

Contempt of Conscience

FIT FOR VIEWING by persons aged 15 YEARS OR MORE

Contains images of victims of war: please warn your classes
That they might find these images upsetting

Length: 9 minutes

Background

In March 2003, the British and American Governments ignored the largest public protests in history to begin the War in Iraq. Despite 36 million people marching in over 3,000 demonstrations, Britain and the US committed their military to war, highlighting the democratic impotence of such protests in a modern climate. It seems little had changed since former US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, commented in 1982: *“Let them march all they want, as long as they continue to pay their taxes”*.

In personal protest against the Iraq War, a group of Quakers withheld the 10% of his taxes which are directed towards military expenditure, and asked that they be redirected to peaceful activities.

Placing conscientious objection in its historical and social context, ***Contempt of Conscience*** challenges modern attitudes to citizen responsibility and asks us to consider whether all taxpayers are unwitting financial conscripts of war – a film that raises challenging and timely questions

AFTER SCREENING

When *Contempt of Conscience* finishes ask
Your pupils/students to engage with

TASK 1

WRITE or SKETCH down the most memorable image or statement that sticks in their mind.

SHOW a friend their image or statement and explain the reason why they chose it

DISCUSS what they consider to be the most important message of the film

EXCHANGE their findings with the rest of the class.

TASK 2

RECALL what they've just watched. If they were able to interview any **ONE** of the people appearing in *Contempt of Conscience*, **WHO** would they most like to cross-examine?

WRITE DOWN the main question they would want to ask that person?

The people who appeared in *Contempt of Conscience* were:

Mark Thomas: comedian war tax resister

Robin Brookes: Quaker, toy maker and war tax resister

Steven Winston; First World War conscientious objector

Arthur Windsor: Quaker and war tax resister

Roger Franklin war tax resister

Birgit Voellm: Quaker, psychiatrist and war tax resister

Simon Heywood: Quaker, university lecturer and war tax resister

Dame Anita Roddick: founder of The Body Shop

WRITING

Explain in a short piece of writing what the arguments are for withholding the part of taxes destined for military expenditure and express your thoughts on whether or not you agree with his stand or not.

Explain in a short piece of writing: {a} what the moral, religious and legal arguments of conscientious objectors are {b} what they have suffered as a consequence of withholding their taxes and {c} whether or not you agree with the stand they are taking.

HANDOUTS FOR STUDENTS

Statements

Below are twelve statements. READ THEM ALL and choose a statement you consider to be the most interesting. After you've made your choice, compare, contrast and share your chosen statement with TWO other people in your class. Be prepared to support your choice, with reasons. Are there statements your friends have chosen that are different from yours? Argue the case for the importance of YOUR chosen statement, above theirs.

Now exchange your views with the rest of your class.

Here are the statements:

{1} *"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."*

{Former U.S. President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953}

{2} *"The laws that have been changed that benefit us and that have been progressive laws – the laws against slavery, child labour, sexism and homophobia - have been accomplished by people with conscience."*

{Mark Thomas, comedian/activist}

{3} *"The purpose of my Buddhist practice is to benefit all sentient beings. Killing and wounding people are the opposite, and I do not wish to pay for it. I want my taxes to go towards something beneficial."*

{Sian Cwper, Buddhist and war tax resister}

{4} *"I am a doctor. I chose this profession to help people and to alleviate suffering. Contributing to war directly or indirectly by paying taxes which are used for weapons that kill people is not compatible with my professional values. We could have built many new hospitals and employed much needed additional staff for the cost of the attack on Iraq. Every doctor should think twice before giving their money to war and the preparation of war."*

{Birgit Völlm, Doctor, Quaker & war tax resister}

{5} *"For all of my adult life I have been a Quaker and held a strong conviction that all war, and all preparation for war, is wrong and contrary to the spirit of God, as experienced by many people of many different faiths and cultures, but most pertinently, as I have experienced it personally. I can no longer pay taxes for others to kill or prepare to kill in my name"*

{Roy Prockter, Accountant, Quaker & war tax resister}

{6} *“At the beginning of the 20th century 90% of war victims were soldiers but by the end of the 20th century 90% of war casualties were civilian and armies are small bodies of highly trained technicians. Civilians pay for war and suffer most from it. War is now a civilian business, so peace-building is a civilian responsibility.”*

{Joe Jenkins, teacher and Anglican war tax resister}

{7} *“There are precedents for introducing a peace tax. Take the environment for example. You can pay a green tariff for electricity produced from renewable sources - wind and solar power etc. You still remain hooked up to the national grid just as before, and you use whatever electricity happens to be in the grid near your house. You do not expect to be using the actual electricity produced from some distant wind-farm - you may well be using electricity from the polluting coal fired power station down the road. However, the principal has been established that the ethical customer can pay for an ethical service even though all the electricity is in one big pool called the national grid. Paying for the military should be similar. All of our taxes go into one big pool called the consolidated fund to pay for public services. Conscientious objectors should be able to get a service which does not offend their conscience in the form of non-military security initiatives”.*

{Conscience: The Peace Tax Campaign}

{8} *“I am appalled by the huge amount of money spent on the military, which is ultimately only going to create misery, death and destruction. At best it is simply wasted. If a fraction of the money spent on military preparations was spent looking for the alternatives; training people as peace negotiators; solving the problems which lead to conflict and resolving conflicts before they escalate into violence we would go far along the road to abolishing war. I think this is a realistic goal, to make war a thing of the past. It only needs for us to break from the habitual mind set that war is inevitable and unavoidable to believe this is so. People are not natural killers - soldiers have to be trained to make them capable of killing. The norm is that people want to be at peace. Having the right to conscientiously object to taxes being spent on war preparation and instead directed to non-violent conflict resolution would enable citizens to influence the way our country approaches conflict in the world.”*

{Robin Brookes, Toymaker, Quaker & war tax resister}

{9} *“Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a*

respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right."

{David Henry Thoreau, American author of *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, {1849}}

{10} *"The government has two powers with respect to war - the power to conscript and the power to tax. Since the end of World War Two the ability of a state to wage war has depended less on abundant reserves of conscripts and soldiers and more on technologically complex, destructive and expensive weapons systems. The conscription of financial resources has replaced the conscription of human beings. With the astronomical costs of military preparedness all citizens have become participants - financial conscripts in our governments' military action. There are many ways to kill our fellow human beings and paying military tax is one of them. The Military Service Act 1916 was a turning point in British history and unique in conscription history by providing for exemption on conscientious grounds. Today we are compelled by law to become financial conscripts without the right to exercise our conscience and say again as many brave souls did in 1916 that we will not be complicit in murdering other human beings".*

{Brenda Boughton, Anglican & war tax resister}

{11} *"What would you do if someone came to your door with a cup in hand asking for a contribution to help buy guns to kill a group of people they didn't like and you didn't even know? The current tax system is akin to this"*

{Wally Nelson, American writer}

{12} *"One week's global military expenditure could end world poverty forever. And no war is inevitable. All wars are deliberately and institutionally created by the rejection of negotiated settlement and non-violent resolution of conflict".*

{Simon Heywood, Quaker, University Lecturer and war tax resister}

SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FURTHER WORK

A. A Quaker View: *Contempt of Conscience* features three British taxpayers who have recently resisted paying their taxes towards war. One of them, Simon Heywood, a Quaker, explains his position:

"My starting point is the recognition that, in order to live a fully human life, I must acknowledge all human life as equal in value to my own. As I am a human being, nothing can entitle me to decide when and how another human being shall die. For me, this is bound up in a recognition of God as the source of all life, and in

upholding of the historic peace testimony which has been essential to Quakers, from the years when George Fox “lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars,” to the New Zealand Quakers who declared in 1987 that they “totally oppose all wars, all preparation for war, all use of weapons and coercion by force, and all military alliances.

It is currently impossible for any taxpaying UK citizen to live by this principle without coming into conflict with the government and the courts, because the courts enforce a policy which compels the individual taxpayer to contribute about 10% of their total tax bill to military expenditure, irrespective of conscientious objection. However, the courts ignore the unique personal urgency of the issue of the deliberate taking of human life, which is already conceded in the right to conscientious objection to military service (a right established at the height of the Great War in 1916) and in the disinclination of political parties to dictate to MP’s consciences on comparable issues such as capital punishment. Also, they ignore the fact that freedom of conscience, as enshrined in article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, is now supported in UK law by the 1998 Human Rights Act. That is, UK tax policy ignores the fact that, on this specific issue, UK citizens arguably already have the right to translate an ancient and compelling conscientious objection directly into tax policy. It is vitally important that they do so. By pouring taxpayers’ subsidies into a prestigious but barely profitable arms industry, the UK floods the world with cheap weapons.

All weapons ultimately encourage war; there is no truly “defensive” arms spending. International events in recent years have illustrated the waste and madness of war and the urgent necessity to build a culture of peace. The world cannot support the humanitarian, economic, environmental, legal, costs of war. One fighter aircraft equals over sixty council houses. One week’s global military expenditure could end world poverty forever. And no war is inevitable. All wars are deliberately and institutionally created by the rejection of negotiated settlement and non-violent resolution of conflict”.

B. Legal powers: The government has two powers with respect to war - the power to conscript and the power to tax. The relationship between taxation and war is a close one. Income tax was first introduced in Britain in 1798 to pay for the purchase of fighting men and weapons in the Napoleonic wars. Since the end of World War Two the ability of a state to wage war has depended less on abundant reserves of conscripts and soldiers and more on technologically complex and expensive weapons systems. The conscription of financial resources has replaced the conscription of human beings. With the astronomical costs of military preparedness all citizens, according to modern day conscientious objectors, have become participants - *financial conscripts* in our governments’ military action.

C. Conscription: Over three million men volunteered to serve in the British Armed Forces during the first two years of the war. In 1914, after 20,000 British soldiers died in the first two weeks of the war, compulsory call-up for British men looked increasingly likely. Even in the chauvinist atmosphere of the First World War however conscription for the battlefield was resisted until by January 1916 the flood of volunteers was reduced to a trickle, despite social pressure on 'laggards' and 'pansies' by attempts to shame them. In 1916 conscription was introduced by passing the Military Service Act.

Members of the No-Conscription Fellowship, set up in 1915, successfully campaigned to secure 'the conscience clause' in the 1916 Conscription Act: the right to claim exemption from military service. The Military Service Act 1916 by allowing for exemption was a turning point in British military policy. Men who applied for exemption to military service on grounds of morality or faith were termed 'conscientious objectors'. Over 16,500 men made that claim. They were required to attend a tribunal to have the sincerity of their claims assessed. They were generally unpopular with both the public and the authorities who saw them at best as unpatriotic shirkers and at worst as subversive revolutionaries. In practise many were Jehovah's Witnesses, Quakers or other Christian denominations, who simply saw the taking of life as wrong, while others objected to the war on political grounds. The tribunals' main difficulty seems to have been distinguishing between genuine cases, and those who had adopted such views (or took up exempt occupations) simply to avoid military service, i.e. evaders. The surviving documents show that the distinction was blurred, and that all applicants for exemption were distrusted. 7,000 pacifists agreed to perform non-combat service like stretcher bearing in the front-line, an occupation that had a very high casualty-rate. Over 1,500 men refused all compulsory service. These men were called absolutists and were usually drafted into military units and if they refused to obey the order of an officer, they were court-martialled. 41 were sentenced to death for refusing to accept military discipline. Those who returned from France joined a total of 1,298 conscientious objectors imprisoned for their views of whom a further 70 died in exceptionally harsh conditions.

British conscription ended in 1919, but twenty years later was resumed when war broke out with Germany again. A number of the total 60,000 conscientious objectors were sent to prison while others worked in relatively menial capacities on farms, mines, factories or in hospitals and some as in the First World War, did relief work abroad with the Friends Ambulance Unit or ended up in a battle-zone alongside the military – while some were forced to undergo medical experiments.

D. History of war tax resistance: in 1709 the Quaker Assembly refused a request of £4000 for an expedition into Canada, replying "*it was contrary to their*

religious principles to hire men to kill one another". During the American Revolution most Quakers were opposed to taxes designated specifically for military purposes. Property was seized and auctioned, and many Quakers were jailed for their war tax resistance. During the Mexican war of 1846 many Quakers again, refused to pay war taxes. The most famous instance of war tax resistance was that of the writer Henry David Thoreau. As well as being a philosopher and something of a mystic Henry Thoreau was also very involved in the burning issues of the day and opposed the imperialist and unjust nature of the Mexican War of the 1840's. He refused to pay the Massachusetts poll tax levied for the war, resulting in a night in jail. Someone paid the tax for him — ending his protest abruptly — so he put his opposition in writing and created a document first published in 1849 called "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" — a document that was to later influence people like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Henry David Thoreau wrote:

"Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right."

During the Indochina War in the 1960's and 1970's war tax resistance gained its greatest strength in American history; gaining nationwide publicity when the singer Joan Baez announced in 1964 her refusal to pay 60 percent of her income taxes because of the war in Vietnam. By 1967 about 500 people had signed a pledge to do likewise. The increasing horror of the war in Vietnam signalled a shift in war tax resistance from a few hundred to eventually 20,000 resisters. With the election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980 and his call to rearm the U.S. by spending billions of dollars on the military many more people began to resist war taxes. The government admitted the number of war tax resisters tripled between 1978 and 1981.

A national stir was created in 1981 when Roman Catholic Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle urged citizens to refuse to pay 50 percent of their income taxes to protest spending on nuclear weapons. Letters of endorsement of his stand were made by other religious leaders in Seattle and elsewhere around the country.

E. Definitions: Conscientious objectors: people who, by reason of religious or ethical belief, are 'conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form'. These people may be discharged from military service. They are exempt from military service, in the event of a draft {compulsory conscription}. If called up, they may perform alternative service as civilians.

Non combatant conscientious objectors: people who, by reason of religious or ethical belief, are conscientiously opposed to killing in war in any form but who do not object to performing noncombatant duties such as being a medic in the armed forces. These people are reassigned to non-combatant duties in the Armed Forces or, in the event of a draft, are trained without weapons and assigned to non-combatant service.

Conscientious objectors to paying for war: people whose consciences forbid them to pay the military portion of their taxes because of ethical and religious beliefs. Some impoverish themselves by living below taxable levels while others face court appearances, property loss, and in some cases, imprisonment.

Selective objectors: people whose consciences would not permit them to participate in what they believe to be an 'unjust' war but does permit them to participate in what they believe to be a 'just' war.

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E. Christian Ethics and War & Peace

For any individual, the Will of God is an informed conscience. According to Christian ethics, there are three ways in which the conscience is informed, namely scripture, tradition and reason.

The Old Testament

The biblical word for peace is Shalom, implying health, well-being and integrity. Consider Micahh's definition of peace: "He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more". Shalom embraced both a spiritual, internal peace and a relational dimension that involved the whole of society. As the meaning of Shalom expanded, the concept came to mean a wholeness, good health, prosperity, contentment and calm, without division. Simply to boast of an absence of war when the other ingredients of peace were missing, for example in a time of injustice, when there was no wholeness, was to cry "Peace" when there was no peace {Jeremiah 6.14}. The all-embracing nature of Shalom would mean that a state of peace is not defined merely by whether or not there is military activity on a battlefield. Rather, as Shalom permeates all

society, so any state of peace would be dependent on the nature of every activity within society, especially preparations for war and even, in the case of nation states, taxation to pay for war and its preparations. The prophets warned against those who cried 'peace', when there was no peace. A society which did not in itself host military conflict would not be in a right relationship with itself and others, and would not be at peace, when it undertook or prepared for military action in some distant quarter. It is to be expected that those whose vocation was the promotion of peace, would reject such military preparations wherever they were found in society. It is to be expected that the upholders of Shalom would resist enforced taxation for military purposes.

God saw creation and that "it was good". For human beings, any sense of the sanctity of life was increased by the knowledge that "God created humankind in his own image" (Genesis 1.27). There was the repeated hope and vision of a restoration of such peace and respect. The rainbow that followed the flood (Genesis 8) was the sign of this new hope for peace. Thus too, "The wolf shall live with the lamb" (Isaiah 11.6) and God's new covenant with all creation in Hosea 2.18: "I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety". In the Exodus narrative, the Decalogue includes the commandment (Exodus 20.13 or Deuteronomy 5.17) "You shall not kill", without qualification or exception.

The prophets, almost without exception, attempted to turn the people away from being reliant on force and the state. The most positive expression of this philosophy was spoken by the angel in Zechariah's vision: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4.6). There was a developing understanding of God. The primitive God of battles gave way to Hosea's God of love (Hosea 11.1).

Christians identify the prophetic figure (Isaiah 52.13-53.12) of a suffering servant with the person of Christ. A victim suffers voluntarily, without recourse to violence, for the greater good. Even without reference to the passion of Christ, the passage implied that the nation or the king was called to suffer and under no circumstances meet violence with violence.

The New Testament

The New Testament laid the foundations for the first pro-peace and anti-war movement in Western history. There are a hundred references to peace in the New Testament. Erasmus observed: "To the Jews war was permitted, for the same reason as divorce, because of the hardness of their hearts. But since the

time that Jesus Christ said, put up thy sword into its scabbard, Christians ought not to go to war”.

In an influential 1930 pronouncement, the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops worldwide stated that "war, as a means of settling international disputes, is incompatible with the *teaching* and *example* of our Lord Jesus Christ".

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God". (Matthew 5.9) The makers, the doers of peace were one with God, they were God's kin. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14.27).

The Matthew and Luke versions of the Sermon on the Mount exhort love of enemies (Matthew 5.44; Luke 6.28), understood in both private and communal senses. "Turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5.38-39). "I am the way, and the truth and the life" (John 14.6). The implication is that, in Christ, peace is the way. Peace is not simply a distant, hoped-for end it is the means by which that end might be achieved. Hence it can be deduced that non-peaceful methods, such as financing and preparing for war, will not bring peace.

When challenged about the emperor's coin (Mark 12.17) and the duty of paying taxation to uphold a military force that occupied the land, Jesus transcended all the emperor's claims by stating that that which was God's - i.e. everything - should be given to God. The emperor's claims were hollow, a chimera, for nothing and no person could stand alongside the ultimate claims of God. In contemporary terms, the emperor's claims would translate to the budget of the Ministry of Defence. Alongside "Render to God the things that are of God", those claims are nothing.

1st century Palestine was under military occupation, with many parallels to 21st century Iraq. Jesus respected the humanity of those on both sides, whilst refusing to be caught up in the violence of either. His closest followers included both Simon the Zealot (terrorist) and Matthew the collaborator. His acts of healing knew no boundaries, and were received by Jews, outsiders and Romans alike. Jesus refused to be a military Messiah (John 6). Entering Jerusalem (Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12) he rejected traditions of the warrior king and instead approached in the way of Zechariah 9.9-10:

"Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem; and the battle-bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations..."

At the time of Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane, a follower wielded a sword, cutting the ear of the high priest's slave. The gospels give different accounts of the

episode, each indicating Jesus' rejection of the method of violence. Jesus' reported words were: "Put your sword back into its sheath" (John 18.11); "No more of this!", he said, touching the wounded ear to heal it (Luke 22.51); and most damning and prophetic of all, "*Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you not think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?*" (Matthew 26.53). In other words, the tradition shows Jesus as having the (heavenly) means to resist, but deliberately choosing not to do so, and rejecting the use of arms to protect him as well. The cause, defending Jesus himself, may have been more just than ever was claimed in any "just" war, but it met with rebuke. The way of the sword was not the way of Christ.

The risen Christ's Easter greeting was "Peace be with you" (John 20.19-20, 26), the intended hallmark of the resurrection community.

Other New Testament writings: God was identified with the things of peace (as in 1 Thessalonians 5.23, 2 Thessalonians 3.16); and peace was to be sought with holiness (Hebrews 12.14), Romans 12.17, 1 Thessalonians 5.15 and 1 Peter 3.9 all exhort their readers and listeners not to repay anyone evil for evil. "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

The New Testament transformed the deadly weapons of human wars and allowed Christians to have only a spiritual armory in their stead. So Ephesians 6.12-17 speaks of the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit and "as shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace".

In the 1930s, when Canon Dick Sheppard considered wrestling "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6.12), he asked, "Doesn't that describe, quite accurately, what the conscientious objector does when he refuses to bear arms?"

An Anglican approach to war-tax refusal

The Tradition of the Church

In almost all areas of doctrine and Christian teaching, the formative period is regarded as the time of the early Church, when the first followers of Christ tried to come to terms with the implications of his life and witness. Pacifism and war-refusal were taken as normative. A host of early Church witnesses followed Justin Martyr (d.165) in indicating that an essential part of Christian distinctiveness was that the followers of Christ had fulfilled the prophecy of turning swords into

ploughshares and no longer made war on their enemies. Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyons, c.177-202) was adamant that "[we] do not know how to fight, but when struck offer even the other cheek." Clement of Alexandria regularly asserted that Christians reject war. *"For it is not in war, but in peace, that we are trained. War needs great preparation, and luxury craves profusion; but peace and love, simple and quiet sisters, require no arms nor excessive preparation"*.

Origen (185-254) said of Jesus the law-giver, *"He nowhere teaches that it is right for His own disciples to offer violence to any one, however wicked. For He did not deem it in keeping with such laws as His, which were derived from a divine source, to allow the killing of any individual whatever"*. Origen argued that the peaceable ness of Christians was the reason for their success: *"How would it have been possible for the Gospel doctrine of peace, which does not even allow men to take vengeance on their enemies, to prevail throughout the world, unless at the appearance of Jesus a milder spirit had been everywhere introduced into the conduct of things?"*

Tertullian (160-220) asked *"how will a Christian make war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away?"*, for in Gethseman, the Lord, *"in disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier"*. Tertullian added: *"While He is being betrayed ... He to whom, had He willed it, legions of angels would at one word have presented themselves from the heavens, approved not the avenging sword of even one disciple. The patience of the Lord was wounded in (the wound of) Malchus. And so, too, He cursed for ever the works of the sword"*.

In the English Church, examples of unease with war can be traced back to at least the 7th century. The *Penitential of Theodore*, 7th century Archbishop of Canterbury, was not the only document of the age to impose a compulsory period of penance for anyone who had killed in battle. Walter Map, Archdeacon of Oxford, complained about the Knights Templar, that *"they took up in defence of Christianity the sword which had been denied to Peter in the defence of Christ. There Peter had learned to pursue peace by patience: some one or other taught them to defeat force by fighting; they "took up the sword and perished by the sword."*

War-Tax Refusal in the British Christian tradition

At the Council of Oxford in 1197, when a request was made for substantial funds and persons to assist Richard II's wars abroad, Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln refused this war taxation outright. He argued that he was not bound to produce soldiers or money for foreign wars. He said he would *"prefer to return to my native land and resume my normal eremitical way of life"* rather than do such a thing. Herbert le

Poore, Bishop of Salisbury, took a similar stand. In a fit of rage, the king ordered the confiscation of Church property in the dioceses of Lincoln and Salisbury. Le Poore agreed to pay a fine instead, but Hugh refused. Still, nobody would lay hands on his diocesan property for fear that Hugh would excommunicate them. The matter was resolved when Hugh went to the king to deliver some appropriately stern spiritual advice. When Richard calmed down he acknowledged Hugh's courage: *"if all the bishops of the Church were like this one, there is not a king or ruler who would dare to raise his head against them"*.

Writing from within an explicitly Christian tradition, early poets - Langland, Gower, Chaucer - all produced substantive works opposing war and the involvement of Christians in war. A more developed theology of war-resistance followed the disgust of John Wyclif (c.1330-1384) for the wars of the European Church. Wyclif is regarded as a saint in the Church of England calendar and his anti-war expression reached its peak with a petition to Parliament in 1395, which included:

"Manslaughter by battle or pretending a temporal or religious cause without special revelation is expressly contrary to the New Testament which is a law full of grace and mercy. This conclusion is openly proved by the example of Christ's preaching here on earth which mostly taught one to love and to have mercy on his enemies, and not to kill them. The reason is that for the greater part where men fight, after the first stroke, charity is broken; and whosoever dies outside of charity follows the highway to hell... the law of mercy that is the New Testament forbids all manslaughter. In the gospel is the same law found in the Old Testament, "thou shalt not kill"... And knights who run toward heatheness to get themselves a name for killing men, displease much the King of Peace; for by meekness and suffering our belief is multiplied, and fighters and manslayers Jesus Christ hates and warns: "whoever kills by the sword, dies by the sword".

The founding of the Church of England was intended to maintain continuity with the Catholic Church, whilst adopting the best practices of the Reformation. The founding Articles of the Church of England conceded (Article XXXVII) that it was "lawful" (hardly a ringing endorsement), at the order of those in authority, for a person to undertake military duties in wars that satisfied the strict criteria of "just wars", but the language in which the article is phrased clearly implies that such action would be a departure from the norm.

In 1937, the Anglican pacifist Paul Gliddon summed it up as "an extraordinarily unenthusiastic way of summoning us to the colours" paralleled by the lukewarm assent parents sometimes give to the marriage of their daughters, "If she wants to marry him, we won't stop her.." In its cautious tone and language, the Article implies not only that conscientious dissent from legal demands to support war is also lawful but that it could almost be construed as the norm.

An 18th century saint of the Church of England is William Law, whose tract *An Humble, Earnest and Affectionate Address to the Clergy* was damning of combatants on both sides of warfare:

"Who reflects, how many Hundreds of Thousands, nay Millions of young Men, born into this World for no other End, but that they may be Born again of Christ, "are robbed of God's precious Gift of Life to them, " [and] have been either violently forced, or tempted in the Fire of Youth, and full strength of sinful Lusts, to forget God, Eternity, and their own Souls, and rush into a kill or be killed, with as much furious haste, and goodness of Spirit, as Tiger kills Tiger for the sake of his Prey?"

At the end of 1914, a restructuring of the peace movement and the founding of the Fellowship of Reconciliation involved a number of pacifist Anglicans, including Maude Royden and George Lansbury, (later, as a borough councillor in Poplar, imprisoned for leading a non-payment revolt against the unjust taxation structure of London County Council; he subsequently become leader of the Labour Party and Leader of the His Majesty's Opposition in Parliament).

Paul Jones (1880-1941), Anglican Bishop of Utah, USA, was removed from his position because of his anti-war stand. Conscription was introduced into Britain in 1916. Seven per cent of those who came before tribunals as conscientious objectors to military conscription were members of the Church of England. Conscientious objection also took many forms, from the Royal Army Medical Corps, to other non-combatant service within the army, to the Friends' Ambulance Unit (not restricted to Quakers), to work of national importance, to an absolute refusal to undertake any activity that might be related to the total war being waged by the nation. An Anglican absolutist conscientious objector, Harold Brewster, was among a group of men sentenced to "suffer death by being shot" at a military camp in Boulogne. The sentence was later rescinded. Another Anglican absolutist was Thomas Attlee, brother of a future Prime Minister, and a senior committee member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. From 1917-1919 he was subject to a series of cat-and-mouse imprisonments, where he was immediately arrested on release from one prison sentence and given a further sentence. His health suffered irreversible damage.

Those who today refuse to pay taxes that fund the military stand in the tradition of those absolutists. Absolutism is not the only form of Christian pacifism, but it is a relevant, recognised and respected witness within the Anglican tradition.

The Anglican Pacifist Fellowship

From 1937 there has been an organization that embodies pacifism and war resistance within the Anglican Church. A pacifist rally in Westminster that year, with a procession of clergy to Lambeth Palace, led to the founding of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (APF). APF today has over 1200 members, who have agreed to the Fellowship pledge: *"believing that our membership of the Christian Church involves the complete repudiation of modern war, pledge ourselves to renounce war and all preparation to wage war, and to work for the construction of Christian peace in the world."*

Complete repudiation of all preparation to wage war would clearly include a conscientious objection to payment of military taxation. As well as campaigning for peace at every opportunity, APF had a support role for conscientious objectors, especially during the Second World War. Some conscientious objectors still had to endure cat-and-mouse-imprisonment. Anglican pacifists became involved in social projects as an alternative to military duties. One project run by APF included the provision of a soup kitchen (The Hungerford Club) for down-and-outs beneath Hungerford Bridge in London. The Anglican pacifist novelist, Vera Brittain, worked hard to prevent the obliteration bombing of civilians. Canon John Collins from St. Paul's Cathedral was in the forefront of the founding leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Complete repudiation of war and the things that make for war is acknowledged as a mainstream Anglican position and many modern Christians have been at the forefront of campaigning against all recent wars, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For members of APF the wars today, as other wars before them, are simply wrong according to *"the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ"* and so must be opposed on ethical and religious grounds – and as a matter of conscience. The current law - which forces Christians and people of other faiths to pay for deliberate and state institutionalized killing is, quite simply, in contempt of conscience.

Summary

From the above it can be seen that:

- A tradition of war-resistance dates back to the foundations of the Christian faith.
- It is a tradition rooted in scripture.
- The tradition of refusal to pay taxes for war is over 800 years old in the English Church.

- Members of the Church of England have an established record of opposition to war.
- Since 1937, Anglican pacifists have had their own organization, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (APF).
- The refusal to pay taxes for war is an expression of a legitimate absolutist form of conscientious objection.
- It is a refusal that has Anglican precedent and a sound basis in faith.

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