

**General Topics :: Pro-war is not Pro-life****Pro-war is not Pro-life - posted by chapel (), on: 2009/10/23 17:26**

Pro-war is not Pro-life

By Metropolitan Jonah

Here are extracts from a pastoral letter written for Sanctity of Life Sunday by the newly elected head of the Orthodox Church in America:

It is the very Word of God who, by His incarnation and assumption of our whole life and our whole condition, affirms and blesses the ultimate value of every human person — and indeed of creation as a whole. He filled it with His own being, uniting us to Himself, making us His own Body, transfiguring and deifying our lives, and raising us up to God our Father. He affirms and fulfills us, not simply as individuals seeking happiness, but rather as persons with an infinite capacity to love and be loved, and thus fulfills us through His own divine personhood in communion.

Our life is not given to us to live autonomously and independently. This, however, is the great temptation: to deny our personhood, by the depersonalization of those around us, seeing them only as objects that are useful and give us pleasure, or are obstacles to be removed or overcome. This is the essence of our fallenness, our brokenness. With this comes the denial of God, and loss of spiritual consciousness. It has resulted in profound alienation and loneliness, a society plummeting into the abyss of nihilism and despair. There can be no sanctity of life when nothing is sacred, nothing is holy. Nor can there be any respect for persons in a society that accepts only autonomous individualism: there can be no love, only selfish gratification. This, of course, is delusion. We are mutually interdependent.

We must repent and turn to God and one another, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. Only this will heal the soul. Only by confronting our bitterness and resentment, and finding forgiveness for those who have hurt us, can we be free from the rage that binds us in despair. Repentance is not about beating ourselves up for our errors and feeling guilty; that is a sin in and of itself! Guilt keeps us entombed in self-pity. All sin is some form of self-centeredness, selfishness.

Repentance is the transformation of our minds and hearts as we turn away from our sin, and turn to God, and to one another. Repentance means to forgive. Forgiveness does not mean to justify someone's sin against us. When we resent and hold a grudge, we objectify the person who hurt us according to their action, and erect a barrier between us and them. And, we continue to beat ourselves up with their sin. To forgive means to overcome that barrier, and see that there is a person who, just like us, is hurt and broken, and to overlook the sin and embrace him or her in love. When we live in a state of repentance and reconciliation, we live in a communion of love, and overcome all the barriers that prevented us from fulfilling our own personhood.

All the sins against humanity — abortion, euthanasia, war, violence, and victimization of all kinds — are the results of depersonalization. Whether it is "the unwanted pregnancy," or worse, "the fetus," rather than "my son" or "my daughter;" whether it is "the enemy" rather than Joe or Harry or Ahmed or Mohammed, the same depersonalization allows us to fulfill our own selfishness against the obstacle to my will. How many of our elderly, our parents and grandparents, live forgotten in isolation and loneliness?

How many Afghan, Iraqi, Palestinian and American youths will we sacrifice to agonizing injuries and deaths for the sake of our political will? They are called "soldiers," or "enemy combatants" or "civilian casualties" or any variety of other euphemisms to deny their personhood. But ask their parents or children!

Pro-war is not pro-life! God weeps for our callousness.

We have to extend a hand to those suffering from their sins, whatever they are. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven, save the one we refuse to accept forgiveness for. Abortion not only destroys the life of the infant; it rips the soul out of the mother — and the father! It becomes a sin for which a woman torments herself for years, sinking deeper into despair and self-condemnation and self-hatred. But there is forgiveness, if only she will ask.

We must seek out and embrace the veterans who have seen such horrors, and committed them. They need to be able to

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o repent and accept forgiveness, so that their souls, their memories, and their lives might be healed.

Most of all, we must restore the family: not just the nuclear family, but the multi-generational family which lives together, supports one another, and teaches each one what it means to be loved and to be a person. It teaches what forgiveness and reconciliation are. And it embraces and consoles the prodigals who have fallen. In this, the real sanctity of life is revealed, from pregnancy to old age. And in the multi-generational family each person finds value. This is the most important thing that we can possibly do.

The Blessed Mother Teresa said that the greatest poverty of the industrialized world is loneliness. Let us reach out to those isolated, alienated, alone and in despair, finding in them someone most worthy of love – and in turn, we will find in ourselves that same love and value, and know indeed that God speaks to us in the depths of our souls: “You are my beloved in whom I am well pleased.”

Re: Pro-war is not Pro-life - posted by ccchhrrriiisss (), on: 2009/10/23 18:06

Many survivors of the holocaust (and descendants of those survivors) might disagree with the author of this article.

There were many lives lost during World War 2; however, there is no telling how many lives were saved. Thankfully, we aren't all speaking German right now...and we don't have a swastika on our flags.

Of course, it is ridiculous to assume that soldiers want to KILL people. Every soldier that I have ever met wants to avoid it. The question of whether or not there are causes that are worth "resisting" for (whether through physical or verbal means) is still open to debate.

Re: , on: 2009/10/23 18:22

Oh boy here we go again. Cccrrriisss, are you really looking for another fight??? Wasn't the heavyweight championship of this theopolitical grudge match finished like two weeks ago???

This is precious.... two men of God who act like two brothers who could never get along but somehow always needed each other. Now can't you see that you two bro's love each other so much that you can't stay away... that somehow.... so somewhere... despite the one and a half/two week separation that you two crazy kids would just find each other. I mean who could have guessed??? It's an enigma. Yet it's also refreshing to watch these threads hash out as it brings family together like no other topic.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiisss (), on: 2009/10/23 18:46

Hi ccridder...

You're right -- I definitely love this brother. I just disagree with his position on this issue. In fact, I have no desire to debate this issue (again, and again, and...well, you get the picture). Yet, in the past, some of the various "non-resistance" threads are strongly opinionated and include particular views that often go unchallenged and/or untested.

If someone begins a thread about a controversial issue (even something as controversial as a particular view regarding the extent of true, Biblical non-resistance), they should certainly expect disagreement. In the last thread (about whether or not a person can defend his family), it was even suggested that there was something ulterior behind the spirit of the thread. That is not my intent, motive or reflective of the underlying attitude behind a reply. In fact, it is easier to simply sit by and let these types of threads run their course. However, I still think that there deserves to be a presentation of the alternative views regarding this matter (or, at least, a reminder that there ARE different persuasions about this matter). There are many very sincere brothers and sisters in Christ here on SermonIndex who hold to somewhat different views about the precise Biblical extent of non-resistance. Their Scriptural and prayerful thoughts can be just as relevant.

Again, I sincerely do not mean to stir up a "hornet's nest" of debate at all -- probably no more than the brother who posted the original article. The original post itself suggests that those believers who feel that there are acceptable, Biblical mandates for war are actually "pro-war." They are not. They just feel that war can possibly be necessary at times. The title (and some of the statements within the article) seem to suggest that an agreement with some war also removes a person from being "pro-life." I believe that this is incorrect, as substantiated by my reply. If the cause is correct, war can actually save far more lives than might be lost during the conflict itself.

Anyway, I agree with your concern. Hopefully, this won't turn out that way (except by the possibility of "bringing the family together"). Each of us, after all, are longing to please the Lord with every fiber of our being.

Re: , on: 2009/10/23 19:04

"If someone begins a thread about a controversial issue (even something as controversial as a particular view regarding the extent of true, Biblical non-resistance), they should certainly expect disagreement." ccchhrriss

First of all, out of all the posters here I find yours the most difficult to spell.

Secondly, is that right? You didn't think Chapel expected any disagreement on the semi-similar threads that he's started and you guys took of on your love fest???

When I said this was precious, I meant it.

Now Chapel do you feel the same way? Because if so I think we may be able to get you two into a pretty nice relationship..... that way when the fur flies we know that behind it all.. it's done out of brotherly love.

I must be the middle child!!! Love those brothers.

Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss () , on: 2009/10/23 19:18

Hi ccridr,

Quote:
-----Secondly, is that right? You didn't think Chapel expected any disagreement on the semi-similar threads that he's started and you guys took of on your love fest???

To clarify: I didn't say this about Chapel and it wasn't directed at him specifically. If someone (anyone) begins a thread about a controversial issue...they should *expect* disagreement.

I hope this is a little more clear. I hold nothing but respect for brother Chapel...just as I did for our brother Pastorfrin. I didn't agree with some of what brother Pastorfrin wrote...but I think that he knew that our conversations were motivated by the love of Christ. Hopefully, with this in mind, the "fur" will not "fly" at all.

Re: , on: 2009/10/23 19:24

'To clarify: I didn't say this about Chapel and it wasn't directed at him specifically. If someone (anyone) begins a thread about a controversial issue...they should expect disagreement.' cccrrriss

I understood that, but some just have a little knack for finding each other in the randomness of controversial postings. In other words, on this particular topic, no matter who starts it.. you and Chapel will act like brothers who disagree very very much. That's fine, I just want to make sure that the brotherly love is still there. A little levity to certain threads which are on top of previous exhausting threads is sometimes necessary.
;-)

Re: Pro-war is not Pro-life - posted by chapel (), on: 2009/10/23 19:33

Hi cccrrriiisshh,

Thank you for your typical oracular reply.
;-)
Must run for now, hoping for a edifying discussion.
chapel

Re: , on: 2009/10/23 19:36

When you two get back together, PM me. I have to take a picture. 8-)

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2009/10/23 20:17

Is Chapel Orthodox, Catholic, or something?

I was just wondering because of using this article.

Now I believe brethren that we shouldn't converse in unprofitable conversation. That is what this thread is all about. The bible says that we should edify one another and many of you know that we've been down enough of these roads before which lead to strife and confusion.

Hear the words of the Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

1 Corinthians 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

2 Timothy 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

2 Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

2 Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

2 Timothy 2:26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Most of these controversial articles are full of man's wisdom and should be avoided. We are to be filled with the spirit and not lean to the wisdom of men. The apostles preached the gospel of Christ with power and never got caught up in endless discussions. They never got caught up in the philosophies of men but only preached by the Holy Ghost anointed words of wisdom. Let's preach Jesus Christ and him crucified to all people and not get caught up in what the word of God warns us not to become involved in.

Whether it does any good or not, I've said it anyway.

Blessings to all!

Re: - posted by Leo_Grace, on: 2009/10/23 20:18

This is an issue that has been discussed extensively before. I will post just once here to restate that there is no such thing as an anti-war doctrine in the Bible, whether in the old testament or in the new. There is no clear Scriptural basis to elevate anyone's aversion to war to the level of a church doctrine, although such aversion is not necessarily a bad thing. What we are taught clearly in the Bible, in both the old and the new testaments, is:

Mt 22:37-40 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Obedience to this greatest commandment, as the Lord Jesus says, is the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets.

There are Christians even today who stand in harm's way as soldiers, policemen, and as agents of law enforcement, as their fathers did before them, out of an abiding love for their families, their communities and for their country, to protect and to defend even at the cost of their own lives. If, through their faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit has led them to this ministry, who are we to condemn them?

The opening post, a message by Metropolitan Jonah, the head of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), comes from a man who also teaches the following, and I quote from the OCA website:

1. Mary worship (though they would try to deny this on the basis of semantics)

We believe that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God. Through her He Who was God before the ages took on our human nature without relinquishing His divine nature or confusing or "meshing" it with the human nature in any way. The Mother of God is often referred to as the "New Eve," for she said "yes" to God whereas the first Eve said "no." We believe that the Mother of God was sinless of her own free will, that she remains ever-virgin, and that she is the "living tabernacle" of God inasmuch as her womb, as one hymn states, becomes "more spacious than the heavens" by carrying within it the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

Properly speaking, Orthodox Christians do not "pray to" the Mother of God instead of God; we seek her intercession before her Son, asking her to pray on our behalf; another Orthodox hymn states that "the prayers of a mother availeth much before her Son."

2. Praying for the dead to be allowed into heaven, which belies the essential Biblical teaching that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole requirement for eternal salvation.

Orthodox Christians pray for the dead so that the Lord will have mercy on their souls, that He will grant them eternal rest "in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that He will extend His unfathomable love upon them, and that He will receive them into that state "in which there is neither sickness, nor sighing, nor sorrow, but life everlasting."

I seriously question whether Metropolitan Jonah should be presented in this website as an authority on Christian teachings.

Let me close by saying that I do respect the views of others, even if they may differ from mine, as long as none of the essential doctrines of true Christian faith are breached.

Re: - posted by IWantAnguish (), on: 2009/10/23 23:40

In my bible, Jesus says "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my Kingdom is not from the world."

Wait... Did Jesus say, "If my kingdom WAS of this world, my servants would play musical instruments and sing kumbaya around a camp fire." ?

No... Jesus clearly states, that if he was to be an earthly messiah as everyone expected him to be, his servants would rise up and fight, and we can derive from this, that he would slaughter the opposing enemy.

Jesus wasn't a pacifist.

Re: May Christians Kill? - posted by chapel (), on: 2009/10/23 23:53

May Christians Kill?

By Fr. Philip LeMasters

Eastern Christianity does not view morality in fundamentally legal terms or within the context of abstract philosophy, but as part of the holistic vocation of humanity for theosis: participation by grace in the eternal life of the Holy Trinity. Hence, the Orthodox vision must be considered on its own terms, and not distorted by the imposition of Western categories. The

question for the Orthodox is not, “What approach to warfare is most persuasive rationally or incumbent upon all Christians as a matter of moral law?” Instead, the East asks, “In light of the human vocation for growth in holiness and communion with God, how should Christians respond to the prospect of warfare?”

The prominence of petitions for peace in the Liturgy sheds light on the Orthodox response to war. Since the Church believes that the Liturgy is a participation in the worship of heaven, and grounds the knowledge of God in worship and mystical experience, it is fitting to place the issue of war and peace within the context of the liturgical life of Eastern Christianity, for it is in worship that the Church participates most fully in communion with the Holy Trinity.

In the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the first petitions of the Great Ektenia are for “the peace from above, and for the salvation of our souls” and “the peace of the whole world; for the good estate of the churches of God, and for the union of all.” At every Liturgy we pray for our parish, the clergy and laity, for government officials and all those in public service, for the place we live and for all towns and cities, for peaceful times, for travelers, the sick, the suffering, for captives and their salvation, and for our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger, and need. “Help us; save us; have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Your grace,” we beg, finally commending “ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.”

These are not simply decorative words. Neither are they prayers which refer merely to the inner tranquility of worshipers, nor to an entirely future Kingdom of Heaven. Instead, they embody an Orthodox vision of salvation and call upon the Lord to enable us to experience his heavenly peace right now in every dimension of life: personal, public, religious, temporal, and political. Whoever prays these prayers is asking already to participate in the Kingdom of God on earth, to find the healing and blessing of salvation in every dimension of one’s life – indeed, in every aspect of God’s creation.

The entire Liturgy is an epiphany of God’s Kingdom on earth. The priest begins the service with a proclamation, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and ever and unto ages of ages,” which declares that the assembly is now participating in the worship of Heaven. The Church is raised to the life of the Kingdom as her members gather to glorify and commune with the Holy Trinity.

Because we believe in the Incarnation and the goodness of God’s physical creation, we pray for peace and salvation upon people in “real life” situations of peril and suffering, for deliverance from the kinds of calamities and hardships that beset our mortal bodies in this life.

The peace for which we pray includes every dimension of our existence before the Lord. God created us for communion with Himself in all aspects of our personhood: body, soul, and spirit. Christian salvation entails the resurrection of the complete, embodied self in the blessed communion of Heaven and the transformation of the entire creation in subjection to the Holy Trinity.

The peace for which we pray is our participation in that all-inclusive salvation. There is no true peace other than that found in the healing and transformation brought to human beings by the God-Man in whom our humanity is united with divinity. Since God intends to save us in every dimension of our existence, his healing concerns the full range of human life. Even as bread and wine become the means of our communion with the Lord, we are to offer every bit of ourselves and of this world to the Father in union with the sacrifice of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. We will then find life-giving communion with the Holy Trinity in everything we say and do; our life will become a eucharistic offering as we grow in holiness and union with God.

If the Liturgy is a participation in the eschatological peace of the Kingdom of God, it is fair to ask whether the members of the Church recognize and live out this vision of heavenly peace. An immediate note of realism comes to mind, as the members of the Church are sinners who have not manifested fully the new life of Christ. Nonetheless, the presence of the Holy Spirit enables the Church to embody a foretaste of the eschatological peace of the Kingdom of Heaven, and there is much in the history and ongoing life of the Church which witnesses to the saving peace of God here and now.

Though there is some ambiguity in the Church’s teaching on Christian participation in war, the Orthodox vision of peace prizes selfless love and forgiveness over violence, viewing war, in some situations, as a lesser evil with damaging spiritual consequences for all involved.

In contrast with Orthodoxy, it is easier to describe the traditional Western Christian justifications of war, which have included both the granting of plenary indulgences to those who fought in the crusades and the affirmation of a just-war

theory. The former envisioned the killing of infidels as such a righteous act that the crusaders were released from all temporal punishments for their sins, including exemption from purgatory. The latter, which has been widely influential in Western culture, provides moral sanction to wars which meet certain philosophical criteria.

Orthodoxy has never embraced the crusade ethic. Orthodoxy has viewed war always as an evil, even if, as the theologian Olivier Clément expressed it, "The Church has accepted warfare sorrowfully as a sometimes necessary evil, but without concealing that it is an evil which must be avoided or limited as much as possible." Elsewhere he notes, "The only normative ideal is that of peace, and hence the Orthodox Church has never made rules on the subject of *ius belli* and of *ius in bello*."

Canon 13 of St. Basil's 92 Canonical Epistles states:

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

Father John McGuckin observes that St. Basil refers to St. Athanasius as the father who wrote, in his "Letter to Amun," that killing the enemy was legitimate in wartime. McGuckin argues, however, that St. Athanasius was advising Amun on the question of the sinfulness of nocturnal emissions. "In fact the original letter had nothing whatsoever to do with war... The military image is entirely incidental, and Athanasius in context merely uses it to illustrate his chief point in the letter," which is to show that the moral significance of actions may not be discerned without reference to the contexts in which they occurred.

Against any simplistic readings of the letter as a blanket justification of killing in war, St. Basil places the issue in a specific context. As McGuckin writes on St. Basil in "War and Repentance," "what he speaks about is the canonical regulation of war in which a Christian can engage and find canonical forgiveness for a canonically prohibited act..."

Killing in war had been forbidden completely in earlier canons, such as Canon 14 of Hippolytus in the fourth century, which states:

A Christian is not to become a soldier. A Christian must not become a soldier, unless he is compelled by a chief bearing the sword. He is not to burden himself with the sin of blood. But if he has shed blood, he is not to partake of the mysteries, unless he is purified by a punishment, tears, and wailing. He is not to come forward deceitfully but in the fear of God.

St. Basil distinguishes between outright murder and killing "for the defense of Christian borders from the ravages of pagan marauders." By limiting fighting to such circumstances, he sought to "restrict the bloodshed to a necessary minimum." In contrast to the lifelong exclusion from the sacraments imposed on murderers, St. Basil recommends three years of exclusion from the chalice, thus providing a public sign that the Gospel standard is violated by war.

The Christian soldier who has killed in war is to "undergo the cathartic experience of temporary return to the lifestyle of penance... Basil's restriction of the time of penance to three years, seemingly harsh to us moderns, was actually a commonly recognized sign of merciful leniency in the ancient rule book of the early Church." (It is not uncommon to meet veterans who are tormented for the rest of their lives by the horrors of war. I recall the father of a childhood friend who suffered from nightmares thirty years after the conclusion of his military service during World War II. Those who are trained to kill sometimes have difficulty returning to the mores of civilian life, not to mention the life of theosis.)

McGuckin concludes that this canon of St. Basil excludes the development of just war theory in Orthodoxy. Though particular wars may be necessary or unavoidable, they are never justified, as shedding the blood of other human beings is contradictory to the way of the Kingdom of God.

In his book, *The Price of Prophecy*, Fr. Alexander Webster agrees that a theory of justified war "has never been systematically elucidated in Orthodox moral theology." He describes participation in such a war as "a lesser moral option than absolute pacifism, for those unwilling or unable to pay the full price of prophecy." He suggests that Orthodox criteria for a just war include a "proper political ethos," meaning that the nation going to war should follow "the natural-law ethic and have positive relations with the Orthodox community." The war should also take place for the "defense of the People of God" from injustice, invasion, or oppression "by those hostile to the free exercise of the Orthodox faith." A proper "spiritual intent" should also lead to "forgiveness and rehabilitation" of enemies as

persons who bear the image of God, and not "mere revenge, self-righteousness, or conquest." Webster states that

Whereas the pacifist seeks to emulate Jesus as the Good Shepherd who allowed Himself to be slain unjustly by and for sinners, the just warrior perceives a higher duty: to defend the relatively innocent from unjust aggression. If the Orthodox pacifist can never do anything evil even for a reasonably just end, the Orthodox warrior cannot preserve his personal holiness by allowing evil to triumph through his own inaction.

It is curious for Webster to suggest that the just warrior follows a "higher duty" than that of the pacifist, especially when the clear norm for the Church is the selfless, forgiving, nonresistant way of Christ. Likewise, the enumeration of moral categories for a justified war and the reference to governments which follow an ethic of natural law raise the question of whether this interpretation places questions of war and peace more within the context of human moral reasoning than in that of the journey to theosis. It is fair to ask whether Webster's formulation gives sufficient attention to the spiritual vision of Orthodoxy, as opposed to the greater reliance on an ethics of human reason in Western Christianity.

Though Christ like response of "turning the other cheek" to assaults is the ideal, the Orthodox Church does not prescribe pacifism or nonviolence as an absolute requirement of the Christian life. The Church's moral guidance serves the goal of theosis, of guiding the members of Christ's Body to growth in holiness and union with the Trinity. The canons of the Church are applied pastorally in order to help particular people find salvation as they seek to be faithful in the given set of challenges and weaknesses which they face. The Church's experience is that temporal authority and the use of force are necessary to restrain evil and promote good in our fallen world.

Though the witness of the early Church was largely, but not exclusively, pacifist, the Byzantine vision was of symphonia, or harmony, between God's Kingdom and earthly realms. Hence, Christian emperors and armies fought wars and sustained a social order that sought to embody faithfulness to the Lord in all areas of life. Church and empire were to be united, in Webster's words, "even as the divine and human natures of Christ are united in the One Person of the Incarnate Son of God." In practice, however, that vision was never fully realized in Byzantium; human sinfulness corrupted its political and ecclesiastical leaders in many ways.

There have remained in Orthodoxy, however, indications of the ideal of peace. Monks and clergy, for example, may not bear arms and are forbidden to use deadly violence even in cases of self-defense. Canon V of St. Gregory of Nyssa "states that should a priest "fall into the defilement of murder even involuntarily (i.e., in self-defense), he will be deprived of the grace of the priesthood, which he will have profaned by this sacrilegious crime."

Those whose hands have shed blood are no longer the icons of Christ which priests are called to be, and are not suited to serve at the altar. As Webster writes in *The Pacifist Option*, "An Orthodox priest is supposed to be an exemplar for the Christian community, a man with a personal history free from all serious or grievous offenses including the taking of a human life for any reason."

Even as the sacramental priesthood is a special vocation to which not all are called, the straightforward embodiment of Christlike, nonviolent love – incumbent upon priests – is not canonically required of all believers. In keeping with the practice of *economia*, the norm of nonresistant love may not be directly applicable to those whose vocations in our broken world require the defense of the innocent. These may grow in holiness by fighting as justly as possible, even as they mourn the harm done to themselves and others by their use of violence.

Whatever choices we make in our efforts to defend the innocent from attack and abuse, none are perfect. In a fallen world populated by sinful people, every Christian's journey to the Kingdom will be marked by a measure of spiritual brokenness, and repentance is the only road to healing.

Particular countries and peoples have been so closely identified with the Orthodox faith that their defensive wars against Islamic invaders, though not Western-style crusades, have been described as "a difficult and painful defense of the Cross." The appeal for "victory over their enemies" at the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and other instances of martial imagery in the liturgies, has at times been corrupted into a "national Messianism" in which a soldier who dies in battle is regarded as a martyr and the evil of war is forgotten.

It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that Orthodoxy has enthusiastically endorsed war. Even in cases of the defense of a Christian people from Islamic invasion, the spiritual gravity of warfare has not been forgotten. For example, St. Sergius of Radonezh in the fourteenth century gave his blessing to Grand Prince Dimitri to fight a defensive war

against the Tatar Khan only after he received assurances that the prince had already exhausted every possible means of reconciliation.

Kutuzov's strategy in response to Napoleon's invasion was similar, abandoning Moscow to the French and merely harassing Napoleon's forces during their withdrawal, having no other aim than to drive the invader back to the frontier.

Far from being examples of unbridled militarism, these are instances which reflect the reluctant acceptance of war at times as a necessary evil.

These notes of realism should not be allowed to obscure the Church's insistence that "non-retribution, the avoidance of violence, the returning of good for evil ... and the harmony of peoples" are a holistic "normative good which Christians must seek with God's help," in the words of Olivier Clément.

Fr. Stanley Harakas observes that "the Eastern Patristic tradition rarely praised war, and to my knowledge, almost never called it 'just' or a moral good.... The peace ideal continued to remain normative and no theoretical efforts were made to make conduct of war into a positive norm."

The evidence for widespread pacifism in the Church is strongest before St. Constantine, when the Empire was pagan and Christians, including converts within the army, were persecuted for refusing to participate in the worship of false gods. Even after the Christianization of the Empire, with the eventual requirement that only Christians could be in the army, there remained teachers of pacifism in the Church, such as Pope St. Damasus, Prudentius, and St. Paulinus of Nola. Webster remarks that St. Paulinus, in the fifth century, was the last Church Father who explicitly addressed the moral issue of war from a pacifist perspective. From then on, pacifist sensibilities would manifest themselves in other contexts, such as the requirement of clerical and monastic nonresistance.

The contrast between the canonical requirement of pacifism for the clergy and the acceptance of military service by the laity requires further comment. Webster notes that the identification of clergy with the nonviolent norm and the allowance of participation in war on the part of the laity implies a two-tier ethic with a higher and a lower class of Christians, which could be taken to imply that the clergy are necessarily holier than the laity.

More faithful to Orthodox ecclesiology would be the affirmation that the norm now embodied by the clergy will at some future point become normative for all Orthodox. Here we are dealing with a point of eschatological tension that will be resolved in the Kingdom of Heaven, when all will be pacifists, for violence and other evils will be destroyed. In the present, as Webster writes in *The Pacifist Option*, the clergy are "expected to demonstrate the attainment of an advanced spiritual and moral state to which all Orthodox Christians are called."

The recognition of pacifism as an ultimate norm or goal for all Christians should not be surprising. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ calls His followers to theosis, to growth in holiness and perfection in union with God. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) This teaching is the conclusion of a section focusing on the love of enemies, which is immediately preceded by the Lord's repudiation of resistance against evil. "Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also." (5:39)

These passages indicate that the repudiation of violence in self-defense is a sign of growth in holiness. Our Lord's example of offering Himself on the cross for our salvation is the paradigmatic epiphany of the selfless love in which human beings are to participate as they come to share by grace in the life of the Trinity.

Fr. Philip LeMasters is professor of Religion and director of the Honors Program at McMurry University in Abilene, Texas. A priest of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese, he serves at St. Luke Orthodox Church in Abilene. This is an abridged version of a chapter in his book, *The Goodness of God's Creation* (Regina Orthodox Press). The Patristic texts cited here and many others, plus essays by a number of Orthodox theologians, can be found in *For the Peace from Above: An Orthodox Resource Book on War, Peace and Nationalism*, Hildo Bos and Jim Forest, editors, Syndesmos, 1999. The full text of the book is posted on the OPF web site: <http://incommunion.org/articles/for-the-peace-from-above/first-page>

Re: , on: 2009/10/24 10:59

I won't speak for others but as a former catholic The Roman Catholic Church is not a credible source for me. Where was the Pope's stance in WWII when many catholics were fighting... Why didn't they forbid catholics to join the military? Why don't they now??? What was the Church's stance during Mussolini's reign?

This is the same church that prohibits divorce but will give Michael Kennedy and annulment for a sexual affair with a 14 yr old nanny because of money and power.. http://www.nypost.com/p/news/regional/kennedy_ex_rips_annulment_bullies_eHldXX3nMiy8ShqyTOmqWN

Yes.. there are times when I will copy and paste too. It's so easy to have someone speak for you... there are many times when we should make our own case and leave it at that. You're not going to change any minds just because the author of the article has 'Father' next to it.

The church is it's own rulemaker and rulebreaker.... it's historically true and it's true now. Doctrine can so easily change month to month... year to year... decade to decade when the Holy Spirit is shoved aside to be represented by it's own intellect.

Re: - posted by Leo_Grace, on: 2009/10/24 13:04

Dear ccridger,

This is not Roman Catholic teaching. It is from the East Orthodox religion. Philip LeMasters, who it seems likes to be called father in violation of the teaching of Jesus Christ, is the resident priest of St. Lukes's Orthodox Church (SLOC) in Abilene, Texas. They are a mission parish of the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese (AOCA) of North America, which hold to the same denominational doctrines as the previously mentioned Orthodox Church of America of Metropolitan Jonah.

Aside from the faulty practices already mentioned previously: **Mary worship and Praying for the Dead to get them into Heaven, they also practice Infant Baptism, not just as a church tradition. They believe that upon water baptism of the infant, it is indeed born again in the faith of their church, with all the Biblical promises of forgiveness, redemption, sanctification, and salvation that accompany spiritual rebirth.** I quote from the website of AOCA:

But children don't understand the faith!

The assumption behind this objection to infant baptism, one which did not exist in the early Church or in the centuries which followed, is that faith is a product of reason. That to truly believe, our minds must be capable of understanding why we believe, or at least able to provide intellectual consent. For the adult convert to the Orthodox Church, intellectual consent is crucial. Baptism is not magic. It is a voluntary act of submission to God, a consent to live in relationship with God within the covenant He has established through His Son with a larger body of baptized believers, the Church. But at the same time, faith falls flat if it does not go beyond individual reason. It falls flat because it is so individualized, exclusive, and self-centered. Tertullian said famously that "one Christian is no Christian." It is true that our faith must be personal, that we must have a personal relationship with God. But our faith must not be limited to that personal relationship alone. Our relationship with God is valid only if it is realized in communion with the whole Church.

I've spoken of the Church as family, and I want to return to that image. Children can break fellowship with the family if they consider themselves outside the family's fate. They are family members only in so much as they live as part of the family, accepting all the responsibilities and self-sacrifice that such family status demands. I don't have to explain this to my children. They understand from birth that they belong to a larger group, and belong in the most intimate way. They know who their father and mother are and where to go for help and for security. The concept of "family" is beyond them, but the reality of family life is not. In other words, children have a sense of belonging a dozen years or more before they understand what this belonging means.

The earthly family is an image of the heavenly family, the family of the Kingdom of God. Children born to a Christian family are born again into the heavenly family through baptism. A child baptized in the Orthodox Church belongs to a spiritual family. This family bridges both heaven and earth, stretches backward and forward in time and includes both saints and angels. Children belong to this family exactly as each of my daughters belongs to my family. They know in a profound way that they belong long before they have some kind of cerebral understanding of that belonging.

Our modern world so exalts reason and cerebralism that young children are sometimes treated as not fully human, or are at least treated less seriously than adults because they can't think like we do. The truth is that a child is a full human being. A child of any age is capable of expressing and participating in the glory of God. Christ Himself sanctified every age as God-bearing, since He was as much the perfect Word of God as an infant as when He was a grown man. We must remember that children are not second-class persons. Their baptisms are as significant to them and to God as adult baptisms. Even if they do not cognitively understand what that baptism means, they are certainly capable of intuitively understanding it.

Is baptism just a sign?

Everything I have said assumes that baptism is more than just an outward expression of an inward acceptance of Christ. Of course, baptism is an outward expression in that physical hands are laid on a physical person and that the rites of baptism are tangible, visible, and physical. But the Orthodox embrace completely the Incarnation of Christ. For us, Christ's body was not just an outward expression. Christ's physical body was not an incidental part of His saving Incarnation. His body was indivisibly part of His whole person. So important is the body to God that the Christian promise is that we will be raised with our bodies.

*Baptism effects a change in one's status with God. It is more than a mere sign. The views held by most Christians about marriage provide a useful comparison. Few Christians would say that a marriage ceremony is merely a "sign." A change clearly occurs. The man and the woman are separate before the ceremony, but they are "one flesh" after. This is a profound change, one which is effected by God through the ceremony itself. Baptism is no different. **The rite of baptism has always been understood as a baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ, an entrance into the saving covenant, an enrollment in the Lamb's book of life, a union with the whole people of God, and the giving of a new citizenship in the Kingdom not of this world.** Clearly, this is more than just a formality.*

I repeat. Many of the teachings of the leaders of the Orthodox Church are contrary to Scripture, and should not be presented in this website as authoritative Christian beliefs.

Re: Pro-war is not Pro-life - posted by chapel (), on: 2009/10/24 13:26

Dear Saints,

Let me begin by saying to everyone that this thread was not started to point blame or accuse any one individual of anything. Nor to argue about hypothetical situations that rarely if ever happen. Having said that let me ask those who have proved they are hypercritical by their large number of captious post to either discuss the topic at hand or find somewhere else to complain.

For everyone's information I'm neither Orthodox nor Catholic (by the way, I can read so you can ask me) but blood brought and cleansed through the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who happens to believe in not doing harm to others by following the example of our Lord Jesus and his disciples.

I posted the two articles to show the diversity even within the same organization on this issue but do find it strange how we reject truth from some and accept it from others, for instance, Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists even though they were responsible for the killing of large numbers of Anabaptists for a disagreement on doctrine. So you must be able to understand why we Anabaptist look at some with a wary eye, and why do (as the last article points out) church organizations require their chaplains, priest and ministers to not carry weapons and not to kill?

My qualifications to speak on this issue; The word of our Lord Jesus Christ and his command to be a witness everywhere we go and to follow his example in everything.

Having served in the US army and being involved in the treatment of veterans for thirty-five years I'm able with some authority to address the issue of war and the mindset of veterans before, during and after they have served in combat.

So in keeping the discussion to the issue at hand, Pro-War is not Pro-Life.

Why do denominations require their chaplains, priest and ministers to not carry weapons and not to kill?

May the Lord's peace lead all of us.

lee

Re: , on: 2009/10/24 18:09

Thanks for the info Leo. It was close enough to catholicism for me... I could see how I could get confused it seemed so similar.

I'm in complete agreement with the last line of your post.

Re: Pro-war is not Pro-life - posted by chapel (), on: 2009/10/25 12:50

One Excellent Reason Not to Join the Military: You May be Ordered to Kill Civilians

by Paul Rockwell

Published on Saturday, April 29, 2006 by CommonDreams.org

The following article is adapted from: Ten Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military, edited by Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg, with an introduction by Cindy Sheehan, published by New Press.

A soldier who sees the humanity of the enemy makes a troubled and ineffective killer.

-- Chris Hedges

When Marine Sergeant Jimmy Massey enlisted in the Marines, he never expected that he would be ordered to kill civilians. He enlisted in good faith, and he trusted his Commander-in-Chief to tell the truth, to follow the Geneva Conventions and the rule of law. He was even ready to risk his life for his country in the event that the United States faced a real or imminent attack.

In January 2003, Jimmy was deployed to Iraq. During the initial invasion he was involved in a number of checkpoint killings, the kind of atrocities that occur over and over today without fanfare or scandal.

A hard-core Marine, Jimmy was in charge of a platoon of machine gunners and missile men. It was their job to secure the road out of Baghdad. As bombs rained down on the ancient city of five million people, civilians fled in panic. There was chaos at the checkpoints.

All Iraqis, Jimmy told me in a recent interview, were considered a menace.

One particular incident really pushed me over the edge. It involved a car with Iraqi civilians. We fired some warning shots, but the car did not slow down. So we lit it up. Well, this particular vehicle we didn't destroy completely, and one gentleman on the ground looked up at me and said, Why did you kill my brother? We didn't do anything wrong. That hit me like a ton of bricks.

Jimmy was involved in four more checkpoint tragedies.

Like thousands of his fellow Marines and soldiers, who also enlisted in good faith, Jimmy was trapped; trapped between atrocity and near-sedition. If he followed orders, he might commit war crimes. If he disobeyed orders, he put his own life and career in jeopardy.

Marines are trained to kill without remorse. But there are times in life when indoctrination, reprisals, threats of humiliation, all fail to erase that inner feeling that we are all God's children. A Marine who recognizes the humanity of the people whose country is under occupation makes an ineffective killer. Repelled by the indiscriminate carnage, the visible suffering of the Iraqi people, who only deserved to be left alone by outside powers, Jimmy repudiated the war. He refused to participate in apparent war crimes. He defied authority, and his commander called him a coward and put him under a kind of house arrest. Jimmy, a real fighter, eventually won his honorable discharge.

At his home in North Carolina, Jimmy says the U.S. military is committing war crimes. Yes, I killed innocent people for my government; And for what? I feel like I've had a hand in some sort of evil lie at the hands of our government. I just feel embarrassed, ashamed about it....I spend long hours speechless and looking at the wall, seeing nothing but images of dead Iraqis.

The Pressure to Kill Civilians

Like Jimmy Massey, Darrell Anderson is fighting the dark ghosts of atrocity. A 22-year-old GI from Lexington, Kentucky, who won a purple heart after he was wounded, Anderson was stationed at a checkpoint near a police station in Baghdad, when a speeding car swerved in his direction. Darrell said he received orders to shoot. There was a family two children, a man and his wife in the car. Darrell's buddies screamed: Shoot! Why don't you shoot? Why don't you shoot?

According to Darrell, he simply could not pull the trigger of his M-16. The car posed no threat, he told me.

My superior came over and said what are you doing? I said, look, there's children in the back. It's a family. I did the right thing. It's wrong to fire in this situation. My superior told me: No, you did the wrong thing. You will fire, next time, or you will be punished. That's our orders.

There is constant pressure to kill Iraqi civilians, Anderson said. At traffic stops we kill innocent people all the time. If you are fired on from the street, you are supposed to fire on everybody that is there. If I am in a market, I shoot people who are buying groceries.

The indiscriminate use of artillery is a direct violation of the Geneva Conventions, which state (Part IV, Article 48): combatants shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants, between civilian objects and military objectives and, accordingly, shall direct their operations only against military objectives.

Darrell Anderson said he was riding in his self-propelled Howitzer when he was ordered to fire rounds into downtown Najaf in response to a mortar attack. Artillery rounds are filled with little BBs or shrapnel. Like cluster bombs, the kill-ratio is wide, and bystanders are covered in the blanket of destruction. Under orders, Darrell said, we fired about 70 or 80 rounds. My buddies came back and said, we killed a lot of people. About a hundred civilians. They were just people downtown. Killing downtown civilians is a typical incident.

I remember watching old World War II films where Nazis in Poland or Czechoslovakia would call civilians into the street, line them up, and threaten reprisals if they did not yield vital information. Occupiers need intelligence, but local natives rarely give information voluntarily. From the U.S. raids on hamlets in Vietnam, French raids in the Casbah in Algeria, to the ongoing door-to-door raids in Iraq, the main features of imperial occupations have never changed.

Darrell was involved in numerous nighttime raids on Iraqi homes. When we raid homes in the middle of the night, Darrell explains, twenty guys blow through the house at gunpoint, and it's pretty terrifying for all the Iraqi families. We kick down the doors or bash them with a sledgehammer. One team goes in to clear the bottom floor. The second team heads up stairs. The women are screaming and crying, the children are freakin' out, and the men ask us why, why, what have we done? We separate the women, and their men are handcuffed and taken away. Even if we are looking for a single person, all the men are considered enemy until proven otherwise.

Once we raided a home based on faulty information we got from a drunk. We paid him for the tip. We busted into a house and yanked some guy out and sent him to Abu Ghraib for torture. Sometimes we closed off the whole section of a city and raided a couple of hundred homes, door-to-door.

Darrell described the almost ceaseless brutality of the occupation. In downtown Baghdad, there were three guys going to their car. One Iraqi opened the door and reached inside. The guys in our Humvee a machine-gunner and an NCO in charge fired on the Iraqis. Our gunners said the Iraqis could have been going for weapons. So we just killed them. There were no weapons in the vehicle. Three innocent guys, and there was no investigation.

Darrell compares Iraq to the tragedy of Vietnam, another American war in which unseen, distant commanders, whose own lives were never in danger, sent vulnerable young men and women into situations where war crimes become an everyday feature of military conduct. Baghdad is in rubble, he said. The big buildings were blown up. Many were targets, and houses in Najaf are blown to pieces.

Today Darrell is a war-resister. He left the military and escaped to Canada, where he is seeking political asylum. I can't go back to the war. If I return to Iraq, I have no choice but to commit atrocities. And I don't want to kill innocent people.

Breaking Through Denial

Aidan Delgado, an Army Reservist in the 320th Military Police Company, witnessed horrific atrocities in Iraq. He served as a mechanic from April 2003 to April 2004, and he was stationed at Abu Ghraib for six months.

I first met Delgado at a high school in Northern California, where he presented graphic images of the U.S. occupation. If you're old enough to go to war, Delgado said to the seniors, you're old enough to know what goes on. I want to let you know what you are signing on for if you enlist.

It was common practice, his narrative began, to set up blockades. The Third Infantry would block off a road. In advance of the assaults, civilians would flee the city in panic. As they approached us, someone would yell: Stop, stop! In English. Of course many couldn't understand. Their cars were blown up with cannons, or crushed with tanks. Killing non-combatants happened routinely, not only with the Third Infantry, but the First Marines. On an MSNBC report last week, they dug out a father, mother and her six children. The killing of civilians is still going on today.

Delgado's experiences at Abu Ghraib turned him against the entire war. His duties at the prison led him to discover that most of the prisoners had never been insurgents. (According to the May 4th 2004 Taguba Report on Iraqi prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, the vast majority of the 4000-6000 detainees never committed acts against U.S. forces.)

The living conditions at the prison were inhumane. Behind barbed wire, the prisoners launched a protest that got rough. Rocks were thrown. The guards asked permission to use lethal force, and they got it, Aidan said. They opened fire on the prisoners with the machine guns. They shot twelve and killed three. I talked to one guy who did the killing. He showed me grisly photographs and bragged about the results. Look, I shot this guy in the face, he said. See, his head is split open. He talked like the Terminator. I was stunned and said, You shot an unarmed man behind barbed wire for throwing a stone. He said to me, Well, I said a prayer, and I gunned him down. There was a complete disconnect between what he had done and his morality. He was the nicest guy, a family man, a courteous, devout Christian.

When Delgado finished his high school presentation, I saw a student who looked almost ill in the back row. I later learned that, a day earlier, he had enlisted in the Army.

Delgado challenged the students to confront the issue of atrocity, to overcome denial, to consider the military, not as a career, or an opportunity, but as a way of life that claims and smothers souls.

The reality of torture and other war crimes presents a moral challenge to all young men and women considering a career in military service. Under the impact of Delgado's testimony, the high school students began to wonder: Will I be ordered to commit atrocities or war crimes, to carry out policies against my own religion and conscience, deeds that I may regret for the rest of my life?

Moved by Delgado's narrative, I myself began to reflect on past abuses in American military history. I recall the anguish of Paul Meadlo's mother when she discovered that her son committed atrocities at My Lai. Her cry of pain became a headline in the November 30, 1969, New York Times: I sent them a good boy; they made him a murderer. And she wanted to know: What did the military do to her son? Policies from Command

War crimes in Iraq are not mere aberrations. They emanate from official policies regarding the aims and conduct of the occupation.

It is official policy, for example, to use cluster bombs in populated areas. Soldiers and Marines merely carry out the policy.

It was official policy, under Operation Iron Hammer, to put barbed wire around villages, to bulldoze crops, to bomb homes, and to hold families in jail until they released insurgent information. (Patrick Cockburn, U.S. Troops Bulldoze Crops, Counterpunch, October 14, 2003). In his attempt to justify the punitive expedition, Captain Todd Brown, Company Commander of the 4th Infantry Division, stated, You have to understand the Arab mind. The only thing they understand is force; force, pride, and saving face. (New York Times, December 7, 2003)

It was official policy to level Fallujah, a city of 300,000 people, as an act of collective punishment. American commanders openly declared that Fallujah needed to be taught a lesson. Commanders ordered the use of 500-pound bombs that are utterly indiscriminate in their effects. No type of building, mosques, homes, medical facilities was exempt from aerial destruction. At a mass burial of dead Iraqis, Captain P.J. Batty stated: Everyone needs to understand there are consequences for not following the Iraqi government. (Associated Press, November 16, 2004. Also CNN, Nov. 16).

In her 2005 book, *ONE WOMAN'S ARMY*, the Commanding General of Abu Ghraib, Janis Karpinski, exposes the connections between the use of torture at Guantanamo, in Afghanistan and Cell blocks One and Two at Abu Ghraib. Major General Geoffrey Miller, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld played key roles in the preparation and execution of torture policy.

While Karpinski does not excuse the acts of reservists at Abu Ghraib, she reminds us that young Americans face prison time for following orders, while those who actually authorized the use of dogs, hooding, sleep deprivation, stress positions and isolation techniques of torture avoid accountability for the consequences of their own decisions. During the Abu Ghraib scandal, neither Rumsfeld, Miller, Gonzales nor one top official or commander stepped forward to share responsibility with the reservists. In essence, Karpinski makes clear, American commanders left their soldiers in the lurch.

Every American youth who considers military enlistment needs to take a close look at military justice.

Not only are American Marines, reservists, and soldiers expected to follow unlawful orders, they are also expected to bear life-long burdens of shame, guilt, and legal culpability for the arrogance of their own commanders who dispense life and death from an office computer. Even before the invasion of Iraq in April 2003, more than six hundred U.S. veterans signed a Call to Conscience, expressing remorse for past war crimes. As troops, they wrote, in the last Gulf War we were ordered to murder from a safe distance. We remember the road to Basra where we were ordered to kill fleeing Iraqis. We bulldozed trenches, burying people alive.

Once a student makes that fateful decision to enlist in the U.S. military today once an individual, through basic training, is conditioned to kill without remorse, to become an occupier in a country where insurgents are indistinguishable from neighbors, friends, and family in their own homeland it is too late to turn back. As war-historian Gwen Dyer writes: Men will kill under compulsion men will do almost anything if they know it is expected of them and they are under strong social pressure to comply.

Only exceptional people can resist atrocity, writes psychiatrist Robert Lifton in *Superpower Syndrome*. Jimmy Massey, Darrell Anderson, Aidan Delgado and scores of other war-resisters are exceptional men and women. When they enlisted, they only wanted to serve their country. They hoped to make a difference. But the military transported them beyond the rule of law, turning them into occupiers of Iraq, not defenders of democracy. These war-resisters fought back and broke the military code of silence.

Americans can hold on to their humanity, to be sure. But only by recognizing the humanity, not only of Arab peoples, but of all peoples who have a right to self-determination like ourselves.

Refusing to enlist is more than a career decision. It is a moral and political act, a contribution to the burgeoning, international movement for a better, more peaceful world. It is an affirmation of the sacredness of life and the dignity of all humanity.

Paul Rockwell is a columnist for *In Motion Magazine*. Contact him at rockypad@hotmail.com

Re: , on: 2009/10/25 15:01

Hi Chapel,

Just wanted to comment on your piece. Now I would imagine that most on this forum would know my stance on this issue. I am unashamed of my position as a "spiritual pacifist." Let me explain that just a little. I do not believe that the royal priesthood should be involved in war and I believe strongly that this is a Biblical position.

I believe that America is a secular nation, as is every other nation in the world. I do not believe that the above stories of "atrocities," are helpful in the debate as to whether Christians should be engaged in war. In every war there are trigger hap

py soldiers. The reasons are varied and many times it is just simply fear. And who amongst us could cast a stone at these soldiers at checkpoints unless we lived under constant threat of our lives and a stress that only soldiers could relate to?

I guess my larger point is, in the annals of Kingdoms and empires, America undoubtedly comes out on top. Remember, it is a secular scoreboard and America wins hands down. In my opinion, they are the finest secular country in the history of nations. If I were any soldier in the history of soldiers and I had to fall into the hands of my enemies, then I would choose to fall into American hands, without a doubt.

Co-mingling the argument only creates confusion, that is why I always explain that I am a "spiritual pacifist." Now, if I am hated for that, then that is fine. Was the Iraq war justified? Justified by who and for what purpose? In my position all war is wrong for Christians, that has no bearing on whether secular America decides it needs to invade Iraq or any other country. 2000 years ago if Rome decided it wanted to dispatch a king and take his country and his oil, they would simply do it. 200 years ago if Britain decided it wanted to take the continent of India, it went ahead and did it, in order to enrich itself and enlarge its borders. What has any of that got to do with Jesus? Nations do what nations do for their own purposes, and through it all the genuine followers of Jesus keep on following Him and His word, despite the consequences. Today is no different.

It is not my role as a Christian to condemn America for going to war for whatever purpose. When I read the Scriptures I do not read a single line from Jesus or His followers condemning Rome for its wars or empire building, even although they were severely persecuted by Rome. I do, however, read about false teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, hirelings, hypocrites and so on, typically those who named the name of God or Jesus. We have not been called to judge the world at large, neither have we been called to condemn it, but rather to seek and to save the lost. May the Lord bless every soldier that has been dehumanized by acts of brutality. May they find healing in the arms of Jesus.....brother Frank

Re: Pro-war is not Pro-life - posted by chapel (), on: 2009/10/26 16:53

Hi Frank,

Thank you for your response and the thoughts you have shared. They do very much apply to this discussion. I do agree with you for the most part in what you have written, but feel you may have misread my intentions.

I agree that we should not be critical of mistakes soldiers make in the heat of battle and also that unless one has been involved personally in combat they have no grounds on which to offer advice. This article is not criticizing the individual soldier but the command they receive to kill all and it does happen I have seen it in action.

Just to let you know I have been there; in 1966 I was hit twice in the abdomen and once in the right knee, destroying most of my knee joint and nearly severing my right leg. I spent many months in hospitals and have been in and out of treatment most of my life.

When I was discharged from the service I earned my MSW and have been involved in the treatment of mostly combat veterans until I retired last year at the age of 66. At 67 I volunteer at our local mission, the VA hospital and serve as an elder in our assembly.

I do not only have my own experience of combat to live with but I have 100s, no 1000s of others to live with as well. I spend many nights laying awake reliving and playing over and over in my mind how all this happened, the horrors and the faces of those you loved all gone and for what.

I agree with you Frank that there will always be war until our Lord comes and makes an end of it all. But until then, I must warn young Christian men and Women that serving in the military is not what it is made out to be. That you will either be taking lives yourself or be supporting those who do; once this happens you will need to live with it the rest of your life. Do you know that the military spends many resources in the recruitment of our church youth? If a government can get the support of the religious system to make war it then becomes legitimate in the eyes of its citizenry.

No we must not criticize our soldiers for actions they must take in the heat of battle, but we must warn our Christian youth that once they take the oath of service, their soul is no longer their own but it belongs to the kingdom they have sworn to uphold and defend; it will then matter because their lives will be co-mingled between two kingdoms and the order to kill I will have to be dealt with. My hope is that we can warn them in any and all ways possible so they will never have to receive the order to kill.

His love and peace to you

lee

Re: , on: 2009/10/26 17:01

I've never met anyone who was "pro-war"... and I was a Marine who was in several war zones during my hitch.

But to "pro-war is not pro-life" I must ask... what about the 6,000,000 Jews were murdered, and the untold millions who's lives were SAVED because we joined WWII?

Thats just an ignorant thing to say.

God was certainly "pro-war" all through the OT, and will be again at the end of days.

Krispy

Re: , on: 2009/10/26 18:28

Hi Lee,

We agree on many things Lee and warning young Christians seems perfectly reasonable to me. I think that was why, in my post, I was trying to differentiate between the secular and the Christian world. Of course what makes it especially difficult in America is that almost everyone claims to be a Christian. Ravenhill thought about 2% , and I actually think it may be quite a bit higher than that but in any regard it would still be a small percentage of the overall population.....Frank

By the way, I knew about your service and I believe that it gives you a certain weight in any conversation about war. I am very sure that you have been a great blessing to many veterans. Long may the Lord bless you Lee.

Re: , on: 2009/10/26 19:42

Wow, I have been away at drill for the past three days so I am just now back on SI.

Have you chapel or appolous stated yet that a born again christian who participates in Gov or war or police will still go to heaven?? I honestly can't remember your answer.