

The War in Iraq: How Just was this War?*

*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.
(Isaiah 5:20)*

*The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those
who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.
(Luke 22:25)*

Jesus calls all of his followers to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). There is no doubt regarding that charge. Nevertheless, there is a disagreement regarding how Christians should strive to promote peace. For the first three hundred years in the life of the church, the overwhelming majority of Christians were pacifists. They believed that any use of force would be a denial of their obedience to the Lord Jesus. With Constantine and his joining together of the church and the state, the followers of Jesus began to face a new challenge. What should Christians do when their “Christian” government asked or ordered them to take up arms and fight a national enemy? Some Christians came to the belief that under certain circumstances it would be acceptable to fight in a war. As evangelical historian Ronald Wells clarifies,

Christians borrowed models of behavior about war from Jewish and classical cultures.... Thus the “Christian” ethic of war that emerged after the fourth century was not distinctly Christian, but rather was based on Hebrew, Greek, and especially Roman ethics, accommodated to the needs of a “Christian culture”.¹

Over the following centuries theologians struggled to sharpen the criteria that would constitute a “just war”. Most just war theoreticians today agree that there are seven essential criteria that must be met if a war can be considered justified. In contrast with this belief, a significant portion of the church has continued to be pacifist (denominations like the Mennonites, the Quakers, certain Brethren groups, and many followers of Jesus within other Christian denominations).

For the sake of argument, in this chapter it will be assumed that the “Just War Theory” is a valid Christian position. The participation of Christians in wars can be justified, but **only if all seven “just war” criteria are met**. On

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¹ Ronald A. Wells, ed. *The Wars of America: Christian Views*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981, p. 7.

the following pages the war in Iraq will be evaluated according to these criteria. One of the clearest presentations of the Just War theory has been articulated by Arthur Holmes, eminent evangelical philosopher and Wheaton College Professor Emeritus.² According to Holmes, all of the following criteria must be fulfilled for Christian participation in a war to be considered acceptable behavior:

1. **Just cause.** All aggression is condemned; only defensive war is legitimate.
2. **Just intention.** The only legitimate intention is to secure a just peace for all involved. Neither revenge nor conquest nor economic gain nor ideological supremacy are justified.
3. **Last resort.** War may only be entered upon when all negotiations and compromise have been tried and have failed.
4. **Formal declaration.** Since the use of military force is the prerogative of governments, not of private individuals, a state of war must be officially declared by the highest authorities.
5. **Limited objectives.** If the purpose is peace, then unconditional surrender or the destruction of a nation's economic or political institutions is an unwarranted objective.
6. **Proportionate means.** The weaponry and the force used should be limited to what is needed to repel the aggression and deter future attacks, that is to say, to secure a just peace. Total or unlimited war is ruled out.
7. **Noncombatant immunity.** Since war is an official act of government, only those who are officially agents of government may fight, and individuals not actively contributing to the conflict (including POWs and casualties as well as civilian nonparticipants) should be immune from attack.³

Now let us turn to the war in Iraq and evaluate it according to these principles. Readers are encouraged to examine the evidence as rigorously as possible and, thereby, to express their love for the Lord with all their minds.

²A very succinct presentation can be found in Arthur F. Holmes, "The Just War" in Robert G. Clouse, ed. *War: Four Christian Views*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981, pp. 117-135. An added quality of this book is that four eminent Christian scholars present their own views and then critique the positions of their colleagues.

³ Holmes, "The Just War," pp. 120-121. Some scholars, like Yoder, *When War is Unjust*, p. 18, suggest an additional criterion: the probability of success, which requires accurate estimates prior to engaging in war. Instead of treating this as a separate criterion, we will incorporate it into the discussion of the other criteria, where appropriate.

Just Cause

Three main arguments were put forth by the Bush administration claiming that a war against Iraq had a justified cause. The first allegation was that Saddam Hussein was a terrorist with ties to the attacks carried out on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Al Qaeda on September 11, 2001. The second claim was that Hussein possessed and would use weapons of mass destruction. The third was that Hussein was a tyrant who had committed genocide and other atrocities against his own people. We will look at each of these allegations in turn.

I. The Bush administration repeatedly urged war against Iraq because Hussein was a terrorist. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 rightfully worried the U.S. public. “The war on terror” became a favorite phrase of the media. The Bush administration frequently asserted that Saddam Hussein was a key figure in world terrorism. In his oft-quoted “axis of evil” State of the Union address in January 2002, President Bush claimed that Iraq, Iran and North Korea, together with their “terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.”⁴

Top administration officials repeatedly made statements associating the Hussein regime with the September 11 attacks. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld affirmed, “There are Al Qaeda in Iraq.” National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice proclaimed, “Saddam Hussein cavorts with terrorists.” President Bush repeated the accusation: “The [Iraqi] regime has longstanding and continuing ties to terrorist organizations and there are Al Qaeda terrorists inside Iraq.” Key Democratic leaders, such as Hillary Rodham Clinton and Tom Daschle, also argued in favor of going to war against Iraq because Saddam Hussein had supposedly collaborated with Al Qaeda in the September 11 attacks.⁵

In his infamous speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier on May 1, 2003, announcing the end to major combat in Iraq, Bush continued the same argument connecting Iraq and 9/11. “**The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on Sept. 11, 2001**—and still goes on.” He then added that the victory over Iraq had “removed **an ally of Al Qaeda**”. He further expanded on the connection by saying, “With those

⁴ President Bush’s State of the Union Address, January 2002.

⁵ “Should the Senate Approve H.J. Res. 114, to Authorize the Use of Military Force Against Iraq? - PRO - Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (NY-D) *Congressional Digest*. 81, no. 10, (2002): 314 and “Should the Senate Approve H.J. Res. 114, to Authorize the Use of Military Force Against Iraq? - PRO - Sen. Tom Daschle (SD-D) *Congressional Digest*. 81, no. 10, (2002): 306-309.

attacks” on September 11, “the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got.”⁶

These statements coming out of the administration had their desired effect. A poll (taken in September, 2003) revealed that 70% of U.S. Americans believed that Saddam Hussein was involved in the September 11 attacks. When asked about that poll on the *Meet the Press* television news program, Vice President Cheney responded, “I think it’s not surprising that people make that connection.” Cheney then elaborated, “If we’re successful in Iraq... then we will have struck a major blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, **the geographical base of the terrorists who have had us under assault for many years, but most especially on 9/11.**”⁷

Reporters doggedly questioned President Bush to see if he would back up the vice president’s remarks connecting Iraq and the 9/11 attacks. Knowing that the evidence just did not exist, Bush had to back away from both Cheney’s remark and from the public perception that his own administration had cultivated. Bush finally made his confession, “**We’ve had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with Sept. 11**”.⁸

Ray McGovern, a CIA analyst with 27 years of service, expressed a common sentiment within the CIA regarding the alleged Iraq-Al Qaeda connection.

The ties with Al Qaeda was just a scare tactic to exploit the trauma, the very real trauma, that the American people have felt ever since 9/11 and to associate that trauma with Iraq. As you know from the polls, most Americans believed that Iraq had something to do with 9/11, and that was a very successful, very deliberate and **very unethical** and **immoral** operation on the part of the P.R. people of this administration.⁹

Mel Goodman, Senior CIA analyst for twenty years, expressed a similar opinion, “Iraq... was not part of the picture of terrorism before we invaded; Saddam Hussein and Bin Laden were enemies.”¹⁰

Charles Freeman, former United States ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War and with thirty years of diplomatic service concurred, “...**the war really had absolutely nothing to do with terrorism, there was**

⁶ Bob Kemper, “Bush: No Iraqi link to Sept. 11” in the *Chicago Tribune*, September 18, 2003, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War*, 2003, (video).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

no connection whatsoever between Iraq and the secular regime there and the religious fanatics who perpetrated 9/11.”¹¹

Months after President Bush admitted there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, the administration continued to circulate the claim that there was such a connection. In an interview on January 9, 2004, Vice President Cheney affirmed, “There’s overwhelming evidence there was a connection between Al Qaeda and the Iraqi government. I am very confident that there was an established relationship there.”¹² Cheney based his claim upon a document analyzed by the Department of Defense and forwarded to the Senate Intelligence Committee. What the Vice President “forgot” to mention was that the Defense Department itself had declared the document “inaccurate” when it was published.

As late as June 14, 2004 Vice President Cheney again repeated the same argument. In a speech before the James Madison Institute, Cheney affirmed, Hussein “had long established ties with Al Qaeda.”¹³ Just two days later the independent commission investigating the September 11 attacks concluded that there was “no credible evidence” that Hussein had cooperated with Al Qaeda attacks against the United States.¹⁴ Incredibly President Bush tried to defend his administration’s position as being consistent with the commission’s conclusion. “The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and al Qaeda is because there was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda but my administration never said that the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda.¹⁵” Bush’s latter affirmation clearly contradicts statements that had been previously made by top administration officials.

Followers of Jesus Christ must have a high commitment to the truth. That commitment means more than just refraining from communicating falsehoods. It also means correcting falsehoods, even when that action is not convenient to your cause. The fact that key members of the Bush administration perpetuated the alleged, but false, connection between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist attacks of September 11 orchestrated by Al Qaeda and that they voluntarily communicated nothing to correct that misunderstanding by 70% of the United States population reveals a serious lack of integrity in our highest government officials.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “Transcript of Interview with Vice President Dick Cheney,” *Rocky Mountain News*, January 9, 2004.

¹³ “Cheney Claims Ties between Saddam, Al Qaeda”

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/South/06/14/cheney.terrorism.ap/index.html>.

¹⁴ “Panel: No Iraq link to 9/11” in the *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 2004, p. 1.

¹⁵ “Bush insists that Iraq, al Qaeda had ‘relationship’” June 17, 2004,

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/06/17/Bush.alqaeda/index.html>.

II. The second allegation utilized by the Bush administration was that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and would use them against the United States and the civilized world. This claim was repeated over and over again both to the North American public and to the larger international community. Democratic leaders such as Joseph Lieberman and Hillary Clinton voiced this same allegation. It was the principal argument that Colin Powell urged before the United Nations in his attempt to gain Security Council approval for military action against Iraq.

President Bush repeatedly affirmed that Iraq was an imminent danger to our country. His critics claim that he played upon the fear of the U.S. people. For example on October 7, 2002, he stated

The danger to our country is grave. The danger to our country is growing. **The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons.** The Iraqi regime is building the facilities necessary to make more biological and chemical weapons. And according to the British government the Iraqi regime could launch a biological or chemical attack in as little as 45 minutes after the order were given... The regime is seeking a **nuclear bomb** and with feasible, fissile material could build one within a year.... Facing clear evidence of peril, **we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.**¹⁶

President Bush argued his case in his State of the Union address on January 28, 2003. He affirmed, “Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent...Saddam Hussein had material sufficient to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin, enough to subject millions of people to death by respiratory failure...the British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.”¹⁷ The claim that, between 1999 and 2001, Iraq had purchased 500 tons of uranium oxide from Niger was in fact fallacious and based upon false documents. George Tenet, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, had already protested that claim and had seen that such accusation was removed from a similar speech the president had given in Cincinnati on October 7, 2002.

¹⁶ *Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War*, 2003.

¹⁷ President Bush’s State of the Union Address, January 28, 2003.

Secretary of State Colin Powell repeated these claims when he went before the United Nations on February 5, 2003. He argued, “**Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option...** our conservative estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons of chemical weapons agent.”

Vice President Cheney affirmed on March 16, 2003, on the eve of the war, that the strongest reason for going to war was that “we believe [**Hussein**] **has**, in fact, **reconstituted nuclear weapons.**”¹⁸ His affirmation contradicted all the evidence. Just two weeks earlier the International Atomic Energy Agency had reported, “**There was no indication of resumed nuclear activities.**”¹⁹ Six months later, after the war had already been “justified” and executed, Cheney was questioned on the *Meet the Press* television program about his statement affirming that Hussein had possessed nuclear weapons on the eve of the war. He simply replied, “**I misspoke.**”²⁰

If there were doubts about Hussein’s possession of weapons of mass destruction, surely after the coalition troops took control of Iraq the truth would come to the surface. High officials of the Bush administration had repeatedly affirmed that they knew where the weapons were. Powell had shown the United Nations pictures of the buildings and mobile units where weapon production was supposedly taking place.

Donald Rumsfeld constantly repeated that he knew where the weapons were located. Just two weeks into the war he affirmed, “We know where they are. They are in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat.”²¹ As months went by, no weapons of mass destruction were found. After two months, administration spokespersons argued that more time was needed. “Come back in six months, if we haven’t found the weapons by then, there will be a credibility problem.” Six months came and went. No weapons of mass destruction were found. More than a year later, there is still a serious credibility problem.

The most conclusive and damning evidence comes not from Democrat critics but from within the Republican sphere of influence. In June 2003 the Bush administration appointed Dr. David Kay to head up the 1,200-member Iraq Survey Group to hunt for the weapons of mass destruction. After months of fruitless investigation and \$300 million of expenses, Dr. Kay resigned and admitted that United Nations inspections and Iraq’s own destruction of their

¹⁸ *Meet the Press*, NBC, March 16, 2003.

¹⁹ *The Status of Nuclear Inspections in Iraq: An Update*, March 7, 2003.

²⁰ *Meet the Press*, NBC, September 14, 2003.

²¹ *This Week with George Stephanopolous*, ABC, March 30, 2003.

weapons had left Iraq with no stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons.²² The evidence reveals that the affirmations about the weapons of mass destruction were completely false. Did the intelligence community mislead the President? Or did the President mislead the Congress and the United States public? Republican John Dean, former White House Counsel to President Nixon in the early 1970s commented on President Bush's 2003 State of the Union address and specifically his affirmations regarding the weapons of mass destruction, "Bush presented so many distorted beliefs, estimates and guesstimates that **it appears he was misleading the public and the Congress....** The most troubling thing about the fact, the distortions and the misleading statements that Bush gave Congress is that it is **a federal felony, it's a crime, to mislead and distort information to present to the Congress.**"²³ This serious accusation by a respected member of the Republican establishment is further corroborated by a classified September 2002 report issued by the Pentagon's intelligence agency in which it warned that there was "no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons".²⁴

Whether President Bush himself was misled, whether he was just careless and foolhardy, or whether he deliberately misled others, the fact of the matter is that the allegation that Hussein had great amounts of weapons of mass destruction on the eve of the war has not been verified. No weapons of mass destruction have been found. In the past year many Iraqi scientists have been interrogated, and they all confirm that there were no such weapons.²⁵ At this point in the argument the alleged sincerity of President Bush is of no importance. The degree or lack of sincerity does not change the facts of the matter. In spite of the doubts coming from the United Nations Inspection Committee and even from the United States intelligence community itself regarding the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the United States went to war based upon their supposed existence. The criterion for a just war was not fulfilled by this mistaken assumption.²⁶

²² Richard W. Stevenson, "Iraq Illicit Arms Gone before War, Departing Inspector States", *New York Times*, January 24, 2004.

²³ *Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War*, 2003.

²⁴ Defense Agency Issues Excerpt on Iraqi Chemical Warfare Program, State Department, June 7, 2003, <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/03060720.htm>.

²⁵ Six months after Saddam Hussein's capture, many higher level officials in the Bush administration continue to affirm that such weapons of mass destruction did exist at the time of the war, but have now been lost, stolen or hidden. If this belief is true, it is even more troubling, because the alleged purpose of the war (i.e. to eliminate the WMD) has not been realized. If these weapons did exist, they are now probably in the hands of terrorists. Their affirmations belie a desperation to cover the tactics that they know were dishonest.

²⁶ Even staunch U.S. allies have felt betrayed by what they now perceive as a weapons of mass destruction pretext. Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, having sent 2400 troops to Iraq, confessed, "I feel

III. The third argument is that Saddam Hussein was an evil tyrant who had committed genocide against his own people. On the surface, this claim is the strongest and seems to fit the just cause criterion. Saddam caused the killing of thousands of Iraqis. He used chemical weapons against Iran and against his own Kurdish citizens. In 1991 he invaded Kuwait. President Bush claimed, “This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children.”²⁷ President Bush was quite correct in his denunciation of Hussein’s atrocities.

Nevertheless, these accusations are seen by many Latin American Christians as **hypocrisy**. Many of the accusations of tyranny, abuse, and genocide refer to events that took place during the 1980s. In that period, the United States was supporting Saddam Hussein and Iraq in their war against Iran. The United States government, of which George Bush, Sr. was Vice President (1981-89) and President (1989-1993) respectively, knew about the “almost daily” use of chemical weapons by the Hussein regime. First, the United Nations criticized the Iraqi use of chemical weapons. Then on March 5, 1984, the Reagan administration itself issued a public condemnation of Iraq. In spite of those atrocities, the United States continued support of Hussein. “The U.S. restored formal relations with Iraq in November 1984, but the U.S. had begun, several years earlier, to provide it with intelligence and military support (in secret and contrary to this country's official neutrality) in accordance with policy directives from President Ronald Reagan.”²⁸ Shortly after the U.S. condemnation of Iraqi chemical weapons, Donald Rumsfeld himself was sent as a special envoy of the Reagan administration to improve ties with “President Saddam Hussein.”²⁹ Tariq Aziz, Iraq’s foreign minister, commented that Hussein “was extremely pleased with Ambassador Rumsfeld’s visit”.³⁰ The Reagan administration provided Iraq with combat planning assistance. Our “highly classified program involved more than 60 officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency who shared intelligence on Iranian deployments, bomb-damage assessments and other crucial information with

uncomfortable [about Iraq] due to the fact that we were misled with the information on weapons of mass destruction." "Poland 'Misled' on Iraq, President Says", *Associated Press*, March 18, 2004.

²⁷ President Bush’s State of the Union Address, January 2002.

²⁸ <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/>.

²⁹ The picture that is circulating widely these days of Donald Rumsfeld shaking hand with Saddam Hussein comes from a meeting that took place in Baghdad on December 20, 1983. See <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/> for greater details.

³⁰ Christopher Marquis, “Rumsfeld made Iraq Overture in ’84 despite Chemical Raids” in the *New York Times*, December 23, 2003.

Iraq.”³¹ Tom Blanton, executive director of the National Security Archive, made this sad (from an ethical perspective) commentary: “**Saddam had chemical weapons in the 1980s, and it didn’t make any difference to U.S. policy.... The embrace of Saddam in the 1980s and what it emboldened him to do should caution us as Americans that we have to look closely at all our murky alliances.... Shaking hands with dictators today can turn them into Saddams tomorrow.**”³²

It is generally admitted that Saddam Hussein was an evil tyrant that ruled over his own people mercilessly. Nevertheless, there are many other tyrants in our world today, some having records even worse than Hussein’s. Why did the Bush administration decide to wage war against Hussein and not against other evil tyrants? That question naturally leads into the second criterion of just intention.

Just Intention

This is one of the weakest links in the chain trying to justify the war in Iraq. As Holmes has clarified, “neither revenge nor conquest nor economic gain nor ideological supremacy are justified.” Self-defense or defense of innocent victims would have been the most justified intention. Given that the “imminent danger of weapons of mass destruction” resolution before the United Nations was not accepted, a definite change occurred in the argumentation by the Bush administration. As the bombs began to fall, the war was dubbed “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, thus pointing to a change in the attempts to justify it. The “just intention” became the “freedom of the Iraqi people” who were suffering intensely under the tyrannical Saddam Hussein. A nagging question still remained: Why Saddam and not other tyrants? Over the past decades there have been more violent, oppressive tyrants around the world. Neither George Bush, Sr. nor Bill Clinton nor George W. Bush did anything to remove the oppressors. In fact, during the presidential election campaign of 2002, George W. Bush disparaged the idea of “intervention and nation building” in other countries. He promised that under his administration the United States would be “humbler”.

By definition, “intentions” are problematical to identify with exact precision. It is difficult to examine our own hearts and intentions, much less the intentions of another. But we must not shy away from this task. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, before the war started, our Latin American sisters and brothers suggested that some of the intentions of the Bush

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

administration were not justified. They claimed that the Bush administration was more interested in Iraqi oil or regional hegemony than in the freedom of the Iraqi people. Evidence that has surfaced this past year demonstrates that our Latino brethren were right. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein had been proposed by very influential members of the present Government long before the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The self-described “neo-conservatives” (Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, etc.) had begun making the case for an American invasion of Iraq back in 1997.³³ They admitted that his removal would be necessary for the United States to have access to inexpensive oil. It was suggested that the replacement of Hussein with a “puppet president” sympathetic to the United States might even lead to the downfall of OPEC. The protection of innocent Iraqis was not a part of this argument.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has been the most outspoken member of the administration arguing for the removal of Hussein as the lynchpin for U.S. hegemony in the region. The removal of Hussein would “convince” other Arab leaders to “fall into line”. This goal of “ideological supremacy” is not acceptable according to Holmes’ description of this Just War criterion.

As René Padilla demonstrates in the following chapter, U.S. military interventions on behalf of the “freedom” of other countries have not always originated from “good intentions”. Latin America has suffered so many interventions that it rightfully questions the validity of this abused argument. The war in Iraq confirms their suspicions. Cheney and Rumsfeld had claimed that as soon as Hussein’s troops were defeated, the coalition soldiers would be hailed as “liberators”. Just two weeks before the invasion Paul Wolfowitz likened the invasion to World War II and affirmed, “Like the people of France in the 1940s, [the Iraqi people] view us as their hoped-for liberators.” In fact, those predictions and celebrations were short-lived. Although most Iraqis probably were happy to see Saddam removed, the continuing attacks upon coalition soldiers demonstrate that many Iraqis view the United States as an undesirable occupation army. Even the Iraqi Governing Council (appointed by the United States) wanted to speed up the schedule and democratization for the turnover of power. Their demand for free and direct elections was not welcomed by the United States. The Bush administration first argued for a slower, more controllable caucus process. As the occupation has become more costly and more of a political liability, the U.S. Government has become more open to a “more respectable and quicker withdrawal” of their troops.

³³ *Philly Daily News*, January 27, 2003.

The teaching in the Bible urges Christians to at least consider the possibility of economic gain as a significant, albeit frequently hidden, motivation for wars. The Apostle James is quite clear when he asks the rhetorical question, "Where do wars come from?" He himself answers that the lust for possessions and the desire to gratify one's own pleasures motivates wars.³⁴ The Apostle Paul concurs when he affirms that "the love of money is the root of all evil."³⁵ The evidence shows that economic factors were a very significant aspect of the war. After the major military fighting had been declared over, expensive contracts were granted, without bids, to certain, favored companies. The most notorious case is the \$7 billion contract granted to a Halliburton subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown & Root, in order to put out oil fires, import fuel and operate oil facilities in Iraq. This no-bid contract had been given to Halliburton even though the subsidiary had been found guilty of overcharging our own Government by millions of dollars.³⁶ The conflict of interests implicated with Vice President Cheney's previous employer could not be more obvious.³⁷

In addition, the economic benefits promised as rewards of this war have not yet materialized, and the costs of the war were either grossly underestimated or deliberately misleading. The United States public was told that spending on Iraq would not be high because Iraqi oil production would essentially pay for the proposed war and for the later reconstruction.³⁸ That

³⁴ James 4:1-3.

³⁵ I Timothy 6:10.

³⁶ In 2002 Brown & Root had paid \$2 million to settle a criminal charge for overbilling the government. Letter from Rep. Henry Waxman and Rep. John Dingell to OMB Director Joshua Bolton, October 15, 2003. The overcharging continued in Iraq. "Jeffrey Jones, the Director of the Defense Energy Support Center (DESC), told minority staff of the House Government Reform Committee that it costs the DESC \$1.08 to \$1.19 to buy and import fuel via truck into Iraq—a price that's less than half the \$2.65 Halliburton is charging the US government." Letter from Rep. Henry Waxman and Rep. John Dingell to Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, November 5, 2003. At White House insistence, the \$87 billion emergency funding request had a measure removed that would have punished those who deliberately defrauded the United States with up to 20 years of prison.

³⁷ Vice President Dick Cheney had been the CEO of Halliburton up until 2000. On Sept. 14, 2003 Cheney affirmed on the NBC News program "Meet the Press" that "Since I left Halliburton to become George Bush's vice president, I've severed all my ties with the company, gotten rid of all my financial interest. I have no financial interest in Halliburton of any kind and haven't had, now, for over three years." Nevertheless, the Congressional Research Service ruled that Cheney did indeed have "a continuing financial interest" in Halliburton as demonstrated by his 2001 deferred salary of \$205,298, his 2002 salary of \$162,392, and his 433,333 shares of stock in the company. "Cheney may still have Halliburton ties" <http://money.cnn.com/2003/09/25/news/companies/cheney/?cnn=yes>.

³⁸ In March, as the war began, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz claimed revenues of \$50-\$100 billion from Iraqi oil could be expected within two to three years, declaring, "To assume that we're going to pay for it is just wrong... We are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon." "Rebuilding Costs to Be Shared; Rumsfeld tells Congress that taxpayers will get help from oil revenue, international donations," *LA Times*, March 28, 2003, p. 12. This rosy prediction was in direct contrast with the explanation given by George W. Bush's father for why he had not pursued the elimination of Hussein at the end

prediction was either a gross underestimate or a deliberate falsification. When White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey estimated that the Iraq intervention could cost up to \$200 billion, he was summarily fired for his “whistle blowing” candor. On October 4, 2002, Glen Hubbard, the President’s top economist claimed that “costs of any such intervention would be very small”.³⁹ Four months later, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz “dismissed articles in several newspapers asserting that put the cost of war and reconstruction at \$60 billion to \$95 billion” for their excessive exaggeration of the figures.⁴⁰ On April 23, 2003, President Bush’s top reconstruction official at the State Department told *Nightline* that “The American part of [reconstruction] will be \$1.7 billion and we have no plans for further-on funding for this.”⁴¹ Just six weeks after announcing that “we don’t anticipate requesting anything additional for the balance of this year”, on September 7, 2003, President Bush asked Congress for an additional \$87 billion pushing the total cost to **\$166 billion**.⁴² According to the non-partisan Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the President would have to request another \$50 billion but for political reasons would delay it until after the November 2, 2004, presidential elections. That postponement was not feasible. On May 5, 2004, President Bush was forced to propose to Congress a request for another \$25 billion to cover military operations, thus upping the total cost to **\$191 billion**.⁴³

The intentions suggested for going to war have been found to be deficient. Self-defense was not valid because Hussein did not collaborate in the 9/11 attacks. Protecting the world from Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction might have been the sincere intent of the Bush administration, but the absence of WMD makes this goal suspect. The intention to make Iraq into a democracy and thus lead to a new era United States hegemony and political stability in the Middle East was overly optimistic and lacked a sufficiently solid understanding of Arab religion and culture. Perhaps the desire for cheap oil was not the primary intention for going to war. Nevertheless, the fact that

of the Gulf War in 1991. “Trying to eliminate Saddam...would have incurred incalculable human and political costs.... We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq.... There was no viable ‘exit strategy’ we could see, violating another of our principles.... Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations’ mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish. Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. It would have been a dramatically different—and perhaps barren—outcome.” George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*. New York: Knopf, 1998, p. 489.

³⁹ CNBC, October 4, 2002.

⁴⁰ “Pentagon Contradicts General on Iraq Occupation Force’s Size”, *New York Times*, February 28, 2003.

⁴¹ “Assistance for Iraq”, *Nightline*, April 23, 2003.

⁴² Presidential Address, September 7, 2003.

⁴³ “\$25b sought for Iraq, Afghanistan”, *The Boston Globe*, May 6, 2004.

estimated revenues from oil production were definitely considered in the anticipated costs of the war leads to the conclusion that this intention did play a role in the war plans and was not justified.

Last Resort

On various occasions President Bush recognized the validity of the “Last Resort” criterion and claimed that it had been more than fulfilled. He repeatedly stated his position, **“I’m reluctant to use military power. It’s the last choice; it’s not our first choice.”**⁴⁴ On the eve of the invasion the President affirmed, “The American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war.”⁴⁵ Many citizens of the United States believe that our country is the “reluctant warrior” who only goes into battle after all other options have been exhausted.

Towards the end of 2002 and during the first months of 2003 President Bush claimed that he was still seeking a diplomatic solution and wanted to avoid war: “I hope this will not require military action”.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, other evidence suggests that the administration had already decided to go to war against Iraq even as it continued to talk about peace. In fact, the invasion of Iraq had been suggested by the Neo-Conservatives years before, and there were just waiting for a pretext to implement their plan. The attacks on September 11, 2001, became the perfect motive. The very next day in the situation room of the White House, Rumsfeld asked the question, **“Shouldn’t we use this as an opportunity to do something about Iraq as well?”**⁴⁷ This question of doing “something about Iraq” was raised even though Vice President Dick Cheney admitted five days later that there was no evidence of Iraq’s involvement in the terrorist attacks of September 11,⁴⁸ a position he soon altered, as we have discussed. Within the administration there were disagreements on strategy, but waging war on Saddam was never really in doubt. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz stated that, despite having no immediate reason for overthrowing Saddam, “the disagreement [in the weekend after 9/11/01] was whether [invading Iraq] should be in the immediate response or whether you should concentrate simply on Afghanistan first.”⁴⁹ In March of 2002 President Bush told a group of senators, **“[expletive] Saddam. We’re taking him out.”**⁵⁰ Vice President Cheney gave senators the

⁴⁴ Presidential Press Conference, December 16, 2003

⁴⁵ Presidential Speech, March 17, 2003.

⁴⁶ Presidential Speech, October 7, 2002.

⁴⁷ Bill Christison in *Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War*, 2003.

⁴⁸ “Meet the Press” NBC, September 16, 2001.

⁴⁹ Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with Vanity Fair’s Sam Tannenhaus, *DefenseLink*, May 9, 2003.

⁵⁰ “We’re Taking Him Out”, Time.com, May 5, 2002.

same message, “**The question was no longer if the U.S. would attack Iraq.... The only question was when.**”⁵¹ The revelation of these declarations from the spring of 2002 makes later affirmations of a willingness to pursue diplomatic solutions sound very hypocritical indeed.

The world community urged Bush to walk the extra mile. After Secretary of State Powell made his argument before the United Nations, key members of the Security Council proposed a counter resolution asking for a few more weeks of investigation and negotiation. Bush refused to do so, even though he would have obtained the “super majority” vote required on the Security Council. The evidence suggests that the administration had already decided to go to war against Iraq even as it continued to talk about peace. Chief United Nations inspector in Iraq, Hans Blix offered his opinion which is widely shared by the international community, “I still thought that three and a half months for new inspections was a rather short time...especially now that the U.S. government is now saying you have to have a bit of patience, you know these things take time.”⁵²

Formal Declaration

This rule states that because the use of military force is the prerogative of governments, not of private individuals, a state of war must be officially declared by the highest authorities. This criterion has been understood as the prerogative of national governments or of international bodies. The formal declaration must be linked to the “just cause” that is articulated. If Saddam Hussein had been involved in the 9/11 attacks, then the United States Government through its Congress would have been the appropriate body to declare war upon Iraq. That was not the case.

The events leading up to the war in Iraq demonstrate that the United Nations was the most appropriate authority to declare war. The United Nations exercised the sanctions against Iraq after the first Gulf War. These included the limits on exportations of oil for food as well as limits on arms.

The Bush administration recognized, in theory, the authority of the United Nations. On September 12, 2002, President Bush himself addressed the United Nations General Assembly. He then sent Secretary of State Colin Powell to address the UN in an attempt to persuade the Security Council to declare war. Then the Bush proposal was drafted and circulated among the Security Council members by Spain and England. For the proposal to be accepted, nine of the fifteen members, the so-called “Super Majority” needed

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War*, 2003.

to approve it. Early on, it was clear that the United States, Great Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria would vote in favor of the proposal. It was also clear that Russia, France, and China would vote against it. That left the decision in the hands of the swing members. The two Latin American member states, Chile and Mexico, opposed the resolution. Much pressure, totally unrelated to the merits of the proposed war on Iraq, was applied to these countries to persuade them. For example, Mexico's President Fox was promised changes on immigration laws regarding Mexicans entering the United States. The Bush administration threatened that the free trade agreement with Chile would be in danger unless Chile voted in favor the resolution. Chile opposed the war resolution and the trade agreement was, in fact, postponed.

In spite of the arguments put forth by Powell and in spite of the “strong arm” tactics that the United States pursued to obtain the necessary nine votes on the Security Council, the United States was not able to obtain the United Nations' authorization. Unable to garner the necessary votes, the United States withdrew its proposal and launched its own military attack. **It is precisely at this point that the war on Iraq clearly did not meet the formal declaration criterion for a just war, because the United Nations did not approve the resolution.**

It is here that Just War Christians must be honest with their own principles if they are to be taken seriously. In his justification of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, George Weigel affirmed that the 1991 Gulf War did meet this criterion precisely because the United Nations had authorized it.⁵³ The 2003 war in Iraq did not meet this criterion. Given that the resolution proposed before the United Nations argued that Saddam Hussein had (and would use) weapons of massive destruction and given the fact that no weapons have been found more than one year after the invasion, it must be concluded that **the United Nations was morally right to reject the resolution.**⁵⁴

At a lower level, the “formal declaration” rule was treated within the United States Government. According to the United States Constitution, **only**

⁵³ George Weigel, “From Last Resort to Endgame: Morality, the Gulf War, and the Peace Process” in David E. Decosse, ed. *But Was It Just? Reflections on the Morality of the Persian Gulf War*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 22. Regarding the 1991 Persian Gulf War Weigel claimed that “the use of armed force by the coalition led by the United States was authorized by a resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations. At every significant decision point between August 2, 1990, and February 28, 1991, the United States engaged in extensive consultations with its principal allies, including major Arab states. In short, the Gulf War was authorized, not just once, but in a continuing process of international agreement, by all the relevant ‘competent authorities’.”

⁵⁴ It is here that I am personally saddened by the actions of many of my fellow Christians. Instead of ridiculing the French and others for their “lack of backbone”, Christians who supported the war for the wrong reasons should admit that they were misled by our own government. Consequently, they should ask the tough questions of our government leaders rather than sweeping the dirt under the rug.

Congress has the power to declare war on a foreign country. Nevertheless, President Bush wanted sweeping powers to be given to the executive branch. As a result, the White House sent a “discussion draft” resolution to Capitol Hill in September, 2002. It was really a “blank check” to do whatever was necessary in Iraq and in the “region”. Whereas Bush was seeking a more limited objective from the United Nations (the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction), he desired more ambitious powers (total regime change in Iraq) from the United States Congress. Most Republicans and Democrats alike cowardly abandoned their constitutional responsibilities and granted the President these extraordinary powers.

Veteran West Virginia Democrat Senator Robert Byrd, an expert on congressional legal issues, was one of the lonely, prophetic voices that questioned this procedure. He lamented:

Our Senate was, for the most part, silent—dreadfully silent. There is no debate, no discussion, no attempt to lay out for the nation the pros and cons of this particular war. There is nothing. This nation is about to embark on the first test of a revolutionary doctrine applied in an extraordinary way at an unfortunate time. **The doctrine of pre-emption—the idea that the United States or any other nation can legitimately attack a nation that is not imminently threatening but may be threatening in the future—is a radical new twist on the traditional idea of self-defense.** In pursuit of this doctrine, the administration has split traditional alliances, possibly crippling for all time international order-keeping entities like the United Nations and NATO. This administration has called into question the traditional worldwide perception of the United States as well-intentioned, peacekeeper. This administration has turned the patient art of diplomacy into threats, labeling and name-calling... Calling heads of state ‘pygmies,’ labeling whole countries as evil, denigrating powerful European allies as irrelevant—these types of insensitivities can do our great nation no good. Yet, this chamber is hauntingly silent.... We are truly ‘sleepwalking through history’.⁵⁵

Senator Byrd rightfully points out that not only did the administration fail to meet the criterion of formal declaration it also weakened the authority, and

⁵⁵ Doug Cassel, “The Irresponsible Nation: U.S. has blown up rule of law and order”, *The Chicago Tribune*, March 23, 2003. Cassel’s opinion is important because he is the Director of the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University’s School of Law and because Christian convictions underlie his arguments.

therefore the ability, of the United Nations to mediate in other locations in the future.

There were other prophetic voices that rose up to challenge this maneuver. Ray McGovern, a CIA analyst with 27 years of experience, rightfully unmasks the deception that was utilized: “Weapons of mass destruction was a convenient way of tricking our Congress into giving the President authority to wage this war.”

Insert here quote by Billy Graham

Limited Objectives

According to Holmes, the criterion of limited objectives means that “if the purpose is peace, then unconditional surrender or the destruction of a nation’s economic or political institutions is an unwarranted objective.”⁵⁶ Therefore, it is questionable whether the war in Iraq met this condition. If the objective was to eliminate Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction, then that had apparently taken place years before the war broke out. Saddam’s cat and mouse games with the United Nations inspectors might reveal his own stupidity or a tactical bluff. Nevertheless, the fact that Hans Blix and his inspectors had not found weapons in more than three months of fairly unrestricted searches did not justify an invasion of Iraq. The Security Council acted correctly in rejecting the resolution.

Regime change, by itself, is not a valid objective. Was regime change necessary to achieve *freedom* and *democracy* for the Iraqi people? Possibly. Was the destruction of Iraq’s economic and political institutions (ex. the Iraqi police force) warranted? No. Even the Bush administration has admitted this mistake. The destruction of the Iraqi police force led to greater looting, unrest, and violence, transforming the reconstruction process into a prolonged, costly and violent occupation. Billions of dollars are being invested in the reconstruction of Iraq’s infrastructure. To his credit, Bush pressured his own Republican congressional representatives to not make this “assistance” to Iraq in the form of a loan that would need to be repaid. Nevertheless, attempts to rebuild Iraq’s schools, police force, health and educational services, etc. have been met with substantial opposition by Iraqis who perceive the coalition forces not as liberators but as foreign occupiers. Because the administration underestimated the breadth of Iraqi opposition to their attempts at reconstruction, it is still questionable whether the objectives of freedom and democracy will be realized.

⁵⁶ Holmes, “The Just War,” p. 121.

Proportionate Means

Whether the war in Iraq fulfilled this criterion is debatable. In Holmes' terms "the weaponry and the force used should be limited to what is needed to repel the aggression and deter future attacks, that is to say, to secure a just peace. Total or unlimited war is ruled out."⁵⁷ Were the indiscriminant "shock and awe" bombings excessive? Yes. On the other hand, did the coalition soldiers demonstrate restraint in their military actions? On many occasions, yes, they did. Stories abound of the numerous kind acts performed by coalition soldiers on behalf of Iraqis.

One of the most questionable practices has to do with the treatment of prisoners. In May 2004 pictures leaked out to the press of the abuses that took place in the Abu Ghraib prison. Torture, sexual humiliation, sleep deprivation and vicious dogs were part of the treatment used against Iraqi prisoners of war in order to gain information from them. Debate rages on how widespread these abuses were. The administration claims that those who performed these actions were just "a few bad apples". The administration's critics believe that the abuses were more widespread. The soldiers guilty of these abuses claim that they were acting upon orders from their superiors. Although at the time of writing the final findings have not yet come out there are some troublesome signs at a wider level. The administration did not extend the Geneva Conventions rights of prisoners of war to those in prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, by classifying them as "enemy combatants".⁵⁸ There are indications that the prisoners in the Iraqi prisons, including those at Abu Ghraib, were also not completely protected by the Geneva Conventions, especially after Major General Geoffrey Miller, in command of the detention facility in Guantanamo, visited the Iraqi prisons in August, 2003, and made recommendations to obtain information. Some of the harshest criticism has arisen from the Republican ranks. "Over time, we will find that this was not just rogue MP behavior," affirmed Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican on the Armed Services Committee. "How could we let this prison melt down and become the worst excuse for a military organization I've seen in my life?"⁵⁹

An unclassified 2002 Justice Department memorandum was sent to the White House that described legal justifications for torture.⁶⁰ Additional

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Although it is well known that suspected jihadists are detained in Guantanamo prison, it is not so widely known that the United States operates a half-dozen others in Jordan, Afghanistan, and on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Even allied governments, such as Indonesia, have been refused access to their own citizens in these prisons. "Inside the Iraq Prison Scandal" *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 2004, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24867-2004Jun8.html>

memoranda written by lawyers within the Defense Department and other agencies argued that “inflicting pain in interrogating people detained in the fight against terrorism did not always constitute torture” and that “President Bush was not bound by either an international treaty prohibiting torture or by a federal anti-torture law.”⁶¹

On this issue of abuse, the conservative evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* took a clear stand. Based upon the theologies of Augustine and Luther, Steven Gertz wrote that American soldiers “at Abu Ghraib failed on at least two accounts—working counter to the purpose of peace, and if some reports are true, failing to disobey orders that no Christian could in good conscience follow.”⁶² The article went on to affirm that Christians need to protest the abuse of power. It then praised the work of “the *Christian Peacemaker Teams*’ presence in Iraq, calling commanders of military bases to account for injustice done to prisoners, attempting to help Iraqis gain access to family and friends imprisoned in Abu Ghraib, and urging police to cajole Army officers into acting on the abuses.”⁶³ Gertz ended his article with an exhortation to Christians.

Let’s rightly react with revulsion when we see these pictures and call for an accounting for the crimes committed. But let’s also recognize the evil nature in ourselves, and out of this recognition, cheer on the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams and others seeking to counter the evil done by Christians who have failed to live up to their calling. May God have mercy on us and the guards and the prisoners of Abu Ghraib.⁶⁴

Noncombatant Immunity

Holmes explains this criterion as follows: “Since war is an official act of government, only those who are officially agents of government may fight, and individuals not actively contributing to the conflict (including POWs and casualties as well as civilian nonparticipants) should be immune from attack.”⁶⁵ In the war in Iraq did civilians receive the immunity required? There is evidence on both sides of this debate.

⁶¹ Neil A. Lewis, “Bush Didn’t Order any Breach of Torture Laws, Ashcroft Says” *The New York Times*, June 9, 2004.

⁶² Steven Gertz, “I Was in Prison and You Abused Me: What would Jesus do at Abu Ghraib?” at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/121/53.0.html>

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Holmes, “The Just War,” p. 121.

On the one hand, much was made of the coalition's "smart bombs". A week and a half into the invasion, Rumsfeld boasted: "Our military capabilities are so devastating and precise that we can destroy an Iraqi tank under a bridge without damaging the bridge. We do not need to kill thousands of innocent Iraqis to remove Saddam Hussein from power."⁶⁶ These technological wonders could pinpoint their targets and thereby reduce the "collateral damage", that is, the deaths and injuries that were unintentional consequences of the bombs. Were these bombings a moral improvement on the indiscriminant air bombings of World War II? Of course they were. Did these smart bombs meet the criteria's standards? Probably not, because many of these "smart" bombs produced exploding shrapnel that did in fact kill innocent civilians. Other bombs were "mistakenly" dropped upon wedding parties or other cultural gatherings that had nothing to do with the opposition fighters. According to the organization *Iraq Body Count*, as of June, 21, 2004, a minimum of 9,436 civilians (and perhaps up to 11,317 civilians) were killed in the military intervention in Iraq.⁶⁷

Conclusion

The criteria of Just War Theory, if applied faithfully, are high standards to meet...and rightfully so. If we are to suspend such commands in Scripture as "Thou shalt not kill", "Turn the other cheek" and "Love your enemies", we must have clear and powerful overriding arguments. Christians who believe in Just War Theory must be rigorous in the application of those criteria if they want to be taken seriously.

We believe that the war in Iraq failed to satisfy the criteria of a Just War and most grievously the first four criteria. Because all seven criteria must be fulfilled for a war to be considered "justified" we believe that this war failed to satisfy the necessary conditions. Sincere Christians might disagree with us on some of our evaluations. We welcome further discussion by our brothers and sisters in Christ as we together strive to walk more faithfully in the steps of the Prince of Peace.

⁶⁶ Derrick A. Jackson, "Bush Speech Spins the Winds of War" in the *Chicago Tribune*, June 7, 2004, p.21.

⁶⁷ <http://iraqbodycount.net/>