

FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

145 IROQUOIS ROAD
OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE 37830
(865) 482-5119

March 4, 2003

Dear members and friends of FBF,

My most recent sermon, "A Just War or Just a War?," evoked a higher level of response than usual. If you weren't here last Sunday, I outlined the three major views people have toward the morality of warfare, two of which appeal to the Bible and Christian tradition as their basis.¹ Most of the feedback has been positive, but I left some folks wondering where I stood on the morality of our nation's apparently inevitable war with Iraq.

For one thing, I tried to present the view of Christian Idealism (pacifism) fairly, even though I do not believe that it reflects the best understanding of Scripture. More importantly, however, my goal was to help our people think biblically through the issue rather than to proclaim my own view. Even among believers who hold to Christian Realism (just war theory), such as I do, the morality of any particular war will hinge not on biblical teaching, but on our understanding of the facts in each case. And I try to confine my preaching to what I know to be true from the Scriptures, not what I believe to be true from the TV news.

However, as someone has said, "There is no honor in maintaining neutrality in times of moral crisis." And so in the Christian Realist (just war) tradition, thus sayeth the pastor (not the Lord):

- Because the U.S. president and congress, not the United Nations, constitute the divinely established sovereign leadership of this country, a war with Iraq would pass the "*legitimate authority*" test.
- Because I judge Iraq's dictator to be thoroughly evil, and aspiring to an even greater capacity for evil, I consider the upcoming war with Iraq to pass the "*just cause*" test.
- Because I do *not* believe that war with Iraq would be fought for selfish reasons like the acquisition of Iraqi oil, or personal vengeance or glory, I believe it passes the "*right intention*" test.
- I believe that the U.S. has made ample attempts to achieve the desired end by other means short of war, and that therefore the war against Iraq passes the "*last resort*" test.
- I believe that our military will make every reasonable attempt to discriminate between combatants and noncombatants, between military and nonmilitary targets, and that the military force applied will be sufficient and overpowering without being gratuitous and bloodthirsty. If that is the case, the war with Iraq would pass the "*discrimination*" and "*proportionality*" tests.

Time will tell whether these assessments of fact and motive are correct. I pray that they are, for only if they are could our war with Iraq be called "just." Only if they are could we confidently call upon the Lord to support our just cause, and to punish and suppress the evil of Sadaam Hussein's reign. Only if they are will Christian support of the war be biblically justified.

Yours in Christ's Service, *Chris*

¹ Secular realism (usually called simply "realism") holds that war is neither moral nor immoral – it is just what happens in the natural course of relations between nations. Christian idealism (usually called pacifism) appeals to the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) to support the view that war can never be justified from a Christian perspective. The position of Christian realism (usually referred to as "just war theory") is that God's word (especially Romans 13:1-6) teaches that sovereign governments have authority under God to exert force (even lethal) under certain circumstances. The tape, "A Just War or Just a War," is available at FBF.