

ACTIVISM

- the activist position believes it is always right to participate in war (the position held by most evangelical Christians): we must obey our government and fight in every war our government enters—"My country, right or wrong!"
- human government has been ordained by God, and to disobey the government is to disobey God (Rom 13:1–2; 1 Pet 2:13–14)
 - disobeying the government leads to anarchy, which is a far greater evil than participating in a war—even an unjust war
 - leaders of a nation bear full responsibility for the justness of a war, since citizens are seldom informed of all the facts
- *rationale*: since the government of the United States is based upon Christian principles, and since these Christian principles make America an enemy of tyranny and injustice, all wars fought by the United States are just wars
 - but this position is based on the assumption that the United States can never err in calling upon its citizens to wage war
 - loyalty is given first and foremost to the state instead of to God; but, the state is less than perfect: the standard of right and wrong is found in God, not the state
- it was this blind obedience to the state that gave rise to the terrible atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War II

SELECTIVISM

- the selectivist position believes it is right to participate in some wars—some wars are just (2 Chr 13:2–20) and some are not (Judg 11:4–27; 2 Chr 35:20–24); therefore, Christians should fight in just wars but not in unjust wars
 - taking life is not always murder: it may be permitted or even commanded by God; e.g., capital punishment (Gen 9:6; Exod 21:14, 23; Rom 13:4), self-defense (Exod 22:2; Luke 22:36–38), and just warfare (Judg 3:1–2; Heb 11:34; Rev 19:11)
 - if bearing arms to defend yourself is permitted (Luke 22:36–38), surely bearing arms to defend your nation is permitted
 - it is not always right to obey the government (Exod 1:15–21; 2:1–3; Dan 3:4–18; 6:6–13; Acts 4:18–20; 5:27–29)
 - *criteria for a just war*: (1) a war to defend the innocent is just, such as wars against aggression (Gen 14:1–17); (2) a war to execute justice is just, such as punitive wars of retaliation against countries that engage in terrorism or harbor terrorists (Taliban in Afghanistan); (3) just wars must be declared and fought by governments—the sword is not given to individuals (Rom 13:4); (4) military objectives are limited in a just war—don't destroy a country's ability to sustain life after the war is over (Deut 20:19–20); (5) a just war must be fought justly—without theft, murder, torture, starving prisoners, or rape
 - unjust commands given in war should not be obeyed—especially commands to commit war crimes: submission to higher authority was the defense made by Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg trials after World War II, but was rejected by the tribunal: soldiers are responsible for their own actions and must not perform immoral acts under orders from superior officers (also the shooting of babies in their mothers' arms in the My Lai incident in Viet Nam)
- evil is evil—whether commanded by superior officers or by a government

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- nations can rob, rape, and murder and are brought to justice through warfare (Judg 6:1–6; 8:18–21)
- a preemptive strike or preventative war tries to forestall an evil that has not yet occurred: it anticipates an act of aggression
 - warfare does not involve personal hatred with intent to murder, so it is not a violation of the sixth commandment (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17)
 - if good men do not resist evil men, then evil men will prevail in the world: "all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing"
 - the fear of the LORD is the best deterrent of war (2 Chr 17:10)