

~~LIFE AND PEACE~~  
~~CHRISTIAN WORLD CONFERENCE~~

*Life & Peace:*

SOME MORAL AND ETHICAL AFFIRMATIONS ABOUT PEACE TODAY

(Paulos Mar Gregorios)

1:1 Preamble: For Christians, moral choices are choices, not commanded by law, but discerned by the Spirit. In a fallen world, there are few choices between absolute good and absolute evil. We live in a world where the wheat and the tares grow together. All good here, except for Jesus Christ himself, is mixed with evil, as far as Christians can understand. But they are real choices, some decisive.

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1:2

There is <sup>legitimate</sup> no way to proceed directly from a biblical injunction to a moral choice. Decisions have to be made, especially in issues that affect the destiny of many, through a process of reflection and decision, assisted by the Spirit of God, but also based on our understanding of God's purposes and of human vocation and destiny.

1:3

But the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church in general give some pointers and guidelines. For example, faith, love and hope are important principles for a good human existence in history. Distrust, hatred and despair have therefore negative values. Truth is all important. So falsehood and deceit are to be abjured. <sup>Repentance and self-criticism are of the essence of the Christian faith. This must apply at national level also.</sup>

1:4

In the teachings of Christ, as recorded in the Scriptures, there are some clear guidelines for conduct. For example, Jesus Christ said: Blessed are the peacemakers. He told his disciples to love their enemies, to bless them that curse, to forgive seventy times seven.

1:5

Jesus also taught "Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self" (Mt. 16:25 NEB). We must discern the meaning of such teaching for international life as well. "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you" (Mt. 7:12 NEB). "Do not be anxious". "The least among you all, he is the greatest" (Lk. 9:48b NEB). "Beware! Be on your guard against greed of every kind, for even when a man has more than enough, his wealth does not give him life" (Lk. 12:15 NEB) "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk. 14:11). These teachings are not without relevance to international relations.

1:6

Christians recognise that peace among nations is not identical with the peace which Christ gives. But the two cannot be totally unrelated either. Nations living together in peace and mutually beneficial collaboration would be far ~~more~~ closer to the ideal of the Kingdom of God than nations at war tearing at each other and scaring everyone. Christian choices have always to be for alternatives which more clearly manifest the Kingdom of God in history. It becomes therefore a duty of all Christians to work for peace and not to be complacent about war; to work for justice and not to take injustice as something inescapable.

1:7

Christians ~~can and~~ <sup>should</sup> state moral affirmations in language which is not theological, in order to promote discussion among all people. Different religions and ideologies may seek differing justifications within their own traditions for these ~~common~~ affirmations. Both the common affirmations and their differing justifications are important.

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2:1

All war is culpable, and cannot be morally justified. Some would argue that a war in self-defense is less culpable than a war of aggression, conventional war less than nuclear war. No war, defensive or offensive, conventional or nuclear, can be ultimately justified; circumstances may mitigate the degree of blame; some means of war are more anti-human than others; but no war is good.

2:2

Nuclear war is totally anti-human; it is to be unequivocally condemned. The extreme gruesomeness of the kind of death and the damage to human beings, the defencelessness of the non-belligerent and the innocent; the scale of destruction and the damage to the ecosphere and the future generations, as well as the risk of total destruction of life itself on this planet are some of the factors that make nuclear war different from conventional war as we have known it in the past.

2:3

It is <sup>the</sup> a crime against humanity to research and develop, test, manufacture, buy or sell, ~~manufacture~~ acquire or transfer, stockpile or deploy, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons of any kind. There should be an international judiciary, legislature and executive to implement this prohibition.

2:4

The existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons are also an affront to human freedom and dignity. They should be totally eliminated, without risk to the ecosphere and to humanity. The peoples of the world must press their governments to implement such elimination without delay; all legitimate forms of pressure should be used; people should also consider whether threats of non-violent revolt should also be used.

1:1 Christians should pray fervently that the leaders of the nations will be persuaded by the Spirit of God to pursue peace and not war; they should persist in such prayer, even when many national leaders adamantly refuse to yield to public pressure. Christians should combat the fatalism and despair that often follows the failure of demonstrations to achieve any progress in disarmament. Fatalism and resignation are the enemies of peace and justice. Hope is what Christians should foster. Prayer with faith, love and hope is the most powerful instrument ~~the~~ Christians have in their arsenal.

3:2 Christians are law-abiding citizens; it is their civic duty to use all the legitimate ways in which a government can be made to take the right decisions in matters of peace and justice; they cannot stand off, disclaiming responsibility for the way nations handle their affairs. Too many Christians think that political actions are unrelated to their Christian obedience. The churches should intensify their teaching about the civic responsibilities of Christians.

3:3 The question should now be taken up in the churches, especially in nuclear nations, but not only there, whether Christians should use non-violent non-co-operation with governments not taking bold and imaginative steps towards disarmament; ~~like~~ non-payment of taxes, courting of imprisonment, refusal of military service, and facing death wherever necessary. The Christian witness should not be confined to words and demonstrations. The injunction to lay down one's life for Christ's sake has its special relevance in a world where governments stubbornly refuse to serve the interests of peace and justice. The time has come for Christian witness (marturia) to be through mart yrdom again. *It is not enough for Christians to keep on giving "reasonable advice" to heads of governments, at little cost to themselves.*

4:1 Christians should also condemn in no uncertain terms research and development, production and stockpiling, use or threat to use, ~~in the case of~~ climatological, chemical and ~~biological~~ biological weapons and delivery systems. This is an urgent need. There is a growing sentiment in military circles that nuclear weapons would soon be forbidden, and hence a hasty effort to develop and stockpile non-nuclear weapons with great capacity for mass destruction. There is a particular urgency for Christians to familiarise themselves with new developments in non-nuclear weapons of inhuman mass destruction.

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5:1 Some argue that nuclear defence is more economical than conventional defence, both in terms of personnel and resources. This ~~may~~ may not be true. It is imperative, at this juncture of history however, to condemn as evil the enormous amounts, 12 digit figures in U.S.dollars, being spent on armaments and military forces, when half