A Christian Approach to a Nation at War

The United States is a nation of Christians, and we're at war with radical Islam. How should the Christian view this? Jesus said, "Love your enemies" and He said, "Turn the other cheek;" so how do we Christians view this (and any other) war? Should we join the hundreds of peace demonstrators in the street? Should we be a silent majority opposed to all wars against our fellow man?

Before I deal with those question, there are a number of periphery issues to be dispensed with. First off, we are not a Christian nation, as we are host to a large number of people with a variety of faiths, some of whom even see scientists as the prophets and priests of our age. However, we Christians are in the majority, and there are times when we need absolute clarity of thought. One area where we ought to think clearly is war.

We've all heard the complaint, "I don't want some president who receives special messages from God running our country." Don't worry; George W. Bush is not receiving emails, telephone messages, or a deep voice from heaven directing his actions. FDR, who was a great man in many, many ways, also did not receive audible messages from on high. God did not contact President Roosevelt by telegraph instructing him to fight against the Germans or the Japanese. As a firm and committed believer in Jesus Christ—a faith which FDR frequently shared in his fireside chats—he knew good from evil and was willing to commit our nation's armies to the distinction which he made between the two. Now, admittedly, there are some Christians who believe that they have direct contact with God, believing that He communicates with them directly and sometimes audibly. If you are one of the heathen, please do not be overly-concerned at this juncture—only a small percentage of Christians actually believe this. This is our fringe element, just as those who call themselves Christians and demonstrate at soldier's funerals are a fringe element. As much as these people disgust you, they also disgust us.

Do you need to be concerned if our president professes to believe in God? Not at all. Just as a Christian should not be swayed by a candidate who claims to be a Christian, nor should those of another faith (or those who lack faith in God) automatically reject a candidate who professes a belief in Jesus Christ. Believing in a power greater than oneself is a mark of humility (when that belief is sincere), and personally, I would rather have a man of humility in power over against a man who sees himself as a god. In any case, when a person professes a faith in Jesus Christ, and is running for president, I can give you my personal guarantee that he is not receiving direct messages from God, via dreams or email; nor does he believe in this sort of direct contact. Now, to be fair, many of us Christians do believe that God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible, and, at times, through circumstances in our lives.

I should quickly cover some of the buzz-words, as well. There are factions in this country who believe that our involvement in a civil war is bad, but that our involvement in a genocide is good. This is silly. Many genocides are nothing more than lopsided civil wars. However, many of us respond to buzz-words, rather than to logical arguments, and this is why some groups use them. Our minds need to be clear and not swayed by buzz-words.

But what about the issue of war? How does a president know that it is time to go to war? Even more importantly, how does a man of faith know that it is time to go to war? This is actually an easier question to answer than you might think.

In the Old Testament, God told Israel on several occasions, to go to war again this or that people. In fact—and I know this is going to concern some of you—God not only did this audibly but He occasionally called for the complete destruction of this or that people. For these reasons, some people reject

Christianity; and, for these reasons, some Christians avoid the Old Testament. But isn't this simply the olden days? Didn't Jesus come to this earth to teach us a better way? Didn't Jesus tell us to love our enemies? Didn't Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek? So, since Jesus came to straighten things out, does this not change our whole view of war? Since God is no longer communicating with His people audibly, doesn't this mean, we should no longer go to war unless, for instance, we are attacked? No, it doesn't.

Jesus said a lot of things, and, we as Christians, should believe what He said. However, it is also reasonable to make an attempt to understand the meaning of what He said. If one reads the context of Jesus saying, "Forgive those who wrong you," "turn the other cheek" or "love your enemies" He was not speaking to a nation or even to a strong political party, but to individuals and to their inter-personal relationships. Furthermore, what Jesus taught was not brand new, as almost any learned Jew can point out; most of what Jesus taught can be found in the Old Testament, sometimes stated in the same words. The idea is, in our daily lives, when dealing one-on-one with our fellow man, we need to be gracious, forgiving and we need to allow God to avenge us; God does not want us to seek revenge against anyone ("Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord; this comes from the Old Testament). Now, does this mean that we don't prosecute criminals? Does this mean that we don't protect our own families against criminal mischief? Of course not! God also gave the Jews a code of laws, which included an excellent system of jurisprudence. God told them to love their neighbor; but God also set up a system of laws and punishments which were to be followed. There is a proper balance to strike. For criminals, there are standards and practices set up in the Mosaic Law; for those who just irritate us, we deal with them in grace, and, when necessary, with forgiveness. Don't think I am taking the easy way out here. It is a lot more difficult to forgive someone who has wronged you than it is to show up to some peace march.

Now, let's actually delve into the Christian and the military. Paul, throughout his many epistles, uses a great many military analogies. He never stops to say, "Oh, by the way, you as a Christian should not ever go to war; I'm just making a little analogy here." He *never* says that. Paul also told us that a ruler does not bear the sword in vain. Furthermore, when Jesus spoke to the Roman soldier, He did not say, "My friend, you need to lay down your sword and follow me; you need to stop acting as a military pawn of Cæsar." What Jesus did say was, "Never in all Israel have I found so great a faith."

Now, please allow me to return to the original questions. When is a war just? When should we go to war? There are two things that we should notice about the enemies of God in the Old Testament: first of all, they hated the Jews and they wanted to destroy the Jews. Many Christians—not all—believe that the Jews are still God's people and many of us Christians recognize the natural affinity which should exist between Christians and Jews. Therefore, when some little man comes along and advocates destruction of all the Jews, this should indicate to us that this man is evil. In retrospect, we know that should have attacked Hitler much earlier than we did. In retrospect, his evil was so great, that it should have been obvious to all. Even the craziest of liberal Bush-haters even recognize how evil Hitler was, because they often compare Bush to Hitler. The analogy may be way off, but, at least they have the sense to recognize how evil Hitler was.

So, look around you today—are there any other groups who advocate the destruction of the Jews? For any Christian, that should be a dead giveaway—any man who advocates the destruction of the Jewish race or any large pocket of Jews might as well be carrying the sign, "I am evil; I am your enemy. I am filled with hatred and I will act on it when I am strong enough." Let me suggest that it is okay to go to war against anyone who spouts this kind of hatred and it is okay to support any ally of ours who goes to war against such a group. When someone is so anti-Semitic that they would kill Jews if given the chance, then a Christian should clearly recognize this as evil.

The second sign to which Christians should be sensitive is child sacrifice. Now, you may think that this is an act relegated to heathen races from long ago and is therefore irrelevant, but this is not the case.

Any society who values ideology over their own children—to the point that they are willing to sacrifice the lives of their own children for their ideology—these men are evil. Don't become mixed up at this point. We have an all-volunteer army, and these are not children—they are young adults. There will always be war in this world, and anyone who thinks differently simply knows nothing about history. Having a well-trained army is a necessity for most countries. However, understand I am speaking of young children; I am speaking of children under the age of 12. When a culture values their ideology over the lives of their children, then they have reached a point where they do not have even the most fundamental form of love—love toward their own family, then that society has reached a point of maximum degeneracy. Recently in Iraq, two children were placed in a truck in order to allay suspicions, and then, these two children were blown to smithereens in this truck in order to make a political statement, while two cowardly adults exited the vehicle, not yet being quite ready to enjoy their own 72 virgins. You may point out, this is an extreme example, but it isn't. Suicide bombers and those who place bombs in vehicles do not care who they destroy when the bomb goes off—it might be adults, it might be children—they don't care. Bombers have even intentionally targeted children's hospitals. If it makes a political statement; that is all they care about.

Furthermore, the willingness to sacrifice their own children is made clear by the education and indoctrination which many Muslims receive throughout the Middle East. In case you are not aware, there are numerous Muslim cartoons—the target audience being small children—and these cartoons glorify the suicide bomber. There is a lot of literature which is a part of their educational process, which speaks of the Jews as being pigs and monkeys, and which teaches hatred of the west, to the youngest of children. Whereas some cultures teach the love of a mother and father for their own child as fundamental; these cultures, at an equally early age, teach hatred for Jews and westerners at the same age as a fundamental value. Dying as a warrior for Allah—as a suicide bomber—is glorified in many Muslim nations, on television and in their schools and in their Mosques, and they target their very own children, at the youngest age. That is child sacrifice, and that is evil.

So the tests are simple for the Christian: if our nation is at war and we are uncertain about it, then check these two tests: do they preach hatred of the Jew and are they willing to sacrifice their youngest children for an ideology? If they pass either of these tests, then we know we are in a war of good against evil. We do not need a deep voice from heaven to tell us this.