

Pacifism and the OT



Christian Pacifism 7 – Mosaic Law, Lawful Warfare

Mosaic Law Includes Violence



Lawful Mosaic Violence



- ⌘ Adultery - Lev 20:10-12
- ⌘ Bestiality - Lev 20:15
- ⌘ Incest - Lev 20:17
- ⌘ Practicing magic - Exodus 22:18
- ⌘ Murder - Exodus 21:12



How do Pacifists Respond?

Mosaic Law is an Accommodation



- ❧ “the law was not God’s ideal moral code for all people of all time. Rather, God met the Israelites where they were and began to take “incremental steps” toward His moral ideal. Nonviolence – it’s not just a New Testament invention. It’s the capstone of the Old.” -Sprinkle, *Fight*, location 485
- ❧ “So the perceived strictness or violent nature of these biblical laws must be understood in light of other ancient cultures rather than our own.” - Sprinkle, *Fight*, location 464
- ❧ “Moses’s laws of punishment, while seemingly harsh from our perspective, were much more humane in light of ancient Near Eastern systems of law.” -Sprinkle, *Fight*, location 801

Where does the Accommodation Stop?



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Heresy of Marcionism



- ✧ Founded in 144 AD by Marcion of Sinope
- ✧ Affirmed the teachings of Jesus and Paul
- ✧ Rejected the teachings of the OT and the OT God

Pacifist Marcionism



- ✧ Rejects the teaching of the OT as an accommodation
- ✧ Asserts that only NT law must be followed
- ✧ Reads extensively or exclusively from the NT to the exclusion of OT
 - ✧ “The OT does not know of gentleness, the benevolence towards all creatures of God, the charity towards enemies, which appears everywhere in the New Testament.” -Lassere, *War and the Gospel*, p. 61

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- ❧ If God is merely accommodating to the OT audience, what's the guarantee that he's not accommodating to the NT audience?
- ❧ How is this different from Marcionism?
- ❧ Accommodation creates a bigger problem for Pacifists than it solves

God Doesn't Describe it as Accommodation



“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.” (Psalm 19:7-9 ESV)

“The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” (Psalm 119:160 ESV)

“So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” (Romans 7:12 ESV)

What of OT Warfare?



God meant to do the Fighting



- ☞ “The LORD will fight for you, and you will only have to be still.” Exodus 14:13
- ☞ “The victories were “not a record of exceptional prowess in battle or mopping-up, but rather a victory brought about by the Lord himself.” –Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, p. 80
- ☞ “Confidence in YHWH is an alternative to the self-determining use of Israel’s own military resources in the defense of their existence as God’s people” –Yoder, p. 83

Problems with above interpretation



- ❧ The words quoted are from Moses to the people of Israel
- ❧ God used human agency (Moses participated in the violence)
 - ❧ Moses' outstretched arms were used by God to open the sea (14:21)
 - ❧ Moses' closed arms closed the sea (14:26)
 - ❧ "Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle" (Psalm 144:1 ESV)

But God Commands the Warfare



☞ “for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.”

(Deuteronomy 20:4 ESV)

☞ “And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword....but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded”

(Deuteronomy 20:13, 17 ESV)

OT Warfare was less Brutal



✧ God restricted means of warfare against other nations

Restrictions on Warfare



- ☞ “Israel’s army is made up of volunteers at the time of battle.” Sprinkle, *Fight*, location 697
- ☞ “if the Israelites do go to war, they are to first offer peace to the city before they fight against it.” – location 701
- ☞ “only if the city rejects peace is Israel sanctioned to go to war”
“noncombatants are not to be killed during war”
- ☞ “even fruit trees aren’t to be destroyed”

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- ✧ God restricted means of warfare against other nations
- ✧ Annihilation wasn't total

OT Warfare was less Brutal



- ✧ God restricted means of warfare against other nations
- ✧ Annihilation wasn't total
- ✧ God's Government Prevented Violence

Problems with this Defense



- ✧ God commanded the warfare
- ✧ Any sanctioned destruction is still sanctioned violence
- ✧ Prevention of the scale of violence is not the same as pacifism

Reasonable Conclusions



- ✧ In a fallen world, God uses violence to accomplish his will
- ✧ His use of violence is more humane than the pagan world
- ✧ His use of violence always highlights His agency
- ✧ Even as we use violence, we trust in God ultimately



Questions or Comments?