

The fact that some human rulers do not believe in God and do not believe that human beings are God's image bearers does not lessen or relieve them of their responsibility.

Our Lord testified to the responsibility of human governments to carry out their lawful functions (including the preservation of human life), and the responsibility of citizens of a society to support their government in the execution of its lawful and necessary and useful functions. In Matthew 22:21 He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

9. The responsibility to protect and defend human life may involve some form of personal or societal defensive action against persons or things that threaten to take it away unlawfully. In some instances, personal or societal defensive action may involve the use of some form of physical restraint of persons or things that threaten or attempt to take away human life unlawfully. Such physical restraint may involve the use of force.

This principle affirms the right of self-defense, as well as the right to use force to defend oneself under certain conditions.

Some denominations in Christendom do not admit these rights, including the Quakers and the Mennonites. They take the peace or pacifist position on these matters.

Pacifism is the view that the use of force in self-defense is wrong under any circumstances, and that therefore one must oppose the use of force and refuse to employ it for personal defense or in warfare, even if such opposition and refusal results in death for oneself or for others.

In a statement adopted by the Mennonite General Conference in August, 1937, entitled "Peace, War, and Military Service," we find the following:

As followers of Christ the Prince of Peace, we believe His Gospel to be a Gospel of Peace, requiring us as His disciples to be at peace with all men, to live a life of love and good will, even toward our enemies, and to renounce the use of force and violence in all forms as contrary to the spirit of our Master. . . . We believe that war is altogether contrary to the teaching and spirit of Christ and the Gospel, that therefore war is sin, as is all manner of carnal strife, that it is wrong in spirit and method as well as in purpose, and destructive in its results. Therefore, if we profess the principles of peace and nevertheless engage in warfare and strife we as Christians become guilty of sin and fall under the condemnation of Christ, the righteous Judge.

In another statement adopted by the Mennonite General Conference in August, 1951, entitled "A Declaration of Christian Faith and Commitment,