

Consider the contemporary movie ratings and the popular opposition to violence on TV. It doesn't matter whether or not the violence issues in the death of the wicked or not, there is more revulsion against the bloody death of anyone than there is against sexual immorality or blasphemy. Do not the sins of idolatry, blasphemy, adultery, and homosexuality actions arouse divine wrath and attract righteous violence from him? How then can we be more offended by violence than by the sin ^{that} provokes it?

We are seduced by cliches like "violence begets violence" when actually violence also stops violence. Did David's violence stop the violence of Goliath? Did Phinehas' violence assuage the wrath of God and save the nation (Num. 25:7-11)? And no one likes to recall that the God of heaven is known as a "Man of war" who wages war against His enemies. He is the one who invented violence; he will judge sin and sinners with eternal destruction. "Our God is a consuming fire," says the writer of Hebrews. He has no fundamental aversion to the stuff. Ramsey says:

Violence and bloodshed are no doubt horrifying, especially in destructive, total war, but the word "unlovely" has in Christian ethics a mainly spiritual not a mainly physical meaning. A selfish act is the most unlovely thing, and an unselfish motive may lead the Christian to perform necessary responsibilities which prove not so "nice" in terms of physical contamination. For the Christian outlook, sin came into the world, death followed; sin, or the contrary of love, is the greatest evil from which men need to be delivered, death is only the last enemy of mankind which shall be destroyed, and the sting of death is in fact sin (1 Cor. 15:26,56). For many pacifists, however, bloodshed and death are the worst evils. . .

Such a view has more in common with dualistic pacifism in the ancient world or with otherworldly Indian religious ethics than with early Christian pacifism. [Ibid., p. 182]

Yes, modern pacifism is a far cry from any biblical pacifism which might be extracted from the Scriptures. It depreciates the gravity of sin; it substitutes violence for sin as an object of revulsion. The Scriptures pass no judgment upon violence ipso facto. Rather, they reckon violence as force which may be wielded for good or for evil (in which latter instance the term "violence" might be technically applied in contrast to "force"). Force, then, is amoral. We regularly speak of military or police force by which no immorality in the use of force is intended. Thus, depending upon the way it is used, Bernard Goetz is vindicated and the L.A. Police Department is impugned.