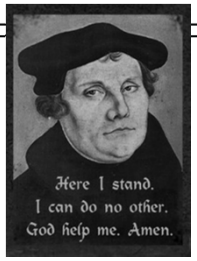
HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH



TIME TO REFLECT,

TIME TO REACT,

TIME TO STAND UP

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http://themajestysmen.com/here-i-stand-bravery-boldness-martin-luther/

CHRISTIANITY, WAR, AND VIOLENCE

- What are the views of war and violence in the Hebrew Bible?
- What are the views of war and violence in the New Testament?
- Reality Check
- What did Jesus say about war, violence, and being armed?
- What did the Reformers say?
- What are the current Presbyterian Policies on war, terrorism, conscientious objection, and gun control?
- What can we make of all of this?

Image: http://militarythoughts.blogspot.com/2004/10/this-is-coolbert-when-reading-bible.html

WAR AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

- "we cannot understand the Old Testament without reference to war.
- **a nation no larger than the state of Vermont** located in the strategic Syria-Palestinian corridor—and all the surrounding nations coveted it.
- 'a buffer zone' between "Egypt in the south and various Mesopotamian empires in the north-northeast"
- Contrast the **more restrained narratives of the Old Testament** to the gory and blood-curdling history of war in Assyrian records. Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal boasted that he draped the skin of enemy corpses over the walls of their cities, and "with their blood I dyed the mountain red like red wool...I cut off their heads...I burnt their adolescent boys and girls."

https://www.algemeiner.com/2012/12/04/annexation-and-withdrawal-a-modest-proposal/map-2/

Wood, John A. 11 "War in the Old Testament." Copyright © 2004 Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University
https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

PROPHETS WARN OF DEPENDENCE ON MILITARY POWER

- "it is striking how many times **the biblical prophets condemn Israel's militarism** and how much they long for peace.
- The prophet Hosea scolds the Northern Kingdom (Israel) for having **'trusted in your power and in the multitude of your warriors'** (Hosea 10:13), and faults the Southern Kingdom (Judah) for building 'multiplied fortified cities'(8:14), indicating that the foreign policy of both kingdoms had become thoroughly militarized.
- **A "mystique of violence" permeated Israelite society in the eighth century, and the prophets cried out against it."**

http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/hebrew-prophet.html

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SYNERGISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF HOLY WAR

- "The concept of **holy war** was widespread in the ancient Near East during the biblical period.
- After examining the historical records from areas surrounding Israel, Gwilym Jones concludes that all the nations **believed that their affairs were controlled by the gods, and they attributed military successes to the work of their gods**.
- One important strand in Israel's tradition of holy war was **the belief that God fought *with* the nation**. (4-5)
- Patrick Miller describes this as a belief in '**synergism,'** that victory was the result of a fusion of divine and human activity."

https://www.eternallifeblog.com/nehushtan/

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https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

GOD FIGHTS *FOR* ISRAEL

- "**Joshua** is the classic example of the noble warrior in Israel: while the biblical texts insist that victory was ultimately from God, his careful military preparation and brilliant strategy were essential. Numerous warriors in the book of **Judges—Deborah, Gideon, Samson**, and so on—as well as the incomparable **King David** later on, fit this mold.
- However, this synergistic understanding of holy war is not the only one present in Scripture. **Beginning with the Exodus event, there is a firm belief that God fights not with or through Israel, but *for* Israel.** "The Lord will fight for you," Moses tells the people, "and you have only to keep still" (Exodus 14:14). Israel's role was "limited" to worship and singing." (5-6)

https://annoyzview.wordpress.com/2015/01/13/who-was-the-pharaoh-of-exodusexodus-is-perhaps-the-greatest-salvation-event-mentioned-in-the-old-testament-there-is-no-wonder-then-that-hollywood-has-over-the-years-exploited-the-event-to-come-up-wi/

Wood, John A. 11 "War in the Old Testament." Copyright © 2004 Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University
https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

HEBREW BIBLE ON PACIFISM

- "Many passages express the **classic pacifist view that God will bring about peace without violence.** The roots of Old Testament pacifism are found as early as the patriarchal period.
- **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob coexisted peacefully with the inhabitants of Canaan**, refusing to fight over territory and water rights, and offering alternative solutions for problems that war would not solve (for example, Genesis 21:25-34; 26:17-33; 36:6-9).
- Even the Exodus story contains elements of traditional pacifism, placing the **Egyptians** in a good light when some of them **donate items to the Israelites and even accompany them out of Egypt** (Exodus 12:35-36, 38). All the hostility is directed toward Pharaoh, who embodies the evil of rejecting God."

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https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

HEBREW BIBLE ON PACIFISM

- "The prophet **Elisha** cures the enemy Syrian general Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14) and later insists that a captured army of Aramaeans be fed and released (2 Kings 6:8-23). The remarkable conclusion to the latter story reads: "And the Aramaeans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel."
- ... the obscure prophet **Oded** challenges the standard treatment of captives by having them clothed, fed, and returned to their homeland (2 Chronicles 28:9-15). **These prophets believed the horrible domestic consequences of warfare not only must be but could be averted by bold non-violent initiatives.**"
- Isaiah and Micah also supported non-violent solutions.

http://freecoloringpages.co.uk/

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https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

JUST WAR

"The "just war" perspective, developed within the Christian tradition by medieval theologians such as Augustine, Suarez, and Aquinas, has roots in the Old Testament. In a few passages war is justified not on the basis of a perceived direct command from God or a unique Israelite theological principle, but on the basis of humankind's universal sense of justice."

- "**Jephthah**'s speech in Judges 11:14-27 has a courtroom ring to it, when he asks God to judge the merits of the land dispute with the Ammonites not on the basis that Israel can claim to be God's chosen people, but on the **reciprocal rights and obligations of the disputants.**
- Similarly, **King Jehoshaphat** argues against a military coalition attacking him as if they were in "the courtroom of Yahweh"; he details that Judah has clear title to the disputed land, has possessed it peacefully, and mercifully had not destroyed these nations when Judah had power to do so (2 Chronicles 20:5-12). **Jehosphaphat appears to argue that Judah earlier had waged war with a view to establishing an enduring and equitable peace, a theme found in traditional just-war theory.**
- Later, the prophet **Amos condemns the surrounding nations for violating commonly accepted norms of justice** (Amos 1-2). In these settings, God is not perceived as a might-makes-right sovereign."

Wood, John A. 11 "War in the Old Testament." Copyright © 2004 Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University
https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

JUST WAR

- The Just War "tradition co-existed in ancient Israel alongside other understandings of war.
- Their experience of being under almost constant threat from neighboring peoples understandably pushed the Israelites toward more militant and emotional views of warfare.
- Yet *at times they moved beyond a visceral response to a calmer, more reasoned one*."

Wood, John A. 11 "War in the Old Testament." Copyright © 2004 Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University
https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS: JOHN WOOD'S SUMMARY

- **"some Christians struggle to move beyond the holy-war mentality in the Old Testament.**
- We judge that many **other ancient Israelite practices—including polygamy in the family, patriarchal treatment of women in society, monarchy in government, and dietary laws in religion—are not normative, for we insist that Jesus Christ is the standard by which all Scripture is interpreted and applied.**
- By this standard we should discern that **ancient Israel's holy-war mentality was more influenced by the surrounding cultures than by the revelation of God.**
- **Regardless of whether holy war was ever normative for ancient Israel, we should acknowledge that holy war is not a proper Christian response to war and conflict.**

http://www.crusadesandcrusaders.com/2013/01/16/prominent-figures-of-the-first-crusade/

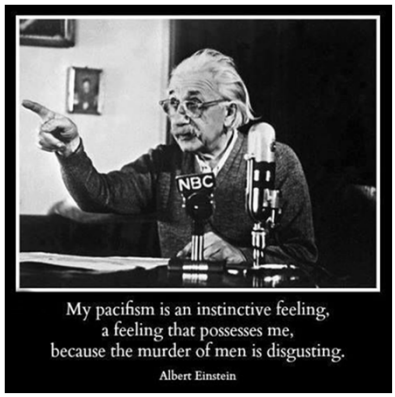
Wood, John A. 11 "War in the Old Testament." Copyright © 2004 Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University
https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/PeaceandWararticleWood.pdf

BBC Religions http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/christianethics/war.shtml

PACIFIST AND JUST WAR POSITIONS

Actually, Einstein is an example of both pacifist and just war perspectives, being a part of the post WWI pacifist movement and a reluctant supporter of US intervention in WWI.

- "share a **presumption against violence** and place **severe limits on the use of violence to resolve conflict**.
- **Pacifists** urge that there is Always a non-violent way to respond to conflict.
- **Just-war theorists**, while admitting their approach has been misused by some people to justify virtually any use of state violence, insist that **violence, when it is truly justified at all, must be the last resort, carried out in a restrained manner, and used with humility and grief**.
- For example, when Christians first served in the Roman army in the third century, churches welcomed home their soldiers not with tickertape parades, but with **the requirement that they retreat and mourn over their participation in killing, even when their participation in war was morally justified**." (Wood 16-17)



http://quotesgram.com/pacifism-quotes-funny/

BBC Religions http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/christianethics/war.shtml

CHRISTIANITY AND THE ETHICS OF WAR

http://wallpaperscristaos.com.br/christianwallpapers/war-peace

- "The main Christian view of war ethics is contained in the doctrine of the **Just War**.
- The basic assumption of modern Christians is that war is **rarely justified and should be avoided unless the Just War conditions are met.**
- An individual Christian may believe that **the standard of evidence and argument required for them to support a war is higher than the standard of evidence that national leaders may require to go to war**."

"Christianity is no longer (if it ever was) wholly against war. Some say that modern Christianity has a **'presumption against war'**, but others say that it has a **'presumption against injustice'** - and the bias against war comes from the injustice that war can do.

This view says that **the aim of Christianity is to promote a world in which peace and justice flourish everywhere**: war may sometimes be the **tool** needed to do this, and waging war may sometimes be a **lesser evil** (a lesser injustice) than allowing injustice to persist or tolerating the victimisation of innocent people.

BBC Religions http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/christianethics/war.shtml

CHRISTIAN PACIFISM

- **"Christians have a long history of refusing to take part in war.** Many Christians are pacifists of various types. These range from peace activists to those who need a great deal to convince them that war is justified.
- The Christian argument for pacifism is based partly on Jesus's teaching in the **Sermon on the Mount** and other places, and in the **example that Jesus sets Christians** through his life.

Those who argue against this say that Christ's pacifist nature and behaviour were part of his unique role as redeemer of humanity. Christians are not redeemers and so their conduct should follow Christ by seeking to bring peace and justice to the world even if this means not always **'turning the other cheek**'."

http://www.patheos.com/blogs/formerlyfundie/was-jesus-a-pacifist/?ref_widget=trending&ref_blog=emergentvillage&ref_post=now-a-poem-and-painting-reminding-us-to-be-present

BBC Religions http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/christianethics/war.shtml

CHRISTIAN GROUPS THAT EMPHASISE PACIFISM

- **Mennonites**: a church that grew out of the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the early 1500s. Mennonites believe Christ's injunction to **"love your enemies"** prevents them from participating in any way in military action against another country.
- **Quakers** (or The Religious Society of Friends): a Christian group with a total commitment to non-violence. In 1660 the Quakers declared **"...the spirit of Christ which leads us into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of the world."**

http://coursesite.uhcl.edu/HSH/Whitec/texts/AmClassics/RomFiction/StoweUTC/UTC/UTCQuaker.htm

REALITY CHECK

'Violence more common' in Bible than Quran, text analysis reveals

The Old Testament was found to be more than twice as violent as the Quran. Independent. Samuel Osbourne 9 February 2016. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/violence-more-common-in-bible-than-quran-text-analysis-reveals-a6863381.html

Investigating whether the Quran really is more violent than its Judeo-Christian counterparts, software engineer Tom Anderson processed the text of the Holy books to find which contained the most violence. ...

By categorising words into eight emotions - Joy, Anticipation, Anger, Disgust, Sadness, Surprise, Fear/Anxiety and Trust - the analysis found the Bible scored higher for anger and much lower for trust than the Quran.

Further analysis found the **Old Testament was more violent than the New Testament, and more than twice as violent as the Quran**.

Mr. Anderson summarises: "Of the three texts, the content in the Old Testament appears to be the most violent. "Killing and destruction are referenced slightly more often in the New Testament (2.8%) than in the Quran (2.1%), but the Old Testament clearly leads—more than twice that of the Quran—in mentions of destruction and killing (5.3%)."

Anderson: "First, I want to make very clear that **we have not set out to prove or disprove that Islam is more violent than other religions.** "Moreover, we realize that the Old and New Testaments and the Quran are neither the only literature in Islam, Christianity and Judaism, nor do they constitute the sum of these religions' teachings and protocols.

"I must also reemphasize that this analysis is superficial and the findings are by no means intended to be conclusive. Ours is a 30,000-ft, cursory view of three texts: the Quran and the Old and New Testaments, respectively."

Wiki “Christianity and Violence”

REALITY CHECK

- “J. Denny Weaver, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Bluffton University,[10] suggests as common examples of violence in Christianity:
- **"the crusades**
- **the multiple blessings of wars**
- **warrior popes**
- **support for capital punishment**
- **corporal punishment under the guise of 'spare the rod and spoil the child‘**
- **justifications of slavery**
- **world-wide colonialism in the name of conversion to Christianity**
- **the systemic violence of women subjected to men"**.[11]

- According to the view of many historians, the **Constantinian shift turned Christianity from a persecuted into a persecuting religion**.[12]
- Miroslav Volf has identified the intervention of a "new creation", as in the Second Coming, as a particular aspect of Christianity that generates violence.[13] Writing about the latter, Volf says: "Beginning at least with **Constantine's conversion**, the followers of the Crucified have perpetrated gruesome acts of violence under the sign of the cross.
- Over the centuries, **the seasons of Lent and Holy Week were, for the Jews, times of fear and trepidation**; Christians have perpetrated some of the worst **pogroms** as they remembered the crucifixion of Christ, for which they blamed the Jews.
- **Muslims also associate the cross with violence**; crusaders' rampages were undertaken under the sign of the cross."[14]

REALITY CHECK

REALLY!?!?!

- The statement attributed to Jesus “I come not to bring peace, but a sword” has been interpreted by some as a call to arms for Christians.[15] Mark Juergensmeyer argues that "**despite its central tenets of love and peace, Christianity—like most traditions—has always had a violent side.**
- The bloody history of the tradition has provided disturbing images and violent conflict is vividly portrayed in the Bible. This history and these biblical images have provided the raw material for theologically justifying the violence of contemporary Christian groups. For example, **attacks on abortion clinics have been viewed not only as assaults on a practice that Christians regard as immoral, but also as skirmishes in a grand confrontation between forces of evil and good that has social and political implications.",[15]:19–20 sometimes referred to as Spiritual warfare.**
- **Higher law** has been used to justify violence by Christians.[16]

http://msmagazine.com/blog/2015/11/30/attack-in-colorado-springs-part-of-an-ongoing-campaign-of-threats-and-violence/

Wiki “Christianity and Violence”

SO WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

- Matthew 5:39 "38 You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' 39 But **I tell you not to resist an evil person**. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, **turn to him the other also**; **40** And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, **hand over your coat as well**." [Greek ῥαπίζω (*hrapizo*) "open handed strike"]
- Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, **love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.…"
- Matthew 7:12 "So **whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them**, for this is the Law and the Prophets."
- Luke 6:5 Whatever house you enter, begin by saying, 'Peace to this house.' 6 **If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.** 7 Stay at the same house, eating and drinking whatever you are offered. For the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not move around from house to house.…

Image: https://kingdompraxis.wordpress.com/tag/war/

Bear insults

Love your enemy (show no prejudicial treatment).

Do not judge people

The Golden Rule

Be and be around "men of peace."

JUDGEMENT AND JUSTICE

Do not Judge Others

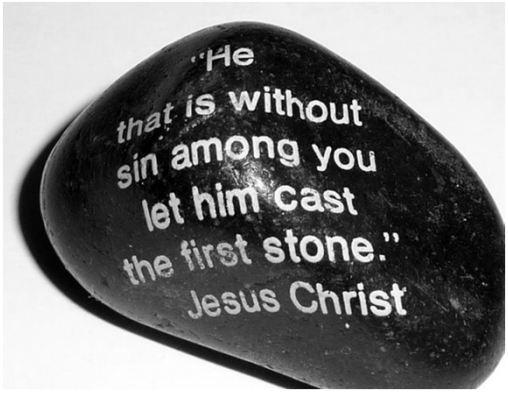
- Matthew 7:1 Do not judge, or you will be judged. 2 For with the same judgment you pronounce, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.…
- Matthew 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?

- **1** Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.
- **2** He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.
- **3** And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'
- **4** "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think,
- **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' "
- **6** And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.
- **7** And **will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?** Will he keep putting them off?
- **8** I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

God will fight *for* us

JESUS CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

- **In all four gospels: Jesus cleanses the temple wielding a whip.**
- **This has been interpreted as a basis for just war.**
- **But did he not also say: John 8:16 "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone when I judge; I am with the Father, who sent Me.…"**
- **And ...**



http://newdestinydenver.blogspot.com/2012/06/everyone-matters-to-god-sermon-series.html

Background http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/religion/3072106/posts

WHAT DID JESUS SAY ... TO SOLDIERS?

- Luke 3:14 Jesus is approached by soldiers and asked what is expected of them: ***"Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely -- be content with your pay."***
- **Luke 7: 1** When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. **2**There **a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly**, was sick and about to die. **3**The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. **4**When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, **5**because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." **6**So Jesus went with them.
- He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him**: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."**
- **9**When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, **"I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." 10**Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and **found the servant well.**

Including these verses in a discussion of Jesus relation to violence was suggested by Jeffrey Mann's "The Myth of a Non-Violent Jesus." *Real Clear Religion*. April 30, 2014
http://www.realclearreligion.org/articles/2014/04/30/the_myth_of_a_non-violent_jesus.html

Jesus does not promote non-violence in either case of his encounters with soldiers.

Note relevant to last week: Jesus does not free the "servant."

Matthew 5:41: **"If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles."**

WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

Are the swords a call to arms? A symbol? A rebuke of the emerging Zealot party?

The Sicarii were a splinter group of the Jewish Zealots who, in the decades preceding Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE, heavily opposed the Roman occupation of Judea and attempted to expel them and their sympathizers from the area. The Sicarii carried sicae, or small daggers, concealed in their cloaks. At public gatherings, they pulled out these daggers to attack Romans and Hebrew Roman sympathizers alike, blending into the crowd after the deed to escape detection. Wiki "Sicari"

- And He said to them, "When I sent you (on training missions) without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything? . . . But now . . . **he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one** . . . For the things concerning Me have an end. So they said, **"Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough"** (Luke 22:35 - 38, NKJV)
- Matthew 26:51 At this, one of Jesus' companions drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 52 "Put your sword back in its place, Jesus said to him, **"for all who draw the sword die by the sword.** 53 Are you not aware that I can call on My Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?…"
- Greek word *machaira* (Strong's #G3162) is defined as a knife, dirk or sword.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

"how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out o… ye?"

"The good man brings good things out of the good treasure of his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil treasure of his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks."

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Some see …ng society. ~Daniil

"love your enemies"

Belief in Jesus has a cost, and challenges will reveal who is prepared to pay it.

- Matthew 10:33 "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven. 34 **Do not assume that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.** 35 For I have come to turn 'A man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.…"

The Account for this poster was suspended! YAY.
http://googlefamilyfeud.com/cgi-sys/suspendedpage.cgi

WHAT DID JESUS SAY? SUMMARY

- Though Jesus has for millennia been portrayed as a pacifist, the scriptures reveal a more varied portrait.
- His **actions in the temple** and his statement about **his coming to bring a sword** have been traditionally seen as justifying violence for a righteous cause.
- His comments on not **judging** imply that it is not ours to condemn people, but he does admit that our judgements can be in tune with God's.
- He **nowhere challenges soldiers to abandon their occupations**, commends an officer for his faith when that officer uses a military analogy for Jesus' relation to his attendants, and he never directly condemns war.
- He actually tells his followers not to resist if Roman soldiers force them to carry their things.
- On the first missionary journey, he **encourages his disciples to be and find men of peace**.
- He tells us that those who **live by the sword die by the sword**, but that could be a statement about reality rather than a condemnation of carrying swords. He earlier **told the disciples to sell their cloaks and buy swords**.

PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE: MARTIN LUTHER

- In 1527, Martin Luther responded to a concern about the consciences of soldiers. Then, as now, military personnel struggled with how a just and loving God would judge a life spent in the bloody business of warfare. This was not an abstract theological point, but a personal struggle of deep existential angst. Luther instructed them that their occupation serves society no less than any other. ***"[I]n itself it is right and godly, but we must see to it that the persons who are in this profession and who do the work are the right kind of persons, that is, godly and upright."***

- Those who carry the sword, if they do so with justice and integrity, are doing the will of God. ***"For the very fact that the sword has been instituted by God to punish the evil, protect the good, and preserve peace is powerful and sufficient proof that war and killing,"*** Luther argued, ***"have been instituted by God."***
- Luther taught that their work, carried out as service to God and neighbor, is indeed a good and noble act. There was **no need for their consciences to be weighed down**.

I Peter 2:13 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14or to governors as those sent by him to punish evildoers and praise well-doers.…

Jeffrey Mann. "The Myth of a Non-Violent Jesus." *Real Clear Religion*. April 30, 2014 http://www.realclearreligion.org/articles/2014/04/30/the_myth_of_a_non-violent_jesus.html

PRESBYTERIAN POSITION

William Klempa. **Presbyterians and war: Among the various views of war held by Christians, most Presbyterians believe war can be justified in extreme cases.**
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John Calvin

- Calvin stood **squarely in the just war tradition**. He said the Anabaptist pacifist position would be right "were we angels in this world." But the sad fact is the world is full of "cruel monsters and wolves and rapacious men?' **"The rise of the sword will therefore continue to the end of the world." Yet" ... everything else ought to be tried before recourse is had to arms?"**
- Calvin was particularly concerned that wars be waged in a just manner. He condemned the princes for their greed for power and wealth and for regarding war as a game so that "human blood is poured out like the blood of cattle and sheep at the slaughterhouse." Along with Augustine, Calvin insisted we must respect our common humanity. It is a detestable thing to ruin and efface the image of God that shines in all his creatures.
- [Nonetheless, Calvin presided over the burning alive of heretics.]

Presbyterian Policy

- On the whole, Presbyterianism has adopted the just war position. In Calvin's vein, The Westminster Confession of Faith states the civil magistrate has the right to **"wage war upon just and necessary occasion."**
- Similarly, the Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation (1954) affirms civil authorities have been commissioned by Christ "with the right and duty of using force under law against internal disorder and external aggression."
- So, also, Living Faith acknowledges **"war, at times, may be unavoidable"** but emphasizes **"the tragic evil that comes with war, the slaughter of men, women, and children must rouse us to work for peace?"** If we go to war, it should be a just war and one that is waged mournfully as a last resort.

PRESBYTERIANS AND QUAKERS ON THE WAR IN IRAQ

- **Presbyterian Church (USA)**
  The PCUSA's General Assembly outlined a policy about **Iraq in 2002**, in which the church body "urges the United States government **to exercise restraint in its contemplated military action against Iraq**."
- The denomination also supports ending all economic sanctions, but urges "comprehensive efforts by the United Nations, the United States, and the governments of the Middle East to remove all weapons of mass destruction from that region, as part of the worldwide effort to eliminate such weapons and end their development."

- **Quakers - American Friends Service Committee**
  The AFSC has been actively antiwar and is a member of Win Without War. Its website includes "10 Reasons to Oppose the War with Iraq" and promotes an Iraq peace pledge. A joint statement from leaders of five major Quaker organizations said: "We find many compelling reasons for all people of faith and reason to oppose this war and this dangerous new military policy. Among them are:

  A war with Iraq is likely to cause tremendous loss of human lives, vast destruction, and terrible human suffering.
- The aftermath of a war with Iraq is likely to include years of chaos and suffering in Iraq, instability and violence in the Middle East and South Asia, hatred of the United States for generations to come, and an increase in acts of terrorism against countries deemed responsible for the war.
- Such a war, and the policy that underlies it, would legitimize preemptive military strikes by nations that feel threatened by others.
- Such a terrible precedent would undermine international law and the U.N. Charter and could lead to a tremendous increase in wars and violence in the future."

Faith Groups' Positions on War With Iraq: Where does your religious denomination stand? belief.net.
http://www.beliefnet.com/news/2003/03/faith-groups-positions-on-war-with-iraq.aspx

PRESBYTERIAN RESOLUTION ON VIOLENCE, RELIGION AND TERRORISM (2004)

C. Christian Responses to Terrorism

- **Christians need to ponder the message of attackers who are so desperate that they surrender their lives to kill others**, supporting our government in applying just and legal measures against those who engage in criminal activity, supporting the use of military and police force to suppress terrorist actions within the limits of international law and traditional moral limits for the use of force.
- Finally, we must join in the never-ending struggle to provide help through just and sustainable policies and actions for overcoming conditions of injustice and human depravity. Desperate acts of terrorism are less likely to grow out of just societies where there is hope, and they can be reduced in this world by pursuing justice.

E. On Religion and Violence

- **The Presbyterian church recognizes that religion is significantly involved in violence even while wise religious leaders pursue just peace**. The history of religion is replete with acts of violence. Its origins and major religious symbols are implicated in violence. **The church needs to confess its associations with violence and repent of its support for violence.**
- Our faith teaches us that God wants humanity to be transformed and to embrace active and effective **peacemaking**. At the same time, **violent sectarian movements within major faith traditions must be rendered ineffective by reconciliation, dialogue, and, if necessary, the legitimate use of force** by the state and the international community.

Resolution on Violence, Religion, and Terrorism. Approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004). Richmond, Virginia. June 26—July 3, 2004. https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-violence-religion-terrorism-2004.pdf

RELATED ISSUES

Presbyterian policy on the right to Conscientious Objection to carrying weapons and/or to serve in the armed forces: https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/conscientiousobj1.pdf

Conscientious Objection

- *Resolved, That the 204th General Assembly (1992)*
- *1. Reaffirm its support for legislation that would establish in statute the right to* selective conscientious objection (that is, the Military Conscientious Objector Act);
- 2. Reaffirm its support for other reforms of conscientious objector processing that would assure due process, access to information and assistance, implementation of international norms for the rights of conscientious objectors, and expedient relief;
- 3. Reaffirm its opposition to peacetime conscription and registration; and
- 4. Reaffirm its policy for the repeal of the Military Selective Service Act. (Adopted by the 204th General Assembly, 1992)

Presbyterian Center on Conscience and War. http://www.centeronconscience.org/component/content/article/49-words-publication/238-presbyterian-church-usa.html

Gun Control: 1990, 1998 General Assemblies

1990

Support[ing] gun control at federal, state, and local levels as the most effective response to the present crisis of gun violence. . .

Call[ing] upon the United States government to establish meaningful and effective federal legislation to regulate the importation, manufacture, sale, and possession of guns and ammunition by the general public. Such legislation should include provisions for the registration and licensing of gun purchasers and owners, appropriate background investigations and waiting periods prior to gun purchase, and regulation of subsequent sale.

Urg[ing] the enactment of similar state and local laws, should such federal legislation be delayed.

Call[ing] upon government agencies at all levels to provide significant assistance to victims of gun violence and their families.3

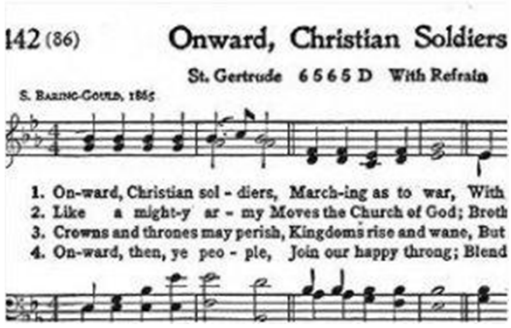
1998

intentionally work toward removing handguns and assault weapons from our homes and our communities; and

seek ways to develop community strategies and create sanctuaries of safety for our children, so that all of our children may come to identify and value themselves and others as the precious children of the family of God that they are, and that they may come to learn peace for their lives and peace for this generation.

Presbyterians and gun control. Discussion in 'Legal' started by gun-fucious, The HighRoad. Oct 9, 2003. https://www.thehighroad.org/index.php?threads/presbyterians-and-gun-control.43925/

RETHINING THE PAST: ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS?


142 (86) Onward, Christian Soldiers

St. Gertrude 6 5 6 5 D With Refrain

S. Baring-Gould, 1865

1. On-ward, Christian sol - diers, March-ing as to war, With
2. Like a might-y ar - my Moves the Church of God; Broth
3. Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane, But
4. On-ward, then, ye peo - ple, Join our happy throng; Blend

for the third hymnal in a row, Presbyterians will not find "Onward Christian Soldiers" in the mix.

Thomas G. Long. The Absurd in Worship. Christian Century. August 13, 2012. https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2012-08/absurd-worship

- If the church ... starts believing it really is some kind of army with sufficient strength to swat down our enemies and exert our will, then our worship becomes idolatry and our life demonic.
- But when we realize that what we say in worship can be true only in the improbable reign of God, we regain our souls and sound the trumpet, this time for an army that marshals no troops but the frail saints, *bears no arms but the sword of the Spirit, makes no advance except that of love and has no enemy but that which undermines God's hope for human flourishing.*

CONCLUSIONS

- The **Hebrew Bible** supports three approaches to war: Just War, Pacifism, and Holy War. The establishment of the Hebrew people in the land of Canaan was a bloody period, and throughout their histories both Judah and Israel were caught up in bloody struggles for survival. Even given this history, the Hebrew people supported Just War and Holy War policies at their own peril.
- Officially the **Christian church** historically upholds, and continues to uphold, both Just War and Pacifist positions, and only fairly recently separated itself from the support of Holy War.
- The **Christian Church** itself has been **complicit in war and violence**, inquisitions, pogroms, crusades, persecutions, and genocides.

CONCLUSIONS

- The direct words and actions of **Jesus** do not wholly rule out war and violence for the cause of justice; attitudes toward both reside, as with the issue of slavery, in the **principles** he established.
- Reformers like **Luther** and **Calvin** supported the idea of Just War, though only as a last resort. However, late in his life, Luther supported the suppression of Jews. Calvin imprisoned and executed those who disagreed with him.
- The **Presbyterian and other Christian organizations** must now directly address the sordid history of the church, their relation to war and violence, and their positions concerning terrorism, conscientious objection and gun control.

IMPLICATIONS IN WHAT JESUS WAS SAYING

- Modern psychologists agree, when we resist something we actually and ironically strengthen it.

They also agree: We cannot mirror the actions of our enemies, or we risk becoming the thing we hate.

WWJD?

- "An eye for an eye? Jesus says in response, 'Do not resist an evildoer.'
- Slapped in the face? Jesus said to turn the other cheek.
- Execute lawbreakers? Jesus claimed there wasn't anyone with the moral standing to serve as an executioner.
- Resist the Roman army with violence? No, Jesus said to carry their bags for them instead."

Matthew 7:12 In everything, then, do to others as you would have them do to you. For this is the essence of the Law and the prophets. 13 Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it.…

From "Was Jesus a Pacifist?" June 1, 2016 by Benjamin L. Corey. *Progressive Christian* http://www.patheos.com/blogs/formerlyfundie/was-jesus-a-pacifist/?ref_widget=trending&ref_blog=emergentvillage&ref_post=now-a-poem-and-painting-reminding-us-to-be-present