

WHY I AM A PACIFIST

By Allon Maxwell

Arising from Christian conviction, reached through many years as a follower of Jesus, I am a Pacifist.

This conviction is not simply a religious theory. It has become a way of life, which is the only reasonable option.

Believing Jesus has changed me. It conditions my attitudes and actions, my goals in life and even the career I choose. It affects how I deal with you.

Ultimately, it affects even my choice of whether I will defend my life, or anyone else's, at the cost of yours.

The outcome of this decision is that:

- * I will not defend myself against aggression.
- * I will not make war.
- * I will not assist others to make war.
- * I will not work in any situation directly associated with the manufacture of "the instruments of destruction".

For Christians who take the words of Jesus literally, the rationale is simple. In the Sermon on the Mount, he teaches his followers that the love normally reserved for friends must be extended also to enemies, in very practical and sometimes costly ways.

Those who really believe him are "second mile people".

- * They turn the other cheek instead of resisting aggression.
- * They love their enemies.
- * They do good to those that hate them.
- * They pray for those who mistreat them.

The guiding principle is, "treat others as you would like them to treat you".

Some practical applications of this are:

- * Never protect yourself by threatening another
- * Never take revenge.
- * If your enemy is hungry, feed him.
- * If he is thirsty give him a drink.
- * Overcome evil only with good.

Finally, Jesus says that this is THE WAY to become a child of GOD. No man can be truly a Christian if he is willing to ignore or compromise these fundamental issues which lie at the very heart of the teaching of Jesus and the second Great Commandment:

"You shall love your neighbour as yourself". Mark 12:31

If enough people believed him and obeyed him, there could never be another war. In fact, his way is the only way in which the evils of war can ever come to an end. Some of us believe this so completely that we are prepared to put it into practice, regardless of the cost. Unless someone starts doing it, it can never happen.

A man who loves his enemy enough, wants to see that enemy become a friend. That means for me that, no matter what my enemy does to me, I will return only friendship.

Even if he so hates me as to seek my life or the life of my loved ones, threatening our safety with all the horror of modern warfare, my best proof of my love for him is to refuse to do that back to him and his loved ones.

If he cannot be moved by that, then he is the one who needs to live. If he lives, perhaps he will eventually learn his need for the change that I have experienced.

If it costs me my own life, or something even more precious than that, to give him that opportunity, that is the final expression of my love for him. That is the real meaning of the cross.

I can afford to love my enemy that way. My life and that of my loved ones, is safer in God's hands than in mine. I can afford to lose my life so that he can live, for I am already eternally safe! And it would be my very great pleasure to wake on resurrection day to find him standing beside me, at last, as a friend.

A recent newspaper statistic claimed that there are currently more than 40 wars in progress around the world. In those wars it is not only soldiers who die. Civilians die too. Women and innocent children die or suffer as terribly as the professional warmakers.

They suffer and die as you read this.

The responsibility for those deaths lies not only with the governments involved. It must be shared equally by the defence industries of the Western world who are willing to take a profit from all that death and suffering and destruction. It must also be shared by those who will take their bread and butter from working in those industries.

There is a fundamental immorality in the make-up of a man who can deaden his conscience to remain insensitive to these issues.

To assist in any way in making war, whether as a member of the military forces, or as a civilian in the defence industries which support it, is to be a part of the obscenity of suffering that is one of the deepest problems faced by the human race.

To assist is to be part of the problem.

As a Christian I want to be a part of the answer.

Jesus has changed me - inside.

That is why I AM A PACIFIST