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The critical question for the Christian regarding service in the armed forces is: "Did Jesus Christ teach a lifestyle of pacifism?" Pacifism, generally defined, is the belief that violence is never (or seldom) justified, war and killing are always unacceptable, and that non-violent means must always be pursued in the resolution of conflicts. By this standard, Jesus the Messiah did not teach pacifism. Jesus taught a lifestyle of dependence upon God, personal non-retaliation against fellow human beings, and love for one's neighbor requiring robust participation in human society.

A determined minority through the ages has made the persistent claim that Jesus the Messiah taught pacifism as the Christian lifestyle. Their emphasis is upon peace, non-violence, peace-making and radical Christian love as an alternative lifestyle. These are worthy ideals, and the rest of the Christian communion has much to learn from the pacifist point of view. That lifestyle, however, leaves the rest of the Christian communion (and others) to do the difficult work of ordering society and enforcing the peace. —excerpts from this paper

Was Jesus a Pacifist?

Some Christians through the ages have wondered why Jesus the Messiah never openly condemned killing in all of its forms. Why didn't Christ, who continually spoke of life and death, condemn the profession of arms, capital punishment, racism, oppression of the poor, official corruption and slavery among the other social ills of his day? Plainly, Jesus the Messiah was not focused upon political considerations.¹ If he had been, we would have received a qualitatively different Gospel. Jesus came to establish of the Kingdom of God in individual human hearts. When we come to the issue of pacifism, we must understand the Savior's life, message and work fully in in the context of the entire scripture.

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must always be pursued in the resolution of conflicts. By this standard, Jesus the Messiah did not teach pacifism. Jesus taught a lifestyle of dependence upon God, personal non-retaliation against fellow human beings, and love for one's neighbor requiring a robust participation in human society.

Throughout this paper a conservative-evangelical hermeneutic is employed. Interpretation of Scripture cannot and must not happen in a historical, philological or textual vacuum. Basic to a conservative-evangelical hermeneutic is the understanding that both the concrete and abstract concepts of Scripture are narrated to us in human language through the ongoing divine-human relationship rooted in time-space history.² The Bible is interpreted as a unified whole, divinely revealed and composed by a variety of human authors. The person and work of the Redeemer-Messiah is the major theme of Scripture that weaves the scripture into a unified whole. This conservative-evangelical hermeneutic in no way disregards neither recent academic discussion on how biblical literature was composed, nor overlooks its various theological themes. However, the Bible is approached as a unity that is internally consistent.

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Approaching the Scripture in this manner demands that the interpreter explore the meaning of Jesus Christ's life and work within the entire scope of Scripture.

Personal Non-retaliation, Not Pacifism

Jesus commanded his followers (in keeping with both the OT and NT ethic) to subordinate all desire for personal revenge to God (Lamentations 3:30; Matthew 5:39; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30) against a future reckoning (Luke 21:22). The consequence of this charge is to eliminate the act of personal retaliation from the Christian life. Believers are also directed to love their neighbors (Matthew 19:19), which has an entirely different set of ethical responsibilities focused upon others, including one's family. At no time is there a suggestion that the follower of Christ is to renounce civic or familial duties, rather Jesus taught a dual obligation.⁴ Christ taught a robust life of faith lived to the fullest as a citizen of God's Kingdom and as an involved resident of this present world.

A determined minority through the ages have made the persistent claim that Jesus the Messiah taught pacifism as the Christian lifestyle. Their emphasis is upon peace, non-violence, peace-making and radical Christian love as an alternative lifestyle. These are worthy ideals, and the rest of the Christian communion has much to learn from the pacifist point of view. However the pacifist lifestyle leaves it to the rest of the Christian communion (and others) to do the difficult work of ordering society and enforcing the peace.

It might be easy enough to believe that Jesus was a thoroughgoing pacifist if one only studies the Gospel accounts. But even when exclusively considering the Gospel narratives there must be a degree of textual selectivity to find a truly pacifistic Christ. On the other hand, if one seeks to understand Christ within the entire context of scripture we find the Messiah progressively revealed in a multitude of roles. When one integrates all of these roles the answer to the question, "was the Christ a pacifist?" must necessarily be, "No."

Which is the authentic and true Christ? Is the Christ to be understood as the sacrificial lamb of God (Isaiah 53:7); or the confrontational prophet (Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15); or the divine warrior (Luke 10:18; Acts 26:18); or the eternal judge (Revelation 20:11-12); or the sovereign king (Matthew 2:2; 21:5); or the final high priest (Luke 7:50; Jn. 3:16); or perhaps by some other scripturally supported interpretive scheme? In reality all of these perspectives are valid but incomplete, for the eternal Christ is revealed to us intricately, in multifaceted views. The careful interpreter will seek to comprehend and to integrate all that is disclosed about the Christ's person, life and work into a coherent understanding. The Christ of the Scriptures is revealed as Eternal God; who is not present in history to confirm our prejudices but to divinely transform individuals and their societies through them.

In the process of reflecting upon how we understand and interpret the person of Christ, we are confronted with the issues of accommodation with societal expectations, theological prejudices, cultural trends and personal biases. Social, philosophical and theological expectations obscure the evidence and inevitably lead to an over-emphasis upon one facet of Jesus' character and teaching at the expense of others. For instance, believers of many ages who were weary of armed conflict focused upon Christ as peacemaker and further identified him as a pacifist. In the modern era, Christians fatigued by global wars, national jingoism, the threat of nuclear holocaust and international jihadist terror have selectively focused again upon the Jesus "meek and mild," and rejected his nature as Divine Warrior. It is not surprising that some modern theologians, in the process of deconstructing texts, discover modern anachronisms inserted in first century accounts. In this way, some have found that Jesus was really a modern roughly inserted in the wrong milieu. This modern "Jesus" person thus teaches humanistic solutions to social conflict.

St. Anselm's "I believe that I may understand" becomes Descartes' "I think, therefore I am." Without a reference outside himself, deracinated 'modern man' produces a newfangled definition of 'peace': "an absence of war, achieved by the rational efforts of mankind." It follows from this definition that if nobody fights, or fights back when attacked, there will be no war, and mankind will have established 'peace' on earth—and all without the need of the Prince of Peace.⁵

To understand Jesus' concept of spiritual and communal order, one needs to integrate the fullness of the Old Testament, which teaches the proper uses of force necessary to order civilization. Because the Gospel accounts are focused upon Jesus' life and teachings, one could easily ignore Messianic teaching found throughout the pages of Scripture. Without an understanding of Old Testament faith and revelation, it is far too easy to make the Savior into a modern Western liberal.⁶ Deconstructing Jesus outside of his Hebrew context and traditions results in a Christ created in our own image. The truth, however, is that in Jesus we find no ethical or spiritual discontinuity between the New Testament Kingdom of God and the Old Testament establishment of the Israelite kingdom. ⁷ In fact, Jesus declared his earthly ministry to be in full accord with the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17)

Many Old Testament texts glorify war, warriors⁸ and GOD as the ultimate warrior: "Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:8, NASB). As repugnant as these themes might be to some moderns, they are essential to our understanding of the nature of God received through inspired Scripture. "It must be stressed that the theme of God the Warrior is an important one in the OT, not something peripheral to the main subject matter."⁹ The Old Testament acceptance of the fact of war also carries with it severe condemnations for those illicitly and wantonly ignoring revealed morality. Craigie notes that Christians need a complete perspective on OT war passages ¹⁰ to gain deep theological insight into our current world circumstance and human condition. We must study scripture to understand the just use of violent means.

God the Warrior is a central theme of the entire Old Testament literature.¹¹ Throughout the

biblical texts we find references to God as the Victorious Warrior (Exodus 15:3), Conquering King (Psalm 10:16), God Mighty in Battle (Psalm 24:8), and Lord of Armies/Hosts (1 Samuel 1:11; 1 Chronicles 17:24). Craigie points out that the term "Lord of Armies"

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has more than two hundred occurrences in the Old Testament.

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"As odd as it may seem to modern sensibilities, battle in the context of God-ordained Holy War is portrayed as an act of worship in the Hebrew Bible. The armies of Israel labored in the presence of their God, accordingly they had to be spiritually prepared.

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God works out his salvific plan through fallen humanity and within their ordinary interactions with each other. "To state it another way, God employs, for his purpose of bringing salvation to the world, the very human beings who need salvation."

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Messiah's work, prophetically unveiled in the Hebrew Scriptures, involves waging holy war. Isaiah [55:3-5; 61:1-3; 63:1-6] describes Messiah as "the one who is anointed by the Lord to be his conquering hero over all opposition and over all sovereignties."¹⁶ Messiah's mission is one of self-sacrifice, redemption, rescue and release but also one of divine vengeance against wrong doers in the final settling of accounts. The prophet Micah labels Messiah as "One who breaks" (2:13) the roadblocks that impede the faithful from returning to God's presence. The Messiah is the King who will victoriously lead the faithful (Isaiah 63:1-6) against the nations. Jeremiah identifies Messiah as the Priestly King (30:9, 21). Ezekiel names Messiah as the One who unifies the nations (37:15-28). Zechariah foresees Messiah as King and Priest who rules over the nations (6:9-15).

In the New Testament, the Apostle John's Apocalypse is the summation of the Messiah's earthly work. The Christ revealed in the Apocalypse is the just and victorious leader at the head of Heaven's armies defeating (Revelation 19:17-21) the massed armies of a rebellious planet earth. This is hardly a pacifistic, non-violent portrayal of Christ, but is certainly in keeping with Messiah's role as OT prophet, priest, king and warrior.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords. (Revelation 19:11-16, NIV)

This portrayal of Christ, even if interpreted figuratively, does not measure up to modern humanist and pacifist expectations. The only way that we could possibly deconstruct Christ into that modernist mold is to divorce him from his Hebrew antecedents and NT apocalyptic faith traditions. Moreover, the atoning work of the all-powerful, Divine Warrior who meekly submitted to a sacrificial death as the Lamb of God is as astonishing as it is powerful.¹⁷ Rather than remake Christ into our own image, we ought to recognize his divine person as self-revealed in scripture.

God and His purposes are disclosed in terms that are familiar through language, custom and form. The scriptures are given in human language, clearly expressed and understandable, and rooted in the divine-human relationship. God is neither ineffable nor unknowable but self-revealing in a time-space covenant. Our relationship to God is confined by our creaturely limitations, but this is precisely the mystery of the incarnation – that God became flesh so that we might comprehend Him. As a learned rabbi put it in the Talmud; “We describe God by terms borrowed from his creation, in order to make him intelligible to the human ear.”¹⁸

The following six of Jesus’ teachings are interpreted through the lens of a conservative and evangelical perspective refuting the notion of Jesus as pacifist. Each of these passages, when taken out of the context of the entire scripture, may be misconstrued as supporting Christian pacifism; however, when understood within the complete scriptural tradition it requires a much different conclusion. Christ’s teachings are fully within the inter-testamental continuity of Messiah as revealed in scripture.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9)

The Greek word for peace, εἰρήνη, is found in the New Testament 92 times, with a range of meaning that is both temporal and eternal. It can denote national calm, or the absence of war; security or prosperity; spiritual peace brought only by the Messiah; a personal divine peace given by the ministry of the Holy Spirit; divine blessings resulting from faithfulness and obedience; and finally eternal reward and rest in paradise.¹⁹ The New Testament conception of peace is firmly rooted in the Hebrew “Shalom,” which is translated in the Septuagint

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more than 250 times by the Greek word for ‘peace’ (εἰρήνη). Shalom translates into English as “peace, prosperity, well, health, completeness, safety.”

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Shalom can mean the ‘absence of strife,’ but also has that divine quality of wholeness or completeness that is only characteristic of divinely given peace.

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Shalom is always the result of God’s interaction with humankind through covenant. “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.” (Isaiah 32:17).

What is a peacemaker (εἰρηνοποιοί)? The Reformer, John Calvin, defined peacemakers as “those who have an enthusiasm for peace.”²³ He went on to write: “it is a matter of toil and trouble to pacify those who are at dispute...Christ bids us look to the judgment of the Father, for as He is the God of peace.”²⁴

That person, who would make peace, is surely not pacifistic in the sense of eschewing all force. Making peace in a conflicted and turbulent world is not only a matter of living on principle but of initiating and enforcing peace with justice between disputing parties. A clear, but violent example of this is found in the book of Judges where the tribe of Benjamin is confronted, evil is restrained, and peace is restored (21:13).

Recent American military experience confirms that making peace between belligerents is as dangerous and violent for the peacemaker as engaging in all out combat. Peacemakers often are targeted by all sides in a dispute. Peacemakers bear the blame for each belligerent’s dissatisfaction. Peacemakers sacrifice wellbeing and personal safety for the establishment of peace. The preferred role of a peacemaker, even a military peacemaker, is one who exercises both active and passive means of deterrence to resist violence. Peacemakers are frequently wounded or killed in the process of establishing peace. Peacemakers sometimes are called to violently confront and/or restrain violent people in order to bring about the end of conflict and to enforce the peace. A harsh reality of life is that the death of a few violent persons may permit the whole of society to regain peace. The role of the peacemaker brings a reality check to the

modernist conception of establishing peace without the employment of force.

Defeating evil reestablishes peace. In spiritual warfare, the peacemaker seeks to defeat evil on all levels – against spiritual powers, as well as humanly inspired evil in interpersonal and communal relationships. Jesus, breaking the Sabbath regulation as he fights a spiritual battle, heals “a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all” (Lk 13:11, NASB). The Messiah treats her as a casualty of war, cures her affliction by the power of his word, then confronts the critical hypocrisy of the religious leaders present.²⁵ The woman finally knows physical peace coming from her healing and presumably finds spiritual peace in her Healer-Redeemer. The Messiah demonstrates that the believer establishes peace by defeating evil.

The Apostle Paul, writing in Romans 13, discussed the divine establishment of governing authority. The entire import of that chapter is that government is instituted by God to regulate order in society, promote justice, and preserve the peace. The principle that government is instituted by God is reiterated twice in the first verse. This divinely sanctioned order has the power of the sword (13:4) for the prosecution of its work. The work of government is to establish justice and keep the peace. Peace and peacemaking in the temporal realm are given to the governing authority. The establishment of peace and peacemaking may be accomplished by pagans (the Apostle’s governing authority is the pagan Roman government). God’s prevenient grace is worked out through human government as that authority does the work of justice.

TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

"But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." (Matthew 5:39; cf. Luke. 6:29; John. 18:22-23)

It is Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount that gives us most pause to consider that the pacifist case is possible. The immediate context for this saying is located within the context of Jesus' Kingdom ethic. He taught that the Kingdom of God is a present reality (Matthew 4:17ff) for first century listeners (as it is for those who followed throughout the centuries).

The key word in this passage is 'resist' [ανθιστημι] which in all 14 NT uses carries the meaning "to set one's self against, to withstand, resist, oppose; and to set against."²⁶ The word is useful for understanding the nature of both immediate and longer-term conflict. The immediate statement is intensely personal – an interpersonal principle that denies the believer the right of retaliation or vengeance - fully in keeping with the OT ethic.

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Jesus amplifies the personal subordination of the NT believer to God by denying the individual the possibility of retribution. The debate ever since has been if and how this principle of non-retaliation applies beyond the individual to social relationships and ultimately to governing authority. Ramsey contends that Christian love must have a "preferential ethics of protection" toward others.

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We must not misconstrue Christ's command to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39), which is intensely personal but does not also allow the believer to ignore the difficulty of other persons. "Coercive force, proportionate to the offense, is a just response in the face of violent aggression."

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A matter of distress to all parties when considering the appropriateness of warfare for Christians is that Christ gave us no direction for the conduct of government, especially concerning the use of deadly force. Any application of Jesus' Kingdom ethic to the broader society is an argument either by extension or from silence. (The same could be said for many of the grievous social ills of Jesus' day – such as slavery, prostitution, usury, etc.) The principle of personal non-retaliation is not explained in detail by Jesus, it is left up to the individual and the church to work out the complexities of personal discipleship.

Christian Pacifists³⁰ argue the case by extension. The ethic of radical, personal nonviolence taught by Jesus is to be the norm throughout the continuum of all human interactions. "That is why Christian ethics is not first of all an ethics of principles, laws or values, but an ethic that demands we attend to the life of a particular individual: Jesus of Nazareth."

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To do this, the Christian must not 'mimic' Jesus but to boldly live a virtuous life in a virtuous community.

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The church without "the kingdom ideal" is without identity; and it is the church which gives that ideal its expression.

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For Hauerwas this is neither an abdication of the public arena, nor 'a form of monasticism' which would deny any political significance to Christians practicing non-violence.

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He maintains that there is a Christian responsibility to support the state except when "government and society resorts to violence in order to maintain internal order and external security."

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The Christian continues to 'turn the other cheek' as a matter of practicing the radical virtues proclaimed by the Savior. Hauerwas believes in, "the responsibility of Christians to work to make their societies less prone to resort to violence."

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The Christian Warrior must carefully listen to the pacifist, for in doing so one finds motivation to pursue peace by non-violent means as a virtue. Warriors are those who wield the tools of violence, who can become overzealous in the exercise of power and too willing to ignore peaceful alternatives.

There are numerous pacifistic positions, all of which radically apply Sermon on the Mount teaching. The pacifist of absolute principle couples turning of the cheek with the OT command "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13). The pacifist, Johannes Ude, admits to no exception to this unconditional command – "It is on a higher level of authority than the various other political practices and prescriptions in the Old Testament which still left a place for violence."³⁷ Thus for Ude, OT principle is completely superseded by NT grace.

All varieties of pacifists agree on the principle that violence is not the answer to life's problems and that peaceful, alternative pathways must be found to resolve conflicts between parties. Turning the other cheek, personal humility and sacrifice within the context of submission to God are the guiding attitude for establishing peace in all human relations.

Historically, the argument from silence has been developed by Just War advocates. Thomas Aquinas, writing on Christian charity, cites Augustine, who in a sermon cites John the Baptist giving ethical direction to soldiers (Luke 3:14). The Baptist does not direct the soldiers to give up killing or warfare but rather gives a proscription of personal morality – "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). Augustine concludes. "If he commanded them to be content with their pay, he did not forbid soldiering."³⁸ Aquinas goes on to argue: "Those who wage war justly aim at peace, and so they are not opposed to peace, except to the evil peace, which Our Lord "came not to send upon

earth (Matthew 10:34).”

³⁹ His view harmonizes with St Paul (Romans 13:3-5).

Aquinas again cites Augustine: "We do not seek peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace."
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C.S. Lewis, writing in the same vein, understands Christ's teaching to turn the other cheek in a very literal and practical manner that does not eschew all violence, simply the right of personal retaliation. He interprets this command to turn the other cheek as an uncomplicated command without a secondary conclusion or effect. What is relevant is the personal injury and the Christian's response. The believer must submit individual desire for retribution to God (Deuteronomy 32:35). Lewis maintains that when we read into this command any other conditions than the interaction between two individuals we have moved beyond the command. "Does anyone suppose that Our Lord's hearers understood Him to mean that if a homicidal maniac, attempting to murder a third party, tried to knock me out of the way, I must stand aside and let him get his victim?" He denies this is contained in Jesus' words.⁴¹ Lewis sees consistency with this viewpoint in the whole of Jesus teaching and the entirety of scripture. He cites Jesus' praise of the Roman Centurion (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:6-10) 'without reservation'; the Apostle Paul's teaching on the right of the sword (Rom. 13:4ff) and St. Peter's confirmation of governmental authority (1 Pet. 2:14).

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Lewis does not find a universal principle of non-resistance that applies in all circumstances, but one that Christ's hearers would plainly understand as a personal ethic and not more.

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LIVE BY THE SWORD, DIE BY THE SWORD

"Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew. 26:52-54; cf. Luke 21:24; John 18:11)

In this command, the power of the divine Holy Warrior is revealed. "The idea of God actively being present in battle, not as sole combatant but as one who is personally present and assists the forces of good, is found very widely in Hebraic and later Christian tradition."⁴⁴ Peter's impulsively loyal act of drawing his lone sword against (Jn. 18:11) the constabulary force, although futile, was fundamentally a confusion concerning which conflict was being fought. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of earth stand in stark opposition at this pivotal moment. This was not a simple arrest but a cosmic battle waged with divinely powerful (2 Cor. 10:4) weapons of righteousness (2 Cor. 6:7).

This episode in Christ's life demonstrates again that Holy War is fought by God himself.⁴⁵ Holy War is eschatological in nature and for the purpose of establishing the Kingdom of God. Although human believers are the soldiers of Holy War, it is not fought with worldly means. Messiah, as God's charismatic representative

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engages in spiritual battle even though the humans involved are unaware of the celestial import of their actions. Human or political agency is not sufficient to bring about the divine program,

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rather as the prophet Zechariah proclaimed, divine action is required: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

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Messiah will fight his enemies (Luke 10:19; 1 Corinthians 15:21), no one else is capable of winning this battle, and "victory belongs to the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31).

Is there, however, a contradiction in Jesus' teachings? In the arrest scene Christ commands Peter to put away his sword. How are we to understand that injunction in light of his command given to the disciples:⁴⁹ "Go out and purchase a sword" (Luke 22:36) which is recorded by Luke just prior to the arrest? Because Luke develops the themes of human and spiritual conflict in his Gospel, ⁵⁰ the distinction between the two kingdoms⁵¹ is highlighted. Both instructions are given in the closing hours of Passion Week. The Messiah's eternal Kingdom purposes are primary and spiritual discernment is required on the part of his disciples.

We gain greater insight into the cosmic spiritual conflict afoot as Satan enters Judas (Luke 22:1-6); darkness reigns (Luke 22:53); and the Christ is arrested then condemned then executed (Luke 22:54ff).⁵² In unambiguous contrast, the human events recorded by Luke are mundane and even unremarkable for first century Israel - just as the spiritual insights into these ordinary events are startling. Such is the intertwining of the natural and spiritual realms in Luke's Gospel.

Calvin interprets the command to purchase a sword as a martial metaphor designed to prepare the Apostles for the conflict ahead. The Disciples are to strip themselves of every normal requirement of life, selling what is unnecessary to obtain everything essential to fight victoriously. But the battle call of Christ is not a call to worldly strife but toward spiritual warfare - a far more difficult task.⁵³

The immediate and larger context of these sayings is solidly within the spiritual battle to establish the Kingdom of God. Jesus has amply demonstrated that he is not interested in a temporal kingdom as he battles Satan (Matthew 4:8-10) by refusing to trade worship for world hegemony. Jesus conceded that Satan had (albeit temporarily) the power to grant him all of the authority and splendor of the earth's nations (Luke 4:5-6). The world is "under the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19) and Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and "the ruler of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). "What Jesus would not do, however, was to give in to Satan's pernicious temptation to worship this illegitimate tyrant as a way of regaining the temporal kingdom (Luke 4:7-8)."⁵⁴

The Kingdom of God is not a worldly kingdom acquired by military might. Rather, Christ's Kingdom "is not of this realm" (Zechariah 4:6; Jn. 18:36). So the Apostles are not to build the Kingdom of God by military might, or any other human methodologies. Just as Jesus the Messiah clearly delineates the separate concerns of church and state (Matthew 22:21), so he unambiguously defines how the Kingdom of God would be built. The sword, a weapon of the temporal world, is not an appropriate method for the Kingdom of God. Nations are a construct of human society, protected by military might and ordered by a constabulary. The Kingdom of God is created by the loving sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Zechariah 4:6) exercising divine power.

From all of this we may derive a clear teaching of principle that delineates between church and state. The church must be built by the power of God and not the power of the sword. The unspoken corollary is that worldly power is divinely given for the building, defense and ordering of human society.

Almighty God shows us a great grace when he appoints rulers for us as an outward sign of his will, so that we are sure we are pleasing his divine will and are doing right, whenever we do the will and pleasure of the ruler. For God has attached and bound his will to them when he says, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" [Matthew 22:21, and in Romans 13:1], "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."⁵⁵

Charles concludes that Christ's forbidding the disciples the use of armed force to establish the Kingdom of God is not an argument for pacifism. Nor, he notes, does it preclude the believer from 'bearing the sword' in public service for the good of society. He deduces that the NT does not teach that military service is "incompatible with the Christian faith."⁵⁶

Where does this leave the average Christian? Christians live in two worlds, both the Kingdom of God and this earthly kingdom. Christ's command to be the 'salt of the earth' (Mt. 5:13) directs believers to be participants in all walks of life, and for the believer to be there as agents of God's grace and divine transformation. Therefore, some persons are vocationally called and gifted by God to be protectors of society. They are suited for service in the constabulary and military forces ordained by God to maintain justice and peace.

TWO KINGDOMS

"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."
(Matthew 22:21; cf., Luke 20:20-26)

Confusing the two kingdoms is a fundamentally modern mistake. Church and state ought not to transgress the prerogatives of the other. Christ's teaching is not a warrant to divorce church and state but rather to discern the appropriate realms of each.

A common secular misapprehension is to suppose the Kingdom of God to be merely a very nice copy of this world. This secular vision fails to comprehend the spiritual realm. One might attribute this attitude to either ignorance or ideological blindness. A reverse error is theological - to assume that there can be no good (complete depravity) in the world. This theological error lacks credible understanding concerning the creation and the imago dei resident (although

damaged) in mankind.

Bock notes that the Savior's "render to Caesar" pronouncement is the closest thing we have on record that might be construed as a political statement.⁵⁷ Human governments have "a right to exist and to expect its citizens to participate in contributing to its functions."

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We note that Christian faith neither confuses church and state, nor specifies what form government must take. The mission of the state is to order society. The mission of the church is to transform the individual (John 12:35-36) and to judge (John 7:24) this present order but not incorporate or imitate its worldly ways (Romans 12:2).

Two kingdoms intersect in the Christian who is a citizen of both. We are created with dual spiritual and physical natures, and so we dwell simultaneously in both realms. God delegates different authority to rulers (Proverbs 24:21; Romans 13:1-7) and to spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17). Since Christians dwell in both kingdoms, care must be taken to integrate the two kingdoms in faith and in deed.

For the very fact that the sword has been instituted by God to punish the evil, protect the good, and preserve peace [Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-14] is powerful and sufficient proof that war and killing, along with all the things that accompany wartime and martial law, have been instituted by God. What else is war but the punishment of wrong and evil? Why does anyone go to war, except because he desires peace and obedience?⁵⁹

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia wrote concerning the Apostle Paul's discourse in Romans 13:1-5: "the core of his message is that government—however you want to limit that concept—derives its moral authority from God."⁶⁰ The state is "the minister of God" with powers to "revenge," to "execute wrath," including even wrath by the sword (which is unmistakably a reference to the death penalty).⁶¹ Government is accorded powers not divinely given to the individual, especially the power of temporal justice. He notes that this teaching from Romans concerning the powers of the state was the prevailing "consensus of Western thought," both religious and secular, until modern times.

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A citizen of the Kingdom of God (Eph. 2:19) is necessarily a righteous inhabitant of this present realm; participating in society by supporting the ruling authorities (Tit. 3:1), paying taxes (Ro. 13:6) and living out one's calling. It therefore follows that a Christian may serve in government,

in the military, in commerce, in medicine, in education, and in any other walk of life not expressly forbidden in scripture. The Christian is to discern the how to righteously live in two kingdoms and to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”⁶³

THE STRONG MAN

“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.” (Matthew 12:22-32)

Both Luke and Matthew record Jesus’ teaching concerning the strong man. This is a spiritual-temporal metaphor concerning the exercise of power. The immediate scriptural context of this instruction has to do with the exorcism of demons.

...Luke presents the analogy of military force in the parable of the strong man. The ‘stronger one’ is implied to be a warrior who conquers or ‘overpowers’: (νικάω) – rather than ‘binds’ – the strong man who, fully armed (καθωπλισμένος), guards his own palace (αὐλήν) in order to ensure the safety (εν εἰρήνῃ) of his possessions. When the stronger one overcomes the strong, he takes the ‘armor’ (πανοπλία) in which the strong man trusted and divides up the ‘spoils’ (σκῦλα).⁶⁴

The Messiah, as Divine Warrior, contextualizes his war-making inside his hearers’ frame of reference and solidly within the framework of scriptural teaching. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of using demonic power to cast out evil spirits (Isaiah 49:24-25) - a charge he easily refutes. Jesus then proclaimed his exorcisms as proof that he had ushered in the Kingdom of God: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”⁶⁵ Calvin notes that this attack on Satan is accomplished in “open battle resulting in demonic defeat and leaving evil nothing.”

⁶⁶

Christ is that someone stronger (ἰσχυρότερος) who overpowers (νικάω) the strong and, until now, uncontested ruler of this world (Jn. 12:31) and casts him out.

It is necessary for the ‘strong man’ to be overpowered so that Jesus can repossess his stolen

property – the creation (Mark 3:27). Luke writes that this can only be done when “one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him” and thus “takes away his armor in which he trusted and then divides his plunder” (Luke 11:22). So, the Messiah’s entire ministry is about divinely overwhelming the powerful usurper who had taken control of what was rightfully God’s (Luke 11:21), “namely, God’s people and ultimately the entire earth.”⁶⁷ Christ’s metaphor depends upon his hearer’s understanding of power, and military might as then expressed by the oppressive Roman occupation of Israel. The subject here is the exercise of divine power wielded by the Messiah. Because of the Messiah’s example we may conclude, *prima facie*, that resort to force is not evil in and of itself. A corollary deduction is that it is appropriate for the believer to oppose, restrain and confront evil. This is not a religious justification for resort to violence, rather a model for the restraint of evil.

An objection might be entertained that this exercise of power is entirely in the spiritual realm and does not affect the temporal. However, our human experience is that evil is objectified in earthly reality. The reason that this teaching is so readily understood is that the average hearer has experienced evil and knows evildoers who must be confronted and restrained. Further, that the moral and civic costs of allowing evil to thrive are ruinous to the human soul and to society.

Christians are to overthrow the power of Satan by the power of God (Ephesians 2:1ff) regardless of where it is manifested. In this present kingdom, we more readily see the physical effects of evil but may have difficulty identifying the spiritual force behind that evil. The Christian, in service of governing authority, may justly exercise coercive force to right wrongs, to establish justice and to enforce the peace as a righteous expression of faith.

Charles notes that biblical justice (Hebrew: *mispat*) is the cluster of principles that guide how humans rightly interrelate. In the pursuit of justice, we distinguish good and evil, guilt and innocence (Genesis 18:25; Isaiah 5:20ff); protect the innocent and weak (Exodus 23:6–9; Leviticus 19:9–10); prevent and correct injustice (Leviticus 19:11–14; Isaiah 10:1–2). “This justice, moreover, is to be impartial (e.g., Exodus 23:3; Leviticus. 19:15). The Pentateuch defines the contours of justice, the Psalms extol God for his inherent justice, and the prophetic literature calls Israel to repent and do justice.”⁶⁸ Scripture contains crucial guidance for moral, ethical and spiritual boundaries.

The Christian serves as salt and light (Matthew 5:13) to bring the power of Christ into this world. Christians as citizens of two kingdoms must righteously integrate their faith and civic duty. The state ought to rightfully and righteously act to prevent oppression, fraud, murder, and all other crimes that deny the establishment of justice and the protection of individuals. The church, as it ushers in the Kingdom of God, is not to use the methods and weapons of the world but the

power of God and His righteousness.

JESUS AND THE ROMAN CENTURION

Throughout the Gospels Jesus always confronted people with their spiritual needs. Often that confrontation was in the form of a pointed identification of personal sin followed by an immediate command to reform. For example, Jesus confronted the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22) about his love of money; he challenged the woman at the well with her infidelities (John 4:7ff.); and he rudely challenged the Pharisees concerning their hypocrisies (Matthew 22:18; 23:13). In the Centurion passage (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:3-10) Jesus does not confront the Centurion (a professional soldier who is in the employ of an oppressive and imperialist state) about the evils of military occupation or the wickedness of the Roman Empire. Nor do we have record of the Centurion making a spontaneous vow to reform his life, as we do in the account of the taxman Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10), whereby we might surmise such a confrontation.

Further, this event illuminates a proper understanding of authority. The Centurion understood that a powerful prophet like Jesus rightfully exercised delegated divine power (Matthew 8:9). The Centurion expected that Jesus could simply give a command and it would be done. Jesus marvels at the Centurion's understanding and faith and holds him up as an example that others should follow. Jesus then responded to the Centurion's expression of belief by healing his servant (Hebrews 11:6).

In the same way, John the Baptist's prophetic preaching demanded radical repentance for sinful actions. It is significant that in his recorded interaction with military his concern is with the soldier's personal conduct and not with their employment.

The account found in Luke 3:7-14, like the other Synoptic accounts, frames the encounter in terms of repentance. The demands of the Baptist are clearly ethical: "Produce fruit in keeping with your repentance!" "But what should we do then?" the crowd asks...Then some soldiers asked, "And what should we do?" to which John replies, "Do not extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay."⁶⁹

Both Jesus and the Baptist dismay both pacifist and just war theologian. Neither makes an unambiguous affirmation or condemnation of the military profession. Jesus makes no comment about the Centurion's profession. It therefore is an argument from silence to note that this commander of soldiers is engaged in an honorable profession. The (Gentile) Centurion's faith is exemplary – "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel" (Matthew 8:10).

There is not one condemnation for the honorable conduct of the profession of arms throughout the pages of scripture. This is not to say that evil and morally inexcusable actions have not been faithfully recorded in the Bible (such as the killing of infants, Matthew 2:16-18) and condemned. On the other hand numerous military heroes are lauded in the pages, such as King David's mighty men (2 Samuel. 23). NT writers frequently import military allusions to explain faith concepts (2 Timothy 2:3-4; Hebrews 11:32; James 4:1; 1 Peter 2:11).

CONCLUSION

Jesus the Messiah did not teach pacifism; he did teach a lifestyle of dependence upon God and non-retaliation against fellow human beings. The commands to love neighbor (Matthew 19:19) and to subordinate all desire for revenge to God (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30) against a future reckoning (Luke 21:22) eliminates the possibility of retaliation from the Christian life.

While Christians are free, and even obligated, to forgo self-defense, they are not free to ignore the distress of others. Christians have an obligation of love that requires them to protect others. Peaceful means must be explored first, and non-violent solutions to conflict valued above all others. If force is necessary, it must be proportionate to the offense as a just response in the face of violent aggression. This is the beginning and foundation of Just War teaching.

A citizen of the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:19) is necessarily an inhabitant of this earth who

supports the ruling authorities (Titus 3:1), pays taxes (Romans 13:6), and is a productive member of society (2 Thessalonians 3:10). It therefore follows that Christians ought to serve in government, in the military, in commerce, in medicine, in education, and in any other walk of life not expressly forbidden in scripture. The Christian is to discern the how to righteously live in two kingdoms, and to live boldly as Christ's disciples regardless of the calling.

The military profession as it is justly practiced is an honorable vocation before God. Because human society must be rightly ordered and protected, there is an on-going need for human protectors of humanity. While we have much to learn from Christian pacifists about restraint of power and seeking peaceful resolutions to human conflicts, there will always be a need for those who make and restore peace by force of arms.

Finally, Jesus the Messiah taught a lifestyle of dependence upon God, personal non-retaliation against fellow human beings, and love for one's neighbor requiring robust participation in human society. We have reviewed many of the divine roles that describe the Christ and his ministry. In Jesus Christ we have both the Divine Warrior and the Lamb of God. Only the Messiah embodies and reconciles both of these roles (and many more). The entire Christian communion looks forward to the day when Christ returns and sets all things right.

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Endnotes

1. Whatever political issues arise from Jesus teachings are second and third order applications of Jesus' teachings, and are very open to debate as to the correctness of the interpretation.
2. Longman III, Tremper & Daniel G. Reid. *God Is A Warrior*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995); p.15.
3. *Ibid*, p.26-27.
4. Matthew 22:21. "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."
5. Tarsitano, Louis R. "Waging Peace: War, Christianity & the Divine Order" (*Touchstone*, October 2002, accessed 02 February 2009); available from <http://touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=15-08-031-f>; internet.
6. A Modern Western Liberal is one who values a 21st century understanding of human rights,

democratic governance, individual liberty, etc. This is not to be confused with theological liberals who generally hold a non-literal and progressivist interpretation of scripture.

7. Charles, Daryl J. *Between Pacifism And Jihad: Just War And Christian Tradition*. (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, , 2005); p.94.

8. 1 Chronicles 11:26 ff.

9. Craigie, Peter C. *The Problem of War in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: MI Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1983); p.35.

10. *Ibid*, p.16.

11. *Ibid*, p.35-36.

12. Most frequently translated “Lord of Hosts” which obscures the meaning in modern English.

13. *Ibid*, Craigie, Peter, p.35-36

14. *Ibid*, Longman et al, p.34.

15. *Ibid*, Craigie, p.41.

16. Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *The Messiah In the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, , 1995); p.181.

17. Warriors are often called upon to sacrificially lay down their lives, but this is never done without a fight. That Christ should meekly lay down his life as the atoning sacrifice brings in logic and purpose that is not human but divine.

18. *Ibid*, Craigie, p.39.

19. Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : electronic ed.* (Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996); S. G1515

20. An early Greek translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into biblical Greek by a group of 70 scholars. Thus the Septuagint is abbreviated LXX.

21. Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1980); 2401a.

22. *Ibid*, Harris et al, 2401a.

23. Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries, vol. 1. A Harmony of the Gospels: Matthew Mark And Luke* , A. W. Morrison, translator, David W. Torrance & Thomas F. Torrance, editors. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub Co., 1972); p. 172.

24. *Ibid*, Calvin, p. 172.

25. Boyd, Gregory A. *God At War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); p.183.

26. *Ibid*, Strong, G436

27. Deut. 32:35; Ps. 94:1; also cited in Rom. 12:9 and Heb. 10:30.

28. *Ibid*, Charles, p.72-73.

29. *Ibid*,. p.72-73.

30. Speaking in general, noting that there are a wide variety of pacifist positions as noted by John Howard Yoder in his book, *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism*.

31. Hauerwas, Stanley. "The Peaceable Kingdom," *The Hauerwas Reader*. John Berkman & Michael Cartwright, edits. (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005); p.121.

32. *Ibid*, p.121.

33. Hauerwas, Stanley. *Against The Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society*. (Notre Dame IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1992); p.112.

34. Hauerwas, Stanley. Letter to the Editors (*First Things*, February 2002, no. 120).

35. Hauerwas, Stanley. "Sectarian Temptation," *The Hauerwas Reader*. John Berkman & Michael Cartwright, edits. (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005); p.105.

36. *Ibid*, Hauerwas, "Sectarian Temptation," p.105.

37. Ude, Johannes. Cited by John Howard Yoder in *Nevertheless*, (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1992); p.33.

38. Aquinas, St. Thomas. *The Summa Theologica*. (accessed July 6, 2007); available from <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3040.htm> [Ep. ad Marcel. cxxxviii]

39. *Ibid*, Ep. ad Marcel. cxxxviii.

40. *bid*, Ep. ad Bonif. clxxxix.

41. Lewis, C.S. *The Weight of Glory: (Why I Am Not A Pacifist)*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1980);. p.85-86.

42. *Ibid*, p.87.

43. *Ibid*, p. 87.

44. Johnson, James Turner. *The Holy War Idea In Western And Islamic Traditions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997);

45. *Ibid*, p. 38.

46. *Ibid*, p. 37.

47. Von Rad, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology*, vol. II., (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1965); p. 285.

48. Zec. 4:6, NASB.

49. Of the eleven remaining disciples, two already carried swords – Luke 22:38.

50. *Ibid*, Longman et al., p.129.

51. Lutherans understand this concept under Luther's teachings on 'Two Kingdoms,' and Catholics under the rubric of 'Two Swords.'

52. Longman III, Tremper & Daniel G. Reid. *God Is A Warrior*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI. 1995, p.129.

53. *Ibid*, Calvin, p.144.

54. *Ibid*, Boyd, p.181.

55. Luther, Martin. "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved," *Luther's Works*, vol. 46, *The Christian In Society*, Robert C. Scultz, editor. (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1967); p.135.

56. *Ibid*, Charles, p.97.

57. Bock, Darrell L. *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan

Pub. House, 1996); p.512.

58. *Ibid*, Bock, p.512.

59. *Ibid*, Luther, p.95.

60. Scalia, Antonin. "God's Justice And Ours" (*First Things*, May 2002, vol. 123) p.17-21.

61. *Ibid*, p. 17-21.

62. *Ibid*, p. 17-21.

63. Mt 22:21, NASB.

64. *Ibid*, Longman et al, p.111.

65. Mt 12:28, NASB.

66. *Ibid*, Calvin, p.41.

67. *Ibid*, Boyd, p.181-2.

68. Charles, J. Daryl. "Between Pacifism and Jihad" (*Touchstone*, Nov. 2003, accessed 02 February 2009) available from <http://touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16-09-028-f>;

internet.

69. *Ibid*, Charles, p.93.