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What the Church Should Be Saying about War and Foreign Policy

by Laurence M. Vance

The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2007 conference, "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.

Jacob Hornberger: Laurence Vance holds degrees in History, Theology, Accounting, and Economics. The author of many articles in both secular and religious publications, he has written and published seven books, including *Christianity and War and Other Essays Against the Warfare State*. He is an adjunct instructor in Accounting at Pensacola Junior College in Pensacola, Florida. Some of Laurence's articles are on our Web site. He's contributed to the Future of Freedom Foundation but most of his articles are on lewrockwell.com and I really recommend them to you, especially if you're interested in the religious aspects of the war in Iraq and foreign policy in general. This man is just doing absolutely fantastic work in this area. I mean, he's challenging Christians with their own principles with respect to the Iraq War and foreign policy, and he's paid a personal price for that in his own church groups, among his own associates. It's very, very admirable how he has just stuck straight to his principles, especially as a devout Christian. The title of Laurence's talk is "What the Church Should Be Saying About War and Foreign Policy." Laurence Vance.

Laurence Vance: It is fitting that today is a Sunday because I would like to speak this afternoon about what the church should be saying about war and foreign policy. This war, like all of the other foreign wars the United States has been involved in, is a consequence of our intervention as foreign policy. Although the foreign policy of the current administration has been referred to as the Bush Doctrine and "This Great Mission," it is not much different from the foreign policy of most previous administrations. Gunboat Diplomacy may have given way to Cowboy Diplomacy, but U.S. foreign policy is still aggressive, reckless, belligerent, and meddling. The history of U.S. foreign policy is the history of jajmani, nation building, regime change, and jingoism. In a word, it is a history of interventionism with its stepchildren: imperialism and empire.

Although Donald Rumsfeld claims that we don't seek empires and we're not imperialistic, I don't hesitate to use the terms. Not only did the 9/11 Commission Report conclude that the American homeland is the planet, it referred to the Department of Defense as the behemoth among federal agencies with an annual budget larger than the gross domestic product of Russia-- it is an empire. The extent of the U.S. global empire is almost incalculable. The Department of Defense's base structure report states that the Department's physical assets consist of more than 600,000 individual buildings and structures at more than 6,000 locations on more than 30 million acres. There are over 700 U.S. military bases on foreign soil. There are U.S. troops stationed in 159 different regions of the world in every corner of the globe. There are 285,000 U.S. troops stationed in foreign countries, not counting the 200,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are 100,000 U.S. soldiers in Europe to face a nonexistent Soviet Union.

The United States has commitments to provide security to over 35 countries. The United States still maintains 64,000 troops in Germany, 33,000 troops in Japan, and 10,000 troops in Italy, 60 years after World War II. We have, in fact, never stopped mobilizing for war since World War II, manufacturing enemies where we could find none. In addition to military personnel, the Department of Defense employs 675,000 people worldwide, including thousands of foreign nationals. But instead of all this being an example of imperialism and empire, we are told by neoconservative intellectuals that the United States is merely exercising benevolent jajmani. Because the United States seems to have none of the benefits of an empire but all of its drawbacks, some imperialists, those who believe that it is in the national interest of the United States to intervene in conflicts around the globe, attempt to control foreign governments and spread our political and economic systems to other countries by force. They argue that we are not an empire because we haven't annexed any country's soil in over 100 years.

But America's unprecedented global empire of troops, bases, and ships clearly says otherwise. We may not be an empire in name but we are an empire in denial. A noted British historian has remarked that the greatest empire of modern times has come into existence without the American people even noticing. Well, some of us have noticed and we don't like what we see. Besides the obvious, an empire of troops, bases, and ships, we see an empire of influence, domination, and occupation. We see an empire maintained by bribes, threats, and coercion. We see an empire sustained by nationalism, militarism, and jingoism. America spends more on defense than the next 12 countries combined. This can't be because we have more people. China and India have a greater population. Or because we have a larger land area to protect. Russia and Canada have more territory. With an official budget for fiscal year 2008 that is over \$538 billion, Pentagon spending accounts for about 40 percent of total world military spending, yet economist Robert Higgs has estimated that the true amount spent by the United States on defense will actually top \$1 trillion for the first time in history.

This means that defense-related spending will account for about one-third of the total federal budget. But some would say that is a small price to pay for our security. This is a dangerous

world we live in. The United States faces a variety of threats from terrorists and rogue nations. There is no price too high to pay for our security. There is no disputing that there are a number of countries in the world that hate the United States, and that number would be even higher if we turned off the foreign aid.

But instead of reserving to ourselves the right of preemptive strikes and saying of potential foreign aggressors, like President Bush did, "Bring them on," shouldn't we be asking some serious questions about our foreign policy? Why do they hate us? Why do they burn our flag? Why do they demonstrate against us? Why did they bomb our embassies? Why did they try to blow up one of our ships? Why did they take out the Twin Towers? I think we will find that in most cases the answer is because of our foreign policy.

Many Americans have begun to wonder why if the mission of the Department of Defense is to defend the country that we need a Department of Homeland Security. The truth of the matter is that the Department of Defense, which couldn't defend its own headquarters, is misnamed. Rather than guarding our borders, patrolling our coast, and protecting our citizens, the DOD is focused on invading the next country and fighting the next foreign war. Foreign military bases are for offensive military actions, not defensive ones, and likewise for the stationing abroad of thousands of military troops.

There is no better example, of course, of the true mission of the Department of Defense than the current war in Iraq, an unconstitutional, unnecessary, immoral, senseless, and unjust war if there ever were one. It is unconstitutional because only Congress has the authority to declare war. It is unnecessary because Iraq was no threat to the United States. It is immoral because it was based on lies. It is unjust because it is not defensive. It is senseless because 3,400 U.S. soldiers have died in vain. The war in Iraq is also terribly expensive, costing the American taxpayers over \$200 million a day. The final cost of the war is projected to be as high as \$2 trillion. That is a far cry from the \$50 billion that then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said the war would cost.

So rather than America's military heritage being one of how the military has defended the country from attack, it is instead one of invasion, destabilization, occupation, subjugation, oppression, death, and destruction. Instead of the U.S. military defending our freedoms, the military has been at once the world's policeman, fireman, social worker, bully, and busybody. Rather than the presence of the U.S. military guaranteeing peace and stability throughout the world, the presence of the U.S. military, more often than not, is the cause of war and instability around the globe. Instead of existing to defend the country, U.S. troops exist to serve as the President's personal attack force, ready to obey his latest command, to deploy to any country for any reason.

Yet, after the historical record has been laid bare, some people just don't get it. After the United States invaded Mexico under false pretenses, after we helped to overthrow the existing monarchy in Hawaii, after we seized Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam from Spain during the Spanish-American War, after the United States intervened militarily in Nicaragua, Panama, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Korea, Cuba, China, and Mexico before World War I, after we sent troops to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Russia, Panama, Honduras, Yugoslavia, Guatemala, Turkey, and China between the World Wars, after we engaged in 100 additional military actions following World War II, after all this some people still can't see or perhaps don't want to see the insidious nature of U.S. foreign policy.

Writing in the *Weekly Standard* in 2001 soon after the September 11th attacks, neoconservative Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Senior Fellow Max Boot maintained that rather than the attack being a payback for American imperialism, it was a result of insufficient American involvement and ambition. The solution is to be more expansive in our goals and more assertive in their implementation. Contrast this with the opinion of Chalmers Johnson, who has written a trilogy of books on the true nature of U.S. foreign policy. The suicidal assassins of September 11, 2001, did not attack America as political leaders and news media in the United States have tried to maintain. They attacked American foreign policy. The world doesn't hate us for our wealth, our freedoms, and our culture. It hates us for our foreign policy.

Although militant Islamists may want to convert Americans to Islam, outlaw pornography, jail homosexuals, ban alcohol, cover up women's midriffs, and clean up our decadent culture, they have consistently maintained and demonstrated that it is the U.S. presence in the Middle East, blanket support for Israel, years of aggression against Iraq, and support for corrupt Arab governments for which they are willing to resort to terrorist attacks. Terrorist attacks against the West are political in nature, not cultural or religious.

Max Boot has further said that U.S. imperialism has been the greatest force for good in the world during the past century. This thinking has even pervaded the highest office in the land. Echoing the inscription on the Liberty Bell, President Bush closed his second inaugural address with the statement that America, in this young century, proclaims liberty throughout the world and to all the inhabitants thereof. But rather than receiving a proclamation of liberty, what many people in foreign countries receive instead are threats, bombs, and bullets. It is no wonder former U.S. Attorney General William Ramsey Clark has said that the greatest crime since World War II has been U.S. foreign policy, and Murray Rothbard, who was at once the 20th century's greatest proponent of liberty and opponent of the state, was perfectly justified in saying that empirically, taking the 20th century as a whole, the single most warlike, most interventionist, most imperialist government has been that of the United States.

From a Christian perspective, there is only one way to describe U.S. foreign policy. It is evil. It was evil before the United States invaded Iraq, and it would still be evil if the United States withdrew all its forces from Iraq tomorrow. It is because of our foreign policy that the U.S. military has become, through its wars, interventions, and occupations, the greatest force for evil in the world. U.S. foreign policy sows discord among nations, stirs up strife where none existed, intensifies the hatred that many foreigners around the world have for Americans and each other, and creates terrorists faster than we can kill them.

The United States has pressured, destabilized, undermined, manipulated, and overthrown governments, including democracies. We have assassinated or attempted to assassinate foreign leaders. We have destroyed industry, culture, and infrastructure. We have helped install autocrats and dictators. We have sponsored regime changes in countries that no longer favored U.S. corporate interests. We have backed and engineered military coups. We have been involved with torturers, death squads, drug traffickers, and other unsavory persons. We have allied ourselves with murderous regimes. We have downplayed massive numbers of civilian casualties by dismissing them as collateral damage. We have labeled violence perpetrated by our opponents as terrorism, atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, while minimizing or defending the same actions committed by the United States or its allies.

We have engaged in thousands of covert actions. We have undertaken massive propaganda campaigns to deceive foreigners about their own country. We have kidnapped foreign citizens in their own country. We have transported insurgents and detainees to torture-friendly countries. We have looted and confiscated government documents from foreign countries. We have selectively intervened in countries for dubious humanitarian concerns while ignoring real suffering and death in other countries. We have used humanitarian interventions as a guise for imperialism. We have encouraged favored governments to engage in human rights violations.

We have supported corrupt and tyrannical governments. We have crushed populist and nationalist governments or movements struggling against tyrannical governments. We have trained foreign soldiers and police to suppress their own people. We have influenced, sabotaged, financed, and otherwise interfered with elections in other countries. We have taken sides or intervened in civil wars. We have recklessly tested and knowingly used chemical and biological weapons on both U.S. citizens and foreigners in their countries. We have encouraged the use of chemical and biological weapons by other nations and trained foreign nationals to do the same. We have downplayed the slaughter of civilians killed in civil wars if they were on the side we didn't agree with.

We have provided military hardware, too, and trained the paramilitary forces of foreign countries. We have engaged in provocative naval actions in international waters under the guise of protecting freedom of navigation. We have bribed, blackmailed, and bullied our way around

the world. Say what you will, believe what you will about the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea, the fact remains that the United States is the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons on people, and we did it twice. The United States is an overextended, out of control rogue nation, yet the mere mention of the evil that the United States has perpetrated throughout the world upsets and angers many Americans because they have the mindset that a terrorist is someone who detonates a bomb but doesn't wear an Air Force uniform.

But because we live in an imperfect world of nation states that is not likely to change anytime in the near future, the question of U.S. foreign policy cannot be ignored. Randolph Bourne's observation almost 100 years ago, that war is the health of the state, has never been more relevant than right now. Those who disparage the welfare state while turning a blind eye to the warfare state are terribly inconsistent. There is an intimate connection between foreign policy and domestic policy, as I will point out in my conclusion. If there is any real religion that should be opposed to the evils of war, it is Christianity, and if there is any group of people in America that should be opposed to a militaristic foreign policy, it is Christians. Yet in the church will be found some of the greatest supporters of the state, its President, its military, and its wars.

The question before us then is what should the church be saying about war and foreign policy? Before answering that question I would like to point out not only what things the church is saying now about war and foreign policy, but why I believe these things are being said. So what is the church saying now about war and foreign policy? Unfortunately, the church is either saying things that are wrong or is not saying enough about what is wrong. In the church's conservative, Evangelical, and fundamentalist circles, and I identify loosely with all three, much of what is being said is not just wrong, it is evil, immoral, hypocritical, shameful, and more importantly it is unscriptural. But the church is also not saying enough. It is not saying enough about the defective Christianity of the President. It is not saying enough about the evils of war. It is not saying enough about our overgrown military establishment. It is not saying enough about our interventionist foreign policy. It is not saying enough about the warfare state.

President Bush has mastered the art of using religious rhetoric to capture the support of gullible Christians for his aggressive, militaristic, interventionist foreign policy he terms "This Great Mission." As Seminary Professor Emeritus Walter Wink has well said, "Evil never feels safe unless it wears the mask of divinity." The biggest foreign policy blunder of the Bush Administration is, of course, the war in Iraq. This war in particular is a great evil. For a just war, rather than being an offensive, preemptive, open-ended shock and awe campaign, must have a just cause, be in proportion to the gravity of the situation, have obtainable objectives, and only be undertaken as a last resort. If there was ever a war that violated every one of these principles, it is the Iraq War.

But the problem is not just that waging this war is against every Christian, just-war principle that has ever been formulated, conducting the war is contrary to the whole spirit of the New Testament. Fighting the war is in opposition to the practice of the early church. Participants in the war violate the express teaching of the Sixth Commandment: Thou Shall Not Kill. Supporters of the war violate the First Commandment: Thou Shall Have No Other Gods Before Me. Although the Bible likens Christians to soldiers and the Christian life to a battle, the Christian's weapons are not carnal and his battle is a spiritual one. The Christian is admonished to put on the whole armor of God, not a military uniform. His only weapon is the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, not an M16.

An overwhelming majority of Americans identify themselves as Christians. The same can be said of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines in the military. The percentage of congressmen who identify their religion as Christianity is higher than that needed to override a Presidential veto. The President himself has been very vocal about his faith. But now that we have passed the fourth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, support for the war among Christian Americans continues, bombing and killing by Christians in the military continues, funding for the war by a Christian Congress continues, and justification for the war by a Christian President continues, and we wonder why Muslims hate us. It is appalling that many defenders of the war in Iraq are Christians. It is even worse when they appeal to Scripture to excuse or justify a senseless war that has now resulted in the deaths of 3,400 U.S. soldiers and the wounding of countless thousands more, not to mention the tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

To their everlasting shame, I suspect that it is the most conservative of Christians who will support the war until the bitter end, no matter how many more U.S. soldiers die for a lie, no matter how many more years the war continues, no matter how many more billions of dollars are wasted, no matter how many more young American men and women are disabled for life, and no matter what outrages the government commits against the Constitution, civil liberties, and the rule of law. As a Christian, an American, a father, and a taxpayer, I have not only opposed this war from the beginning, I have vehemently denounced it as well. I have never wavered in my contempt for those who sought it, my disagreement with the President who instigated it, my disgust for the congressmen who fund it, my loathing for the Conservatives who promote it, my abhorrence of the Christians who defend it, and my pity for the soldiers who were duped by military recruiters to participate in it.

I believe that Christian support for the President and his war has diminished somewhat. Unfortunately, however, this is generally not out of principle but only because defending the war has become such an embarrassment. Christian leaders, many of whom I have said make up the Christian axis of evil, are some of the most vocal apologists for the President, his party, his aggressive foreign policy, and his war. Televangelist Pat Robertson wanted the U.S. government to assassinate the leader of another country. But what should we expect from someone who

thinks the war in Iraq is being fought on Christian principles, and who considers criticism of the war to be treason? Catholic radio and television personality Sean Hannity maintains that America has a moral duty to fight for the security of any oppressed nation, but what do we do when we are the oppressors? Watergate conspirator-turned-prisonmaster Chuck Colson thinks the preemptive war against Iraq was self-defense. Conservative columnist and Evangelical Cal Thomas wants the war in Iraq to be stepped up and fought like World War II. I guess that means he is in favor of firebombing Iraqi cities and then nuking a couple more for good measure.

The late Republican apologist and Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell, who ranked George Bush with Ronald Reagan as one of America's greatest presidents, believed the invasion of Iraq was just and right because God is prowar. What Falwell means, of course, is that God is pro American wars. Prophecy guru and fanatical warmonger John Hagee wants the United States to go to war against Iran, and the sooner the better. The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry regards the President of Iran as worse than Hitler. Not only does he wish to destroy Israel, but his next move is westward to Europe and then on to finish off the United States.

But these so-called Christian leaders are not alone. They still command the attention and respect of thousands of Christians in the pew. Their ministries are not hurting for money or followers, and it will remain that way until Christians are as concerned about killing on the battlefield as they are about killing in the womb. Why are Christians saying these things? There is no doubt that this war is abhorrent to Christianity. If there is any war in history that is contrary to the whole spirit of the New Testament, it is the current one. All adherents to Christianity of any church, creed, or denomination should be opposed to this war of aggression.

So why aren't they? Why do Christians who don't agree with President Bush's domestic policies and think even less of his Christianity remain silent about his unjust, immoral, and unscriptural war and his reckless interventionist foreign policy that increases hatred for America and Americans and therefore undermines Christian mission work around the world?

The first reason why Christians are saying these things is the September 11th terrorist attacks. Even though the President himself now says otherwise, many Christians continue to believe that Iraq was behind those attacks. Few have stopped their thirst for revenge long enough to realize that the 9/11 attacks were themselves an act of revenge for over a decade of abuses. The attacks were a guerrilla action against the United States for what Arabs and Muslims see as our invasion and interference in their homelands. The attacks were in retaliation for anger and resentment over U.S. foreign policy. Certainly Christians are aware of the scriptural principle that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

The second reason why is Saddam Hussein. We have continually been told that Hussein was a corrupt, evil ruler. Although that assessment is certainly correct, every country has its share of

corrupt, evil rulers. Just look at the United States. The world has always been full of corrupt, evil rulers, and it always will be until Jesus Christ returns himself to rule. But wasn't Saddam Hussein the same oppressive dictator in the 1980s who brutalized his own people? Why is it then that he was our friend up until the Persian Gulf War, and wasn't he a greater threat to U.S. interests under the first George Bush? If Hussein was so bad, any Iraqi could have put a bullet in his head and gone down in history as a hero. Don't evil dictators ever sleep or go to the bathroom? But not only has Hussein been deposed, he has been executed. So why are U.S. troops still in Iraq? What happened to mission accomplished? And if Hussein was an oppressive dictator who was hated by his people, how does that justify making war on an entire country of people that were his enemies? But have not the Iraqis killed, injured, and maimed thousands of U.S. soldiers? Of course they have. We would do the same thing to foreign troops that invaded our soil. Ridding Iraq of Saddam Hussein was not worth the life of one American.

The third reason why is Islam. Some conservative Christians dismiss the thousands of Iraqi civilian deaths as collateral damage because those who died are Muslims. Some of the same Christians who never hesitate to criticize the role of the Catholic Church in the Crusades view the war in Iraq as a modern-day Crusade against Muslims. Although President Bush thinks that Muslims and Christians worship the same God, conservative Christians consider Islam to be a false religion. But there are a lot of false religions in the world and the God of the Bible never called, commanded, or encouraged any Christian to kill, make apologies for the killing of, or excuse the killing of any adherent of any false religion.

The fourth reason why is Israel. For Biblical reasons, Evangelical Christians are typically supporters of Israel. Unfortunately, however, some of them thought that Iraq was a threat to Israel and therefore the U.S. was justified in invading Iraq and overthrowing Saddam Hussein. But with enough assorted weaponry to destroy Iraq many times over, Israel was not in any danger from Iraq. Rather than protecting Israel by invading Iraq, the opposite has occurred. The continued presence of the U.S. military in the Middle East increases Muslim hatred of both America and Israel and therefore increases terrorism. Gullible Evangelical Christians have been used by neoconservatives who care not a whit about Bible prophecy.

The fifth reason why Christians are saying these things is the Republican Party. It is bad enough when most Republican members of Congress and the Republican Party faithful continue to blindly follow the leadership of a Republican President who will go down in history as doing more to expand the power of government than any Republican since Abraham Lincoln. But it is even worse when conservative Christians go along with these people. Too many Christians are in love with the Republican Party, but this is clearly a case of spiritual adultery. The Republican Party has not only historically been the party of big government, its members have of late taken to supporting preemptive war, bloated defense and intelligence budgets, secret military tribunals, torture of enemy combatants, extraordinary renditions, and an increasingly militarized society, the violation of basic civil liberties, undue government secrecy, and domestic spying programs.

Just like the Democratic Party, the Republican Party never met a federal program it didn't like as long as it furthered the party's agenda. I suspect that the Republicans would be leveling the same criticisms of the war as the Democrats if it were a Democratic president who had launched the war. According to Representative John Duncan of Tennessee, a rare Republican opponent of the Iraq War from the beginning, 80 percent of House Republicans voted against the bombings in the former Yugoslavia under President Clinton. I am convinced that at least the same percentage would have opposed the war in Iraq if it had been started by a Democratic president.

The sixth reason why is the U.S. military. Christians will generally agree with you if you denounce some of the more outrageous abuses of the government. Most will concur if you condemn the welfare state. Many will go along with you if you disparage one of the presidents. Some will put up with you if you criticize the U.S. global empire. A few will even tolerate you if you denigrate the warfare state. But once you question the military in any way, its size, its budget, its contractors, its bureaucracy, its efficiency, its purpose, and especially its acts of death and destruction, many Christians will brand you as a pacifist, a liberal, a leftist, a Quaker, a Communist, a coward, an appeaser, or even a traitor or an America-hater.

There is an unholy alliance between conservative Christians and the military. But this too is an illicit affair. It is contrary to the tenor of the New Testament. It is an affront to the Savior. It is a blight on Christianity. Some Christians have practically elevated military service to the level of the Christian ministry, believing that the U.S. military is the Lord's army that fights against the Muslim infidel. It is a terrible disgrace that instead of the next military adventure of the U.S. government being denounced from every pulpit and pew of every church in the country, there are many preachers in the pulpit and many Christians in the pew who can be counted on to support it. Even Christians who oppose Bush's pseudo-Christianity, his socialist domestic policies, and his interventionist foreign policies can be found encouraging the young men in their church to join the military and then obey the powers that be when it comes to bombing, interrogating, maiming, and killing for the state in some foreign war.

Our support for the troops should be limited to praying for them. But how should we pray for them? Should we pray that God bless the troops while they drop their bombs, throw their grenades, launch their missiles, fire their mortars, and shoot their bullets? Should we pray that the troops are protected while they injure, torture, maim, and kill others? Should we pray that the troops are successful when they drive their tanks into a city and reduce it to rubble? I think, rather, that we should pray that the troops come home now so that not one more drop of blood from an American soldier is shed on foreign soil.

The last reason why Christians are saying these things is the state itself. Many Christians are in love with the state. They have a warped God and Country complex, which elevates the state to the level of God Almighty. Sure, they may complain about paying taxes, obeying a frivolous

law, or complying with some regulation. They may get upset with Supreme Court decisions about abortion or even get outraged about government grants to fund a pornographic art exhibit, but when it comes to the subject of war in the military, these Christians lose their minds. Bombing, maiming, interrogating, and killing are okay as long as it is done in service for the state.

The military and the CIA are great employment opportunities for Christian young people. I have never heard or read of any President that has received as much adoration as the current President. If he dictates that an intervention, invasion, or war is necessary, then the typical Christian response is trust. No need to verify. But the government of the United States and Christianity is a most unholy alliance. It has been argued by the Foundation for Economic Education President Richard Ebeling that there has been no greater threat to life, liberty, and property throughout the ages than government. Even the most violent and brutal private individuals have been able to inflict only a mere fraction of the harm and destruction that have been caused by the use of the power by political authorities.

The U.S. government is no exception. The Bible says to pray for those in authority, not to campaign for them, vote for them, bomb for them, or kill for them. When it comes to defending, believing in the legitimacy of, and carrying out the evil dictates of the state, Christians are under a higher authority. Since when was blind obedience to the state a tenet of New Testament Christianity? The attitude of the Christian toward the state should be no different now than it was in the days of the early church. The Apostles Peter and John were brought before the authorities and asked, "Did not we straightly command ye that you should not teach in his name? And behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." It was then that the Apostles uttered that immortal line, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

All of these things being said, I would now at long last like to give you ten things the church should be saying about war and foreign policy. But instead of appealing to the latest pronouncement of one of our self-anointed Christian leaders who moonlights as a cheerleader for the Bush Administration, I appeal to Scripture. To the U.S. government, the church should be saying ten things.

Number one: Ephesians 4:29, Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. The communication that comes forth from U.S. government officials is routinely corrupt communication. In response to the charge that more than half a million children in Iraq died as a result of U.S. sanctions, soon-to-be Secretary of State Madeleine Albright responded that the price was worth it. Commenting on new interrogation techniques he approved that included forcing prisoners to stand for four hours at a time, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld arrogantly wrote, "I stand for eight to ten hours a day. Why is standing limited to four hours?"

On the eve of the Persian Gulf War, the senior President Bush stated, “And so, to every sailor, soldier, airman, and Marine who is involved in this mission, let me say you’re doing God’s work.” He also remarked once when he was the Vice President, “I will never apologize for the United States of America. I don’t care what the facts are.” This corrupt communication has increased under the current President, as this statement from George W. shows: “No act of America explains terrorist violence, and no concession of America could appease it.” Like father, like son.

Number two: Romans 12:17, Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Dishonesty is the rule when it comes to the U.S. government. Who can forget FDR on the eve of U.S. intervention into World War II? “I’ve said this before but I shall say it again and again and again. Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars. They are going into training to form a force so strong that by its very existence it will keep the threat of war far away from our shores.” And what about LBJ campaigning for President in 1964? “We are not about to send American boys 9,000 to 10,000 miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves.” And then there is our current President. “Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.”

Number three: 1st Thessalonians 5:15, Ever follow that which is good. Although Madeleine Albright once made the claim the United States is good, we have not ever followed that which is good. The Scripture says that “Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to every people.” The United States could and should be the moral leader of the world. Old Right Senator Robert Taft once remarked that if we confine our activities to the field of moral leadership, we shall be successful if our philosophy is sound and appeals to the people of the world. The problem with this, as Taft also recognized, is that the United States wants to force on foreigners, through the use of American money and even perhaps arms, the policies which moral leadership is able to advance only through the sound strength of its principles, and as Old Right Republican Congressman Howard Buffet explained, “Our Christian ideals cannot be exported to other lands by dollars and guns. Persuasion and example are the methods taught by the carpenter of Nazareth.”

Number four: Galatians 6:10, As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men. Ms. Albright also said of the United States, “We try to do our best everywhere.” This too is incorrect, for the United States does not do good unto all men. In many cases we do just the opposite. Just ask those who have lost loved ones, limbs, or property from U.S. mines, bombs, and bullets. In a speech at a NATO summit before the invasion of Iraq, President Bush said, “Great evil is stirring in the world.” Although the President would disagree with me, more often than not it is the United States that commits evil deeds or stirs up evil in the world.

Number five: Ephesians 5:11, Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. The U.S. government, through the CIA, the military, and the State Department, has regularly maintained cozy relationships with dictators, thugs, strongmen, and other corrupt rulers who commit works of darkness, as well as committing numerous works of darkness ourselves. Donald Rumsfeld should forever be haunted by the picture of him and Saddam Hussein taken in 1983 when he was sent to Iraq as a special envoy to President Reagan. Although the United States restored formal relations with Iraq in 1984, we had already begun, even before Rumsfeld made his trip, to secretly provide Iraq with intelligence and military support, contrary to our official neutrality in the Iran/Iraq War and knowing that Iraq could use chemical weapons. The United States has also committed numerous works of darkness, including assassinations, propaganda campaigns, regime changes, and covert actions.

Number six: Romans 12:17, Recompense to no man evil for evil. The world is full of evil. Always has been, always will be. I believe it was Edward Gibbon who said, "History is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." When evil is committed against the United States, we should first seek to discover why it happened before we recompense evil for evil by sending in the Marines. As much as it pains me to say it, most of the evil perpetrated against the United States is in response to our interventionist foreign policy.

Number seven: 1st Peter 4:15, Don't be a busybody in other men's matters. No one likes a busybody. People universally prefer that others mind their own business. The United States is a global busybody; a global busybody with bombs. Supposedly sovereign countries can't even have an election without the United States intervening in one way or another. But fraud or no fraud, foreign elections are none of our business. How would we feel if China or Russia sent observers to monitor our elections? As much as many Americans loathe George W. Bush, how would we feel if another country said that we needed to submit to a regime change? We would be outraged. Most of what happens in the world is none of our concern and certainly none of our business. Why do we wonder that the rest of the world objects to us sticking our nose in their business?

Number eight: 1st Timothy 5:21, Doing nothing by partiality. Instead of doing nothing by partiality, the United States regularly does just the opposite. In fact, the history of U.S. foreign policy is the history of showing partiality to one country over another or being partial to a country if it serves some policy objective, even if it means turning a blind eye to that country's ruler, system of government, human rights violations, treatment of women, or religious intolerance.

Number nine: Romans 12:18, Live peaceably with all men. Even though there's an abundance of evil in the world, there is no reason why the United States cannot live peaceably with the rest of the world. When the Scripture simply says to live peaceably, it doesn't imply that you should

make your opponents die so that you could live peaceably. The Scripture also says to live peaceably with all men. That would include countries that are Communist or Muslim. It doesn't matter what form of government, type of ruler, or national policies a country has. We can live peaceably by recognizing that there is nothing we can do about most of the evil in the world. We can live peaceably by realizing that we cannot remake the world in our image, and most importantly we can live peaceably by not being the cause of evil in the world.

Number ten: Exodus 20:13, Thou Shall Not Kill. God only knows how many people around the world have been killed as a direct result of U.S. foreign policy. No, I am not equating the United States with Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, or Red China. With the exception of Indians, the United States generally kills foreigners, not American citizens. We killed at least 2 million Vietnamese and Cambodians in a war that was both undeclared and unnecessary. We have now killed or been responsible for the deaths of perhaps a half-million people in Iraq. From the beginning of the Iraq War, I have maintained that participants in this evil war violate the express teaching of the Biblical Commandment against killing. Christian apologists for the war say that either the Commandments don't apply to the state and therefore killing done in service for the state is permissible, or that the Sixth Commandment is limited to murder and therefore killing done in wartime is permissible. Therefore, just as Calvary covers it all—my past with its sin and shame—so the wearing of a uniform covers it all—my military service with its death and destruction. Thus, killing someone you don't know and have never seen in his own territory, who was no threat to anyone until the U.S. invaded his country, is not a murder if the United States government says he should be killed. No soldier is responsible for the death and destruction he inflicts as long as it is state-sanctioned death and destruction.

I reject this ghastly state-olatry. There is an unholy desire on the part of some Christians to legitimize killing and war. They have the attitude that what is required conduct for individuals is not required conduct for nations. In the minds of some Christians, it is okay for someone to put on a uniform and kill someone halfway around the world, but it is murder if the same person killed someone here in the United States. Although it was Oliver Cromwell who said that there are great occasions in which some men are called to great services in the doing of which they are excused from the common rule of morality, even a nominal Christian like Thomas Jefferson spoke against this mindset, writing in a letter to James Madison in 1789, "I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively." He who says, "I will be a rogue when I act in company with a hundred others but an honest man when I act alone" will be believed in the former assertion but not in the latter.

A man does not throw his morality out the window just because he puts on a military uniform. There is nothing inherently religious about what the church should be saying about war and foreign policy. It is merely aversion to war and the noninterventionist foreign policy of the Founding Fathers. A noninterventionist foreign policy is not just an Old Right foreign policy, a Libertarian foreign policy, or a paleoconservative foreign policy. It is a Jeffersonian foreign

policy. Jefferson believed in no judgment, no meddling, no political connection, no partiality, no war, and no entangling alliance. What is wrong with the wisdom of Jefferson? How much wiser were the Founding Fathers than Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Perle, Powell, Rice, and the other architects of the Iraq War.

What would a noninterventionist foreign policy look like? We haven't had one in so long that it might be hard to imagine what it would be like. Perhaps it would be better to consider what a noninterventionist foreign policy would not look like. Having a noninterventionist foreign policy doesn't mean that the U.S. should refuse to participate in the Olympics, refuse to make treaties, refuse to issue visas, refuse to trade, refuse to allow foreign investment, refuse to extradite criminals, refuse to exchange diplomats, refuse to allow cultural exchanges, refuse to allow immigration or travel. A noninterventionist foreign policy would not be an isolationist foreign policy.

We know that the word "isolationism" is a pejorative term of intimidation used to stifle debate over foreign policy, but no advocate of nonintervention in foreign affairs wants to build a fortified fence around the United States and retreat behind it, as Clinton's National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, smeared us. In his 2006 State of the Union speech, President Bush did the same thing, thrice warning us of the dangers of retreating into isolationism. The United States cannot police the world. We have no right to police the world. It is the height of arrogance to try and remake the world in our image. Most of what happens in the world is none of our concern and certainly none of our business. It is not the responsibility of the United States to remove corrupt rulers and oppressive dictators from power. The kind of government a country has and the type of leader it has are the sole responsibility of the people in that country.

There is absolutely no reason why the United States would be justified in attacking and invading a sovereign country. If the people in a country don't like their rulers, then they should get rid of them themselves and not expect the United States to intervene. The truth of the matter is that the handful of men who hold political power in a country cannot, in and of themselves, compel that country's citizens to obey them in every respect. They have to have the cooperation of the people. If an individual American feels so strongly about one side in a civil war or border dispute, then he can send money to the side he favors. He can pray for one side to be victorious or he can enlist in the army of his preferred side. Anything but call for sending in the U.S. Marines. How strange it is that advocates of U.S. military interventions consider us non...

Laurence Vance: ...withdraw immediately and completely, militarily and politically, from everywhere and maintain a policy of strict political isolation, or neutrality. Political isolation is the only isolation we desire. Once we bring the troops home from around the globe, strict limits should be set to keep them home. Marine Corps Major General Smedley Butler recommended a peace amendment that would prohibit the removal of the Army from U.S. soil, limit the distance

that Navy ships could steam from our coast, and limit the distance that military aircraft could fly from our borders.

I would like to say something in conclusion about civil liberties. Intervention abroad cannot but follow intervention at home. There is no way a country can have hundreds of foreign bases and thousands of troops stationed overseas without a massive and oppressive bureaucracy at home. Conservative godfather and Cold Warrior William Buckley admitted as much back in the early 1950s. “We have to accept big government for the duration, for neither an offensive nor a defensive war can be waged given our present government skills except through the instrumentality of a totalitarian bureaucracy within our shores.” Buckley went on to recommend that we support large armies and air forces, central intelligence, war production boards, and the attendant centralization of power in Washington.

William Jennings Bryan articulated a better idea over 100 years ago. “We assert that no nation can long endure half republic and half empire and we warn the American people that imperialism abroad will lead quickly to despotism at home.” The state uses war to strip its citizens of their liberties. The authority of the legislature and the force of law that, at least in principle, afford government power in peacetime quickly diminished during times of war. The father of the Constitution, James Madison, recognized this. “If tyranny and oppression come to this land it will be in the guise of fighting a foreign enemy.”

Throughout the 20th century, interventionism was the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy under either political party. The 9/11 attacks were just the beginning of a worldwide revolt against U.S. imperialism and empire. Of all people, Christians should know the truth and speak the truth about the evils of U.S. wars and foreign policy. They should see Bush’s rhetoric about extending the benefits of freedom across the globe and enlarging the realm of liberty for what it is: plain old-fashioned interventionism, pure and simple. Only a Jeffersonian foreign policy of peace, commerce, friendship, and no entangling alliances can cut the tentacles of U.S. global interventionism.

Can any Christian honestly say that Bush’s principles are better than Jefferson’s principles? So what can a Christian do? What should a Christian do? Number one, educate yourself. The FFF publications, the Mises Institute publications, the Web sites, antiwar.com, etc. Number two, speak up. You don’t support the troops, you don’t support the war, you don’t support U.S. foreign policy, speak up. Don’t be silent. What else can a Christian do? Number three, endure. You’re going to be called a traitor, you’re going to be called a liberal, an anti-American. You need to endure. And finally, stand your ground. Your loyalty as a Christian is to Jesus Christ in the Bible, not to the government and the military. Thank you.

Jacob Hornberger: Okay, please re-keep in mind that for tonight we have a predinner speaker, Ron Paul, dinner, and then a postdinner speaker, Andrew Napolitano. Please keep in mind that we're going to start promptly at 6:00, so please try to be in your seats at about, you know, ten minutes to 6:00, five minutes to 6:00. See you in a couple of hours. Thank you. In the other room. Same place as last night. Oh, I'm sorry. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. This room? Sorry. This room. Try this one first. If you don't see anyone, go to the other one.