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Generosity, not domination is the way forward

John Dear | Jun. 5, 2007 On the Road to Peace

A few years ago my friend Rabbi Michael Lerner of Tikkun magazine launched the Network of Spiritual Progressives to unite religious activists from across the spectrum to confront the issues dividing the nation and the world. I joined the group and recently we placed an ad in The New York Times titled, An Ethical Way to End the War in Iraq: Generosity Beats Domination as a Strategy for Homeland Security [1]." Already it has sparked debate and serious interest from many politicians about a new way forward.

Our statement outlines three basic steps.

First, we agree that the war is wrong and we undertake repentance with renewed generosity toward the world's poor. The ad reads: "The remedy for wrong-doing begins not only with the act of changing the path (Stop funding the war!), but also with apology and repentance. Therefore we ask that our elected representatives go before the U.N. and acknowledge that it was wrong for the U.S. to invade Iraq, that hundreds of thousands of innocent people have been killed and wounded in the chain of events that our invasion precipitated. The war has also created over two million refugees. For the suffering and deaths that have come from this invasion, we, the American people, ask forgiveness."

As we do this, we acknowledge our fundamental mistake: Believing that "safety and security can be achieved through domination or control of others." We say that "a better path to safety and security is to treat others with generosity, kindness and genuine concern for their well being. We urge the Congress to pass a resolution rejecting the strategy of domination and embracing the strategy of generosity, and calling upon the world's people to forgive our society for the destructive path it has followed."

Second, we call for replacing U.S. and British forces in Iraq with an international peace force acceptable to the Iraqi people, composed primarily of Muslims from non-neighboring states and also non-Muslims from other states not engaged in violence or economic boycotts against the Iraqi people, to provide security and conduct a plebiscite so that the Iraqi people themselves can determine their future. The ad reads: "The U.S. should give all our Iraqi military bases to this force, leave no forces behind as 'advisors' or deployed in neighboring states ready to re-intervene, and we should require all U.S. corporations operating in Iraq give at least the majority of their Iraq-derived profits to the task of Iraqi reconstruction."

Third, we call for rebuilding Iraq and launching a Global Marshall Plan. The United States must commit hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild Iraq fully. But that is only part of a larger Global Marshall Plan, which the U.S. should now announce, committing at least 1 percent of its gross domestic product each year for the next 20 years with the aim of eliminating global and domestic poverty, homelessness, inadequate health care and

inadequate education, and for repairing the environment.

"Just as the first Marshall Plan allocated 1.5-2% of GDP after the Second World War to the rebuilding of Europe," the ad reads, "this second Marshall Plan, extended to the rest of the world, will provide far more homeland security for the U.S. than the currently planned military spending that will squander our resources."

This Global Marshall Plan, suggests Rabbi Lerner, is the beginning of a new strategy of generosity, a core requirement of our scriptures. It not only helps increase American security and respect for America around the world, but it is morally appropriate and religiously mandated.

"Fostering an ethos of genuine caring for others -- countering the ethos of selfishness, materialism and me-firstism that has been the 'common sense' of a cynical media and our market-driven culture -- must become the highest domestic and foreign policy priority for our society," the ad reads. "Don't let media and politicians convince you this is 'unrealistic' or 'utopian,' because history shows (and the Iraq war proves) that militarism and domination are far less 'realistic' as paths to peace and security."

For the past nine months, my friends and I have prepared to stand trial for a small effort to speak out against this war. (See my column of April 17 [2] for more on this.) It looks like our trial will be postponed until September, because we dared to subpoena Sen. Pete Domenici. Still, we keep hope in this practical vision, a new national conversion of heart that produces concrete change, beginning with the end of this immoral, illegal, evil war and the elimination of poverty, disease and nuclear weapons, which are at the root of terrorism.

Violence, war and domination have utterly failed to achieve any noble end. It's time we tried God's commandment of universal love, through active disarmament and global generosity. We might one day discover what true peace looks like.

Fr. John Dear's new book, *Transfiguration*, (Doubleday, with a foreword by Archbishop Tutu) is available from your local book seller or
www.amazon.com [3]. Or for more information, visit:
www.johndear.org [4]. For info on the Network of Spiritual Progressives, go to: **www.tikkun.org/iraqpeace [1]**.

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