

Christian Ethics

War, Pacifism, and Violent Solutions

Movements closely related to the Baptists have practiced some form of pacifism

- The Anabaptist's emerged in the 16th century: groups like Mennonites and Hutterites.
- Pacifism is built around several concepts:
- Jesus told us to love our enemies. Matthew 5.38-44
- Jesus told us to endure persecution.

- God is sovereign, and so resistance might be resistance against God
- Paul told us to not repay evil with evil.
Romans 12.17
- (But if, for example, justice calls for capital punishment, isn't letting the person live evil?)
- One of the dangers of “blanket” pacifism is that it doesn't distinguish between righteous violence and unrighteous violence

Is violence ever a solution?

- Children should be spanked.
- Pro. 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Pro. 23:14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

- God did it.
- Exo 14:24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,
- Exo 14:27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.
- Exo. 15:3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

- God ordered it.
- 1Sa 15:3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.
- 1Sa 15:33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

So the critical question is, “When is violence righteous, and when is it not?”

Violence is unrighteous if

- If it is just for love of destruction.
Gen.6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence
- It is for personal vengeance.
Rom.12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
- It's an attempt to bring the kingdom. John 18.36

But it is not always unrighteous

- Luke 3.14: John the Baptist did not ban military service
- Governments are granted violent powers. Romans 13.3-4; I Peter 2.13-14
- David was a man of war, and yet a righteous man

- Augustine (AD.354-430) was the first to use the phrase “just war”
- Thomas Aquinas (AD 1224-1274) defined it as requiring:
 - A proper authority—civil government
 - A justifiable purpose
 - Peace (not conquest) as the ultimate goal