

## 2. PACIFISM: Is It Wrong For a Christian to Defend Himself?

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“**P**ardon me, sir, I’m **Rebecca Smith** from CNN. What’s your name?”

“**Morris Feinberg**” he replied.

“Sir, how long have you been coming to the Western Wall here in Jerusalem and praying?”

“For about 60 years.”

“Sixty years! That’s amazing. What do you pray for?”

“I pray for peace between the Christians, Jews, and the Muslims. I pray for all wars and all the hatred to stop. I pray for all our children to grow up safely as responsible adults and to love their fellow man. I pray that all politicians tell us the truth and put the interests of the people ahead of their own interests. And finally, I pray for world peace and that everyone will be happy.”

“And how do you feel after doing this for 60 years?”

“Like I’m talking to a brick wall !”

All who sincerely pray and long for world-wide harmony have a soft spot for this good-natured Jewish humour. The God of the Bible has promised the dawn of a new Age of universal harmony at the *Parousia* (personal arrival) of His Son Jesus Christ but, in the meantime, opinions are divided on the best way to prepare for that kingdom where the lion will lay down with the lamb.

We have seen that in Jesus’ day the Jewish nation itself was deeply divided as to how to respond to Rome’s subjugation. **The Sadducees** tried to parley and collaborate with Rome — diplomacy; **the Zealots** engaged in guerilla assassinations carrying daggers under their garments for stealth-killing of the enemy as well as fighting in open insurrection — terrorism; **the Essenes** quietly withdrew from society to the desert for non-involvement — metaphorically speaking, withdrawing to put prayers on rolled up bits of paper and stuffing them into the Western wall; or, perhaps the best way for peace is to be conscientious objectors to all direct participation in the armed services — pacifism.

Into this troubled *milieu* our Lord Jesus proclaimed a radical answer — repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. To that task the first Christians dedicated themselves in preparation for the universal reign of God’s righteousness. They were sent out as lambs into the midst of ravenous wolves.

In the previous article we concentrated on the question of personal retaliation when vilified, insulted and mocked. We saw that Christians are to be motivated by the

same temperate spirit of Jesus — on no account must we resent or hit back, or drag an offender off to the courts for compensation and personal satisfaction.

We also saw that non-retaliation does not mean we are to passively “just cop it on the chin” when insulted or even dragged before the courts. There is a time and a place to firmly rebuke injustice — to stand for right and to fearlessly speak out.

That much said, I don’t think we can use **Matthew 5: 38-39** to argue that Christians are forbidden to defend themselves from physical violence where the outcome is a matter of life and death. A slap on the face is humiliating but not life-threatening. Our Lord was not specifically addressing the question of whether Christians may enlist in the police force or the armed services, or defend their homes and families. We also suspended our judgment of dedicated Christian SOC soldier ‘Harry’. To these matters we now turn.

## **THOSE WHO TAKE THE SWORD WILL PERISH BY THE SWORD**

Objectors to Christians defending themselves in the face of physical violence usually quote Jesus’ words to Peter who had just sliced off the ear of the servant of the High Priest ... **Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword ... (Matt. 26: 52).**

A little context is needed. The disciples had been told on numerous occasions that it was the Father’s will for Jesus to be handed over to the authorities and to be executed. So Peter should have known he was not to fight the detachment of guards and soldiers coming to arrest Jesus (**John 18:3**). Drawing his sword in this context was to oppose God’s revealed purposes for the Messiah.

Likewise, we are not to draw the sword against duly authorized officials of the law. They are authorized to bear the sword. If Jesus meant everyone in this statement, he was also condemning every government officer who bears arms. Scripture calls those authorities who bear the sword to execute wrath on evildoers the **“ministers of God” (Romans 13:4).**

The Bible thus teaches that there is a legitimate use of “the sword” and also an illegitimate use of the sword. Those who kill illegitimately will face eternal judgment (**Revelation 13:10**). Even a Christian who is guilty of manslaughter, or worse, may still face the death penalty administered by the government. His faith may not save him ... **There is a sin leading to death. And I do not say that he should pray about that (1 Jn 5:16).**

When a group of soldiers asked John the Baptist **“What should we do?”**, he replied, **“Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely — be content with your pay” (Lk 3: 14) ( <sup>1</sup> )** There was no suggestion from John that the soldiers should renounce their profession first. On the contrary, if they were to go on receiving pay, they would

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<sup>1</sup> The KJV translates it, **Do violence to no man...** the word **διασεῖω / diaseiō** means to shake violently, cause to tremble, terrify, agitate, extort by intimidation.

have to remain in their profession! They were to be godly soldiers. And on that basis John baptized them. Peter did the same after Pentecost (**Acts 10:47**).

When under threat of attack while rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, **Nehemiah** recorded that “**we prayed to our God and set a guard**” (**Nehemiah 4:9**). He encouraged the people thusly, “**Do not be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes**” (**vs 14**). We are told they carried trowels in one hand and swords in the other hand (**verses 14-18**). God blessed their work and the walls went up. Sometimes prayer by itself is not enough.

When God provides us with the means to do His work, it is foolish to discard them. Jesus did not command **Peter** to throw his sword away. He told him to put it back in its place. Jesus had already agreed that Peter could carry that sword (**Lk 22:36f**). Sometimes, not to carry a sword (i.e. a defensive weapon) may be the height of stupidity. That would be just as foolish as those believers who dismiss modern medical science in the matters of health and hygiene, saying their faith in God is sufficient and nothing more needs to be done.

A Seventh Day Adventist Pastor, **John Whitcombe** observes that, **being a keen student of European history, I am acutely aware of the absolute necessity it has been for Protestants over the centuries to bear arms in the face of aggressive papal onslaught. The lesson of the Spanish Armada, the Waldenses, the Hussites, the Bohemians, the Huguenots, the Cathars, the Battle of the Boyne, the German Electors, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the English civil war, and the Thirty Years' War is that Protestant armies comprised of armed citizens were essential to resisting papal aggression. Without Protestant citizen armies, armed and willing to take the field of battle, the Protestant Reformation may never have survived. In our modern era the Christians of northern Iraq and Nigeria, under savage assault by Boko Haram and ISIS, would suffer even greater loss without armed men willing to defend them. Sometimes those defenders are government forces, but often they are local Christian militias, stepping in to defend the innocent against murderous assault, when it is politically convenient for governments to look the other way. ( <sup>2</sup> )**

## **ESCHATOLOGICAL ETHICS VERSUS PRESENT REALITY**

As Christians our ethics and lives' orientation are to be lived with the expectation that the ultimate reality is the coming Kingdom of God. Practically, this means we are caught between the present reality of evil and the future triumphant inbreaking of Christ's reign into our world. We anticipate a glorious future, but it's not yet here. It would be foolish to try to lie down with the lion or the wolf now, or to let the kids play with venomous snakes!

So let's try to see how this plays out as we answer the question as to whether it's permissible for followers of Jesus to defend ourselves from physical violence — to have the sword “**in its place**”, so to speak.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.libertymagazine.org/article/self-defense-and-the-christian> (Jan-Feb 2019).

## THE ISAIAH WALL

One of the most famous verses from the prophetic books of the Old Testament (OT) is the one which adorns the **Isaiah Wall** right across the street from the United Nations building in New York. It reads, **And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2: 4).**

It expresses the Jewish hope and the Christian hope for universal peace as an essential component of the Messianic Age. And by the way, it's currently a stumbling block to Jews accepting Jesus as their Messiah for the simple reason that he seems so far to have failed to bring in that Age which puts an end to blood shedding.

Whilst Isaiah's verse is famously quoted, not too many are aware of the far lesser known verse from **Joel** which **reversed Isaiah's words** at a time when Israel needed to fight her enemies ... **Prepare for battle, arouse the warriors ... beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears ... (Joel 3: 9-10)!**

Given that we have not yet entered the Messianic Age of universal peace, and given that we live in an age where violence, murder, pillage and invasion of one's property, are rampant realities, perhaps **Joel's** call is the prudent approach as we await the Messianic Age?

The writer of **Ecclesiastes** was a pragmatist and said that, in this life, there's **a time to kill, a time to heal ... a time for war, and a time for peace (3: 3,8)**. Would Jesus agree with this? And don't forget we read in both Testaments that God says, **"Vengeance is mine, I will repay" says the LORD**". Let the wicked stamp all over us in the meantime. We are God's lambs to the slaughter. Surely the follower of Christ is under new covenant 'spiritual' obligations?

Should we just keep praying to the brick wall whilst the defenceless and innocent suffer? Is evil not to be resisted? And more to the point, have the advocates of Christian non-resistance properly interpreted Jesus?

An early Zionist essayist, **Ahad Ha'am**, expresses his alarm at Jesus' teaching and captures well also the consternation of many modern Christians concerning the matter: **If I practice love to the extent that when you smite me on the right cheek, I offer you the left also, I am thereby encouraging injustice. I, like you, am then guilty of the injustice that is practiced.**" ( <sup>3</sup> )

In an argument with the pacifist writer **Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Masaryk** (1850-1937) the great humanist and founder of Czechoslovakia expressed similarly: **If someone attacks me with the intention of killing me, I shall defend myself, and if I cannot avoid it, I shall kill the attacker. If one of us two must be killed, let the one be killed who has the bad intentions.** ( <sup>4</sup> )

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<sup>3</sup> As quoted in *Jewish Wisdom: Ethical, Spiritual, and historical Lessons from the Great Works and Thinkers* by **Rabbi Joseph Telushkin**. William Morrow & Co., Inc. NY. pp 420-421

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p421

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** the German theologian and pastor started off as a pacifist, but the realities of the Nazi cruelties eventually changed his mind and he joined the resistance movement. The Nazis finally executed him for crimes against their regime in 1945. **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** saw the flaws in his pacifism and famously said, “**Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.**”

He provided this helpful analogy; “**If I sit next to a madman as he drives a car into a group of innocent bystanders, I can’t, as a Christian, simply wait for the catastrophe, then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver.**”

In OT law one was allowed to defend one’s family and property. In the mayhem of a night break in, **If a thief is seized while breaking in [i.e. tunneling his way into a house at night] and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed ... but if the thief enters when the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed ...**” (Ex. 22: 2-3). Defence must be proportioned!

Thus, the Jewish Bible iterates that one is justified when defending himself from the wicked aggressor, whereas Jesus’ teaching *seems* contradictory for he says, “**Offer the wicked man no resistance**” We have seen that the context concerns personal calumnies, and is not specifically addressing the question of pacifism *per se*.

## **THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHTHORSEMEN IN 1917: A JUST WAR?**

Many of Israel’s wars were commanded by God. They were therefore “just wars”. God Himself is called Yahweh Sabaoth ... LORD of hosts or God of armies. But is there such a rationale for war, or at least some wars, today?

I often think of the last great cavalry charge in history. In WW1 the British had tried to break the Turkish defences at Beersheba in Gaza. Three British divisions had bombed, shelled and strafed this Ottoman stronghold from the western and southern sides with no success. Repelled and contemplating withdrawal, suddenly out of the desert the Australian 4th Brigade (including some of the 12th Brigade) appeared. Their horses were near to complete exhaustion, frothing at their mouths, because they had had no water for days (60 hours). It was late afternoon October 31st 1917.

The brash Aussies offered to charge the Turkish guns. The British derided them for their proposed stupidity. After all, the heavy British bombardment had failed. What good could men on horseback do? But the Brits watched in disbelief as the Aussie horsemen lined up. It was now dusk. The order to charge was given and the Lighthorsemen drew their *bayonets* and charged into the teeth of the Turkish machine guns and heavy artillery!

The daring, the speed, the suicidal madness of the cavalry attack panicked the Turks who feverishly fired away with their mighty guns. But the Aussies kept yelling and coming as the Turks tried to quickly readjust the sights on their guns. In their panic they kept firing over the horses and their riders, such was the speed of the famous Waler horses. And to cut a long story short, approximately 800 horsemen



captured the heavily defended Beersheeba, took 1,000 prisoners and lost 31 of their own.

Why do I tell this story to answer the question as to whether there are such things as “just wars” still? Well, truth be known, there was a significant number of those Aussies who carried Bibles in their shirt pockets right next to their hearts. They believed they were there on a Divine mission to liberate the Holy Land and to return it to the Jews as the prophets had foretold.

You may say, “But Greg, that sounds like the atrocities of the Crusaders from the Middle Ages.” I answer that, unlike the Crusaders who bore cruel medieval antisemitism by only saving those Jews who would convert to Christianity, our Aussie soldiers were no Jew haters. They had the conviction that they were in a holy war and fulfilling Bible prophecy to bring Jews back home to their Promised Land.

Whether you agree with their convictions and actions or not, we cannot argue with the fact that the charge of the Lighthorsemen at Beersheba bears the stamp of a mighty miracle of Biblical proportions. (Space does not permit me to list a number of other ‘supernatural’ events which followed the Lighthorsemen in their Middle East campaign.) I cannot think that Yahweh of Hosts was not there that day at Beersheba working out His eternal purposes for Israel, albeit through war. ( <sup>5</sup> )

There are numerous OT examples of men and women who carried out God’s will by killing wicked persons? ( <sup>6</sup> )

## MAHATMA GANDHI

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin makes the claim that while a few Christian sects such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses hold themselves literally to Jesus’ pacifism, that almost every nation with a significant Christian population has chosen to either “disregard or reinterpret Jesus’ words”. Then the rabbi makes the arresting assertion that, Indeed, Jesus’ foremost twentieth-century disciple on this issue has turned out to be not a religious Christian, but a devout Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi.

During the Second World War, when it appeared that Nazi Germany might overwhelm England, Gandhi offered the British the following advice: “I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussoline to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions ... If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourselves, man, woman, and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them” (*Non-Violence in Peace and War*).

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<sup>5</sup> The 1987 film *The Lighthorsemen* is considered very accurate and is based on a letter to his brother from one of the horsemen in the attack.

<sup>6</sup> An example of a woman killing an enemy is Jael in *Judges 5: 18ff*. When Jael hammered a tent peg through the skull of Sisera she fulfilled God’s prophecy and received praise for the execution. Scripture records that “the Spirit of God came upon Saul” inspiring him to respond militarily, saving the people of Jabesh Gilead (*1 Samuel 11:6*). Clearly the Spirit of God inspired this, and many other military deliverances.

A few years earlier, only months before WW2 erupted, **Gandhi** had offered the German Jews similar 'wisdom' for overcoming Nazi antisemitism: "I am as certain as I am dictating these words that the stoniest German heart will melt [if only the Jews] ...adopt active non-violence. Human nature ... unfailingly responds to the advances of love. I do not despair of his [Hitler's] responding to human suffering even though caused by him." ( <sup>7</sup> ) Good advice? Christian advice?

Needless to say, Jews reacted to **Gandhi's** advice with pain, scorn and incredulity. The philosopher **Martin Buber** referring to the link between Jesus' and Gandhi's teaching, responded to Gandhi in an open letter:

We did not proclaim, as did Jesus, the son of our people, and as you do, the teaching of non-violence, because we believe that a man must sometimes use force to save himself or, even more, his children.

Six years and at least six million murdered Jews later, **Gandhi** offered some postmortem wisdom to the dead Jews. In a 1946 conversation with his biographer, **Louis Fischer**, he stated: "Hitler killed five million Jews. It is the greatest crime of our time. But the Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher's knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from cliffs." **Fischer** interrupted, "You mean the Jews should have committed collective suicide?" **Gandhi** replied, "Yes, that would have been heroism". ( <sup>8</sup> )

One of the best known and quoted rabbis, **Moses Maimonides** in his *Mishneh Torah*, "*Laws of Murder and Preservation of Life*," 1:6-7,9 says, Every Jew is commanded to save a person being pursued for his life, even if it means killing the pursuer, and [even if] the pursuer is a minor.

Thus, if warning is issued and he continues to pursue, the pursuer can be killed even without his acknowledging the warning. But if the pursuer can be stopped by disabling part of his body, by striking him with an arrow, a stone, or a sword ... then that should be done. And this is a negative commandment, ie., not to have mercy on the life of a pursuer. ( <sup>9</sup> )

**Telushkin** summarises his chapter on this note: While **Maimonides'** statement refers to taking action against one individual who is threatening another, the same logic applies to one nation fighting a war against an aggressor state. Terrible as war may be, the alternative often is worse. Had Gandhi convinced the English to lay down their arms, Nazism would have conquered Europe, if not the world, democracy would have come to an end, and not a single Jew might be alive today.

Similarly, if Israel had not been willing to fight wars of self-defense, it would long ago have been destroyed, and its citizens killed. **Thus war, while always unfortunate, is not always evil, sometimes, fighting a war is the most moral thing to do.**

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid 422

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 422-423

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 423

As Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu has famously said, "If the Arabs would disarm, we would have peace; if Israel were to disarm, Israel would cease to exist."

What our Lord Jesus did forbid from his followers was **not** the resistance of evil by a lawful defence. In **Matthew 5: 38f** he was not specifically addressing the question of legitimate self-defence when one's life, family or property are being violently attacked. True, in such tragic situations, sometimes his advice was to simply **flee**. Do what many of the saints have done: Run for the mountains, flee to the wilderness, seek refuge and trust in God's protection. As much as within us lies, we are to avoid direct conflict.

## HACKSAW RIDGE

Mel Gibson directed the 2016 movie **Hacksaw Ridge** which depicted the true story of Pfc. **Desmond Doss** who won the Congressional Medal of Honour despite refusing to bear arms during WW2 on religious grounds. **Doss** was drafted and ostracised by his fellow soldiers for his pacifist stance but went on to earn respect and adoration for his bravery, selflessness and compassion after he risked his life — without firing a shot — to save 75 men in the Battle of Okinawa.

In my personal opinion, I think **Desmond Doss** exemplified the spirit of Jesus by risking his life, getting the blood of his fellow soldiers on himself, and saving his comrades in the heat of battle. Which brings us to ...

## SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMANDO 'HARRY'

So, after much reflection, I am convinced my Special Operations Commando mate, **'Harry'** acted within God's will when he downed that enemy combatant who was about to kill his mate. He was not acting out of a sense of personal grievance. He was not shooting at innocents indiscriminately. He waited until that foreign soldier showed his intent to shoot another man in the back. It would have been wrong and far worse not to have shot that enemy soldier. I certainly can't condemn **Harry** for being there in the first place as God's instrument at the right time.

Even if our consciences would not agree with **Harry** pulling the trigger on a murderous combatant, the Christian may surely serve the Lord as his salt and light as a medic, mechanic, chaplain, cook, or any other area of logistical support in the service of his or her country against treacherous and terrorist regimes.

This is not to deny that killing another in reasonable self-defence will not have consequences in our own minds and persons. Killing another who is made in God's image will damage the soul for sure. After all, **King David, the man after God's own heart**, desperately wanted to build the Temple of Yahweh, but the God whom he had obeyed denied him that privilege saying, "**You have shed much blood and fought**



great battles; you shall not build a House for My Name for you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight” (1 Chron. 22:8).

David often enquired of the LORD God as to whether he should enter a battle. And the Bible testifies how God directed him into many victorious battles. Since there is no criticism of David’s military campaigns, God’s refusal to let David build the Temple suggests that even in times of justified wars, or even in a matter of legitimate self-defence, violence against others is still detrimental to one’s own soul. I pray that you and I are never put in such terrible situations, but like **Bonhoeffer** reality has a powerful way of changing one’s course.

We are to entrust our personal grievances into the hands of the One who has promised to finally set all things right. A Day is on the horizon when swords will be beaten into agricultural tools. However, to deduce from Jesus’ teaching about **not resisting the wicked person** a universal law and a general application of unlimited non-resistance of evil is to ignore the exceptions which Scripture and common decency allow for. It is also contrary to our innate God-given need for protection, preservation of life and justice on behalf of others.

## WHY DID THE EARLY CHRISTIANS LAY DOWN THEIR SOLDIERY?

Those who argue that the early Christians who laid down their weapons and left the Roman military should be our model, fail to include a critical part of the equation. Every Roman soldier had to swear his allegiance to Caesar as his lord. Every year, along with all citizens of the Empire, they had to take a personal oath of allegiance to Caesar above all other names. They must offer a pinch of salt or some incense on the altar to their ‘god’. Christians in that army for obvious reasons could not do this. Caesar was not lord, Jesus was Lord Messiah and king.

But this surely does not apply to the modern Christian in Western armies of the world who swear allegiance to “God, king, and country” and to uphold the rules of international law. If you are in the Republic of the USA there surely can be nothing wrong with enlisting for “God and the Constitution” — upholding the rule of law? Yes, of course there may come a time when one has to disobey an unjust order. In this case, as in all situations, **we must obey God rather than man**.

## THE NIGHT ENEMIES SANG CAROLS WITH EACH OTHER

Most wars are inspired by greed and grievance. So generally speaking, war is senseless. And yes, this means that sometimes a “Christian” may face off against another believer. I would think this a rarity. For example, on Christmas Eve of 1914 roughly 100,000 British and German troops voluntarily ceased hostilities on the Western Front.

Apparently the Germans had started singing “Silent Night, Holy Night”. Then the British joined in. Both sides left their trenches and met in “No Man’s Land” and, instead of discharging bullets at each other, exchanged greetings and gifts as they

sang Christmas carols together. They buried their dead during this unofficial truce which lasted for Christmas Day, but in a few places also Boxing day.

Back in their trenches, they were shooting and killing each other again. War is truly senseless. And I cannot help but think that in this instance, so-called Christians were shooting at other so-called Christians. Unbelievable! However, that scenario will probably never again be repeated. The world is a very different place today.

## IN CONCLUSION

War is an inevitable evil because of the fallenness of our world. But I think there may be circumstances that necessitate the use of force in order to prevent an even greater evil. Before Nazi Germany started invading sovereign nations without provocation and murdering Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and the disabled on an industrial scale, Great Britain's Prime Minister **Neville Chamberlain** (in)famously pursued a policy of appeasement. In hindsight, his peace at any price actually facilitated the war and is considered a massive diplomatic failure. (One wonders how **President Trump's** policy of "**Peace Through Strength**" might have changed the course of the world's history back then, even saving millions of innocent lives.)

Whilst nations are sometimes too quick to resort to armed conflict, it would seem that war can be a legitimate and morally justified response to evil. Sadly, there are times when no amount of diplomacy or sanctions will prevail. I am persuaded God has used defensive wars against tyrannical and Satanic regimes such as the Nazis and the Imperial Japanese to finally promote greater justice and peace.

If war can be morally justified, it follows that it is not morally wrong to join the military. This premise is corroborated by the Bible's interpretation of the history of war. The New Testament does not call into question the moral integrity of Christians who serve in the military, however, those who serve have a responsibility to do so with exemplary moral character that bears witness to the values of God's kingdom.

The more true Christians in the services, both civil and military, the greater the effect of the light. Christians can and should be a restraining influence to ensure that our military maintains the highest possible ethical standards. From this perspective, one could make a case for having as many Christians in the military as possible!

Like the good and godly centurions honoured by Jesus in the NT can we not give thanks for those military personnel who bring to a most challenging world, uprightness, honour, true valour and civility?

When did you last give your heavenly Father thanks for the brave men and women who have sacrificed themselves for your present security? I am thankful to the God who has given to my country the arms necessary to protect its citizens and to administer temporary justice with the necessary force.

In this context theologian **Norman Geisler** argues convincingly that "**to permit murder when one could have prevented it is morally wrong. To allow a rape when one could have hindered it is an evil. To watch an act of cruelty to children without**

trying to intervene is morally inexcusable ... not resisting evil is an evil of omission, and an evil of omission can be just as evil as an evil of commission. A man who refuses to protect his wife and children against a violent intruder fails them morally.”

Remember how Abraham, “the friend of God” and “the father of all those who believe” armed his servants, and pursued those who had kidnapped his nephew and other innocents to rescue them (Gen 14: 14f)? This does not mean I shall be a vigilante and pursue the kidnapper with weapons. But I shall use all the authority of the law and its jurisprudence to help promote Kingdom values.

True, we await the return of Jesus with his mighty angels when the LORD God shall finally take out His vengeance on all those who have refused to believe His Gospel and when He will give ultimate relief from the curse of sin and those who persecute the church (2 Thess 1: 7f).

But in the meantime, and whilst we await the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy of universal righteousness and peace at the dawning of the Messianic Age when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, I personally think it prudent to acknowledge we are living in a violent, unjust, evil Age, and that the lesser of two evils may be to beat ploughshares into swords as the prophet Joel called.

“Peace Through Strength” is pragmatic. But grace must reign through righteousness (Rom 5:21). Lasting peace can only be rooted in lasting justice.

As a citizen of the coming Kingdom of God upon earth, am I not to display the principles of that Kingdom in the here and now? Let us pray for peace in the nations as we get about being Christ’s witnesses and promoting the Gospel of His Kingdom in a non-violent way. And let each be convinced in his own heart how best to promote Christ’s witness as we live in this wicked world.

#### A FINAL QUESTION TO PONDER:-

**Are you prepared to play with poisonous snakes or to lie down with the lion and the wolf just yet?**

If you think about it, that’s not a *non-sequitur*!