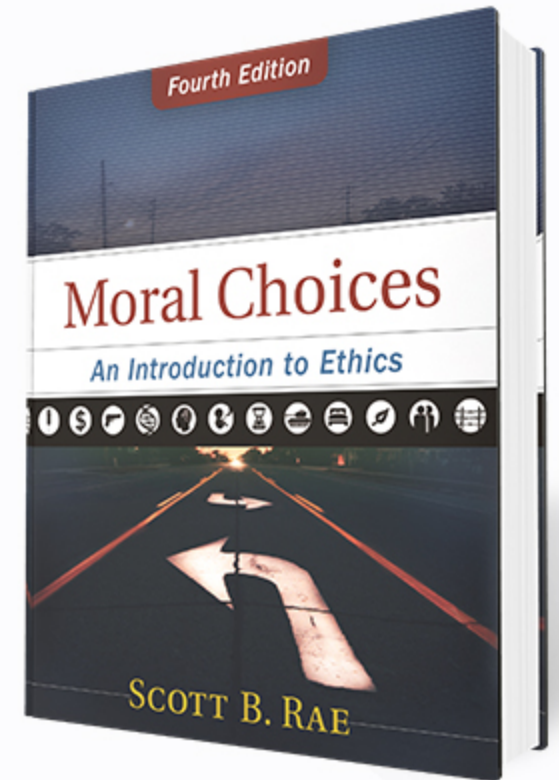


Chapter 10: War, Violence, and Morality



The Christian Tradition and War

- Quite Controversial because there is a strong history of pacifism within Christianity
 - Early church was clearly advocates for it until Constantine & the emergence of “Christendom”
 - Teachings of Jesus and his own crucifixion are crucial foundations
- Strong encouragement to deal with best resources, Rae recommends two:
 - Pacifism, *What About Hitler? Wrestling with Jesus’ Call to Nonviolence in an Evil World*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006
 - Just War, *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.
 - Also consider, Martin Luther King Jr.’s, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, John Howard Yoder

Introduction

- Introduction

- In 2003 the United States launched an invasion of Iraq.
 - There was much debate over the war.
 - One of the points of concern was whether the war was moral.
- This raises the question of whether there is such a thing as a just war.
- For Christians, the debate over the morality of war is set against the backdrop of war in the Old Testament.

War in the Old Testament

- The Nation of Israel and War

- Throughout the Old Testament, Israel finds itself engaged in multiple wars. In each case Israel does so at the command of God.
- God sanctioned Israel's wars for multiple reasons:
 - To secure Israel's boundaries
 - National defense
 - The wars were aggressive in nature.
- However, just because God commanded Israel's wars in the Old Testament does not mean that war is justified for today.

Moral Views of War

- There are two major views:
 - *Pacifism* takes several forms but all agree that participation in war is never justifiable.
 - *Nonviolent pacifism* precludes the use of violence in any form.
 - *Nonparticipation pacifism* is more extreme by not allowing for individuals to be involved even indirectly in actions that support war efforts.
 - Just War Theory
 - Participation in war can be acceptable under certain circumstances.
 - There are three main kinds of just war theory:
 - War is only justifiable when war is undertaken in self-defense.
 - Preventative strikes are justifiable to ward off imminent attack.
 - Wars intended to reverse cases of injustice are acceptable.

Pacifism

- Pacifists insist that all uses of violence, particularly the use of lethal force, cannot be justified.
 - Including war
 - Self-defense
- Pacifists disagree whether pacifism should be a personal doctrine or also applied to society.

- Christian versions of pacifism are grounded in several central passages of Scripture including:
 - Matt. 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36
 - Paul's teaching on vengeance in Romans 12:19-21
 - Peter's doctrine of nonresistance in 1 Peter 2:18-24
 - Jesus' teaching that commands believers to love their enemies is inconsistent with participating in war.

- Critiques of Pacifism:

- It is counterintuitive.

- But did not Jesus say his kingdom is not of this world? (Jn. 18:36)

- It is not loving to let others be abused when it could be stopped.

- What if your spouse was being attacked?

- What about Hitler?

- It is unrealistic.

- Shouldn't the church be a *sign* of the coming kingdom?

Just War Theory

- Just War Theory
 - The just war tradition goes back to the time of Augustine, but was not well developed until the Middle-Ages.
 - Advocates of the classical view hold that war is justified under certain conditions.
 - Specifically when it is in response to unprovoked aggression.
 - Other just war advocates justify preventative wars and wars to reverse clear injustices.

Just War Criteria

Jus Ad Bellum (to go to war)

1. Must be prompted by a just cause.
2. Must have a just intention.
3. Must be a last resort.
4. Must be initiated with a formal declaration by proper authorities.

Jus in Bello (conduct in war)

1. Must have limited objectives.
2. Must be conducted with proportionate means.
3. Must respect noncombatant immunity.

- Proponents of the just war tradition point out that once you accept the basic position of the just war theory, it may be difficult to stop with the traditional just war doctrine.
 - It is argued that preventative strikes, wars to reverse injustices perpetrated by hostile aggressive nations on vulnerable nations, and the use of torture in relation to terrorism can all possibly be justified.
- Problems:
 - Pacifism is the most straight-forward reading of Jesus
 - How can the ends be reliably known? Often in the *fog of war* good intentions and means are lost.
 - All too often nations rationalize the need for war.
 - It must be acknowledge war is often justified on utilitarian grounds.

A Joke from *Theologygrams* by Rich Wyld

		STAR WARS Rebels vs. Death Star	DOCTOR WHO: Dalek campaigns	Harry Potter vs. Voldemort and co	LORD OF THE RINGS: Final Battle	INDEPENDENCE DAY: Humans vs. Aliens
Just decision to go to war (Jus ad bellum)	A) Is the purpose just?	✓		✓	✓	✓
	B) Is there legitimate authority to declare war?	✓	✓	?	✓	✓
	C) Will the war be fought with good intentions?	✓		✓	✓	
	D) Is this war the last resort?	✓		✓	✓	
	E) Are the expected effects of the war proportionate?			✓	✓	
	F) Is there a reasonable expectation of success?		✓			
Just conduct in war (Jus in bello)	A) Discrimination: are civilians being avoided?	✓		✓	✓	✓
	B) Proportionality: is the use of force proportionate to a just outcome?			Tricky with magic	✓	
	C) Legality: are the rights of the opposing forces being honoured?			✓	?	
Round-up	Final Score	5	2	6	6	3
	Notes	Skywalker: Man of the match for trying to save Vader		Potter: Yellow card for excessive shouting at enemies		

Contemporary Issues of Apologetics

- What about the morality of technological warfare
 - Drone strikes and killing without risking a nation's own soldiers?
 - Nuclear weapons with many civilian casualties of war (Hiroshima and Nagasaki)?
- Does the Bible condone genocide? The OT *harem* is serious stumbling block for many.
- Modern extremism and terrorism, how do we make sense of the goodness and justice of God in the face of such horrible human atrocities?
- What about the description of hate speech or discriminatory speech as doing “violence” to minorities, abuse victims, or LGBTQ?
- What about the prevalence of violence in media (TV, movies, video games) and the sheer number of guns in the U.S. compared with the rest of the world?

Contemporary Apologetics

- Current strong arguments for Pacifism rest on *divine judgment* (see Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*)
 - Belief in God's divine judgment is necessary in order to stand against evil and injustice and to love one's enemies.
 - Implication, in order to embrace one's enemy, the truth of their evil must be recognized and condemned *but* our knowledge is partial until divine judgment.
 - Thus truth about wrongs done *precedes* forgiveness and reconciliation (cf. cross of Christ)
- Eschatology necessary in order sustain faith in anticipation of God sorting out the horrors of this world.
- The issue is less about whether God is just, then it is about *how we know* God is just and how that is to be manifested in the present age.

Words Matter but is it Violence?

- Just as one may do in the Bible, must be careful to distinguish depictions of evil in media with actual violence
 - There is only a correlation of *short term aggression* with violence in video games but little by way of actual violence
- While many may object to “political correctness” gone awry, words matter and can be harmful.
 - It is a stretch say emotionally hurtful words \neq physical harm or violence. But excessively and repeatedly it does (*Body Keeps the Score*). This stems from research on epigenetics and “micro aggressions” among abuse victims and oppressed minorities. Generational trauma is real among African-Americans.
 - If divine judgment is true, then one can find hope for healing to endure even the worst verbal assaults without retaliation knowing God will hold everyone to account for every word and deed. (*Volf End of Memory*; Harrower, *God of All Comfort*)

Case Studies

- Drone Strikes
- Self-Defense

Case 10.1: Drone Strikes and Collateral Damage

You are a drone pilot for the military. Your job is to launch preemptive strikes from halfway around the world on targeted individuals or groups deemed terrorist threats. After an extensive review process that evaluates evidence of terrorist activity or planning, you receive your orders to strike particular targets. This is done without any risk to your own personnel, but drone strikes are notorious for inflicting collateral damage on noncombatants, either through pilot error, imprecision, or unavoidable harm to noncombatants due to their proximity to the target. At present, your orders are to launch a strike on a building in a civilian neighborhood. The building is a staging area for suicide bombers—that is, the bombers get “dressed” in suicide vests, receive final instructions, and are sent out from this building. In this instance, a small drone that has been placed virtually inside the building by a local intelligence asset, confirms that several suicide bombers now have their vests on and are preparing to go on a suicide mission. But as you are getting ready to launch the drone strike on the building, you see several children setting up fruit and bread stands across the street from the building you are going to strike. They are not going to leave their stands any time soon. You are faced with the dilemma that if you launch the strike, the children will certainly be killed, since they are well within the blast radius of the strike. But if you don’t strike, the suicide bombers will likely not be stopped.

Questions for Discussion

1. What decision will you make about launching the drone strike at this time? Explain the reasons for your decision.
2. How do the criteria for *jus in bello* that deal with noncombatant immunity and proportionality contribute to your decision to launch or not?

Case 10.2: Violence and Self-Defense

You and your family are startled awake by an intruder who has broken into your house. As he bursts into your bedroom, it is apparent that he is high on some drug and does not seem to be in control of his faculties. He is threatening you and your wife, and it becomes clear to you that he intends to kill you both. You fear for your safety, but more importantly, for the safety of your wife and of your children who are sleeping in other bedrooms down the hallway.

This intruder has created a major moral dilemma for you because you don't believe that the use of violence is ever justified. In fact, you hold to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount where he says, "Do not resist an evil person" (Matt. 5:39). Later in that same chapter, Jesus advises his followers to "turn the other cheek," "love your enemies," and "go the extra mile." You believe that Paul repeats this teaching later when he exhorts the Romans to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). You further are reminded of the example of Christ on the cross, trusting God and not resisting the people who wanted to do him evil (1 Peter 2:23).

Questions for Discussion

1. As a pacifist, how should you respond to the intruder who is threatening your own life and that of your family?
2. Do you believe that the Bible teaches pacifism? If so, what would you do in the situation above? If not, how do you explain what appears to be a clear teaching of the Bible?
3. If you would kill the intruder, on what basis would you justify taking his life?

Case 10.4: Innocent Lives or Combatants?

During one of the many missions against the Taliban in Afghanistan, a SEAL team was sent to the mountainous Hindu-Kush region of Afghanistan with the mission to kill one of the top Taliban commanders. While they were making their way to their target, three goat herders, tending their goats on a hillside, inadvertently discovered them. After capturing and speaking to the herders, the team leaders concluded that the goat herders did not harbor any hostile intentions toward the team. However, they were very concerned that the herders would inform the Taliban and expose the location of the team. In their view, the only way to ensure that they would not inform on them was to kill all three of them. Yet they did not appear to be combatants nor did they give the impression of being an imminent threat to the team.

Questions for Discussion

1. What decision would you make if you were the team leader on this mission—release or kill the herders? Explain the reasons for your decision.
2. How would the just war criteria of *noncombatant immunity* apply to this situation?