

FROM THE EDITOR

WAR AND PEACE

Few topics produce as much passionate discussion among Christians as war and peace. The prolonged conflict in Iraq has fueled the fires of debate even more. To address this controversial and complex topic we have invited several experts to write pro and con on just war theory and pacifism.

In the lead article J. Daryl Charles, Associate Professor of Religion at Union University (Jackson, TN), presents a strong case for just war theory by appealing to the Scriptures and the Church fathers for support, while arguing that Pacifists misinterpret both sources in an attempt to defend their view. Charles then makes a distinction between force and violence, and contends the use of the first is justified to bring about peace or free oppressed people, while the latter is not.

Richard Land, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (Nashville, TN), applies seven standards of just war theory to three real-life scenarios. After examining and analyzing the human rights abuses in North Korea, Rwanda, and Darfur, he asks if the international community had a moral obligation to step in and take forceful action to rescue the millions who suffered under those totalitarian regimes. His conclusions may surprise you.

With disenchantment growing over the war efforts, many Christians are beginning to take a fresh look at pacifism. Tim Erdel, Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Bethel College (Mishawaka, IN), asserts that the term “just war” is an oxymoron and then presents a list of fourteen considerations, which he says will lead open-minded Christians to embrace pacifism. Erdel presents one of the strongest arguments for pacifism you will ever read.

Stanley Hauerwas, the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School (Durham, NC), named “America’s Best Theologian” by Time Magazine, is one of the most provocative writers of our day. In his article, “Sacrificing the Sacrifices of War,” Hauerwas takes a look at the effects killing has upon those soldiers who actually do the killing. He argues that in Christ God has created a new community which expects the resurrection and therefore has no need (or right) to kill and wage war for its survival, but instead seeks to reconcile enemies, even at the cost of death. In doing so, this community follows the example of its Lord and witnesses to the new reality of God’s kingdom.

Our final article, “War and Peace in Christian Hymnody,” is a real delight. David W. Music, Professor of Church Music, Baylor University (Waco, TX) does an excellent job culling the hymns for military imagery. He then establishes the scriptural basis for military language in hymns and shows how the writers use such language to portray Christianity as a life and death commitment. Music balances his study with an examination of many hymns which deal with peace.

Our Spring 2007 edition of *CTR* concludes with some informative reviews of important books, which are designed to help you in book purchases.

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Yours for Christ and the Kingdom,
R. Alan Streett, Editor