

"WILL THE REAL PEACEMAKERS . . .
PLEASE LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES!"

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called •the sons of God." Matt. 5:9

"One of the things that touched me most when I was saved, was the depth of the love of Christ: He loved me in such an immeasurable way. When I think of a just war, Christ certainly had a just reason to be at war with me, and with each sinner. And yet Christ laid down His life even for me."

"Here I was in the U.S. Marine Corps, and I had come to the conviction that it was the wrong place for me to be . . . I recognized then that I am an ambassador of Christ. I now see no man according to the flesh, not as a gook, nor as a Red or as a commie, but as someone created in the image of God. When I was shooting from 500 meters (over the length of five football fields), I asked myself how much could I know about that person, where they stood with God, about their wife, or their Mother or father or their children, or their brothers or sisters, about their preparation for eternity. This was a person created in God's image. And like a speck on the scope I was to destroy him in a second."

Randy McDonnold, *"A Pilgrimage Toward Peace"*, Mennonite Brethren Herald, Nov. 4, 1983.

II. DEFINITIONS OF RECURRING TERMS

"Nonresistance":

- 1) term derived from Matt. 5:38-42, in particular the words, "resist not him that is evil." Henry A. Fast, Jesus and Human Conflict, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1959.
- 2) To be passive in the face of violence. Funk and Wagneals, 1983.

"Pacifism":

- 1) A rejection of war in principle. Yoder, p. 17.
- 2) One who opposes war or military preparedness and proposes that all disputes be settled by arbitration. Funk and Wagnalls, 1983.

"Peacemakers"

Herein lies the term that best captures the full essence of the pacifist position on war and violence. Funk and Wagnalls says "a peacemaker is one who; effects a reconciliation between unfriendly parties." Funk and Wagnalls, 1983.

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PACIFISM / PEACEKEEPING

A. Old Testament History

1. Peace emphasis

- a. Commandment in the law -- love for God/neighbor. Lev. 19:18, Deut. 6:5
- b. 10 Commandments are expressions of love
 - first four speak of love to God.
 - last six speak of love to man.
- c. The Covenant Code instructed Israelites on how to treat neighbors and enemies
 - 1) Should not require an alien to work on Sabbath. Exodus 20:10
 - 2) Should not wrong / deal severely with an enemy. Exodus 22:21-23:9
 - 3) One law existed for both Jew and stranger. Exodus 12:49, Lev. 24:22, Num. 15:15-16,29
 - 4) Jews were to help stray animals of enemy Exodus 23:4,5
- d. Abraham refused to fight and offered to make peace even at a personal sacrifice when Lot's herdsmen and his own had a fracas. Gen. 13:59

- e. Isaac moved his people to keep the peace - Gen. 26:12-22
- f. Joseph forgave his brothers when vengeance seemed better - Gen. 42:21, 15-25; 45:1-15
- g. Elisha used love and compassion to send enemy home with Syria came to attack Israel. II Kings 6:25-23
- h. King Hezekiah paid, heavily for peace in gold and treasures, latter winning a victory without war. II Kings 18:13-16, 19:14-35
- i. Isaiah witnessed to peace:
 - 1) Messiah is the Prince of peace. 9: 6
 - 2) The lamb before the slaughter/peace ushered in. 11:1-9
 - 3) Reliance on God rather than on, military power. 30:15-16
- j. Jeremiah called for the exiles to pray for the welfare of their captors. 29:7
- k. Micah and Isaiah proclaimed the coning of an age when men would beat their swords into plough-shears . Isa. 2 : 3-4, Micah 4: 2-3

2. War Emphasis

- a. First, it was necessary to secure the direction of God's will before war. Judges 20 : 23, 27 ; II Sam . 5:19, 20, 23
 - 1) God's command to Israel to destroy life came because of the iniquity of the enemy people (Gen . 15:16, Deut. 9: 4-5) or because of the concern that Israel should not follow the abominations of the godless (Deut. 20:16-18)
 - 2) Soldiers consecrated themselves and also submitted to certain restrictions . Deut. 23:9-14
 - 3) Assurance from God Was clear before the battle about the outcome (Josh. 2:24 ; 6:2, 16; Judges 3: 25)
- b. Secondly, the turning point of battle came when divinely inspired terror gripped the enemy. . Josh. 10:10, Judges 7:22
 - 1) Israel's weapons / number of soldiers were not major factors (Judges 7)
 - 2) God always brought the victory. Judges 7:2, 9, 15; I Sam. 14:6
 - 3) If instructions were not followed, God permitted defeat. Joshua 7, Numbers 14:43
 - 4) The Lord's wars were not necessarily pro-Israel, often just the opciosite later in history.
- c. Thirdly , Israel confessed that victory did not come through the sword, but through direct help from God. Exodus 14:13-14; Ps. 44:3
- d. Finally, the men and property were not to be taken as spoil, but rather destroyed. War was not for personal/national enrichment. Ex. 20:10-18

B. New Testament History

- 1. Passages Apparently Justifying Use of Force (Fast, pp. 93f f.) in a war situation.
 - a. Not Peace, But a sword. Matt. 10:34f f; Lk. 12:57

Similar sayings are found elsewhere . The passages do warn of disorders , but don 't call for them. The context points even more specifically to the most intimate relationship (family) experiencing d issension due to following Jesus. The term "sword" doesn't speak of war, just violent division.

- b. Jesus expected wars, Mark 13:7,8; Matt. 24: 6, 7; Lk. 21:9-11
 - 1) The purpose of these references was to keep the Christian community's faith undisturbed when wars and disturbances arose.
 - 2) Expectation of war does not equal sanction of participation war.
 - c. Jesus Commended a Roman Army officer, Matt. 8:5-10; Lk. 7:1-10
 - 1) Jesus commended the Centurion for his faith, not his position.
 - 2) Jesus' silence on his position is neither a yea nor a nay for a military occupation.
 - d. Render Unto Caesar . . . Mark 12:13-17
 - 1) Since the questioners were Jews by birth, they would not be interested in service in the Roman army; rather, they would be interested in a military rebellion against the Roman army, since many resented the Roman occupation of their land .
 - 2) Jesus is saying no to this option and calling them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's.
 - 3) When there is conflict, that which is to be given to God takes priority.
2. Passages Emphasizing Love
- a. Jesus praised the non-violent Spirit. Matt. 5:3-12
 - 1) He mourns, v .4
 - 2) He is meek, v.5
 - 3) He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, v.6
 - 4) He is merciful, v.7
 - 5) He is pure in heart, v. 8
 - 6) He is a peacemaker, v.9
 - 7) He is persecuted, v. 10
 - b. Men are to Love Their Neighbor as Themselves, Mk. 12:28-34, Matt. 22:34-40; Lk. 10:25-37
 - 1) This summary of the law of the Old Testament was not original with Jesus (Deut . 6:5).
 - 2) The word "neighbor" does not have a restricted meaning. It can be literally translated "fellow man" .
 - 3) The love for the neighbor was to be like the love one has for self .
 - c. Love Your Enemies, Matt. 5:44, Luke 6:27
 - d. Give in Unselfish Service
 - 1) To people in need. Matt. 25:31-46
 - 2) The servant of all, Matt. 10:43ff
 - e. Self-Denial for Jesus ' Sake
 - 1) Take up the cross, follow Me, Mark 8:34ff, Matt. 16:24ff, Luke 9:23ff
 - 2) Rich Young Ruler, M ark 10:17-31

IV. THE POSITION OF PACIFISM / PEACEMAKING TODAY

William Swartley outlines it as follows :

A. Old Testament Witness

- 1. Warfare has its roots in humanity's fall, Gen. 3-4, James 4: 1-3
 - a. Many pacifists see Old Testament warfare as expressing God's will for the people when the kingdom and the state were combined.
 - b. Much smaller number of pacifists see God as allowing war in the Old Testament as a concession to Israel's sin.

- c. Many other pacifists state that Israel's military warfare resulted from its failure to trust God as WARRIOR. Kings and armies revealed Israel's lack of faith and failure to learn God's teaching in holy war. Ex. 14:14
- 2. The Old Testament criticizes warfare and prepares for the new Testament teaching of non-resistant love and pacifism, Exodus 14:14; 15:1-21 : Isa. 2:1-4;30:15
- 3. Since it prepares for the New, the Old Testament cannot be used for normative Christian ethics.

B. New Testament Evidence

- 1. Jesus' teachings (reflected in apostles) are clearly pacifist.
 - a. Nonresistance means overcoming evil with good, Matthew 5:39-41; Rom. 12:17, 19-21 : 1 Peter 3:9; 1 Thess. 5:15
 - b. Love is for the neighbor and the enemy - Matt. 5:44; 22:34
- 2. The Nature of God's kingdom and Jesus' Messiahship support the pacifist position .
 - a. His proclamation of the kingdom of God in the context of 1st century politics shows Jesus' pacifist commitment. Luke 1:46ff. 3:7ff, Lk . 3:21-4:14ff ; 6:12ff ; 12:49-13:9 14:25-26; 19:36-46; 22:24-53; 23-24
 - b. Jesus' temptations were political in nature, but He didn't give in. (esp at 4:8-11)
 - c. Peter's confession "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8:27-38), a political manifesto, prompted Jesus' teaching on pacifism and the way of the cross .
 - d. The suffering. servant -- Son of man -- Messiah introduced a bold new pacifist picture for Messianic thought. Mk . 8:29; 14:61; 15:2 also Mark 10:45; Lk. 4:16
 - e. Jesus as conquering lamb demonstrated the new way. Isa 53, Revelation
- 3. Christ's atonement calls for pacifist discipleship
 - a. Atonement means victory over the powers, Colossians 2:15
 - b. Atonement means reconciling justification between God and man, and man and man, Romans 5:8; Eph. 2:14,17
 - c. Discipleship means identifying with/following/imitating Christ.
 - 1) Suffering with Christ was a definition of apostolic existence , Phil. 3:10ff ; II Cor. 4:10; Col. 1:24 .
 - 2) Shown in divine condescension, Phil. 2:3-14
 - 3) Give your life as He did, Eph. 5:1ff ; I Jn. 3: 16 .
 - 4) Suffering servanthood in place of dominion. Mark 10:42-45; Matt. 22:25-28 : John 13:1-13
 - 5) Accept suffering for the cause of God's kingdom, Luk 14:27-333; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter. 4:13; Heb. 11:1-12; 5
 - 6) Death is victory, Col. 2:1 4; 1 Cor. 1:22-24
- 4. The Nature and mission of the church leads to pacifism.
 - a. The Church is the body of Christ's peace, Eph. 3:1 4ff , 4:25; 1 Cor. 12:13; Hosea 10 : 2
 - b. The Church's mission is peace, Eph. 3:8-11, I Pet. 2:21-3: 9
 - c. The Church is separate from the state, but subordinate to it and called to witness to it, Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Tit. 3:12
 - d. Peace is the heart of the gospel. (Willard E. Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women, Pennsylvania : Herald Press, 1983, pp. 122-138 .

VI. APPLICATION

A. Limitless Love

1. We are to love God (Matt. 22:37)
2. We are to love ourselves (as made in the image of God) Lev. 19:18
3. We are to love wife/husband (Eph. 5:25)
4. We are to love our family, 1 Tim. 5:8
5. We are to love the brethren, Heb. 13:1, 1 Pet. 2:17
6. We are to love our friends, John. 15:13
7. We are to love our neighbor, Matt. 19:19
8. We are to love the stranger, Heb. 13:2
9. We are to love our enemies, Matt. 5:43-44

"Viewed in proper perspective, the doctrine of limitless love is at the heart of witnessing, evangelism, discipleship, a dynamic prayer life; in short, it is the integrating, unifying thread of Christian living. Limitless Christian love has many facets and to wrench out any one of them is no more natural than to tear off a limb from a natural human body. God's love for us knew no limit. Does He set a different norm for us?" (Froese, p. 53)

B. Worldwide Reconciliation

1. Christians are to be peacemakers in a broken world, Matthew 5:9
2. Christians are to demonstrate limitless love to all men, Matthew 5:44; 1 John 3:16
3. Christians are to minister to victims of aggression. - The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) answers the question, "Who is my neighbor?" The man who has become the victim of exploitation and violence. Political views, religious beliefs, racial background, and attitudes of those in need are not determining factors to our call.
4. Christians are to share their possessions with the needy
 - a. In the church, Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-35
 - b. To all men, Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:35,36
5. Christians are to overcome evil with good, Romans 12:20, 21
 - a. Carnal weapons, coercion, use of violence have no place in the believer's warfare, 2 Cor. 10:3,4
 - b. Christians are to put on the whole armor of God, Eph. 6:11, 17

"The Christian must seek to exemplify the self-effacement of the Saviour, and he must remember that the concern of the gospel is for individual persons.

At the close of the Second World War two veterans met in the home of an American professor; one was a German, the other an American. Both were theology students. The German had been on a submarine, the American in an airplane. They compared notes. The German related that on a given day in a given month in a particular year he had been in a submarine off a Baltic port, dodging the bombs from an American plane. The American said that on the same day of the same month and the same year off that same Baltic port he had been in a plane dropping bombs in an effort to bag a German submarine. For the first time each of them felt the monstrous incongruity on the part of two men training to be ministers of Jesus Christ." Bainton, pp. 263-264

"once again the realists tell us that if we renounce power, we shall be at a disadvantage. Of course we shall. When were the scrupulous not at a disadvantage in dealing with the unscrupulous?"

Shall the scrupulous then become unscrupulous in order to survive ? Are we to renounce honor, shame, mercy, and compassion in order to live? The ancient pagans would not have said so. Did not Socrates declare that to suffer injustice is better than to inflict it? Shall we allow this pagan to take over the virtues which we have been wont to call Christian, while we invoke Christ to justify nuclear annihilation?" Bainton, pp . 267-268

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