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The Lutheran  
2900 Queen Lane

Philadelphia, Penna. 19129

Dear Editor: ~~so have confined Mars, the god of War, with Jesus, The Peacemaker~~  
Col. Ralph Erchinger's article promoting the injuring, maiming and ~~their~~  
killing of other human beings simply because the government tells us that  
we should is an absolute travesty. The article is intellectually shallow,  
factually inaccurate and theologically flawed. One might expect publication  
of such a piece in a military veteran's magazine but not in a magazine  
published by a church which worships the pacifist named Jesus of Nazareth,

The example of Jesus of Nazareth should be the most dramatic and powerful  
lesson against the brutality of violence and death by one human being against  
another that exists in the written record of human civilization. His life and  
teachings should be profoundly moving to a person who seriously questions  
whether he ought to kill or hurt another human being. And Jesus' absolute,  
clear and incontrovertible pacifism -- from the Sermon on the Mount to his  
refusal to physically resist the soldiers of the high priest and the Romans  
-- ought to set the tone for all Christians consideration of the issues of war  
and peace.

What Erchinger, Ronald Reagan, and other advocates of instant and frequent  
military intervention in the affairs of the world have failed to do is provide  
a persuasive rationale for deployment of American military forces anywhere  
on earth. By failing to accomplish that task, they have coincidentally failed  
to make even a weak case justifying the use of deadly force on another human  
being by a person involved in the American military machine.

The concept of the "just war" was central to Luther's interpretation of Christ's  
teaching, and Luther even said that to participate in a war which one believes  
is unjust is to commit the sin of murder. Erchinger has failed to make a  
persuasive case that any American military involvement since World War II was  
just. In fact, the historical record clearly shows that every American  
military action since August, 1945 has been initiated on behalf of despots  
and has ipso facto, been therefore unjust. Not once has American military  
might been deployed to protect American -- or even North American -- security.  
And not one of the proposed areas of potential American combat -- Iran,  
Afghanistan, Israel, Ecuador, and the rest -- harbor any threat to America's  
security whatsoever. The result is that proposals to involve this country  
in foreign wars unrelated to our national security are <sup>suggestive</sup> proposing that we unjustly  
use our military force as the self-appointed policeman of the world, compelling  
weaker countries to do what we tell them to do simply because we have the might  
and that might makes right.

Conscientious objection is the most persuasive way to prevent use of American  
military power in an unjust way. Because of that, conscientious objection  
ought to be not only tolerated, but encouraged and recommended. We need to  
make damn sure that if and when we go to war, we have a just cause and that  
military action is the last -- rather than first -- resort.

It is distressing that Erchinger -- and the letter-writers previously published who seem to froth at the mouth in delight at the thought of war -- seem to have confused Mars, the god of War, with Jesus, The Prince of Peace. Military personnel are so brainwashed by the time of their discharge that it seems likely that their indoctrination supersedes their religious instruction and they mistake Jesus and his teaching as the rationale for killing and for war. To take the views of any military man seriously regarding conscientious objection or the general issues of preparedness or specific military intervention is stupid folly.

President John F. Kennedy once said of former Air Force General Curtis LeMay that "LeMay is the kind of man you want in the lead bomber when you have to go to war...but he is exactly the kind of man you don't want to have making the decision whether to go to war." That same lesson is true for Ralph Erchinger and the other military apologists who claim a ~~heart~~ in life and the Christian church.

Sincerely,  
*Thomas A. Prentice*

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