



## ***The Immorality Of Pacifism, Part 2***

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Not everyone who opposes pacifism is “pro-war.” Sometimes those who hold to a doctrine of pacifistic nonviolence paint those of us who don't with the broad brush of “warmonger!” It should be obvious with only a few moments' reflection that one can be “pro-peace” without being “pro-pacifism.”

I love peace. I want peace in my home. I want peace in my neighborhood. I want peace in the streets. I want peace among nations. Nobody in their right mind prefers war to peace, all things being equal. Even men and women in the military prefer peace to war! No non-pacifist I have ever met prefers war to peace. None. I **enjoy** peace. I prefer peace to war, as a general rule.

I don't believe that violence, per se, is a moral good. Nor is war a moral good, in and of itself. However, there are times when peace and nonviolence are, in themselves, horrible moral evils. Pacifism and non-violence in the face of moral crimes end up promoting evil and advancing violence, thus creating more of the very thing it supposedly opposes. What are we to make of a moral system that ends up allowing and advancing the very evil it opposes? Any such moral system is inherently flawed and self-contradictory.

Having dealt with the pacifist arguments from biblical texts in the previous article<sup>1</sup>, we now turn our attention to other pacifist arguments and a discussion on the moral use of force.

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<sup>1</sup> In part 1 of this series on pacifism, I dealt with the “biblical” arguments for pacifism. You can find that article and others archived on our website at [kootenaichurch.org](http://kootenaichurch.org).

### **Answering The Arguments**

**Argument #1 : “War is not the answer!”** Have you ever seen that bumper sticker? Indeed, war **may not** be the answer, but it depends on what the question is. If my neighbor and I have a dispute about his barking dog, then war is not the answer. If a homicidal, dictatorial, ego-maniacal madman is attacking the nation next door, raping and murdering their citizens, starving people, stealing, plundering, and abusing children, then I think war may indeed be the answer. It depends on the question.

Which do we prefer: opposing a madman's violence with violence, or sitting idly by while millions are starved, abused, murdered, raped and plundered? Which is the higher moral crime? In such a scenario, violence and the use of force, even lethal force, is not only just and moral, but obligatory.

What was the answer to Hideki Tojo's oppressive imperialistic advances against China, Korea, Russia, and even the US (Pearl Harbor) during World War II? I suppose the pacifist would have had us send flowers? Sit back, roll over, and allow Tojo to advance across Asia and the South Pacific, killing millions in a matter of months? Had every nation surrendered, would that have stopped Tojo? Are we to believe that, in the face of no opposition, he would have reconsidered and given up his murderous oppression in order to devote more time to the perfection of his origami skills?

What was the answer to Hitler? If all the European nations had rolled over and offered no opposition to Hitler, what are we to think would have been the outcome of the

Third Reich? Are we to believe that Hitler would have immediately ceased his live human experiments on the Jews, shut down the concentration camps, stopped the gas chambers, his military advances and pursuit of purging the earth of all but the master race, and return home to Berlin to eat sauerkraut and begin designing the Volkswagen Bug?

What is the pacifist answer for the violence of men like this? It seems the pacifist would allow great moral crimes and injustices to be perpetrated upon innocent third parties rather than use force to prevent or stop it.

This is kind of like saying, “**Violence never solved anything.**” That is absurd on the face of it. Violence stopped Nazism in its tracks and kept Hitler from exterminating even more Jews. Violence stopped Tojo, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein, and his raping sons. The use of violence stopped the “shoe bomber” Richard Reed and saved hundreds of lives. On 9/11, the use of violence against 19 terrorists would have saved 3,000 American lives. If dozens more had acted with the moral courage and conviction of Todd Beamer, thousands more would be alive today. The pacifist would have us believe that 3,000 people burning, suffocating, and plummeting to their deaths is to be preferred to using force or violence (lethal if necessary) to subdue 19 men with evil intentions? Please!

Of course violence solves things. That is why we have police and prison guards. The same liberals who try to tell us that violence doesn't solve anything seem to have no problem hiring bodyguards who pack firearms.<sup>2</sup> Even pacifist presidents don't seem to have any problems allowing the Secret Service to do their jobs. Why? Because they **know** that violence solves a lot of things. They know that the moral use of force prevents evil from advancing and innocent people from suffering.

**Argument #2: “If you use violence to oppose violence then you are just using one evil to oppose another.”**

This argument commits a logical fallacy called “begging the question.” To “beg the question” is to assume that your argument is true in order to prove your argument is true. It is to use the conclusion in the premise of the argument. The above argument **assumes** that *all violence is evil* in order to prove that you should never use it because all violence is evil.

The question at hand is, “Is the use of violence *always*

evil?” If the answer is “no” then using violence to oppose violence is *not* using evil to oppose evil. My point is that the use of violence against an evil person is not evil, but justified and obligatory.

**Argument #3: “The Bible says ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ therefore all killing is wrong.”**

Actually, the Bible says “Thou shalt not *murder*.” There is a difference. In the Ten Commandments, Moses used the Hebrew word for murder (*rasah*) and **not** the generic word for killing (*harag*).

*Rasah* (murder) refers to manslaughter, killing for revenge or assassination. It is murder and not simply killing. **Exodus 20:13** forbids manslaughter or the *unjustified taking of innocent human life*.

If Moses had intended to say that *all killing* was prohibited, then he would have used *harag*, which was used to refer to killing, judicial execution, and even, though rarely, the killing of animals.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes *harag* was used of both murder and killing. For instance in Genesis 9:6, the same word is used for unjustified killing (murder) and justified killing (capital punishment). In the event that a man murders another, he should forfeit his life (be executed or killed). Primarily, *harag* refers to unjustified killing.

Not all killing is always wrong. God Himself commanded the death of a man-slayer.<sup>4</sup> The Old Testament law also prescribed just execution for other crimes such as blasphemy, homosexuality, witchcraft, bestiality, adultery, kidnapping, and disobedience to parents.<sup>5</sup> God commanded the children of Israel to destroy life as a judgment upon the wickedness of those living in Canaan.<sup>6</sup>

Not all killing is murder. Murder is wrong. It is always wrong because it is the *unjustified taking of innocent human life*. Though all murder involves killing, not all killing is murder. Justified execution of a criminal who deserves the death penalty is not murder, though it is killing.<sup>7</sup> What is it that makes killing murder? When it is **unjustified** and against an **innocent** human.

In the scenario of a man seeking to kill and harm

<sup>3</sup> Killing of animals is obviously not prohibited by that commandment.

<sup>4</sup> **Genesis 9:5-6.**

<sup>5</sup> **Leviticus 20:10; 18:22; 24:11-14; Exodus 21:16; 22:18 ; 22:19; 35:2; Deuteronomy 21:18-21.**

<sup>6</sup> **Exodus 23:32-33; 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18.**

<sup>7</sup> **Genesis 9:5-6.** For a more complete treatment of the subject of capital punishment, please see *Christians And Capital Punishment* on our website: [kootenaichurch.org](http://kootenaichurch.org).

<sup>2</sup> Like Michael Moore for instance.

innocent third parties using force, even lethal force is not unjustified and it is not against an innocent person. It is justified in order to prevent or correct a horrible moral crime. The perpetrator is certainly not innocent.<sup>8</sup>

**Argument #4: “You can’t use these extreme examples of mass murderers, lunatics, and genocidal maniacs to disprove pacifism.”**

Why not? These are hardly “extreme examples.” These things are happening today! They happen every day and affect millions of lives. If pacifism advances horrible moral crimes all over the world on both a small and large scale, why should I trust it to stop evil when it invades my home?

The truth is self-evident to everyone but the pacifist. Pacifism does not work!

**Argument #5: “We are commanded to love our neighbor as ourself. How can you act violently toward a neighbor and love him at the same time?”**

The problem with this argument is that it is built upon a faulty idea of love. Does loving your neighbor mean that you allow him to do evil? How is that loving?

Let’s say a man wanders into the restaurant where you are enjoying a steak with your family. He is visibly strung out on drugs, out of his mind, and he begins waving around a loaded handgun. As he wanders by your table, he cocks the gun and aims it at the family in the next booth as he begins shouting obscenities. Suddenly you become aware that you are holding the steak knife in your hand. You are presented with a brief window of opportunity. What do you do? Better yet, what is the loving thing to do?

The loving thing to do is not to allow the violent man to inflict violence. He would only be incurring the judgment of God and serving to heap up his eternal punishment. The loving thing toward the gun-wielding man would be to **prevent** him from perpetrating a horrible moral evil. Love does what is in the best interests of another. Is it in his best interests to kill a number of people? No. Therefore, love sacrifices one’s own safety to prevent him from doing what is clearly not in his best interests.

<sup>8</sup> Liberals often try to argue that the pro-life position is inconsistent since many who oppose abortion favor capital punishment. This is absurd since it is not “taking life” that pro-life people oppose. We oppose the *unjustified* taking of *innocent* human life. Abortion is unjustified since the reasons used to defend abortion are not sufficient justification for taking the life, and the life being taken is an innocent life. The moral confusion present in someone who tries to equate Ted Bundy with the baby in the womb is self evident!

Further, what about the family in the next booth? Is it loving to them to stand idly by while he takes their lives? What about the rest of the people in the restaurant? What about loving them? Is it loving toward them for you to sit by while he continues to be a danger to them as well? The pacifist would answer “yes.” Clearly this is twisted moral reasoning.

In such a scenario, we are not caught on the horns of a moral dilemma between loving the maniac and loving everyone else in the restaurant. The loving thing to do for **everyone** involved is to use force, violence, and, yes, even lethal force if necessary to subdue the danger and prevent a moral evil from taking place.

I have an obligation to show my family love by protecting them from such dangers. I have a moral obligation to show my neighbor love by acting to protect him from such danger. The pacifist prefers to show love<sup>9</sup> toward a wicked, guilty, violent person by allowing him to commit horrible moral crimes against his innocent friends and family. The pacifist should try showing some love for someone other than a murderer!

**Argument #6: “O.K., fine, but I might prefer to allow an evil person to do evil to me rather than fight back.”**

That’s fine. But that is not really what I am talking about. If you and you alone are threatened, you are fully within your rights to do nothing and allow a horrible moral evil to be committed against you. I’m willing to give you that much, but I think that you should add a couple of considerations to your moral equation.

First, is that the loving thing to do to him? Is it loving to allow someone to commit evil? Is that in *his* best interests? If not, then I think you have a moral obligation to try to prevent him.

Second, what if his ability to harm or kill you only emboldens him, hardens his heart, and enables him to do the same thing to others? Then haven’t you failed to love the others by preventing him?

Those things aside, my argument against pacifism has to do with what pacifism allows to happen to **others**. The pacifist is willing to stand by while **others** are violated and harmed. **That is inherently immoral. A commitment to nonviolence toward the guilty ends up advancing violence against the innocent. That is a moral crime!**

If you are alone when an intruder enters with the

<sup>9</sup> It is a twisted idea of love which is in no way worthy of what the Bible says concerning love.

intention of killing everyone in the house, then you may choose to do nothing and allow yourself to be killed. But if your wife and kids are home, then you have **a moral obligation** to provide for their good, for their protection. If you have it within your power to do what is right and you do not do it, it is sin.<sup>10</sup> By the way, how is it the loving thing toward your wife and kids to allow yourself to be killed? How does it show love to your wife to willingly deprive her of her breadwinner, covenant companion, and spouse? How is it loving to your kids to allow their dad to be taken from them when you could stop it with the moral use of force?

### **Is There A Moral Use of Force?**

It should be obvious that the Bible does not prohibit all killing. There were times in the Bible when killing someone was not only necessary, but morally obligatory. The same can be said about the use of force or violence. Whether it is wrong or not depends on who is doing it, who it is being done to, and why it is being done. The Bible makes clear that there are times when force has a moral use which is for the good of everyone involved.

Consider this moral question: what do you think of a man who cuts the limbs off of people while they sleep? How would you feel if you went to sleep on a bed and woke up minus a leg or an arm? What kind of morally heinous monster would cut off someone's limbs while they slept?

What if I told you that the person whose limb is being cut off agreed to the act, **and** the limb contained a spreading disease that if left attached would result in the person's death, **and** the person cutting off the limb is a trained surgeon? Now what do you think of this man who cuts off the limbs of people while they sleep?

Whether what he does is a moral travesty or a blessing depends upon who he is, whose limb he is removing, and why he is removing it. Chopping off limbs is an act of violence against an individual and his body. The question is, is it ever justified? Obviously, yes.

Likewise, whether the use of force or violence against another human person is moral or immoral depends on who is using the force, who the force is being used against, and for what purpose. Since the Bible does not prohibit the use of force or violence, then there are clearly times when the aggressive use of force to prevent a

horrible moral evil is not only morally justified, but morally obligatory.

Some examples:

1. **Government use of force.** One of the roles of government as a God-ordained authority is to wield the sword to punish evildoers (**Romans 13:4; 1 Peter 2:13-14**). The imagery of the sword in Romans 13 is not accidental! Governments have not only the authority to execute the guilty, but the moral obligation to execute criminals who commit capital crimes (**Genesis 9:5-6**). Governments, whose authority exists by the will and decree of God, have the authority to use force, even lethal force, for the good of its citizens.

2. **Self-defense.** As we saw in part 1 of this article, the Bible does not require that we sit idly by while we or others are abused by evil men. In the event that life or safety is threatened by someone with ill intent, I believe that the loving and right thing to do is to oppose that evil with force. **Lethal force should never be a first resort.** But when all other options are exhausted, the loving, the right, the just thing is to use whatever force is necessary to subdue evil. That is the moral use of force.

### **The Failure of Pacifism**

I started by saying that, generally speaking, I prefer peace to war. Just because I am not a pacifist does not make me a warmonger or a violent man. I simply do not believe that a commitment to nonviolence in all circumstances ends up advancing a moral end--nor does it advance peace.

Though I prefer peace to war, I do believe there are circumstances when war is preferable to peace. I would rather have war than oppression. I would rather see a war fought than be invaded by a foreign enemy intent on the murder and destruction of my family and my friends.

Anyone who has had to face down a bully knows that rolling over and offering no resistance does not serve to deter a bully or win his heart. It only encourages more aggression. I believe a commitment to nonviolence (pacifism) does not solve or prevent aggression. It only makes for more aggression and encourages more aggressors. It makes the advance of evil easier for those who advance it. Pacifists seem oblivious to a self-evident truth that any 5<sup>th</sup> Grade child knows: sometimes the only way to stop a bully is to **stop** a bully.

Though holding to a pacifistic ideal may make

<sup>10</sup> James 4:17.

someone feel good, it ends up actually doing little good. It does not work to deter crime, to deter aggression, or to turn hearts. In short, life in the real world constantly shows that pacifism fails to promote what it claims is the highest moral good.

Pacifism doesn't work because it fails to rightly understand the nature of fallen man. Pacifism has a romanticized view of man which leaves no room for the truth that sinful man will not be deterred from his violence by the good intentions and well wishes of his victim. It fails to understand that in a fallen world, force must be used to deter, prevent, and right horrible moral evils.

It fails to understand the difference between the obligations of a government and the obligations of an individual. An individual is forbidden to seek revenge and punish criminals. The government is obligated to do so, using the sword if necessary.

Pacifism allows evil men to triumph and perpetrate moral crimes upon innocent people without resistance. Pacifism refuses to show love to both the victim and the perpetrator. Pacifism promotes a theory of nonviolence which only encourages further violence from the violent, thus encouraging great moral evils. Pacifism is immoral.

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