

Christian Pacifism

A discussion with Bill Fortenberry

In this discussion, I present a biblical refutation of pacifism and demonstrate that those who claim that Jesus taught non-violence have strayed from the plain truths of the Scriptures.

Eric:

We all need to increase our learning that is for absolute certainty. I have become a member of this group because of this fact. I am posting this for our collective learning:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_pacifism

I am a christian pacifst and i would like to invite other Chrstians into diogue on this

Bill:

Thank you for posting this article, Eric. I agree with you that we all should learn more about the concept of pacifism, and I appreciate the opportunity to dialogue. I found the article to be an interesting study. It is regrettable that the author did not display a greater knowledge of the Bible and of church history, but that is to be expected from a Wikipedia article. Unfortunately, I must take a stand that is quite opposite of that advocated by the author.

The premise of the article can be condensed into two primary claims: first that the Bible commands pacifism and second that the early Christians were pacifists. Both of these premises can be demonstrated to be incorrect, and I will attempt to do so.

For the first, one need only recognize that every commandment against violence in the Bible is a condemnation of personal abuse or retaliation. God, Himself, authorized capital punishment (Gen 9:6), war (Josh 6:16) and the defense of one's property (Exo 22:2) as exceptions to the law against killing. Some would say that Jesus changed that philosophy to one of total pacifism, yet the Savior did not make a single statement about killing that had not already been stated in the Old Testament. Nor indeed would we expect Him to do so, for He was the very same One who gave the Law (I Cor 10:4, John 8:58). And since He is the same today as He was yesterday (Heb 13:8), there is no reason to assume a priori that His doctrine would be any different now than it was then. If His commandments against killing in the Old Testament were not a call to complete passivity, then there is no reason to assume that the repetition of those same commandments in the New Testament creates a standard any more stringent.

The second premise of this article can similarly be shown as false. The author made the statement that "the Early Church position ruled out violence as an option, even in self-defense." As evidence of this he provided a list of quotes from those supposed to be the fathers of the Christian church which seem to support his claim, but he has ignored several statements by these men which contradict the pacifist position. Tertullian, for example, twice made reference to the Christian soldiers under the command of Marcus Aurelius in AD 174 (1) and also stated in his "Apology" that Christians were regularly found fighting alongside other Romans (2). Clement of Alexandria found no fault in Christians who were employed in the military urging them to "Listen to the commander, who orders what is right" (3) and assuring them in his pedagogy that

he found no fault in their wearing of shoes as part of their uniform (4). Mathetes explained that Christians dwell in this world in a way that is not “marked by any sinbularity” (5); and Origen, while advocating pacifism for Christians themselves, thought it not strange at all to urge those Christians to pray for the triumph of the Roman army (6). It should further be noted that noted archaeologist William Ramsay lists several evidences for early Christian involvement in the military and concluded that ““it is certain that the armies of the eastern empire were largely composed of Christians” (7).

Thus both of the author’s premises are incorrect. While the Bible does teach that Christians should refrain from personal retaliation, it does not advocate total pacifism. And while some sects of the early church did enjoin their members to a life of complete non-violence, such a position cannot possibly be attributed to the church as a whole.

- (1) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0305.htm> and <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm>
- (2) <http://www.logoslibrary.org/tertullian/apology/42.html>
- (3) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/020810.htm>
- (4) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02092.htm>
- (5) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0101.htm>
- (6) <http://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/Origen-War.html>
- (7) <http://books.google.com/books?id=yFX4cGGIPaIC&lpg=PA73&dq=sir+william+ramsay+I+uke+the+physician&pg=PA343#v=onepage&q=armies&f=false>

Bill:

By the way, you should read the wikipedia article again. I think that you will find that it no longer supports your position as strongly as you originally supposed. You see, the problem with relying on wikipedia as a source is that anyone can change anything contained therein. You would do far better to rely on reputable sources that can be easily verified.

Eric:

Ah, very interesting points that you make Bill, I attend seminary at Andover-Newton theological school. I am a Quaker that is serving as a Unitarian minister and i am a pacifist, please allow me to present the other side of this issue.

Jesus taught in many ways, through parables, teachings and with his earthly life lived, that is to say that we can learn a lot by observing his actions as well as his teachings, I am sure you will agree that there is folk wisdom in the phrase, actions speak louder than words...

The actions of Jesus and those of the early church show beyond doubt that Jesus new teaching was one of love. He lived at time of occupation. He choose to live under occupation rather than engage in a war.

his teachings of turn the other cheek, Live the Golden rule, love your: enemy, neighbor and brother as you love yourself. these teachings when held up against Jesus telling peter to put down his sword and that all who live by the sword shall die by the sword are very telling. When taken together you have to admit they could be seen as a pattern of teachings, this coupled wiht his life lived show that his followers are not to fight with violence for the kindoms and principalities of this word or for the heavenly realm.

Blessed are the peacemakers is a very clear teaching, it also implies another truth, woe to the war

makers.

A measure that Jesus taught to hold a teaching up to, to measure it it is a good and true teaching is to look at a teachings fruits to determin if it is good. When the frutis of Just war theory are held up for inspection, they must be seen as not fit for consumption. Death, destruction, physical, emotoinal, and sprititual injuries occur in war. the fruits tell that the theory of Just War is invalid. Veterans lead all catogories in negative indices, suicide, incarceration drug addiction, homelessness and domestic abuse to name a few. Jesus way of loving eniimies shows its fruits in the movemeny by Rev. Dr. King, he loves his enemies but enters into conflict with them while remembering the Golden rule. the fruit of this action shows that conflict can be engaged in a Christain Manner without destroying people, places or things. In fact quite the opposit everyone who came into contact with this disagreement of both sides was bettered by it. Conflict can be engaged in such a manner that everyone is bettered instead of destroyed. God weeps that we take up arms against each other as you or i would when our own childern fight. the golen Rule absollutely applies at all times perhaps especially when people are engaged in conflict. There is no person who would like a gun waved ovet them or especialy would not like to have a weapon in the viscinity of thier children.

early Christians showed thier wish to not fight with weapons of this world by actions like being stoned to death, or Christians being thrown to the lions, they did not fight back. Poeple die in unarmed conflict as well as armed ones. Constantines conversion to Christianity changed the very nature of what it meant to be a chsitian...Just war theory was introduced into Christianity by Romans... God has shown that he can be influence by prayer, if he condoned war in the begining is it not possible that humanities collective prayers for peace throughout history would have some effect on his stance. And that at the time of the birht of the Prince of Peace that there was a significant change afoot? Jesus shows an evolved more civilzed way for humanity to follow, this should be followed.

Bill:

I'm not sure I understand. Are you saying that the facts I presented are wrong, or are you just ignoring them. I provided several examples to prove that the early Christians were not pacifists as a whole, and yet you persist in that claim. Was I not clear in my presentation? Do you need me to provide more evidence? I didn't even mention the Christian nation of Armenia which took up arms in AD 303 to defend itself from the Roman armies or the list of Christian soldiers contained in the history of Eusebius. Should I go on, or are you just going to ignore everything that I say?

Eric:

You speak of ignoring what is said. You seem to ignore that Jesus was in fact a pacifist. And taught pacifistic ideals on human relationships. If yuo can ignore Jesus' own teachings on loving enemies then there is nothing that i can teach you. I will only point to what Jesus has taught and stand on that. He taught to love our neighbors, enemies, and selves. He gave us a guideline to live out this teaching called the golden rule. You can follow it or not it is up to you. The Golden Rule is specific on how people are to interact with one another. how can you ingore the obviose while pointing at a 303 group? Early christianity is much earlier than that and you know it. Jesus tells peter to put his sword down. I am talking that early! when i say early church. Only a person who could ingore the most very basic message of the new testatment: that God is love and that we are

to love one another as God loves us, could argue with pacifism. Jesus loves us and our enemies and employs us as a mediator: His love for us screams "stop the fighting, God is not glorified in our killing each other but in our loving each other" it says. Can't you hear it?

Bill:

Very well, then. I will consider the second premise of the article as being disproven. The "church fathers" did not unanimously advocate pacifism.

I will now address the first premise in more detail. Let us examine what Jesus said about pacifism and determine exactly what His statements mean in light of our current discussion. For sake of continuity, I'll list them individually along with my opinions and wait until you've had a chance to discuss each one before moving on to the next.

Let's begin with Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." At first glance, many would assume that this verse is a strong support for the case of pacifism; but to do so, they must read into the verse something that is not there. Those making this assumption must incorrectly conclude that by pronouncing a blessing on the peacemakers, Christ was also pronouncing a curse upon those who choose to take up arms. However, there is no such curse pronounced in this verse. If we were to apply this faulty logic to the rest of the beatitudes, we would have to conclude that Christ also condemned happiness by blessing those that mourn. That this is not the case is made obvious by the recording of Christ's own commandment for men to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. In like manner, the blessing of the peacemakers does not in any way condemn the use of force.

One further point could be made about this verse. The blessing which peacemakers are said to receive is the name of "the children of God." One could correctly assume that they would inherit this name because God, Himself is a peacemaker as recorded in Romans 15:33 and several other passages throughout the Scriptures, but the fact that God is a God of peace does not in any way prevent Him from being a God of war also as we see in Exodus 15:3 and I Chronicles 5:22. If God can be both a God of peace and a God of war, it is not unreasonable to conclude that those who follow Him can likewise be men of peace as well as men of war.

Eric:

Sir, your ability to dodge the basics is astounding. The Jewish Christians were pacifists, that is to say, they believed in a realized eschatology. They would not pick up a weapon for the kingdoms of this world.

The very fruit of war testifies against what you are saying.

No place in the new testament does it say: love your country more than ur lives or God. Nation states are not given by God but creations of human beings. To fight for one is putting the wrong priorities first. God is first! His divine servant Jesus is clear on this, and so are the disciples: 1Jn 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?- KJV
we are to treat every person we meet as if they were Jesus. This is the basic teaching of Christianity.

Your assertion that Jesus does not issue a woe around war is incorrect, in the beatitudes he says "blessed are the peacemakers" he elaborates on this in the Garden of Gethsemane when his

arresters come, Peter takes up a sword to defend Jesus, he is sternly admonished for this. "Those who live by the sword will die by the sword" so Jesus does in fact give a curse to warmakers. One that is implied in the beattitudes and rather specific at the garden. Jesus as a divine servant of God, is a better translator of the OT then you are. Please stop arguing with Jesus with the OT, he knew it intimately and still taught that love is more important than anything else, why dont you stop arguing with him, to love God you must love your niehbor, enemy, brother and self or as John says you are a lier. BTW it is not possible to love with a weapon in ur hand...

Bill:

There are several errors in your most recent claims. For instance, your claim that nations were not created by God is a direct contradiction of Acts 17:26 in which we are told that God not only created the nations, but that He also determined their geographic locations and their temporal durations. This passage is a reference to Deuteronomy 32:7-8 which informs us that God established the original boundaries of the nations to coincide with His future plans for His own chosen nation, the nation of Israel.

Your interpretation of Christ's warning to Peter is also in error. According to your interpretation, every, single man who has ever used a weapon is destined by God to die by a weapon. There are two problems with this interpretation. First, it does not agree with known facts. There are many men and women who have used weapons in warfare and yet have not been killed by weapons. Several of my own relatives have passed away in peace at the end of a long life after being involved in war. Therefore, either your interpretation is wrong or Jesus was wrong, and I believe that Romans 3:4 would have definite application here.

Secondly, your interpretation also completely ignores the Old Testament foundation of this verse. As much as you dislike the Old Testament, it is still impossible to deny that this passage is a direct reference to Genesis 9:6. As such, one must understand Christ's warning to be subject to the same limitations as the original. To divorce the passage in Matthew from its foundation in Genesis would be like attempting to understand Calculus without first establishing a foundational understanding of Algebra.

The final error which I will address is your misunderstanding of the concept of love. You claim that it is impossible to love someone while threatening to take that person's life, but I ask you, is not God love personified (I John 4:7)? To say that it is impossible to both love and kill simultaneously, is to say that God does not love, for He has killed many, many men.

If God can both love and kill, then your definition of love must not be accurate. The Bible tells us that love is the fulfilling of the Law (Romans 13:10); and since the law calls for the killing of certain individuals, love must therefore be compatible with the taking of a life.

Eric:

Sir, your implications that i have some dislike for the OT is unfounded, offensive and unfortunate. Not any person alive knows the Jewish traditoin better than Jesus did (you seem to be claiming that you know these verses better than Jesus did) He knew the verses you speak of and still taught to turn the other cheek: Did Jesus teach this or not? if he did then you must try to follow it, if he didnt then the bible is in error.

At the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, as he is calling his disciples they say, "let us bury our father and we will follow you." Jesus responds, "let the dead bury the dead"... now it is not possible for real dead people to do anything, so we must then reason out that he is talking about people who are spiritually dead, when we see what happens to veterans: suicide, incarceration, domestic violence drug/alcohol abuse there can be no doubt that these people are spiritually dead as those that did the funeral. The weapon brings death one way or the other!!!

the other interpretation is that the master of the day of judgement has given a very specific teaching here and will lay out his decision based on that teaching, carrying a sword would seem to have its own consequences for eternal life...

It is for this reason that I plead with you not to argue with Jesus with the OT, I would also insist that you not argue with Jesus with Paul. Jesus alone is the authority, it is my opinion that you make a mockery of his teachings when you do this.

You say I dislike the OT, it seems to me that you dislike Jesus himself...

Did he teach turn the other cheek or not?

YES he did, it is up to us to follow it!!! not try to get around it as you seem to be doing...

Finally I will say that the bible can be seen to justify slavery. do you think that there should still be slaves? Obviously not!

So too with war, the bible may seem to justify it in parts but there can be no doubt that the prince of peace (OT title for Jesus) Jesus himself taught that fighting is not the way of a true Christian. I say follow Jesus and all will go well on the day of judgement...

Bill:

You say that Jesus knew the Old Testament better than anyone else, and I agree, but let me ask you this. Why did Jesus know the Old Testament so well?

You also mentioned that many of our veterans are spiritually dead, and once again, I agree with you, and I have a question. What is it that makes one spiritually alive?

Eric:

Why did Jesus know the OT? I will not bother to answer this question.

What makes one spiritually alive? A life well lived, blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, doing the will of our father which is in heaven, this will undoubtedly make us spiritually alive, and we will show this abundant life by living out the Golden Rule...In all facets of our lives.

Here is what Jesus says in MT 5:38-9 KJV You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But say unto you resist not evil (with evil) but who ever shall smite thee on the left cheek turn to him your right cheek also.

This is another clear example of what I have been saying, Jesus here is quoting OT and reteaching what God would have us do. How can you argue with such a clear passage?

When taken as a whole there can be no doubt what Jesus was trying to teach, something that was not new in his time yet we have not yet accomplished it on a societal level, that we all each of us love one another as Jesus would love us...

Bill:

Jesus' explanation of spiritual life can be found in the third chapter of John. There we read of Jesus' statement to Zacheus that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." He went on to explain that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The book of John concludes with the explanation that "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

According to the Bible, therefore, spiritual life comes from believing that Jesus is the Christ. In other words one must believe that He is the Messiah whose sacrificial death and resurrection to pay the penalty for our sin was prophesied in Daniel 9:26 and Isaiah 53. Eternal, spiritual life can only be obtained by personally accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior. Has there been a specific time in your life in which you have done this: a point at which you prayed to the Lord and asked Him to forgive your sins and become your Savior?

Eric:

I am not sure what that has to do with anything we are discussing, but yes actually I am born again as you say.

This has nothing to do with following the teachings that Jesus gave us... If he is the way, then we must follow where he leads, he leads us along a path of the Golden Rule. It is not difficult to understand but it is difficult to do! Those that have been reborn, should, with the help of God and Spirit be able to walk this path, unfortunately this is not always the case...

If you are trying to imply that you are somehow closer to God than I am, and therefore more correct, then I must call you out. I live a life trying to implement Jesus' real teachings not one particular denominations understandings, but the way Jesus speaks to me in my heart...

Again I appreciate the way you ignore the scriptures I have posted in favor of OT...

It is my opinion that you are absolutely and tragically wrong on this issue, and I pray that your heart will be softened and that your eyes can see, and that your ears can hear what Jesus taught with his earthly ministry.

Bill:

Thank you, Eric. It is very good to hear that you are born again. I wasn't completely sure of your salvation, and I wanted to make certain that we were both approaching this issue from a solid foundation. To even the playing field, let me tell you that I asked Christ to be my Savior on May 5, 1985.

Now, let me address your point on following the Golden Rule. This particular teaching of Jesus can be found in Matthew 22:39. In that passage, a lawyer asks Jesus a question about the Old Testament Law. He asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus' answer has direct application to the topic of pacifism. He said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (Deuteronomy 6:5). This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Leviticus 19:18). On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The Golden Rule, of course, is drawn from the second of these two commandments, but the statement that I would like to draw your attention to is that one which immediately follows the Golden Rule: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." As you have already mentioned, Jesus was the greatest expert on the Old Testament that ever lived. Of course, that is to be expected since He is the One who wrote it. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Jesus knew all of the Law when He said that the entire law is based on the Golden Rule. This means that He was fully cognizant of such statements within the Law as:

"The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him." (Numbers 35:19)

"If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him." (Exodus 22:2)

"And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males." (Numbers 31:7)

"And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:" (Deuteronomy 20:12-13)

"But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:" (Deuteronomy 20:16)

Which means that, according to Jesus Christ, all of these commandments (as well as many others which command both killing and warfare), all of them are founded upon the Golden Rule. Now, if Jesus Christ, Himself taught that warfare and certain types of killing are consistent with the Golden Rule, then who are we to argue with Him?

Eric:

Sir, your ability to take a teaching that is specific, like the Golden Rule, and twist it into what it is not, an endorsement of war saddens me. You draw on passages that in my opinion are not the correct passages. Using passages similar to the ones you quote it is also possible to make the biblical case for slavery. Do you believe that there should still be slavery?

No of course not, and neither should there be war either. Interesting passages that relates here are in James 2:14 My brothers, what good is it for someone to say that he has faith if his action do not prove it? Can faith save him? ...if faith is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead. 18 "Show me how anyone can have faith without actions, I will show you my faith with my actions" 24 You see it is by his actions that a person is put right with God, and not by his faith alone... There is a real relationship between our faith and our behavior. If we really Love as we are

commanded to do (ourselves neighbors brothers and enemies), then the very idea of using our actions to hurt another person would never occur to us. My dear brother in Christ. It is my opinion that you are missing the point of the teaching of our great teacher. Jesus is leading us to a place where violence is not acceptable or encouraged or even likely to be thought about...violence is a part of the earthly world not the Godly, our actions prove which place we think we live in, choose God and throw down the sword...

Bill:

You are wrong on several accounts, but I will focus on your claim that I have referred to the wrong passage of Scripture. I strongly suspect that you have resorted to this type of claim because you simply have no answer for the passages that I mentioned. You have done this several times before. When I referred to passages from the Old Testament that disagree with your position, you answered that I can't use the Old Testament. When I quoted from the New Testament epistles to demonstrate your error, you decided to mark them as out of bounds as well. Now I have presented the Words of Jesus Christ Himself in opposition to your point, and what is your response? Well, of course you say that the verses I quoted are "not the correct passage." What else should I expect you to do, admit that you were wrong? Let me make a suggestion. Since I am so obviously incapable of finding the right passage, why don't you just tell me which verse you think is the "correct" representation of the "Golden Rule"?

Eric:

Sir, the Golden Rule is simple, do unto others as you would have others do unto you. What part about this simple teaching do you not understand? Would you want any person to hold a weapon over you or your children? If the answer is no, then likewise don't hold or support holding of weapons over others. In each instance if you would not like the behavior done to you then don't do it yourself.

This is not a stand alone teaching but one that comes with many beside it: Love your God, and love your self, neighbor, brother and enemy. To love God and our fellow travelers refer to the Golden Rule...

Turn the other cheek, this is another CLEAR teaching which is not a stand alone teaching of Jesus'.

I am going the extra mile with you on this but you hide behind scriptures that you think support your opinion. We are called to do justice in this world as those who love Jesus... monies that should be going toward feeding and clothing the poorest of our populations are being spent on warfare! and thus creating homelessness and food shortages etc...our actions as shown in James are what show if we really Love God, John says in 1 John a similar thing...Don't discount Jesus telling Peter to put his sword down...This is the correct passage!!! As taught by our Lord and savior and you sir, in my opinion are making a mockery of it! The teachings when taken together, with many others, point directly to a lifestyle that is void of weaponry Jesus would not pick up a weapon and he ordered those who follow him to put their weapons down, Sir which part of this simple teaching do you not understand? When you understand what Jesus taught and then go through the OT then you will get the fruit which is intended...Jesus did re-teach many of the old teachings again I implore you to look closely at the turn the other cheek teaching.

Do you believe that this is a teaching which Jesus gave?

Do you believe that Jesus told Peter to put the sword down?

Do you believe that Jesus taught the Golden Rule?

Build your house on this rock and it will stand, all others will be swept away...

Sir at this point all i can do it pray for you and those who believe like you. I will pray in prayer and in actoins, my life lived will show that i take these teachings seriously.

You ask what sriptures should we discuss, I say look at Rev. King's life, lived and you will have a better picture of understanding how God wants his children to live...

Bill:

You didn't answer my question. What passage of Scripture do you believe to be the best statement of the "Golden Rule"?

I'll give you a few options. So far, I have found this teaching in: Lev 19:18, Matt 19:19, Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27, Rom 13:9, Gal 5:14, James 2:8, Matt 5:44, Luke 27, Exo 23:4, II Kings 6:22, Psalm 35:13-14, Prov 25:21-22, Rom 12:14, I Pet 3:9, etc...

Which of these verses do you consider to be the best presentation of the "Golden Rule"?

Eric:

Friend, the Golden Rule is simple, I will not banter about it or allow you to make it obscure. Look to the Holy Spirit for guidance, or your own heart. Look to that actions and behavior of Rev. King to see what the Golden Rule lived out looks like in modern times. You are like a lawyer twisting words until they mean something other than thier smiple meaning. It only means something if you live it out...as Jesus taught us to do...so i take my definition from the way Jesus lived his life.

Would you want someone to hold a weapon over you?

Here it is, the paraphrased Golden Rule: 1 John 4:20-21 also 4:18 speaks volumes...

Bill:

I John 4:21 states: "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

In this passage we discover that the Golden Rule is a commandment received from Jesus Christ. It is a commandment that we have received from him. This leads us to the question of when did we receive this commandment from Jesus. To answer this question, we must properly identify the commandment. The verse above tells us that it is a commandment that those who love God should love their brothers also. The commandment of Christ that we should both love God and love others is found in Matthew 22:39. As I explained previously, Matthew 22:39 records Jesus own statement that the "Golden Rule" is consistent with every single commandment given in the Old Testament Law including the commandments to kill under certain circumstances.

Eric:

how can you take a commandement to love your brother and turn it into a validation of war. Sir, you are wrong beyond measure, someone needs to tell you that, and apperanlty the task has

fallen to me. God loves you and I too love you, but when it comes to human interrelationships you justify evil. This is not what the Gospels teach they do teach justice not justified war.

Bill:

Let me see if I can explain this to you a different way. Your position, as I understand it, is as follows:

- 1) God commands us to love one another.
- 2) One cannot kill someone that he loves.
- 3) Therefore, God commands us never to kill anyone.

Throughout all of our conversations on this topic, you have stressed the first point over and over and over again, but I do not disagree with you on that point. On that point, there is no debate: we are in complete agreement. God commands each of us to love all men.

The real point of contention is your second premise: one cannot kill someone that he loves. This is where the real discussion lies. You have yet to present a single shred of evidence for this opinion. Apparently you have concluded that this opinion is correct for no other reason than that it makes sense to you, as if your intellect is the final measure of what is right and what is wrong. Unfortunately, your intellect falls far short of omniscience and thus cannot be trusted as an absolute standard of righteousness.

God has given us a perfect standard of righteousness in His Word, and it is by that standard that your second point must be measured. I have attempted to demonstrate the error of that point from the Bible. I have not denied the validity of the commands to love. I have simply tried to show that it is possible to take a life while at the same time loving the one whose life you are taking.

To prove this, I can point to at least three lines of biblical evidence:

- 1) The same God who is love (I John 4:8) and who loves every man perfectly (Eph 2:4) both kills men (I Sam 2:6) and wages war against them (I Chron 5:22).
- 2) God's perfect Law commands love toward all men (Lev 19:18) while at the same time both allowing (Exo 22:2) and even commanding (Gen 9:6) the killing of men under certain given circumstances.
- 3) Jesus Christ who is God in the flesh (John 10:30) and the ultimate personification of love (John 15:9) has promised to kill certain men when He returns to this earth (Matt 25:41, Rev 19:21, Rev 21:8).

These three lines of evidence are irrefutable. We may not understand it, but the Bible is clear one can take a life while loving the one whose life is taken. To say otherwise, is to deny the love of God Himself.

Eric:

Irrefutable? In my opinion the position i have laid out is the one which is irrefutable. Slavery once had defenders who would quote scripture as evidence that Slavery was correct and acceptable you have continuously avoided the issue, is slavery accpactable, i have asked you repeatedly. The verses of the law in leviticus and Exodus also say things like dont weave two type of cloth together, and food restrictions. We as a society have outgrown these biblical restrictions. Slavery according to the OT is valid, what do you say about this?

Sir, in a lawyerly way you have justified evil. We are to clothe those without clothes and feed those without food, this teaching also implies that we are not to kill those who God has given life. We should give people who would confront us the things they need not kill them. Please for the Love of God, Pray about what you are teaching. I am praying for you!

Bill:

On the issue of slavery, I will defer to the judgment of one who was intimately familiar with the topic. Phillis Wheatley was sold into slavery at seven years of age and did not regain her freedom until she was twenty-five. Here is what she had to say on this issue:

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew,
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

In another poem she also wrote:

While an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,
The muses promise to assist my pen;
'Twas not long since I left my native shore
The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom.
Father of mercy, 'twas Thy gracious hand
Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Can slavery truly be a product of the mercy of God? Phillis Wheatley sure thought so, and while her rejoicing does not justify all forms of slavery, it should at least provide us with an incentive to look beyond the mere surface of the issue.

If slavery is wrong, then what is it that makes it so? And if it is not wrong then by what standard is it justified? These are the questions that Phillis Wheatley's story should cause us to ponder, and it is these questions that we must answer about warfare and capital punishment as well. You say that all three of these things - slavery, warfare and capital punishment - are wrong, but you have provided no standard by which they are to be so judged.

Your claim that you are following the teachings of Jesus Christ has met with failure as I have demonstrated time and again that He did not teach what you say that He taught. Your only response to these failures has been to repeatedly rant about my ignorance and applaud your own wisdom which apparently qualifies you to teach me the error of my ways.

Instead of telling me how wrong I am and how right you are, why don't you print out everything that we have discussed, drive down to Harvard University, find a professor of English and ask him to determine which of us has correctly analyzed the teachings of the Bible? I can assure you that his answer will not be one that you wish to hear.

Eric:

You can assure me nothing friend, that much i know. I asked you a direct question and you this time hide behind a former slave. You think the Bible justifies slavery, all i can say is that i pray that you will someday open your heart and ears to true teachings of our God. Your interpretations of scripture do not leave any room for Jesus' teachings, therefore your interpretations are NOT VALID. Because you discount what Jesus himself taught. (put down your sword is a very clear teaching)

Just to be clear i will not be responding anymore to this posting, not because i feel you in any way proved ur case but i see that you have a closed heart and mind to me and i cant get through to you, i pray that the Holy Spirit will teach you directly or through another...God Bless you!

Bill:

I am truly sorry to hear that, Eric. I had hoped that you would be more reasonable and more willing to set aside your own opinions to discover what the Bible itself actually teaches. Your refusal to do so is most unfortunate.

Jesus commanded us to "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39) The Bereans were said to be "more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11); and in Paul's epistle to Timothy, we are commanded to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim 2:15).

It is my prayer that you will heed this advice from God, and develop a solid, biblically sound defense for your position. I welcome your return to this discussion at any time, and I trust that your learning has been increased through your participation thus far.