

## War Theory and a Christian Perspective on War

### Chapter 19

#### I. War

- A. The sixth commandment is not talking about question of killing in war.
1. Heb. word ratsach (Exod. 20:13) - 49X in OT, but never used to refer to killing in war (other Heb. words used).
  2. God himself commands Israel to go to war at times - would be contradictory to command something and forbid it at same time: Deut 20:1, etc.

#### Deuteronomy 20

**20 “When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses, chariots, and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.**

3. In NT, soldiers not condemned for being soldiers: Lk 3:14; Acts 10 (Cornelius); Luke 14:31: no hint of condemnation for king.

#### Luke 14:31

**31 Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to face the one coming against him with twenty thousand?**

- B. One of primary duties of gov. is to protect citizens, w/ use of force if necessary to restrain evil: Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:14.

#### Romans 13:4

**4 for it is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.**

- C. There are times when war is necessary to stop an evil aggressor: 1 Sam. 13:5; 17:1-11 (David/ Goliath), etc. (many examples in OT); Psalm 144:1; Example: Hitler’s invasion of many European countries

#### Psalm 144:1

**144 Blessed be the Lord, my rock,**

**Who trains my hands for war,**

**And my fingers for battle;**

- D. How can we know when war is justified?

1. God does not allow nations simply to take over other nations at will: Deut. 2:9, 19.

#### Deuteronomy 2:9

**9 Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not attack Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of [a]their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.’**

(People generally recognize this: true democracies do not generally (ever?) authorize wars of aggression.)

2. But God does authorize governments to defend themselves against evil aggression (Rom 13.4).

#### Romans 13:4

**4 for it is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.**

- a. Because there is some evil in world that can only be restrained by superior force.
- b. It is sometimes right to help another country that is being attacked: Ps 82:4; Obadiah 11: judgment on Edom for not helping when Jerusalem was conquered.

#### Psalm 82:4

**4 Rescue the weak and needy;**

**Save them from the hand of the wicked.**

3. We should earnestly seek other means to resolve a situation justly if possible Matthew 5:9 "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*"; Romans 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*
- E. “Just War” principles: standards that have been developed over the years to help people decide if going to war in a specific situation is right. (this list and verses taken from private paper by Dan Heimbach, Jan. 15, 1991-then White House policy staff, now prof. at Southeastern Bapt. Seminary)
  1. Just cause (Rev. 19:11) 5. Last resort (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18, above).

#### Revelation 19:11

**11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.**

2. Competent authority (Rom 13:1)

Romans 13:1

**13 Every [a]person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except [b]from God, and those which exist are established by God**

3. Comparative justice (Rom. 13:3)

Romans 13:3

**3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for [a]good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;**

4. Right intention (Prov. 21:2)

Proverbs 21:2

**2 Every person's way is right in his own eyes,**

**But the Lord examines the hearts.**

5. Last resort (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18) Have all other reasonable means of resolving conflict been exhausted?

Matthew 5:9

**9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.**

6. Probability of success (Luke 14:31) Is there a reasonable expectation the war can be won?

Luke 14:31

**31 Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to face the one coming against him with twenty thousand?**

7. Proportionality of projected results—Will the good results that come from victory of war be significantly greater than the harm and loss that will inevitably come with pursuing war?
8. Right spirit—Is the war undertaken with great reluctance and sorrow at the harm that will come rather than simply with a “delight in war” (Psalm 68:30).

Psalm 68:30

**30 Rebuke the animals [a]in the reeds,**

**The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples,**

**Trampling the pieces of silver;**

He has scattered the peoples who delight in war.

## II. Aggression Defense

G. There are also moral restrictions on conduct in war. How should a just war be fought?

1. Proportionality in use of force (Deut. 20:10-11)

### Deuteronomy 20:10-11

**10 “When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall [a]offer it terms of peace. 11 And if it [b]agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and serve you.**

2. Discrimination between combatants and non-combatants (Gen. 18:23, 25; Deut. 20:13-14, 19; Amos 1:6, 13) – conquest of Canaan was unique in Israel’s history and was a foreshadowing of final judgment. As such it was similar to flood (Gen. 6-9) and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). Therefore rules were total destruction, different from every other war. (Deut. 20:16-18 different from vss. 10-15, 19-20).

### Deuteronomy 20:13-14

**13 When the Lord your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the [a]men in it with the edge of the sword. 14 However, the women, the children, the animals, and everything that is in the city, all of its spoils, you shall take as plunder for yourself; and you shall [b]use the spoils of your enemies which the Lord your God has given you.**

3. Avoidance of evil means (Psalm 34:14: Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.)

### Psalm 34:14

**14 Turn from evil and do good;**

**Seek peace and pursue it.**

4. Good faith (Matt. 5:43-44; Rom. 12:18)

### Matthew 5:43-44

**43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’**

**44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

### Romans 12:18

**18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people.**

- H. What is responsibility of a Christian citizen (Christian man) if called upon to fight in a war?

1. If war is clearly right, fighting to defend one's country:
  - a. is not "morally wrong but necessary"
  - b. is not just "morally neutral," but
  - c. is morally good—Rom. 13:4; Luke 3:14; John 15:13; Ps. 144:1; Note also Num 32:6, 20-23 and 1 Sam. 28:18.

John 15:13

**13 Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends.**

2. In that case, what attitude should a Christian have in combat?-sorrow for evil, even godly anger against evil- yet also "goodness, faithfulness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23), even love for enemy (as David, Absalom): 2 Sam. 18:33

Galatians 5:22-23

**22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.**

3. If war is clearly wrong, then a Christian should refuse to serve
  - a. Acts 4:19; 5:29

Acts 4:19

**19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, make your own judgment;**

Acts 5:29

**29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.**

- b. And flee country (as many did from Germany): 2 Cor. 11:33; 1 Sam. 19:10-12

2 Corinthians 11:33

**33 and I was let down in a basket through a window [a]in the wall, and so escaped his hands.**

- c. Or stay and resist, or take penalty (may vary in diff. situations)
4. If it is unclear, a matter for sanctified wisdom, individual conscience Rom. 14:4 may apply; Rom. 13:1-4 still applies.

Romans 14:4

**4 Who are you to judge the [a]servant of another? To his own [b]master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

## Romans 13:1-4

**13 Every [a]person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except [b]from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore [c]whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for [d]good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.**

## III. Responses to a Christian non-violence position (pacifism)

## A. Arguments in favor of pacifism:

1. Teaching of Jesus: Matthew 5:38 “turn other cheek”
2. Requirement to love our neighbor (Matt. 22:39): but how can we love our neighbor and kill him in war?
3. Jesus did not use force to advance his kingdom (Matt. 26:52-53)
4. Use of military force (at least by Christians) shows lack of trust in God and is disobeying Jesus’ teachings.

## B. Responses:

1. We must appreciate Christian pacifist’s concern to be faithful to Christ
2. Nevertheless, it is an unsatisfactory position for several reasons:

## C. Pacifism fails to recognize that people working as agents of government can do things that are wrong for them to do as individuals Government employee/ agent Personal· taxation · stealing· apprehend speeder · taking law in own hands, speeding· execute retribution on criminal (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2.14) · taking personal revenge (Rom. 12:19)· killing others in war if necessary (to make peace! 1 Tim. 2.2) murder

## D. Pacifism fails to recognize that Matt. 5:38-42 is addressed to individuals, not to governments. Jesus did not come to take leadership of civil government or to serve in capacity of a policeman or soldier.- He did not (and we should not) use force to advance gospel

## Matthew 5:38-42

**38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39 But I say to you, do not show opposition against an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other toward him also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your [a]tunic, let him have your [b]cloak also. 41 Whoever [c]forces you to go one mile, go with him two.**

**42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

- But that says nothing about whether governments should use force to restrain evil (Rom. 13:1-4 approves).
- E. Pacifism fails to see that Scripture itself views love for neighbor as consistent with killing in war.
  1. Both love and war are commanded in OT: Lev. 19.18 (“love your neighbor as yourself”); Deut. 20 (rules for war); 1 Kgs. 2.28-34; NT: Rom. 12.19 with 13.4.
  2. Love for neighbor near at hand requires that I protect him from aggressor
  3. Jesus, who is pure love, will come in judgment one day - will use force against evil (Rev 19.11-16).
- F. Pacifism fails to recognize that a Christian who fights in (just) war is “God’s servant” and doing “good”: Rom. 13.4; 1 Pet. 2.14 - No commands in Scripture pertaining to moral conduct are for believers only: Lk. 10.25-32; Rom. 2.14-15
- G. We have no warrant to “trust in God” for things different from what his Word teaches, and Rom. 13:1-4 teaches that God authorizes government to use deadly force if necessary to oppose evil.
- H. Application to recent wars in Afghanistan, Iraq: were these just wars?
  1. Just cause (Rev. 19:11): At least four, in order of importance:
    - a. defend U.S. against attack (war on terrorists world-wide carried out by attacking most central and strategic centers of their activities)
    - b. help protect allied countries and rest of world against similar attack
    - c. change extremely evil government (would probably not be thought a sufficient cause by itself if there was no threat to U.S. or other countries)
    - d. begin process of bringing democracy to Muslim nations and greater stability to Middle East.
  2. Competent authority (Rom 13:1)
  3. Comparative justice (Rom. 13:3)
  4. Right intention (Prov. 21:2)

5. Last resort (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18, above)
6. Probability of success (Luke 14:31-32)
7. Proportionality of projected results (Ps. 52:1, 3)
8. Right spirit (Ps. 68:30: judgment on those who “delight in war”)

#### IV. Nuclear weapons

- A. Existence of nuclear weapons means world now has greater destructive power than ever before in history
  1. Nuclear weapons used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed 80,000 in initial attack, 60,000 more of radiation wounds later
  2. Estimates of U.S. losses that would result from conventional war invasion were 193,500 - 1,000,000 casualties, with 40,000 dead to perhaps 200,000 (plus Japanese losses, equal or greater)
- B. But now that other nations have nuclear weapons (including potential aggressors such as North Korea) we must have them.
  1. In order to deter aggression the US must have = or greater nuclear power – enough to keep any nation from thinking they could win in a nuclear conflict, large or small
- C. But can't we reason with other nations, come to peace agreements with them? (shouldn't we seek a nuclear-weapons free world?)
  1. We should seek workable, verifiable agreements to reduce or limit nuclear arms
  2. But we must recognize that there is irrational sin in the world, irrational enough that it can only be restrained by force (this is why God gives gov's. the authority to use force to restrain evil)
- D. But wouldn't it be better to run the risk even of giving in to a potential aggressor than run the risk of nuclear war and world destruction?
  1. It is alarmist simply to assume that any use of nuclear weapons would escalate until it resulted in destruction of the whole world.
  2. What about a “nuclear winter” where sun's rays are largely blocked and the whole world freezes, and all human life is destroyed forever? (a real fear of avid nuclear opponents)→ *As a Christian I do not believe that all of history will end that way.*
  3. We fail sufficiently to realize the horror that would result from totalitarian



domination of the entire world. (note millions starving now in N. Korea; similar horrors in USSR under Stalin, China under Mao, Germany under Hitler)

4. Nuclear deterrence has worked now for 67 years. (since 1945)
- E. Conclusion: we must maintain enough nuclear weapons to keep any potential aggressors from thinking they can win.
- F. What about anti-missile “Strategic Defense System”?
1. Yes, definitely!
  2. Argument that “it won’t work” is continually being disproved. (Israel’s Iron Dome system against Gaza, Hamas in Nov., 2012)
  3. Argument that “it will lead to more weapons” is not happening. (bad logic: defensive systems make war more likely). (??) if anybody builds more weapons, peaceful nations will build more defenses, and stay ahead. the goal: that non-aggressor nations (democratic nations) always stay ahead. – as far ahead as possible.