

Each point holds some merit. However, rather than explicate all the above, we would highlight yet another. Pacifism is predicated upon the idea of incompatibility between love and killing. The trauma of the act of killing was ameliorated by the Christian doctrine of the soul outlasting the body. Nevertheless, the early Church showed an aversion to bloodshed. This was due, in part to a textual error in Acts 15. Bainton declares:

*The Eastern text . . . enacted abstention from "things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication." In this context blood was taken to mean the eating of blood. The Western text, as known to a long series of Latin authors from Tertullian to Augustine, read: "To abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from fornication, and from blood," plus the Golden Rule. In that context blood was taken to mean bloodshed. [Ibid., p. 78; see also Bruce Metzger, The Early Versions of The New Testament (Oxford: Clarion Press 1977), p. 136 where the clarification is made, "negative Golden Rule" following the so-called Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:20f. & 29f.]*

By leaving out the fourth prohibition, "and from things strangled" and adding the negative Golden Rule, the end of the Decree says to abstain "from blood. Do not unto others what you would not have others do unto you." Thus, that which was intended to be a restriction upon ritual behavior became a moral prohibition against shedding blood. In reference to the Western text, Metzger says:

*This reading can scarcely be original, for it implies that a special warning had to be given to Gentile converts against such sins as murder, and that this was expressed in the form of asking them to "abstain" from it - which is slightly absurd!*

*It therefore appears to be more likely that an original ritual prohibition . . . was altered into a moral law by dropping the reference to "pniktou" [things strangled] and by adding the negative Golden Rule, than to suppose that an original moral law was transformed into a food law. [Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament, United Bible society, (1971), pp. 431,432]*

The impact of this textual variant (which is an error assuming the superiority of the Eastern and most other textual witnesses) was no small thing. Bainton, again:

*The form containing bloodshed was early and widely received. It was applied alike to murder, capital punishment, and killing in war. On the basis of this verse Tertullian formulated the three*