

The Christian & War

A Study Designed To Answer The Question: May A Christian
Function As A Punitive Agent Of The State?



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Introduction

The question before us in this study is: *May a Christian scripturally function as a punitive agent of the state?* In answering this question, the Pacifist/Anti-War position responds with an emphatic “No!” The My-Country-Right-Or-Wrong position of unrestrained patriotism answers with an unqualified “Yes!” However, it has been my experience that simple answers rarely, if ever, do justice to complex questions. Therefore, the answer I will give is a bit more complex than usual. Even so, it is, I pray, an honest, informative and Scriptural answer. Whether it is or not, is a decision you’ll have to make for yourself.

I will be arguing (1) that war is a moral enterprise, and (2) that those who participate in it, if they do so justly, operate as servants of God, and as such, even in the extreme circumstances of war, stand before God's judgment and under His law. Unfortunately, these are ideas mostly lost on a culture consumed with the anti-war/pacifist consensus—a consensus that says war is always evil. Consequently, many Americans, and this includes many Christians, view war as a conflagration of raw savagery to which no moral code applies. In other words, many believe that “War is Hell,” as General William Tecumseh Sherman said in his attempt to justify the targeting of civilians in the Civil War siege and bombardment of Atlanta and his subsequent scorched-earth “march to the sea.” Many today, like Sherman, see war as an evil, albeit a “necessary evil,” that must, at times, be engaged in so worse evils are not inflicted. The General's concept of “Total War,” as it has come to be known, eventually led to the direct targeting and bombing of civilians in World War II, including the ultimate decision to drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In his justification for doing so, Truman said, in an address to the American people on August 12, 1945:

We have used [the bomb] against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it to shorten the agony of war... (Michael Walzer, *Just And Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations*, 1977, p. 264).

Yes, it seems that all Truman said about the Japanese was true, but it is interesting to note that Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was directed entirely against naval and army installations, with only a few stray bombs falling on the city of Honolulu. Now, whether the Japanese military would have targeted our cities on the mainland, if they would have had the ability, is not doubted. Nevertheless, it disappoints me that our leaders, when they had the opportunity, did not take the moral high ground but, instead, intentionally targeted civilians. But even prior to his decision to drop the atomic bombs, Truman, along with his advisors, had already bought into the “War is Hell” thinking, lock, stock and barrel. This is evidenced by the March 1945 fire-bombing of Tokyo in which incendiary bombs set off a firestorm that killed an estimated 100,000 people.

As James Byrnes, Truman's good friend and Secretary of State, said, "...war remains what General Sherman said it was" (*Ibid.*, p. 265). And Arthur Compton, who was chief scientific advisor to the government, confirmed this when he said "...one realizes that in whatever manner it is fought, war is precisely what General Sherman called it" (*Op cit.*). Finally, in his own defense, Truman said "Let us not become so preoccupied with weapons that we lose sight of the fact that war itself is the real villain" (*Op cit.*).

So, wars, and not necessary those who fight them, become the real villains, and therefore any means to end a war, even when it involves incinerating hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, becomes an unpleasant, but legitimate, tool. Such thinking led otherwise decent people, like Charles "Chuck" Yeager, to believe that once war is forced upon them, there are no limits, and therefore they are obligated to engage in any means, even atrocities, to end it. This is made clear from the following excerpt from Yeager's biography in which he describes a disturbing mission he was ordered to fly in World War II:

Our seventy-five Mustangs were assigned an area fifty miles by fifty miles inside Germany and ordered to strafe anything that moved. The object was to demoralize the German population.... We weren't asked how we felt zapping people. It was a miserable, dirty mission, but we all took off on time and did it.... By definition, war is immoral; there is no such thing as a clean war. Once armies are engaged, war is total. We were ordered to commit an atrocity, pure and simple, but the brass who approved this action probably felt justified because wartime Germany was not easily divided between "innocent civilians" and its military machine.... In war, the military will seldom hesitate to hit civilians if they are in the way.... I'm certainly not proud of that particular strafing mission against civilians. But it is there, on the record and in my memory (Chuck Yeager and Leo Janos, *Yeager*, 1985, p. 63).

Unfortunately, this kind of thinking did not stop with World War II. In defense of our nuclear strategy during the Cold War, General Omar Bradley argued that "war itself is immoral," and therefore in retaliation for attacks on our cities, it would be both moral and militarily useful to attack enemy cities (cf. Robert W. Tucker, *The Just War*, 1960, p. 59, note 52). And in response to the question of whether he had opposed the hydrogen bomb on moral grounds during hearings on J. Robert Oppenheimer, George Kenna, the former ambassador to what was then called the Soviet Union and a prominent Sovietologist, responded, "...I didn't consider that. After all, we are dealing with weapons here, and when you are dealing with weapons you are dealing with things that kill people, and I don't think the considerations of morality are relevant" (*Ibid.*, p. 77, note 70).

Looking back on it now, it should not come as a surprise that such thinking led ultimately to the "search and destroy" tactics used by our military during the Vietnam War—tactics that caused our returning soldiers to be referred to by some as "baby killers." As much as it grieves me to say, these charges were not totally unfounded. The "rules of engagement" in Vietnam were: (1) A village could be bombed or shelled without warning if American troops had received fire from within it; and (2) Any village known to be "hostile" could be bombed or shelled if its inhabitants were warned in advance, either by the dropping of leaflets or by helicopter loudspeakers.

Ironically, rules which were claimed to be an attempt to separate noncombatants (civilians) from combatants (guerrillas) and therefore minimize casualties, actually provided the justifica-

tion for attacking innocent men, women and children, as evidenced by the following incident which was typical in Vietnam—so typical, in fact, that it must have happened many times: “An American unit moving along Route 18 [in Long An province] received small arms fire from a village, and in reply the tactical commander called for artillery and air strikes on the village itself, resulting in heavy civilian casualties and extensive physical destruction” (Jeffery Race, *War Comes to Long An*, 1972, p. 233).

The policy underlying these rules of engagement (the so-called “pacification project”) actually encompassed the uprooting and resettlement of a large number of the rural population in Vietnam: literally millions of men, women and children. Leaving aside the possible criminality of this project, it is safe to say that such uprooting and resettlement was, from its inception, simply an impossible task doomed for ultimate disaster—a disaster that caused, in the end, more violent death for Vietnamese civilians. Further, there never was more than a pretense that sufficient resources would be made available to accomplish the task. Therefore, it was inevitable that civilians would be living in the villages to be shelled and bombed. The following is an example of what happened:

In August 1967, during Operation Benton, the “pacification” camps became so full that Army units were ordered not to “generate” any more refugees. The Army complied. But search and destroy operations continued. Only now the peasants were not warned before an air-strike was called on their village. They were killed in their villages because there was no room for them in the swamped pacification camps (Orville and Jonathan Shell, letter to *The New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1969; quoted in Noam Chomsky, *At War With Asia*, 1970, pp. 292-293).

Yes, war is hell, particularly when we feel justified in doing *whatever it takes* to win one. Whether we should have been in Vietnam in the first place is a debate that will, no doubt, continue to be hotly contested (I believe we had both the right and obligation to be there); but it is especially our conduct in prosecuting that war that is destined to remain a deep scar on the American conscience. The truth is that otherwise decent American soldiers did become baby killers, not because they wanted to, but because they thought they had to. We are, as a people, better than this, and if we cannot rise to a better standard, then no Christian can hope to serve this country without sin. Unless we are able to honestly consider where General Sherman's concept of “Total War” ultimately took us, then we will forever be torn between pacifism or the unrestrained patriotism of Total War. I believe there is a better way.

No doubt, pacifists will argue that, writing as I have, I have already surrendered my position, providing *prima facie* evidence for why a Christian cannot, under any circumstances, participate in war; namely, that even among the best of governments there are a multitude of sinful acts that prove, conclusively, the “fallenness” of all civil governments. Therefore, these argue, a Christian, who is obligated to keep himself unspotted from the world (cf. James 1:27), cannot under any circumstances serve his government as a soldier without sinning. And if I held to the pacifist position, which says that any and all use of deadly force is inherently evil, I would be forced to recant my position. However, I do not believe any and all use of deadly force to be evil. On the contrary, I believe that to refrain from using such force, when justice demands it, would be the very thing that is inherently evil. That is, I believe that force, even when deadly, can be used justly and well in a good cause and that such acts bear no stain of evil.

At the same time, I readily admit that many, perhaps even most, of those who bear governmental authority are unworthy of it, stained openly, as they frequently are, with their own sin and crime. However, this reality does not negate their God-given responsibilities to protect the innocent and punish the evildoer. And therefore if fighting wars is part of the government's repertoire in these matters, and I will be arguing that it most certainly is, then governmental authorities are duty-bound (i.e., morally obligated), when justice demands it, to engage the enemy (foreign or domestic). When they do so, they operate as servants of the Most High God, the Ruler of the nations of the earth.

If our government has oppressed and abused other nations, then we ought to stop it, and those of us who are Christians ought to be praying God's mercy on our guilty country. But to argue, as some do, that our country can't now do what is right because of past failures is to advocate nothing short of dereliction of duty—a duty, as has been pointed out, commanded by God. In point of fact, there is no coherent Biblical relationship between the acknowledgment of *past sins* and the refusal of *present duty*. In other words, any government that today fails to safeguard its citizens because of past crimes will only be adding to its catalog of sins and, as such, will clearly be in neglect of its God-given responsibilities (cf. Romans 13:1-7).

Thankfully, the geopolitical experience that was Vietnam, a traumatic episode in our country's history that deeply wounded and splintered our nation, caused our government to stop and reflect on policies that had become divorced from the moral principles that ought to govern war—principles of which I'll have more to say as this study continues. Particularly, it learned that the public's perception of *how* a war is fought is as important as *why* it is fought. As a result, our government's renewed emphasis on accurate and precise targeting, along with a concerted effort to kill as few noncombatants as possible, and none intentionally, reflects a view of warfare that was manifested in the Gulf War (1990-91) and the current excursions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although "collateral damage" was an unfortunate reality in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq theaters, the small number of civilians killed was, and continues to be, absolutely amazing. These conflicts, at least on our side, represent the most cleanly fought modern wars on record and are more in line with the Just War principles developed down through the ages, particularly in Western civilization. I am delighted by this development and applaud those who have had a hand in causing it to happen, for without such an emerging consensus, I think there could be little hope of God's continued bountiful blessings upon our country. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

I am not a warmonger, and will take umbrage to anyone who says I am. War must always be the last resort. This means if justice can be accomplished any other way, then war is not warranted. It should be clear from what I've said so far that I will not attempt to justify the evils that are all too frequently manifested in war. Nor will I defend, or in any way attempt to excuse, the unrestrained patriotism that always manifests itself when our country is threatened, as it now most certainly is. The state, even when it's the United States of America, is not superior to God's law. In fact, the state is what it is supposed to be *only* when it recognizes a Law above the law. Anything else is idolatry. The proof that the government of the United States of America views this principle correctly is manifested in the conscientious objector status it grants to its citizens who hold deeply felt, demonstrable, religious convictions that it would always be wrong to take human life, no matter what the circumstances.

In closing this introduction, I realize I haven't touched every nook and cranny of this issue. Even so, I hope I have whetted your appetite for a study of this most difficult and fundamentally important subject. It is to that study that I now direct your attention.

The State's Role

Contradicting General Sherman's "War is Hell" statement, Philip Lawler points out: "War is not hell. Hell is hell" (quoted in Joseph P. Martino, *A Fighting Chance: The Moral Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 1988, p. 105). Commenting on this, Martino wrote:

This is not just a witticism. Hell is the unrepentant sinner's final [punishment for] rejection of God, and God's eternal ratification of that rejection. The Christian who goes to war need not reject God. However, by waging war unjustly, he can do precisely that. War can become, then, not hell itself but the road to hell (*Ibid.*).

Admittedly, the "war question," as it is sometimes called, is fraught with dangers. I'll be addressing some of these in this study. But before this can be done, the question of the State's right to wage war must be addressed. There are Christians who believe there is no such thing as a just war, and they are convinced that a Christian cannot participate in war-fighting without sinning. Romans 13:9 and 1 John 3:15, which *command* love and *prohibit* hate (and both in connection with murder and other such vices), have been cited by some as a refutation of all wars. In this chapter, I will try to demonstrate why such proof-texting is wrong.

Can a war be just? Yes, it can. How do I know? The Bible tells me so. In Romans 13:1-7, we have an inspired apostle's teaching on "conscientious citizenship," as some have described it, and I believe this is an apt description of what we find in these verses. But there is another side to this coin. While making it clear that citizens are obligated to submit to governing authorities, Paul gives us valuable and essential information concerning the government's responsibility to its citizens. In fact, these verses articulate the clearest teaching on the God-ordained purpose of human government to be found in the Bible. Thus, it is most unfortunate that some think Romans 13:1-7 to be incongruent with the immediate context of Romans 12:17-21, which says:

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (NKJV).

The incongruists are wrong. Romans 13:1-7 explains (*amplifies* might be a better word) that while Christians are prohibited from executing personal vengeance, God has established civil government to be His earthly agent to see that such vengeance (i.e., justice) is meted out. Therefore, to teach Romans 12:17-21 without mentioning Romans 13:1-7 leaves not just a false

impression as to what it means to be a Christian, but it fosters a lack of appreciation for the ministerial importance of civil government.

From these verses, it is reasonable to conclude that something God has ordained, like civil government and its right to use the sword, cannot be inherently evil, as some argue. Civil government, as articulated in Romans 13:1-7, is not evil, and those who participate in it do not sin when carrying out their God-ordained duties. Therefore, those who taint the God-given duties of civil government with sin are, whether they realize it or not, demonstrating opposition to that which God Himself has ordained. This makes the war issue not just a matter of personal scruples, as many claim, but of doctrine as well. But because brethren have danced around this issue for years in the name of peace and unity, even squeezing it somehow into Romans 14, many have been influenced to think this subject “no big deal,” and even if it is, it's something which falls solely within the realm of personal ethics, and is, therefore, not something that should divide the church. This is evidenced by the writings of Moses Lard, a distinguished voice among 19th century disciples of Christ:

To illustrate what I mean: it is held to be doubtful whether a Christian man can go to war according to the New Testament. For myself I am candid to think he cannot. But others, let me allow, with equal candor think differently. Suppose now, we as a people, were equally divided on the point. Neither party could certainly force the other to accept its view. The difference should be held as a difference of opinion, and hence should be made a matter of forbearance. But should either party attempt to compel the other to accept its view, and in case of failure should separate, I should not hesitate to regard the separating party as a faction, and hence as condemned by the New Testament (“Can We Divide?,” *Lard's Quarterly III*, April 1866, pp. 331-332).

Although Lard's position—not his position on pacifism, but division over the war issue—became the *de facto* position in many churches of Christ, this was, in my opinion, most unfortunate. Why? Because I believe the war issue, and how we deal with it, is an extremely important issue that may very well determine where we'll spend an eternity. But because we have largely dealt with this issue using the Lard guidelines, many Christians have not seriously studied it and are, therefore, unable to decide, by faith, whether or not a Christian is scripturally obligated to refrain from all war-fighting. Of course, if pacifism is truly what being a follower of Christ requires, then it stands to reason that fellowship cannot be extended to those who serve in the armed forces of our country, for while military prowess may be the best assurance of continued peace, it is clear that those who serve in the armed forces of our country are not pacifists. Just such a view has been expressed by a co-author of a recent debate on this subject:

It should be noted that issues I am debating [have] always been a matter of faith with me ever since I became a Christian. That is, my beliefs are not so much based on personal qualms as they are on what the Bible reveals. I cannot but conclude that those who take my opponent's views on “just warfare,” etc. are out of harmony with what God expects of [H]is people. Some may say that since my scruples do not concern the collective activity of Christians (such as using instrumental music in worship services would), I should be able to extend fellowship to those that disagree with me on the “civil government” issue. I beg to differ. To me, this is a moral issue that has bearing on the fate of people's souls just as other moral issues do (gambling, pornography, homosexuality, etc.). It is immaterial to me that many preachers have proverbially swept this issue under the rug, calling it a matter of

“opinion.” It is immaterial to me that many Christians do not share my views. What is important is what the Bible says about the matter (reference citation to this 1998 debate not given to protect the guilty).

Integrity demands obedience to conscience, and I'm convinced that the brother mentioned above is just trying to do what he believes the Bible requires of him. Nevertheless, he and I are clearly on divergent paths, and so much so that if we were in the same congregation we'd have serious issues of fellowship to contend with. However, although our divergent views ultimately produce questions of fellowship, fellowship, *per se*, is not the issue before us. Such can be hashed out later, if the need arises. At issue *now* is what the Bible teaches on the government's and Christian's role in war. Even so, when what we believe affects how others perceive us (*viz.*, good, bad, brave, cowardly, foolish, wise, consistent, inconsistent, orthodox, heterodox, *et cetera*), caution and soft-speaking should be the order of the day. So although I will be pressing my points firmly and, I hope, succinctly, it must not be thought that I am shouting and snorting condemnation at those who disagree with me on this subject. In fact, as long as a pacifist is content to have fellowship with me, I would not advocate, nor would I ever initiate, withdrawing from him. Yes, I do believe the pacifist needs to change his position, and I will be praying for just that, and that this study will advance that end.

At the same time, I admit I could be wrong and in need of repentance myself. If I am, I would appreciate very much being corrected. Consequently, I look forward to hearing from those with opposing views. And although I am optimistic that good can be accomplished by such an exchange, I nevertheless remain convinced there will always be Christians who, struggling with the complexities of what it means to be a true follower of Christ, will simply opt out of history and summarily relinquish the business of government to those who all too often have no conscientious scruples at all. This tradition, as I've already pointed out, has been well represented in churches of Christ. I am convinced that such thinking was, from the beginning, and is now, a terrible mistake that forces the one who holds it to extend love to aggressors but not to their victims. This, to me, is a critical point, and I'll have more to say about it as this study progresses.

My Position Clearly Stated

Personally, I would be overjoyed if every government official was a Christian. And if every policeman and soldier was a Christian, is there anyone who would not think we'd be much better off? However, in affirming a Christian's right (and sometimes duty) to participate in the use of armed force, whether as a policeman or soldier, I do not intend to defend, nor excuse, all that professed Christians have done in these positions. Indeed, not all wars are moral, and therefore it would be wrong (*i.e.*, unjust) for a Christian to participate in such. Secondly, although some wars are moral (*i.e.*, just), and therefore permissible for Christians to participate in, I believe certain moral restrictions must always apply to the fighting of such wars. Thus, a Christian who participates in a just war is not immune from the moral obligations that bear on his conduct. I tried to make this clear in the introduction, and I mention it here again only because pacifists all too frequently misunderstand my position, preferring to identify it as one that justifies killing anyone my government mandates. This may be a correct description of one who believes it is always right to participate in war (*i.e.*, “activism”), but for me, a selective conscientious objector (*i.e.*, “selectivism”), I categorically deny that mine is such a position. Selectivism rests uneasily between the activism that shouts, “My country, right or wrong!,” and the pacifism that would permit

a Hitler or Saddam Hussien to commit genocide without lifting a weapon in resistance. Having reiterated this, it is time for us to turn our attention to the task at hand.

The Sword

Down through the centuries, most non-Christians have equated Christianity with pacifism. This is understandable, as most non-believers are hardly qualified to be exegetes of the New Testament. But it is most unfortunate that one claiming to be a New Testament Christian would think so, for such thinking has caused many to think of Christianity as “an ideal and beautiful religion” that is impractical except for a few rare individuals (viz., pacifists). This false image leads to high-sounding principles that are, after all is said and done, impossible to keep in practice. The world is fallen and full of evil, therefore Jesus, many think, demands that which is impossible. Consequently, unless the “impossibilism” of Christ is replaced with the “possibilism” of politics (for politics, if it is anything, is certainly the art of the possible), then civilizations are destined to be overrun by tyrants and despots. Such thinking has caused many people to be corrupted, producing at least two types of individuals: (1) those who, although they profess Christianity, will not act according to its *real* and *practical* tenets, which make a distinction between the shedding of innocent blood and the shedding of any human blood, and (2) those who, although they profess nominal Christianity, would never act on what they consider to be its *false* and *impracticable* tenets, particularly the supposed tenet of pacifism. Both groups, convinced that a number of things are wicked which are not, and seeing no way to avoid wickedness being done in a fallen world, ultimately partake of a dialogue that sets no limits on warfare.

However, New Testament Christianity, contrary to the false image of “pacifistic Christianity,” is quite practical. Because it is, God has given the State the awesome responsibility of using the sword to restrain, punish and, when necessary, kill evildoers (cf. Romans 13:1-7). Why? Because, although the Bible prohibits individuals from exercising revenge or vengeance (cf. Romans 12:17-21), civil government was ordained by God for this very purpose (cf. Romans 13:4). I honestly do not see how it is possible for anyone who is a Christian to misunderstand this point. Therefore, when officials of the State duly carry out their responsibilities to do good toward the law-abiding and visit wrath (i.e., punishment) on those who do evil, it is hard for me to understand how some Christians think this to be a task only for the unregenerated. On the contrary, God calls these civil authorities His *ministers* who are to be “attending continually to this very thing” (Romans 13:6; see also verse 4). How then can anyone be a sinner by doing what God appointed him to do? Frankly, I don't think there's a pacifist answer to this question that is anywhere close to being Scriptural. Nevertheless, some have cited God's use of evil nations to punish other evil nations as an answer. But God's use of an evil nation, which got that way by its own volition, to punish another evil nation is in no way parallel to the situation under discussion, and I fail to see how anyone but those grasping for straws could not understand this.

Therefore, the State, when acting in accordance with the Law above the law, is authorized to take human life for the good of those it has been ordained to protect and the punishment of those who do evil. Such God-ordained taking of life, although it may certainly be described as killing, is not, as some think, unlawful killing or murder. Consequently, an official of the State cannot be sinning when he carries out this morally constituted duty, and those who so argue are *clearly* (and by this term I mean *unequivocally*) in violation of God's prohibition against calling good evil and evil good (cf. Isaiah 5:20). So, before we even get to the question of whether a Christian can scripturally engage in carnal warfare, the pacifists, who believe that any such law-

ful use of the sword is, in point of fact, murder, has some backing up to do. If one can't get this issue right, then I fail to see how he could ever be convinced from the Scriptures that a Christian has a right, and sometimes a duty, under certain circumstances, to participate in carnal warfare. Nevertheless, it is to this issue I now direct your attention.

Living What We Believe And Believing What We Live

God never calls upon Christians to do what is impossible, impractical or unlivable. In fact, one of the strongest proofs of the validity of Christianity is that we can *live what we believe* and *believe what we live*. As a Christian, I cannot take vengeance into my own hands (I'm speaking here as an individual). To do so would be a sin (cf. Romans 12:19). But such a moral code does not make me, as a Christian and law-abiding citizen, prey and fodder for evildoers. Why? Because ever since sin entered into the world, God has understood His people would be living in a world where evildoers would want to harm and take advantage of the law-abiding. Knowing that when left to our own devices we might be tempted to return evil for evil, bitterness for bitterness, gossip for gossip, slander for slander, hatred for hatred, *et cetera*, God ordained civil government as a mechanical remedy against unrestrained evil. In doing so, He stated that anyone who sheds man's blood (i.e., commits murder) by man shall his blood be shed (i.e., would receive capital punishment, cf. Genesis 9:6). Notice, if you will, that this verse condemns the *wrongful* taking of human life as well as authorizes the *rightful* taking of human life. Further note that this verse is not an "Old Testament" ordinance, *per se*; instead, it is God's law for all mankind for all time, enforceable before, during and after the law of Moses. If this is true, and I don't see how anyone can deny it, then we would expect to see this ordinance incorporated into both the Old and New Covenants, and this is, of course, exactly what we find (cf. Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9).

Israel, under the law of Moses, was a theocracy. As such, it was at times directly guided into war by God. Although these occasions can be used to demonstrate that God is not anti-war, *per se*, nevertheless, the United States of America is not a theocracy. Therefore, I will concede that it can be argued that what applied *uniquely* to Israel as God's chosen instrument is not *normative* for any other nation. But in doing so, I will not give up the fact that Jehovah, according to Exodus 15:3, is a "man of war" or "warrior," depending on what translation one is using. Furthermore, one can be sure that the Bible's prohibition against murder was not transgressed by Israel when they were led into war by God. Therefore, it is clear, once again, that not all killing is murder. If one understands this, then progress is being made.

Additionally, the Bible makes it clear that God did not consider killing in self-defense to be murder. In Exodus 22:2, Moses said, "If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed." Such rests upon the probability that those who break in at night (see the next verse) may very well have murderous intent, and that when discovered would, in order to escape, be predisposed to commit murder. Why then would anyone but a committed pacifist think that this principle—a principle which would later be incorporated into Roman, English and American law—would not also be in force under the New Covenant?

What's more, Genesis 14 is an example (during the Patriarchal dispensation) of God's approval of Abraham's war against the kings of the valley. This can be seen by Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham after he had attacked and routed his foreign enemies: "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed

him and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' And he [Abraham] gave him a tithe of all." (Genesis 14:18-20). This divinely sanctioned war is particularly important in that it occurred before Israel was established as a theocracy (cf. Exodus 19). Therefore, it cannot be argued that this is a special case of theocratic warfare. If not, and if what was written in Genesis 14:18-20 was written for our learning (cf. Romans 15:3), then why would anyone think such actions (i.e., the active doing of justice) to be wrong under the New Covenant? In fact, the New Testament continues to affirm that deadly force (i.e., the sword) is still a divinely ordained means of executing human justice. Writing of the civil authorities, Paul said, "For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (Romans 13:4).

The New Testament's Teaching On The Separation Of Church And State

When it comes to the New Testament, the Lord made it clear there would be a separation between *Church* (viz., spiritual Israel) and *State* (cf. Matthew 22:21). Under this system, the sword was granted to the State, not the Church (cf. Romans 13:4). Therefore, Christians, engaged as they are in spiritual warfare, do not fight with carnal weapons (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:4). This simply means that all the "holy wars," past, present and future, were not, and cannot be, pleasing to God. The borders of God's kingdom are not advanced by armed force.

On the other hand, the State is duly authorized by God to advance its cause by force of arms. In doing so, it is under obligation to defend its citizens from enemies (i.e., evildoers), both foreign and domestic. Although Romans 13:1-7 appears on the surface to deal specifically with domestic law enforcement, it certainly seems to be faulty logic to argue, as some do, that the State may use armed force to protect its citizens from a murderous individual while, at the same time, it must let a murderous country run roughshod over thousands, even millions, of innocent people. No, no, no, a thousand times, no! The State's authority to "bear not the sword in vain" implies the right to use deadly force to restrain and punish evildoers, whether they be domestic or foreign. In fact, the distinction between soldier and policeman is a rather recent invention. It was the armed legions of Rome that fought its wars and kept the peace. The enforcement of law, the maintenance of order, and the protection of the innocent, which today are the province of the police, were in Paul's day the responsibility of soldiers. How then can anyone doubt that the sword in the hand of a civil magistrate represented both the military and law enforcement obligations the State owed its citizenry?

Consequently, and I believe most reasonable exegetes will agree, the State's God-given authority to administer justice, by reason of legitimate extrapolation, includes the restraint and resistance of evildoers who are aggressors as well as those who are criminals, and therefore requires the state to protect its citizens' rights when threatened from outside as well as from within.

Finally, to deny, on moral grounds, the elementary right of the state to defend itself and its citizens by war simply means to deny the legitimate existence of the State itself, which is, in fact, contrary to the Scriptures.

The Restraints Of War

Presently, George W. Bush, as President, is the executive head of our government. This means he is commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. Thus, when the citizens of this nation are threatened by foreign forces, as they now are, Mr. Bush is acting within his God-given duty to execute wrath on the evildoers who have targeted not just our soldiers, but innocent men, women and children as well. He has said the U.S. will either bring these aggressors to justice or justice to these aggressors. This is executive justice and it is just the kind of justice in view in Romans 13:4. Such justice, whether in connection with crime, civil disorder, or international warfare, must be *discriminate* (i.e., limited to the evildoers and those who support them) and *controlled* (i.e., limited only to the force necessary to secure such justice). This brings us necessarily to an examination of the Just War tradition.

The Virtues Of War

The Just War tradition that has developed in the West has been amplified by the works of Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Zwigli, Calvin, *et al.*, but if it is to have any real meaning for New Testament Christians, it must be because such a tradition is, first and foremost, grounded in the Bible. The think-sos of men can be interesting and even informative, but they are not authoritative. Hence, I do not feel obligated to affirm every nuance of the Just War tradition articulated in the past or today. On the other hand, the Christian is obligated to apply the New Testament to everything he does in this world, and this includes not only his obligation to the Church, but also the State. Thus, it is to the New Testament and its principles that the child of God must look to find the virtues, if any, of warfare.

As I've tried to make clear, a major key to understanding the Just War tradition is to be found in the New Testament's teaching concerning the purpose of government (cf. Romans 13:1-7). As we learned, the main purpose of government is to promote, preserve and enforce *justice*. By now it ought to be clear that there are two major aspects of justice. One is distributive justice, which includes protecting the rights of the innocent, and involves the right to life and the right to be free from oppression (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-4). The other is *retributive* justice, which involves the just punishment of those who deserve it due to their trampling on the rights of others. The Bible teaches us unequivocally that killing is permissible as an act of retributive justice (cf. Genesis 9:6 and Romans 13:1-7). Therefore, murder is *wrong* because it is the taking of *innocent* life, and capital punishment is *right* because it is *just retribution* against a murderer. Clearly, most wars follow this pattern. When one nation launches an attack against another, bent on conquest, pillage and destruction, it incurs guilt in the same way a murderer does, albeit on a much larger scale. This means that individual soldiers engaging in acts of aggression share in this guilt and are, therefore, subject to death in the interest of retributive justice. Thus, the attacked nation is morally right when it kills guilty aggressors, as such is the moral equivalence of capital punishment.

However, the main consideration when it comes to warfare is *not* retributive, but *distributive*, justice, which is, after all, the primary purpose of government ordained by God. A Romans 13 government (i.e., a God-fearing government) will do its level best to serve and protect its citizens. Specifically, this involves providing them with a just, free, and peaceable environment. Such a government will protect its citizens from acts of injustice, whether committed by individual criminals or aggressive nations, and the justice God requires demands it. Pacifism's "peace

at any price” is not a Biblical position. Refusing to take human life when justice demands it, as the pacifist does, is a perversion not just of justice, itself, but the Scriptures that demand it. Consequently, *pacifism* is not the answer. But, as we've already argued, neither is *activism's* “My country, right or wrong,” “I'll kill 'um if my country asks me to.” This means it's up to *selectivists*, who think the *why* and *how* of war must be just, to set the ground work for appropriate war-fighting.

The Rules Of A Just War

Space does not permit a lengthy dissertation on Just War doctrine. However, I do find it necessary to mention the basic components or categories that all Just War advocates agree upon. The first of these, *jus ad bellum*, has to do with *the reasons* that justify going to war. The second, *jus in bello*, with *how* a just war is to be conducted.

The Reasons For War

In order to be just, a war must be defensive. As such, its aim is to protect the innocent from unjust aggression. Further, it must be undertaken with the right intention, which is to restore a just peace. When such a war is decided upon, it must be with an understanding that the means used will be proportionate to the ends sought. In addition, a just war can be engaged in only when it has been reasonably determined that there are no viable alternatives for resolving the conflict. Finally, to meet a Just War criteria, there must be a reasonable probability of success in achieving the aims of the war. This very briefly describes the *jus ad bellum* criteria that must be present before one can engage in fighting a just war.

Conduct In War

The second category, *jus in bello*, which has to do with “the how” (or conduct) of a just war is quite distinct, and must be kept so. The various nuances of this category can be many, but the criteria are essentially two: *proportionality* and *discrimination*.

The first has to do with using only the force necessary to effect the desired results. In other words, to vindicate a just cause, no more force than is necessary can be resorted to. Consequently, the disproportionate use of force is not only inappropriate, but wrong (i.e. “evil”), and thus punishable by law.

The second, called “noncombatant immunity,” has to do with the idea that there must be no intentional killing of innocent civilians. In modern parlance, this has come to be called “collateral damage,” a term I'm not all that pleased with, as it can detract from the fact that innocent civilians have been killed. However, in defense of the term, it must be pointed out that those using it are doing so to make it clear that they have not purposefully targeted innocent civilians, which is the exact opposite of what the September 11th, 2001 attacks on America did. This naturally brings us to the current war on terrorism and the question of whether or not it meets Just War criteria.

I answer the above question with an unequivocal “Yes.” I do so because the war on terror meets all the criteria of the Just War principles outlined above. Because our government has the right authority, a just cause and the right intention, I believe the present war against Muslim ji-

hadis, and those who support them, is not just right, but obligatory. Therefore, for me to fail to lend my support to its efforts would be a failure of virtue—that is, a failure to act consistently with the principles of Righteousness and Justice taught in God's Word. Conjointly, I believe if I were to fail (as all genuine pacifists must do) to lend my support to this war, I would be doing a terribly vicious thing, in that I would be failing to show charity (love) toward my neighbor and, thus, toward God (cf. Luke 10:27). Because charity forms the foundation for the “good works” I believe I was “created in Christ Jesus” to do (cf. Ephesians 2:10), I sincerely pray that I will be willing, like the many before me, to lay down my life, when necessary, for my neighbor. If this isn't to be included in the “pure and undefiled religion” that Christians are to practice (cf. James 1:27), then I fail to see how anything else could.

In the next chapter, we'll examine more closely the Christian's role in just warfare.

The Christian's Role

Although Christians are prohibited from taking personal vengeance, God has provided a remedy to protect not just Christians, but all law-abiding citizens from those who would do them harm. This remedy is civil government. It is most unfortunate that pacifists, like the clergy of medieval days, think the religion of Christ somehow lifts them above *time, place* and *people*. They think Jesus' teachings—particularly those in the Sermon on the Mount, coupled with His meek and humble life—effectively condemn the use of force, and that it is, therefore, *always wrong*. I have heard some of them argue that although they believe the police-military power of the state is “necessary” to protect law-abiding citizens, they nevertheless believe all such “dirty hands” tasks should be carried out by sinners, not Christians. This seems awfully condescending. According to these Christian élitists, there does not exist a governmental act involving the use of coercive, violent or deadly force that does not demand repentance. Sin, they argue, is always committed when force is used, even when this force is implemented for just ends. I believe I have demonstrated such thinking to be not just wrongheaded, but unscriptural as well. So in this chapter I want to examine the role Christians may play in just wars.

Service Motivated By Love

While a Christian (pacifist or otherwise) may not be able to picture Jesus—whose unique work was grounded in the priestly role of reconciliation and intercession—as a soldier or policeman, it should not be so hard for someone to understand how a soldier or policeman who is primarily motivated by charity (and I'm talking about the love of God and neighbor here) would be conscience driven to do all he could to restrain evil so that justice could be done. In other words, the question is not what would Jesus do?, but what would Jesus have us to do? Nevertheless, such strikes a discordant note for many Christians. “How,” they ask, “can force, deadly or otherwise, be loving?” In short, it can't unless it seeks to mimic God's use of force. This means, among other things, that the *just* use of force can never involve intrinsic evil (i.e., it cannot involve the *intentional* killing of innocent people). Armed force is charity, then, only when it seeks to resemble God's use of force.

Pacifists frequently argue that the commandment to love one's enemies prohibits the Christian, as an official of government, from exercising deadly force. “After all,” they ask, “if one truly loves his enemy, how can he shoot him?” Well, when his enemy has surrendered, he can't! When his enemy is defenseless, he can't! In fact, there are a multitude of reasons why a Christian functioning as a soldier would not shoot his enemy, and this has frequently been the difference between the actions of armies reflecting Biblical-based ethics and those that don't. As I write this, sworn enemies of the United States are being provided special food consistent with their religious beliefs, adequate shelter, and medical treatment far superior to what they would

receive in their own countries, and all at taxpayers' expense. To me, this sounds much like the Biblical injunction to return good for evil (cf. Romans 12:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15).

But let me ask a few questions that may help us focus our attention: Did God cease loving mankind when He destroyed all but eight souls in a worldwide flood? Does the fact that many will be punished for an eternity in a Devil's hell mean that God does not love every human being, even to the point of sending His own Son into this world to die for him? Well, if God can love His enemies but still punish them, why can't we?

Yes, we are called upon to love our enemies, and we must do so, but, and this is often overlooked by pacifists, the Christian is also obligated to love the innocent citizens who stand to be enslaved or murdered by an attacking army. What then is love's responsibility to them? Is it not to seek distributive justice? Is it not to defend their God-given rights? Clearly, love's responsibility to protect the innocent must prevail. Thus, I conclude that a just war may be engaged in not only to see that justice is done, but to demonstrate love itself. Contrary to the think-sos of pacifists, God does not believe in, nor does the Bible teach, "peace at any price." Refusing to restrain an evildoer, or when necessary to take his life, when justice and love demand it, is a gross distortion of New Testament Christianity.

God has made it clear that He desires to restrain evil among His creatures. To do so, He has authorized the use, when necessary, of deadly force. This is, as we've learned, the primary purpose of God-ordained (i.e., Romans 13) governments, and those who righteously attend such governments are called nothing less than *ministers of God for good* (cf. Romans 13:4,6; 1 Peter 2:14). With this in mind, it is important to note what God said through the prophet in Isaiah 5:20-21: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" Consequently, when Christian pacifists argue it is wrong (viz., that it is "evil") for Christians to serve as "God's minister to you for good," why should they not be seen as those who come under the condemnation of calling good evil, and evil good?

But there is more. In Jesus' condemnation of those who were willing, as a result of their misinterpretation/misapplication of Scripture, to condemn the guiltless, He said, "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7). In other words, Jesus is saying that when His disciples acted as they did, they acted consistent with principles taught in His Word. Therefore, it should be clear His disciples did not break God's law, as they were being wrongly accused of doing by a bunch of haughty, self-righteous, and hypocritical religionists. If Jesus' encounters with these people sounds a bit harsh, be assured they were. Jesus was not being "nice," as most people today count "niceness." Instead, He was "contentious" about what He was saying, for He was addressing an issue that would ultimately determine where human beings created in His image would spend an eternity. He advanced this same theme in Matthew 23:23-24, where He said:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Because *justice, mercy and faith* were important ideas to Jesus, it behooves every Christian to spend some time contemplating these “weightier matters of the law,” particularly as they relate to the issue at hand .

The Weightier Matters

The Christian can be sure that the kind of “faith” Jesus was talking about in the passage above is not merely mental assent. It is, instead, the *saving faith* manifested by works (cf. James 2:14-26)—works, I might add, of *mercy and justice*. In answering the question of whether or not a man can be saved by faith *alone*, James said it this way:

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:15-18).

Suppose, then, that a little old lady walking to the market is attacked by thugs who have knocked her to the ground in an effort to steal her purse. Suppose that because that purse contains all the money she has, and because it's just enough to get her through another week, she hesitates to let go of it. Suppose, in their efforts to make her let go of the purse, one of the thugs begins to kick her in the side, while yet another tries to break her arm in an effort to make her let go of the purse. Is she acting ungodly by trying to protect her livelihood? Now, suppose you are a witness to this whole thing. Do you mean to tell me that the principles of justice, righteousness and mercy require you to do nothing more than yell for someone who is a “sinner anyway” to come and stop these vicious criminals? What kind of faith would this be? And what kind of pathetic religion is this that would seek to brand this old lady a sinner for resisting her attackers and who, in order to be helped, needs sinners (viz., the unrighteous servants of the government) to be called in order to do what is right? Those who practice such a creed and, in turn, look down their noses at those of us they call “carnal Christians” must, I think, be identified with the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day who, although they claimed élitist positions in their service to God, had neglected the weightier matters of the law.

But How About Not Returning Evil For Evil?

Yes, the Bible does talk about not returning evil for evil (cf. Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9), but unless one's conscience condemns him (cf. Romans 14:23), *it is never evil to do what is right*. In fact, the Bible says, “He who practices righteousness is righteous” (1 John 3:7). So, even though sentiment has now evolved to the point that many believe it is wrong (i.e., “evil”) to inflict corporal punishment, even on one's own children, and even though this sentiment is now being enforced by law in some places, God caused it to be recorded long ago that “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24, see also 19:18). The Bible makes it clear that even God provides such chastening to His own children (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19). Consequently, when a child does wrong and is properly punished for it, such is *not an evil* to be eradicated, *but a virtue* to be upheld. Along these same lines, when policemen and soldiers put their lives on the line in order to *serve* their fellow citizens and *protect* them from evil, they are involved in the highest form of love the Bible commands—the self-sacrificing love that is willing, if necessary, to lay its

life down for another (cf. Romans 5:6-10). This remains true even when such love includes the deadly, but just, use of force. Therefore, the Scriptural prohibition against returning evil for evil has nothing to do with the legitimate, lawful, and righteous utilization of force, for “Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:23b)—never has been, and never will be!

But How About Turning The Other Cheek?

Yes, when giving instructions regarding *personal* ethics, Jesus talked about turning the other cheek. He did so in the context of not resisting an evil person, nor invoking the “eye for eye and tooth for tooth” mandate of the Mosaic Law in some exercise of personal revenge (cf. Matthew 5:38-39; Exodus 21:24). Therefore, it ought to be abundantly clear that He was not addressing His remarks to civil authorities, who He had authorized to exercise just such vengeance and punishment. Instead, He was addressing the common man and was, therefore, dealing *only* with personal ethics. On the other hand, if it is true that the turning-the-other-cheek mandate was a New Testament principle to be applied across the board to individuals and governments, as many pacifists claim, then the apostle Paul definitely got it wrong in Romans 13:1-7. This would be an argument that the Bible actually contradicts itself; but what Christian is willing to believe such a thing? Incidentally, many have thought the ethics taught by Jesus here in these verses, although laudable, are not attainable in a fallen world. Consequently, they have believed them to be something destined for implementation in a yet future millennial kingdom. This is a mistake. Jesus' instructions here, although extremely difficult, are the most practical ever given to man. The individual who understands and implements this personal set of ethics will learn to cultivate the kind of life God created mankind to live from the very beginning.

Further, and this point must not be missed, there was absolutely nothing wrong with the *lex talionis* principle taught in the law of Moses (viz., the law of like for like, that is, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, burning for burning, *et cetera*). In fact, it was, and still is, the model *par excellence* for earthly justice. However, *lex talionis* was not created as a personal set of ethics. It was, instead, created as a judicial remedy against the personal vengeance that seldom manifests the weightier matters of the law—things like justice, mercy and faith. However, if all mankind were to live according to the principles articulated in the Sermon on the Mount, there would be no need for the mechanical remedies provided by civil authorities. But because mankind is fallen, Romans 13 governments, which are governments ordained by God, function as God-given ministers of Justice and Righteousness. Governmental authorities, even when they fail to realize it, and whether they like it or not, are subject to Christ's Law above the law and will answer to His “rod of iron” if their policies are contrary to His principles (cf. Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). The degree to which a government finds this offensive is a good indicator of just how far down the path towards a Revelation 13 government (i.e., a government ordained by Satan) it has traveled.

The Need For Salty Christians

“Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). There are more New Testament Christians in America than any place else in the world, and these, I am convinced, function as the salt that continues to preserve this nation (cf. Matthew 5:13). Therefore, the righteous acts of Christians are not only important to the salvation of Christians themselves, but to the preservation of our nation as well. If our government, God forbid, ever becomes a full-fledged Revelation 13 government, openly and deliberately persecuting God's

people, it will go down to the pit, as did the Roman Empire. Any nation that messes with God's people makes itself an enemy of God, and the enemies of God do not prevail. Nevertheless, and in the meantime, the godly salt of faithful Christians continues to preserve our great nation.

But consider a most sobering thought: What happens when this salt loses its savor? Jesus said it would be good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men (cf. Matthew 5:13).

To permit a murder to occur when it could have been prevented is morally wrong. To allow a rape when one could have deterred it is an evil, not a good, as the pacifists must argue. To watch an act of cruel abuse of a child without stepping in to end it is morally inexcusable. What's more, to call such intercession evil, and not good, is itself evil and does not reflect the rightly divided principles taught in the Bible. The word of God says, "Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin" (James 4:17, NRSV). In other words, not properly resisting evil is a *sin of omission*, which can be just as evil as a *sin of commission*. A man who will not protect his wife and children against a violent intruder, even when he believes the Bible prohibits him from doing so, fails them miserably. And although it is true a pacifist who rightly defended his wife and children would sin by doing so, in that he would be violating his own conscience (cf. Romans 14:22-23), he would, nevertheless, be sinning if he didn't. Therefore, the pacifist's "damned if you do; damned if you don't" dilemma should serve to demonstrate the importance of getting this issue right. Happily, God's word, when properly interpreted, does not create such dilemmas.

Likewise, any government that has the means to defend its citizens against a foreign aggressor and fails to do so is morally delinquent. Even as justice demands a life for a life in capital crimes, the same logic can be extended to the unjust actions of nations, and this means that a nation has a moral duty to take punitive actions against an aggressor nation, with Hitler being a case in point. It would have been morally wrong for the Allied forces (in this case a group of aggrieved nations) not to resist Nazi Germany. Even so, the Christian pacifist argues the New Testament is silent on war and international justice, in that Romans 13:1-7 deals only with citizens' obligation to government and the government's responsibility to its citizen. Yes, it is true that Romans 13:1-7 is specifically addressing domestic citizen-government responsibilities and obligations. But I've argued, and I think correctly so, that the demands of justice God has placed on government obviously projects these same principles to matters involving international justice. And to not do so would be convoluted, to say the least, for it would require a nation to serve and protect its citizens from domestic evildoers, but not from the aggression and violence of foreign tyrants.

So, instead of making the government's work harder by attempting to prohibit its God-given right to use deadly force, Christians should be willing to uphold the government's righteous hand as it does justice (cf. 1 Peter 2:14; Titus 3:1; Romans 13:1-7). Admittedly, and even understandably, not every Christian is suitable for military or police service. But for a New Testament Christian to look down his nose at fellow Christians who serve their fellow citizens in this fashion is, in my opinion, unthinkably obtuse. I have discussed, argued with, and even been cajoled by, brethren who charge that a Christian cannot, as they like to put it, "kill for his government" without committing sin. I've even known of congregations where some wanted to refuse the Lord's Supper to our men and women in uniform, particularly those serving in our Armed Forces. Understanding, as I do, that a Christian cannot violate his conscience without committing sin, I re-

spect, and will even defend, a Christian's decision to be a "conscientious objector." But I think any such Christian needs to be extremely careful in his or her condemnation of those of us who believe that not only can we use deadly force to protect the innocent, but that, in some cases, we *must* do so if we are not to be counted as sinners. One such fellow, a preacher of the gospel, made it clear that he was barely tolerating fellows like me, as he said I taught Christians it was "okay" for them to kill for their government when it "commands" them to do so. I assure you that I do not believe, nor have I ever taught, anything of the sort. I do not think the responsibilities of citizenship are so easily discerned, as my accuser suggests. Furthermore, I do not believe one's citizenship obligations should ever interfere with the Christian's duty to *obey God rather than men* (cf. Acts 5:29). Thus, I believe there are times when a Christian must refuse to serve his country, and that if he didn't, he would certainly be involving himself in sin. In other words, the state does not possess ultimate authority. Instead, it possesses only delegated authority (cf. John 19:11), and any government that doesn't recognize this is idolatrous.

True Patriotism Is Limited Patriotism

Consequently, whatever patriotism is, it cannot—indeed, it must not—automatically exempt itself from the charge that "*in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin*" (Psalm 36:2, NIV). Whatever it is, patriotism should not imprudently suppose that by invoking the name of God in slogans it will tether the Almighty to its cause any more successfully than rebellious Israel did when Eli's sons took the ark of the covenant out of mothballs and propped it like a talisman before the armies marching against the Philistines (cf. 1 Samuel 4). True patriotism does not permit itself to be manipulated by media mantras into a pumped-up frenzy that drowns out all other voices—particularly the voice of Jesus, who said, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." To the state, then, and when such is just, obedient servants present their bodies and wills for the national defense; to God, a "contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15). As a result, there need be no contradiction, no conflict of interest. So, like Daniel, who knew how to "seek the peace of the city" to which God had carried him into exile (cf. Jeremiah 29:7a), but who, along with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, would not bow to its "image of gold" (Daniel 3), the New Testament Christian needs to reflect the godly patriotism the Lord enjoins for His priesthood of spiritual pilgrims who, in every age, sojourn in Babylon while "longing for a better country" (Hebrews 11:16, NIV). "Pray," He says, "to the Lord for [your country]; for in its peace you will have peace" (Jeremiah 29:7b).

I, for one, do not believe the only choice of action for the thinking Christian is to be found in the tweedledee of mindless, hysterical hawkishness, or the tweedledum of half-baked, limpish pacifism. Instead, there ought to be a loyalty to one's country based on truth, not lies, and a manly, unflinching patriotism that is based on reality and not popular fiction. The causes of Justice and Righteousness today, like always, call for leaders and soldiers who are prudent, courageous, self-controlled and just. These need to possess the virtues that will enable them to know not just *why* and *when* to go to war, but *how* to properly fight it, and finally, *when to stop it*. We need defenders distinguished by the kind of character that empowers them to pursue every honorable avenue for victory against the enemy, but who are, in the end, resolved to suffer death before dishonor. Where better to find this character and these virtues than in the Christian?

The Christian Soldier

The Christian fights for justice because God is like this, in that He uses force to check evil and bring justice. So, the Christian uses force to restrain evil because this is what God is like, and because God is like this, the Christian does not sin (i.e., he is acting godly) when he uses legitimate force, and this remains true even when this force is deadly force. Furthermore, as God's use of force is a product of His love for His creatures, and as it is clear that God even loves those whom He kills, the Christian, just like God, must love his enemies even when called upon to righteously take their lives. Any acts that are not God-like are morally suspect for the Christian soldier. The acts of a soldier can never be one of personal vengeance (cf. Matthew 5:38-41). Therefore, a just war is something Christians participate in out of loving obedience to God and in conformity to His ways. In his personal relationships, the Christian acts in love toward others as God has always required His followers to do. But when he chooses to participate in government as a soldier or law enforcement officer, the Christian acts in accord with the God-ordained mandate given to the state. There is no contradiction here, as the Christian is free to participate in any legitimate function of government, even war, without violating the restrictions God places on him in his personal affairs.

On the other hand, those who think the Christian, simply by virtue of his Christianity, gets to opt out of doing justice are sorely mistaken. They fail, in their élitism, to comprehend what being a faithful subject of God is all about (cf. Micah 8:8 and Matthew 23:23). As such, they delegate the "dirty hands" duty of doing justice to unredeemed sinners. In doing so, they fail to fully understand the nature of God (a nature that demands justice) and denigrate the very character of those people God has appointed over the administration of justice—people the apostle Paul called "ministers to thee for good." How unfortunate it is that many of God's people, past and present, because they have failed to rightly divide God's word (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15), have majored in the theology of calling good evil and evil good (cf. Isaiah 5:20).

Can a Christian participate in war? Yes, when the doing of justice demands it. Can a Christian participate in just any war? No, he most certainly cannot. If the war is not morally justified, and by this I mean consistent with the precepts and principles taught in the Bible, a Christian would not remain "unspotted" by participating in it. What's more, a Christian could not participate even in a just war if the *means* being used to fight it are unjust. Consequently, the Christian must always sit in judgment upon the activities of his government, supporting it when it is right, but refusing to do so when it is wrong. This, I believe, is part of being what a true Christian is all about.

Serving In The Military

Does this mean I heartily recommend military service? No, it doesn't. Serving in the military is dangerous business, and I'm not just referring to the obvious physical dangers of the job. More important than the physical dangers are the moral and spiritual dangers confronting the warrior. Soldiering isn't easy, particularly for the enlisted man. By an act of Congress, commissioned officers are declared not just officers, but "gentlemen" as well. Therefore, a higher moral code is forced upon officers than regular enlisted personnel. This means that cursing, gambling, whoring, and other such vices are less like to be eschewed among the enlisted ranks than among the officers. In fact, it is fair to say that such crassness has always been commonplace within the lower ranks of the military—and I'm talking about any military here. I wish it were not

so, but it is. Consequently, the man who enlists in the military will have more opportunities to stray from the straight and narrow than his civilian cohort. Indeed, much peer pressure will be brought to bear on the Christian who refuses to go along. As a result, he will be branded a “mama’s boy,” a “girly boy,” or even a “queer.”

Additionally, the Christian will at times—and sometimes for long periods of time—be unable to assemble with those of like precious faith. Unable to partake of the sacred assembly and deprived of the fellowship of fellow saints, the Christian soldier will be left with his spiritual flanks dangerously exposed. If, for any reason, he’s failed to put on the whole armor of God (cf. Ephesians 6:10-17), then he will, no doubt, be wounded, perhaps seriously or even fatally. Not many Christians could honorably serve in the military without compromising at least some of their convictions. Now, I’m not saying it can’t be done, mind you; only that it would be extremely difficult for the average Christian. But after all, the true warrior, whether enlisted man or officer, is anything but average. The fictional model for such a person is the knight of the Middle Ages, and in Malory’s *The Death of Arthur*, the knight Lancelot is pictured as “the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in the hall among ladies” and also as “the sternest knight...that ever put spear in the rest” (XXL.13).

Of course, the Christian will understand that this chivalric ideal of the godly warrior (consisting of a combination of gentleness and meekness mixed, when necessary, with great violence) was provided by the likes of Joshua and David *et al.*—warriors spawned by the God who is Himself a “Man of War” or “Warrior” (see various translations of Exodus 15:3). Christianity, like the Judaism before it, is not for wimps. Whether involved in carnal or spiritual warfare, God’s warriors are called upon to “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13, NASB). This kind of expected behavior places one under a “double demand,” as C.S. Lewis referred to it, for knightly Sir Lancelot represented not an ideal mean between meekness and violence, but the highest degree of both at the same time. When striving faithfully to serve God and country, this is exactly what Christian soldiers do. He knows that the greatest evil in war is not death, nor is it even killing. Instead, the greatest evil is killing unjustly. Consequently, just wars require just people to wage them. The virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and self-control must guide the Christian in his decision as to when he can make his country’s war his war. To “serve and protect” the innocent is the primary motive for the Christian’s decision to participate in war. In doing so, he must realize that the chivalrous character, which requires one to be fierce to the *n*th degree and meek to the *n*th degree, must always be emulated. However, such fierceness and meekness do not grow together naturally, and to acquire such a character is no easy matter. Only in the Christian do we find the best chance for this kind of character, for it is, after all is said and done, the kind of character exhibited by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Consequently, the chivalrous character is *not* a work of nature, but a work of art. This means that if this kind of character is not espoused by the church and cultivated by the military, it will likely not be acquired at all. And therefore, after all is said and done, if there are no chivalrous soldiers, then no war—however just its cause—will be fought justly.

May God richly bless all chivalrous soldiers as they seek to faithfully fulfill both aspects of this “double demand,” exhibiting at the same time, a fierceness and meekness best found in those who have, by means of God’s magnificent grace, cultivated the wisdom of serpents and the harmlessness of doves (cf. Matthew 10:16).

In the next chapter, we'll look at the service of one such soldier.

Salty Chivalry

Johnny Micheal “Mike” Spann, a United States Marine and paramilitary officer in the CIA's Directorate of Operations, Special Activities Division, was the first American to die in combat in Afghanistan. He was shot and killed on November 25, 2001, in a prison uprising by captured Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives at the Kala Jangi fortress in the Northern Afghan city of Mazar-e Sharif. He was from the small town of Winfield, Alabama, about halfway between Birmingham and Tupelo, Mississippi. He was a Criminal Justice graduate from Auburn University. He was also a New Testament Christian.

At his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, where he received full military honors, his wife, Shannon, in her final good-bye to his flag-draped coffin, said “*Simper Fi*, my love.” *Simper fi*, which is short for *simper fidelis*, is the Marine Corps’ motto and means “always faithful.” Whether he was in all things faithful is a decision best left to the One who knows all things perfectly and is, therefore, incapable of making an error in judgment. But, it bodes well for Mike Spann that the wife to whom he had sworn his love believed him to be *simper fi*, and that the grateful country he served thought him to be faithful to the last ounce of devotion. These serve as beacons of hope that this Christian soldier faithfully fulfilled his “whole duty” to the Lord God Almighty, the Ruler of all that is (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13). At Spann's burial service, the preacher said:

Mike Spann was the kind of man we dream of growing up to be when we are boys—tough, kind, strong, fair, fully committed to God, to family, to country. He was a warrior in the highest, best sense of that word. So like David—courageous and prepared because his highest aim was to please God, protect his family, and preserve his nation.

George J. Tenet, the Director of Central Intelligence, said in his remarks:

Here today, in American soil, we lay to lasting rest an American hero. United in loss and in sorrow, we are united, as well, in our reverence for the timeless virtues upon which Mike Spann shaped his life—virtues for which he ultimately gave his life.

Dignity. Decency. Bravery. Liberty.

From his earliest days, Mike not only knew what was right, he worked to do what was right. At home and school in Alabama. As a United States Marine. As an officer of the Central Intelligence Agency. And as the head of his own, young family.

And it was in the quest for right that Mike at his country's call went to Afghanistan. To that place of danger and terror, he sought to bring justice and freedom. And to our nation—which

he held so close to his heart—he sought to bring a still greater measure of strength and security.

For Mike understood that it is not enough simply to dream of a better, safer world. He understood that it has to be built—with passion and dedication, in the face of obstacles, in the face of evil.

Those who took him from us will be neither deeply mourned nor long remembered. But Mike Spann will be forever part of the treasured legacy of free peoples everywhere—as we each owe him an immense, unpayable debt of honor and gratitude.

His example is our inspiration. His sacrifice is our strength.

For the men and women of the Central Intelligence Agency, he remains the rigorous and resolute colleague. The professional who took great pride in his difficult and demanding work. The patriot who knew that information saves lives, and that its collection is a risk worth taking.

May God bless Mike Spann—an American of courage— and may God bless those who love and miss him, and all who carry on the noble work that he began.

I think these are fitting tributes to a fallen warrior, but thinking about Mike Spann and those like him, I feel compelled to ask the questions listed in the subtitle below.

But Who Are These People, And From Whence Do They Come?

In *The Letter to Diognetus*, which is believed to have been written in A.D. 130, an individual by the name of Mathetes undertook to explain to a pagan reader the way it is with these strange people called Christians. He said, in part:

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are

glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

To sum up all in one word—what the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world.

For almost two millennia, these “alien citizens,” still far from their New Jerusalem home, have followed a course of action they believe prescribed in the Bible—a course that compels fidelity to the well-being of their homeland *in time* before the *end of time*. The so-called “Just War” doctrine has emerged as one product of this attempted fidelity. The doctrine, articulated by the many different classes of men who have claimed to be Christian, teaches that just war, although occasioned by evil, is not, in and of itself, evil; nor is it, as is commonly held today, even a necessary evil. On the contrary, if just, war is a positive duty, the doing of which, even though it frequently involves much suffering, is to be counted as a good. However, the pacifist who has been unconvinced by the non-pacifist arguments made in this study will ask, “But what would Jesus do?” or “Can you imagine Jesus flying a stealth bomber or involved in a commando raid?” As a December, 2001 editorial in *First Things* points out:

One might as well ask if you can imagine Jesus driving a bus, editing a magazine, or being a tenured professor in a religious studies department. The question is not what Jesus would do but what he would have us do.

This, I think, is an excellent point. Of course, the pacifist will answer this question one way while others, like me, will answer that in obedience to the command to love one's neighbor, the Christian is duty-bound to defend the innocent by engaging in a just war against a murderous aggressor. Although genuine pacifists—and I'm not talking about those who are just plain cowards and don't want to fight—may be intensely sincere, they are nevertheless monumentally wrong. Although the personal ethic that has us giving way to violence-prone people is not only scriptural, but wise (cf. Matthew 5:39), nonviolent resistance to the aggression American citizens are now facing is a tactic that is utterly implausible and, I believe, completely unscriptural. First, the naive belief that aggression can be effectively resisted if we'll only be nice and understanding to terrorists is not just idealistic, but it is just plain dumb! Second, civil government was ordained by God to take life, if necessary, in order to protect its citizens and punish evildoers, and all this consistent with the principles of Justice and Righteousness taught in the Bible (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-14). Consequently, it is time for pacifists to get themselves “up to speed” on this extremely important subject. When they do so, they'll quit looking down their spiritual noses at those who understand that fidelity to God's word demands the unpleasant as well as the pleasant. The God of the Bible, the One who expects His followers to be 24-hours-a-day disciples, never taught that the living they do for Him is to be compartmentalized into that which is secular and that which is sacred. Either Jesus Christ is Lord of all, or He's Lord of nothing. Please, Lord, give us more of these salty, chivalrous Christians (cf. Matthew 5:13).

In the next chapter, we'll deal with what I think is a key to understanding this difficult subject.

The Sermon On The Mount

There are no more widely known sayings of Jesus than the ones recorded in Matthew 5:1-7:29, commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. How one interprets these teachings plays a big part in how he views the question of war. If one sees Jesus' moral and ethical teachings here as a new and unique set of ethics, then it is very likely he will lean more toward the pacifist position. On the other hand, if one believes the ethics articulated in this sermon to be a declaration of the deeper meanings of the "law and the prophets" (a Hebrew idiom denoting the entire Old Testament), then he is more likely to take a non-pacifist position.

Pacifists, along with a great number of Christians, generally believe the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount *supersedes* the precepts and principles set forth in the Old Testament. They believe Jesus' purpose in this sermon was to annul the ethical code of the Mosaic covenant by announcing a new and loftier morality. But it is just here that many pacifists part company with their fellow Christians, for radical pacifists reject the idea that the Sermon on the Mount pertains fundamentally to personal ethics and insist the commandments set forth by Jesus here are to be inflexibly adhered to in *every relationship* of life. Consequently, their view calls for a radical withdrawal from government and society.

Although it's not possible to speak of an "official position" of the Restoration Movement in this country, it is a documented fact that the pacifist sentiments mentioned above were reflected in many of its most influential preachers, writers, and editors. It was just such a view, no doubt, that motivated the pacifism of Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, Benjamin Franklin, Moses Lard, Robert Milligan, J.W. McGarvey, David Lipscomb *et al.* And it is just such a view that continues to be reflected in the lives of more than a few New Testament Christians. I am of the opinion that such an interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount was a mistake *then*, and therefore it's a mistake *now*.

On the other hand, many non-pacifists believe there is essential agreement between Jesus and the Old Testament in ethical matters; that the ethics of Jesus' teachings are not a radical departure from the law and the prophets; that the moral requirements of the two covenants are not fundamentally different. Consequently, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was not to revise or reverse Mosaic ethics, but to reaffirm their fuller and necessary implications. Of course, it's important to understand that the Sermon on the Mount does not exhaust all the Christian's social and personal responsibilities. When a Christian fails to realize this, he is vulnerable to several erroneous positions, one of which is pacifism.

The argument that Jesus was replacing the moral standard of the Old Testament with a new and improved version stands in direct contradiction of what He himself clearly announced, for in Matthew 5:17 Jesus made it clear He was not abolishing the law and the prophets. The Greek

word here for “abolish” is *katalusai*, and it means “to dissolve or abrogate.” So, to say that Jesus did, in fact, abrogate the morality of the Old Testament is to place Him in a position of contradicting His own words, which is unacceptable for the Bible believer. Further, in this same passage Jesus announced His intention was to *fulfill* the law and the prophets. The word “fulfill,” from the Greek *pleroo*, means variously “to accomplish or obey, to bring out the full meaning, to complete, or abundantly supply,” and it is clear that Jesus did all these by His own obedience to the Law (cf. Hebrews 10:7-9), by satisfying its demands for justice (cf. Galatians 3:10-14), by being the One to whom it pointed (cf. Matthew 1:22, 2:15, John 5:39, Galatians 3:24), and by fully explaining it, or fleshing it out, as He did here in this sermon. In fact, it should be apparent that those who heard Him speak that day would have been more likely to understand Him in this latter sense. Besides, it should be clear why Jesus would have felt compelled to declare His motives up front, for what He would subsequently teach in this sermon would glaringly contradict the morality being taught by the scribes and Pharisees. And as it was these scribes and Pharisees who the people commonly thought to be the true interpreters of the Law, it was necessary for Him to make it clear that He was not, in any way, contradicting the Law of Moses, only the traditional misinterpretations of the scribes and Pharisees.

Because one's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount is so important to understanding the war question, I believe I must do more than just make the claim my argument is correct. Instead, I must give convincing proof. This will involve the exegeses of a segment of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount along with another section of Scripture where the Lord defends His disciples from a charge that claimed they had profaned the Sabbath. This will take considerable space and time, but I believe you may find the journey worth the effort.

A Look At Matthew 12:1-8

Before getting to the series of controversial contrasts Jesus makes in Matthew 5:21-48, it is important to grasp the full impact of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, for it is from this sermon forward that we see the scribes and Pharisees' hatred for Jesus growing to the point when it culminates in their murdering Him with the help of a corrupt Roman official. In other words, when the Lord put these scribes and Pharisees on notice with His Sermon on the Mount, it was clear to them that He was a threat to their influence and power. Consequently, they would stop at nothing to destroy Him (cf. Matthew 12:14; 26:3-4). So, let's look at Matthew 12:1-8 and make some observations about it

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

The Pharisees had always been a minority group, but during Jesus' time they were the religious power in Palestine. Initially, they were known as the *Chasidim* (pious ones), a group that

arose during the 2nd century B.C. to protect and preserve the Jews' religious heritage from the influence of Greek culture. In their zealotry for things Jewish, they espoused radical doctrinal views—views that were later reflected in the Pharisees. Especially influential was the Chasidim's penchant for what would become the rabbinical view of oral tradition: the belief that Moses also instituted oral law as a part of the Jew's religion, with this law being made up of the traditional interpretations of the rabbis. In this regard, it is interesting to note the Mishnah, a 2nd-century A.D. compilation of earlier rabbinical views, as it reflects the extremes to which the Sabbath labor law was viewed by the rabbis:

[He is culpable] that takes out rope enough to make a handle for a basket...

[He is culpable] that takes out leather enough to make an amulet, or vellum enough to write on it the shortest passage in the phylacteries, namely, *Hear, O Israel...*; or ink enough to write two letters, or eye-paint enough to paint one eye.

If a man took out a loaf into the public domain he is culpable; if two men took it out they are not culpable.

If a man removed his fingernails by means of his nails or his teeth, and so, too, if [he pulled out] the hair of his head, or his mustache or his beard; and so, too, if a woman dressed her hair or painted her eyelids or reddened [her face] - such a one R. Eliezer declares liable [to a sin-offering]; but the Sages forbid [acts the like of these only] by virtue of the [rabbinically ordained] Sabbath rest.

He is culpable that writes two letters, whether with his right hand or with his left, whether the same or different letters, whether in different inks or in any language.

A man may fold up his garments [that he wears on the Sabbath] as many as four or five times. Beds may be spread on the night of Sabbath for the Sabbath day, but not on the Sabbath for the night following the Sabbath.

A man may not shift about the straw on the bed with his hand but he may shift it about with his body.

If a man's hand or foot is dislocated he may not pour cold water over it, but he may wash it after his usual fashion.

It was just such extremism that caused the frequent confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees. The ruler of a synagogue, displeased with Jesus' healing of an infirmed woman on the Sabbath, protested, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath" (Luke 13:14). After the Lord healed a lame man, the Jews said, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed" (John 5:10). In this account, it says the "Jews sought all the more to kill Him" (verse 18). Therefore, when Jesus' disciples plucked and ate grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees were bent on blood when they said, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" (Matthew 12:2). But Luke 6:2, which says, "Why are You doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?," makes it clear their ire was directed more at Jesus than His disciples (i.e., they were attacking the Lord's disciples in order to get at Him). However, it was not God's Law, but their man-made traditions,

that formed the basis of their charge. According to Jesus, it was not unlawful for His disciples to be “plucking” heads of grain and “rubbing them in their hands,” on the Sabbath, as the account recorded in Luke 6:1 says.

Nevertheless, the Pharisees were convinced the rules of rabbinic oral tradition, rules which were alleged to be inferences and applications of the law itself, made it absolutely clear that they believed Jesus and His disciples were guilty of profaning the Sabbath, for in the *Patres Traditionum*, it said:

He who reaps on the Sabbath is chargeable; and to pluck ears is a species of reaping. And whoever breaks off anything from its stalk is chargeable under the specification of reaping. The deeds which make a man chargeable with stoning and death if he does them presumptuously, or with a sacrifice if he sins ignorantly, are either generic or derivative. Thirty-nine kinds of the generic are enumerated: to plow, to sow, to reap, to bind sheaves, to thresh, to winnow, to grind, to pound, to powder, etc., to shear sheep, to dye wool, etc.; and the derivatives are of the same class and likeness: furrowing = plowing; cutting up vegetables = grinding; plucking ears = reaping (in R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary of the New Testament, Matthew*, page 461).

In contrast, Jesus made it clear that He and His disciples were not guilty of profaning the Sabbath, and that it was actually the Pharisees' understanding of the Law that was in error (cf. Matthew 12:7). Deuteronomy 23:25 says, “When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.” Although this passage does not specifically address the Sabbath law, it is interesting to observe the difference the Scriptures make between *plucking* and *sickling*. Plucking your neighbor's grain would not be considered stealing, while using a sickle would. Why? Because it seems clear when one “works” on (i.e., uses a sickle) or “harvests” his neighbors grain, he's making or exerting an effort to take what does not belong to him (i.e., he's stealing his neighbor's grain). But when he simply plucks the grain with his hand, he is only doing so to satisfy hunger, which puts him in the category of eating, not working. When one extends this principle to the work prohibitions of the Sabbath law, which were never designed to interfere with a man eating or taking nourishment, then a reasonable person would conclude that Jesus' disciples were not violating the Law of Moses when walking through grain fields on the Sabbath, plucking and eating the grain. That this is a right conclusion is verified by Jesus—who was, after all, the “Lord of the Sabbath” (verse 8)—when He pronounced His disciples “guiltless” (verse 7). (*Incidentally, being Lord of the Sabbath did not mean, as some have concluded, that Jesus was free to arbitrarily violate or change the Sabbath law as it suited Him. What it means is that if anyone was in a position to fully understand the Sabbath it was He. Jesus was the One who instituted the Sabbath and, as Lord of it, He knew what it involved, when it was being profaned, and when it was being misstated by the likes of these Pharisees.*)

There is another argument Jesus made in regard to this that is not recorded in Matthew 12:1-8 and it is very important to understanding this issue. Referring to the same episode, Mark 2:27 has the Lord saying, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” By the steady stream of minute and often absurd requirements articulated in their oral tradition, the Pharisees had reversed the order Jesus here mentions. God had created the Sabbath for man, in that it provided him not just the time to rest physically, but the time also to attend to his spiritual needs. The Jews had turned this order topsy-turvy. Instead of the Sabbath being created for

man, and therefore a blessing, they had come to reflect the idea that man had been created in order to keep the Sabbath, viewing it then as a heavy and vexing burden to be born no matter how man fared. The Sabbath, according to these Jews, had to be kept regardless of man's circumstances. Therefore, although Jesus' disciples were hungry and only doing that which the Law permitted (viz., eating, not harvesting), they were falsely accused of "doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:2b). "But," Jesus said in His response to these self-righteous hypocrites, "if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7). Jesus had already referred to Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13. There He said, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'" It is especially interesting that the Lord bade these folks to "Go and learn," a Rabbinic model that demanded of the hearers further contemplation and insight. So, the Lord has now delivered a double rebuke to these Pharisees, treating them first as learners rather than teachers, and second as beginners who were so ignorant of the Scriptures they were unable to properly interpret them. If the Sabbath was made for man, and Jesus said it was, then the *requirements* (i.e., the needs) of man will always qualify those things enjoined by the Sabbath. Because the Pharisees didn't understand this, they were engaged in condemning the guiltless.

Of course, the fences these Pharisees had built around the Law in order to not transgress it were not, in and of themselves, wrong. In fact, gospel preachers do this when they teach Christians not to get so close to sin before stopping, lest they sometimes find themselves falling over the precipice. In other words, prudence is a virtue worth cultivating—a fence worth erecting, if you will. However, when our fences are transformed into the Law itself, then we, like the Pharisees of old, will find ourselves in the position of condemning the guiltless. This, I think, is exactly what some pacifists are willing to do to their brethren who espouse the position I've defended in this study. As one of these wrote:

To be candid, I would feel uncomfortable worshipping in church where my opponent's doctrine [a non-pacifist position] was taught from the pulpit. I would also feel uncomfortable financially supporting any evangelist or employing him in a corporate work of a local congregation (such as a gospel meeting) if he continued to teach error on the "civil government" issue (once again, the citation is not given to protect the guilty).

In his commentary on the book of Matthew, Kenneth Chumbley warns:

In each generation there are different groups that fit the category of publicans and sinners; and there are religionists who are long on sacrifice but short on mercy, who are more interested in upholding their sectarianism than in helping the hurting, and who are critical of any who ignore their rules. And such Pharisaism is as abhorrent now as when Jesus encountered it (Kenneth L. Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, page 175).

These words are well worth remembering, for the non-pacifist as well as the pacifist. We cannot, indeed we must not, make our conscience another man's guide. When we do so, we become modern-day Pharisees.

Because the aforementioned brother is willing to inflict his misinterpretation and misapplication of the Scriptures on those of us who disagree with him, he is willing to withdraw fellowship, treating us as unrepentant sinners. In doing so, he demonstrates himself an élitist (i.e., Pharisee) of the first order. As such, he not only "condemns the guiltless," but he shows his igno-

rance of the “weightier matters of the Law” (Matthew 23:23)—justice, mercy and faith. *Justice* demands we aid the victims of injustice; *mercy* requires us to demonstrate compassion on those who are being unjustly treated; and faith, after all is said and done, demands the doing of both justice and mercy. Therefore, to walk by faith in this present world (i.e., doing justice and loving mercy) is not withdrawing into asceticism, divorcing oneself from the *people* and *events* of *time* and *space*; it is, instead, being salt and light to a lost and dying world (cf. Matthew 5:13-17). This brings us now to an examination of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, a sermon that teaches what it really means to be a child of God.

A Closer Examination Of The Contrasts Jesus Made

The series of contrasts in Matthew 5:21-48 have caused many to believe that Jesus was pitting Himself against “the law and the prophets.” However, the most reasonable conclusion is that the Lord was refuting the rabbinical perversions and false interpretations the Jewish people had commonly come to accept. Such a conflict was inevitable, for Jesus came into this world not to make men religious (the Jews already had plenty of this), but to make them religiously right. In this regard, He did not come to bring peace, but a sword (cf. Matthew 10:34). Consequently, the scene for Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish leaders (viz., the scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees) was set when His forerunner, John the Baptist, challenged the Sadducees and Pharisees with: “Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7b). But Jesus' actual confrontation with the Pharisees begins with the Sermon on the Mount. It continues to intensify throughout the rest of His earthly ministry, ultimately culminating with His death on the cross. It starts with the Lord saying, “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20) and ends with His Temple address where He made His “Woe to you...” and “Fools and blind!” charges (cf. Matthew 23:2-36). But even before this scathing rebuke, the Pharisees had made up their minds to destroy Jesus (cf. Matthew 12:14), for in His conflict with them over their Sabbath law interpretations and applications (cf. Matthew 12:1-14), Jesus had not only called into question the Pharisees understanding of the Law, but their entire theological system. Realizing His continued popularity would threaten their continued leadership, they were now bent on destroying Him.

As has already been pointed out, Jesus, in Matthew 5:21-48, was not attacking the Law, which He clearly said He had not come to destroy (verse 17), but the oral tradition which had originally been created as a hedge of protection around the Law and had now risen to the status of the Law itself. This means that what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount was not to be viewed as a new set of ethical norms, as pacifist brethren think, but as the Lord's explication of the ethical requirements of the Law unperverted by rabbinical think-sos. For proof of this, let's examine the verses themselves.

Matthew 5:21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'”

Six times in verses 21-48 (viz., 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) Jesus says, “You have heard it said.” With each of these “You have heard” statements, the contrast Jesus is making is between the true teachings of Moses' Law and the false teachings of rabbinic tradition. Here the Lord refers to rabbinic teaching about the sixth commandment, which condemned murder.

Matthew 5:22 “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.”

When Jesus says, “But I say unto you,” He was speaking as the Word, the Divine Logos, the Supreme Lawgiver. He had started using it back in verse 18. The prophets had tended to say “Thus saith the Lord,” and His apostles would later say “It is written,” but Jesus' use of “I say unto you,” shouts His divine authority, for such language would appear totally unacceptable coming from the lips of a mere man. Who better to explain the Law than the Divine Lawgiver Himself?

The problem with what the scribes and Pharisees had said about murder—i.e. “Thou shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment”—was that they had not gone far enough. What the rabbinic tradition expounded was the law itself, and that murderers needed to be subject to the courts. Not a word about what this commandment required of men's hearts. So what these Jews now hear Jesus saying is quite different than what they had heard the scribes and Pharisees declare. Again, the Lord's conflict is not with Moses and what he said; the conflict is with the rabbinic tradition that so grossly ignored the implications of the sixth commandment—i.e., that God, in giving the sixth commandment, never had in view only a civil law and civil court, but addressed the hearts of those who would be His children—hearts which must not be filled with unjust anger and ugly epithets. 1 John 3:15 perfectly demonstrates what Jesus had in mind here: “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” So, God declares the unjust anger that accompanies murder, along with the ugly epithets that go with it, as equally offensive as murder itself.

However, it would be a serious mistake to think Jesus is condemning any and all anger. He's not. “Without a cause” makes it clear He is not referring to *every* instance of anger (cf. Ephesians 4:26). Righteous indignation is a legitimate response to ungodliness (cf. Romans 12:9), and even God Himself is angry with the wicked every day (cf. Psalm 7:11). In fact, there were times when even the meek and lowly Jesus demonstrated anger (cf. Mark 3:5, John 2:17). A man or woman who can't get angry is a person who will fail to do justice and love mercy (cf. Micah 6:8). Anger is the emotional power behind civil justice, and those Christians who didn't feel anger toward those who caused those airplanes to be flown into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 were not acting like God's children. And as it relates to this study, let me say that I believe pacifists who, in the name of Christ, refuse to pursue justice in the present war on terrorism, do Christ, and the religion that bears His name, a disservice. Like the Pharisees of old, they are zealous for the law of Christ, but pervert it with their misinterpretation and misapplications, making the doing of justice a “dirty-hands” affair.

At the same time, and because anger is an extremely volatile emotion that can be easily tainted by our sin-sick natures, we must strive to keep all anger in check (again, see Ephesians 4:26). Civil government does not condemn a man for having murderous thoughts, but God certainly does. If the Jews of Jesus' day had understood this they would not have been acting like they were. And if New Testament Christians understood this today, they would not be biting and devouring each other as they sometimes do. With this in mind, I want to quote once again from Chumbley's *The Gospel of Matthew*:

Though some see here progressive stages of crime (murder, Raca, fool) and punishment (judgment, council, hell fire), it seems better to regard these terms as parallel references. Christ isn't saying there is never a situation in which a man deserves to be called a fool (7.26-27, 23.17, Gal. 3.1) or that calling a man a fool is worse than calling him Raca, which is worse than being angry at him without a cause. Instead, He is teaching that insulting language—name calling, racial, ethnic, and social slurs, etc.—that demeans a fellow human being is condemned by God. (It is also worth noting that an ungodly attitude toward another can manifest itself in silence, as well as in speech. “Silence is the most perfect expression of scorn” [G.B. Shaw] and giving another the “silent treatment” or a “cold shoulder” can be as ungodly as the use of insulting, derogatory language.)

Matthew 5:23-26 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”

“Therefore” begins the practical application of what the Lord has said in verse 22. Anger (ours and the other person's) must be dealt with quickly and decisively. And please don't forget that the Lord is explaining the fuller implications of the sixth commandment, therefore, following these simple rules would not only demonstrate us to be children of God and citizens of His kingdom, but it would prevent the hurts and squabbles of life from turning into the bitterness from which springs the strife, the estrangement, the division, and the destruction that ultimately leads to homicide. So important is this principle that even worship (i.e., sacrifice) bows before it. In other words: “[I]f you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Not only would the world be a better place by the living out of this ethic, but the church would finally be what it was designed to be—a body of believers that truly love God and each other.

Matthew 5:27-30 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

Jesus now addresses the seventh commandment. What the people had heard was correct, but the implications of this commandment had not been explained. Jesus now plumbs the depth of this law to arrive at the heart of the matter.

Adultery, by definition, is sexual intercourse with someone else's spouse. But just like He did with the sixth commandment, Jesus reflects on the entire scope of adultery to include the imagination of the heart as well as the deed. Not only should the child of God not commit adultery, he ought not to even think it. Of course, Jesus is not saying sexual desire is inherently sinful. What

He's saying is that whenever desire is satisfied, whether in thought or deed, with someone else's spouse, sin has occurred. Therefore, the child of God fights adultery where it begins—in the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Although what Jesus says in verses 29 and 30 has been interpreted by some as a literal call to self-mutilation, I know of no New Testament Christian who takes this position (Origen cited this verse, along with Matthew 19:12, as justification for castrating himself). To interpret what Jesus says here to be a reference to literal mutilation does nothing to explain what He's really talking about, for it cannot be doubted that a blind man with no hands can still lust in his heart for that which is unlawful for him to have. Remember, it is the inner man, and not the body, to which the Lord addresses Himself. He uses hyperbole to emphasize the drastic call the law against adultery makes to sever anything, and everything, that stimulates unholy desire. By denying illicit desire (viz., by figuratively plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand), children of God are not handicapping themselves. Instead, they are fitting themselves for the kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:31-32 “Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. ”

What is said here ought to be studied along with what Jesus says in Matthew 19:3-9. The essence of Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage is that if two people are divorced on grounds other than adultery, and if they marry another, they are guilty of adultery. Many have come to think the words of Jesus here are a modification of “the law and the prophets,” but let's examine this matter more closely.

Under the Law of Moses, there was legislation permitting divorce:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

It must be understood that this concession of Moses was made due to the hardness of their hearts (cf. Matthew 19:9). In other words, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was not enacted to reflect a change in God's moral intention concerning marriage, which had, from the beginning, involved one man and one woman for life (cf. Matthew 19:4-6). Giving a writing of divorcement was enacted to avert a greater evil, for without such legislation a man might unmercifully treat a wife in whom he had found “some uncleanness,” even to the point of permanently injuring or killing her. Some say, “but this is ridiculous, as death was the Law's punishment for adultery.” Yes it was, but where do we find it being enforced by these hard-hearted Jews? Even today, adulterers still deserve death, but there are few courts, and perhaps even fewer Christians, who would seek to exact such a “harsh” punishment. Why? Because of the hardness of our hearts, of course. We

simply do not see adultery, even the kind that takes place in our hearts, as the horrendous sin it really is, for many who call themselves after Christ attempt to justify the harboring of such unholy desires in their hearts as perfectly human and therefore natural. Only when we see this sin as God sees it will we be able to understand there has always been only one reason given by God to sever the divinely ordained relationship of marriage—namely, adultery on the part of one of the parties.

However, because capital punishment required a certain judicial procedure in order to assure justice was being done, and because of the hardness of their hearts, no one really pursued such justice, and because the sinned against party in the case of adultery was not permitted to take justice into his own hands, as such was proscribed by God's Law, he was to write her a "certificate of divorce" and "put it in her hand" before sending her away. Therefore, the only grounds God has sanctioned for putting one's mate away is "some uncleanness," which must be, if I've interpreted this correctly, adultery. This is why Jesus says that putting one's spouse away for any reason "except sexual immorality" (here in verse 32 and 19:9), puts both husband and wife in jeopardy of committing adultery, as both would be committing adultery when they joined themselves to another after being "legally" (in the sight of man) but not "scripturally" (in the sight of God) divorced.

The Jews had wrongly interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to be saying a man could put his spouse away "for just any reason" (19:3). According to these scribes and Pharisees, a certificate of divorce, no matter what the cause, dissolved the marriage in the eyes of God. Consequently, they taught that if one secured a legal document, he could put his wife away and marry another whenever he wanted. They were wrong in both assumptions, and the end result was what can only be called "legalized adultery." In fact, this was exactly the position of the School of Hillel, which declared it a sufficient grounds for divorce if the wife had spoiled her husband's dinner. Josephus, himself a two-time divorcé, had this to say about it: "He that desires to be divorced from his wife *for any cause whatsoever* (and many such causes happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her again as his wife any more; for by this means she may be at liberty to marry another husband, although before this bill of divorce be given, she is not to be permitted so to do" (*Antiquities*, IV, viii, 23). So, it is just this kind of thinking Jesus was attempting to correct. (It is noteworthy that when Jehovah spoke of writing Israel a certificate of divorcement [cf. Jeremiah 3:8], it was for the nation's spiritual adultery, not because He was simply displeased with something they had done. And in Matthew 1:19, Joseph was going to put Mary away for what he thought, at the time, was her apparent adultery.) No, Moses did not permit divorce and remarriage *for just any cause*—the only cause, then and now, is adultery. This is what Jesus clearly teaches here in this Sermon on the Mount, hence, it is wrong to interpret these sayings as something new and revolutionary.

With this in mind, let's consider what the prophet Malachi said:

And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.... Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says that He

hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously (Malachi 2:13-16).

Notice that Jehovah's complaint was not that they were adulterers because they had failed to go through the formalities of a divorce. It was the divorcing and remarrying that God hated. Observe further that even though a divorce had been given, and we have to assume this was for every reason other than adultery, the put away woman was still the wife by covenant. Therefore, it is clear that the prophets taught that "legalized divorce" (viz., divorce "for just any cause") did not morally permit remarriage. So, once again, it is correct to say that Jesus and the prophets are agreed in their interpretation of the divorce concession of Deuteronomy 24. Moses' Law did not grant divorce and remarriage for just any cause, and those who so used it were guilty of "legalized adultery." Therefore, in Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:3-9 Jesus states clearly God's will as it should have been understood by the Jews.

Matthew 5:33-37 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

Those who refuse to take an oath today, and I have known more than a few Christians who take this position, assume two things in regard to this passage: (1) that verse 33 is a summary of the ancient law on oaths; and (2) that Jesus annuls that law by instituting an absolute injunction against all oath taking. To shore up their case, they cite James 5:12, which says, "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your 'Yes,' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment." However, this scripture must be viewed through the correct interpretation of Matthew 5:33-37, as James does not say more than his Master. Thus, it is unnecessary for us to deal with this passage directly.

Although verse 33 seems to convey an accurate summary of the Old Testament teaching on oaths (cf. Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21), Jesus is driving at something more. Rabbinic teaching claimed that although all oaths invoking the divine name were binding, oaths that substituted other things for the divine name were necessarily not. Therefore, according to the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (verse 20), if one swore by God he must perform his oath, but if one swore by heaven, earth, or Jerusalem, his oath was not obligatory. That this is the true object of Jesus' correction can be seen from His argument in verses 34-36. It was just the sort of shenanigans the Lord inveighed against in Matthew 23:16-22, which was His final public confrontation with the Pharisees. There He said:

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, "Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it." Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, "Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it." Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it (Matthew 23:16-22).

Jews who had become so corrupt in their day to day lives and businesses were wont to swear often as they tried to deceive others into thinking they were being honest. Their surreptitious substitution of the name of God in their oaths was nothing more than a cover for their cheating and lying. What hypocrites these Jews were. As God's children, they should have been totally honest, and so much so that their *yeas* and *nays* could be taken on face value. But this was not the sort of people with which Jesus dealt in the Sermon on the Mount. Their "righteousness" was so pathetic that, without repentance, they could not be part of God's glorious kingdom. No wonder Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (cf. Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15), for their hypocrisy, which was the hidden, penetrating motivation in their lives, had totally corrupted them, causing them to stray far from that heartfelt obedience that is the sign of true religion to one of pure pretense (cf. Luke 12:1). The Talmud contained an entire section, called *Shebuoth*, that codified the rabbinic hairsplitting on oaths that taught swearing *by* Jerusalem was not binding, but swearing while facing *toward* Jerusalem was. Consequently, it should not be hard for one to understand that Jesus was not here critiquing the teaching of the law and prophets in regard to oaths, but the rabbinic perversions that had come to be accepted by the Jews.

In addition, to argue from these verses that Jesus unqualifiedly prohibited all oaths is to ignore the fact that Jesus Himself answered under oath (cf. Matthew 26:63-64) and that solemn oaths were invoked by the apostle Paul on several different occasions (cf. Romans 1:19; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20; Philippians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:5). These examples evidence that not all oaths, in which an appeal to God as witness is made, are prohibited by what Jesus said here. But didn't Jesus say, "Swear not at all"? Yes, He certainly did, but such language must be interpreted in view of everything that has been said so far. Commenting on this, John Murray wrote:

We are not violating good and necessary principles of interpretation if we regard the word of Jesus, "Swear not at all," thought absolute in its terms, as having reference simply to the kind of profanity with which He was expressly dealing, the disguised swearing of which Jesus proceeds forthwith to give examples. In other words, if we infer that what Jesus unreservedly prohibits is the subterfuge with which He is expressly dealing, namely, the surreptitious use of terms which have a Godward reference on the supposition that thereby we get away from profane and false swearing, then we have not only an acceptable but sufficient interpretation of the prohibition, "Swear not at all."

Murray, I think, is precisely right in his interpretation, and besides, any other interpretation has Jesus annulling the Law, which has Him contradicting what He said in Matthew 5:17, which was: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."

Matthew 5:38-42 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."

Since Jesus mentions the “eye for an eye” principle, which was taught in the Law of Moses (cf. Exodus 21:23; Leviticus 24:17-21), and counters it with instruction not to resist one who is evil, it is assumed by many that Jesus is here contrasting the Old Covenant with what will become His New Testament. This is wrong. The “eye for an eye” principle, or *lex talionis*, as it is sometimes called, represents a sound judicial principle that all courts should follow. It says, simply, that punishment should be commensurate with the crime committed. That is, the punishment for murder and the punishment for speeding cannot be the same and be consistent with this principle. This law was meant as a judicial restraint, not a guide for personal vindication. But the rabbinic tradition had turned it into the latter. Therefore, the very law that provided for even-handed justice and prohibited the spirit of revenge that stokes the fires of feuds and vendettas had been misappropriated by the Jews to validate all those things the law was designed to prohibit. So, something intended only for the court had been applied to the Jews' personal ethic, permitting them to extract their own “justice” without the benefit of due process of law; the very idea this commandment was designed to prohibit.

Consequently, the contrast Jesus is making here is between what the law actually required and what rabbinic tradition permitted. Addressing, then, the subject of personal ethics, which was the thing that had been perverted by the rabbinic tradition, Jesus says “resist not an evil person.” The Greek word translated “resist” is *anthistemi*, and it means “to stand against, oppose, withstand.” But just as we learned that “swear not at all” was not absolute but qualified, it ought not to be thought surprising that “resist not an evil person” is also not absolute but qualified. But before proceeding further with these qualifications, I think it would be helpful to notice what the end result is of the teaching of those who believe Jesus is annulling the Old Testament with an absolute (i.e., unqualified) commandment that applies not just to personal ethics, but to the judicial system as well.

Writing from a Mennonite viewpoint, Guy Franklin Hershberger says:

When Jesus set aside the civil law of eye for eye and tooth for tooth, He was not speaking of personal retaliation, but of the ordinary legal method of avenging a wrong. Even the Mosaic code did not permit an individual who had lost a tooth to strike out the tooth of the offender personally. He must rather report the offense to the civil authorities and then the magistrates would administer punishment, which might consist of removing the offender's tooth. [Notice that Hershberger acknowledges here that the Law of Moses did not permit personal vendettas.] In Matthew 5:38, therefore, Jesus is saying that Christians must not appeal to the state for revenge against offenders (Hershberger, *War, Peace and Nonresistance*, page 51).

Those who agree with Hershberger—and I think at least some of my pacifist brethren do—must consider immoral what would otherwise be described as justice. So let's see how this interpretation translates into real life. Picture a court scene where the victim is bandaged heavily on the right side of his head. On the other side of the courtroom is the defendant, unrepentant and arrogant. At the end of the trial, the judge orders the victim to turn his head so the defendant can strike him on his left side. After this sentence is duly executed, the victim is taken to the hospital while the defendant is released. Justice? Absolutely not, and any nation that practices such “justice” is headed straight for the pit (cf. Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 14:34). Therefore, the radical pacifists' position cannot be correct.

But, if the Lord is contrasting the true morality of the Law with the “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (cf. Matthew 5:20), an entirely different light is cast upon His words. This was addressed by Arthur W. Pink in *An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*:

The Divine statute...had been grossly perverted by the scribes and Pharisees. They had wrested its purpose and design by giving it a false application. Instead of confining it to the magistrates in the law courts, they had made the statute a promiscuous one. The Jewish leaders had so expounded this precept as though God had given permission for each individual to take the law into his own hands and to avenge his own wrongs. They intimated that it allowed each person to take private revenge upon his enemies; if thy neighbor smite thee and destroyeth one of thine eyes, then go thou and do likewise to him. Thus a spirit of resistance was cherished and the act of retaliation was condoned (page 113).

Therefore, when Jesus said “resist not an evil person,” He was specifically addressing the kind of thinking outlined above. He was not prohibiting the righteous exercise of judicial justice, but the exercise of personal revenge. Consequently, there was nothing wrong with the *lex talionis* (viz., the law of like for like) principle taught in the Law of Moses. In fact, it was, and still is, the model *par excellence* for earthly justice. However, such was not created as a personal set of ethics. It was created, instead, as a judicial remedy against personal vengeance—something that very seldom manifests the *weightier matters* of the law—things like mercy, justice and faith. Nevertheless, if all mankind were to live according to the principles articulated in the Sermon on the Mount, there would be no need for the mechanical remedies provided by civil authorities. But because mankind is fallen, Romans 13 governments, which are governments ordained by God, function as God-given ministers of Justice and Righteousness. Government authorities, even when they fail to realize it, and whether they like it or not, are subject to God's Law above the law and will answer to His “rod of iron” if their policies are contrary to His principles. And the degree to which a government finds this offensive is a good indicator of just how far down the path towards a Revelation 13 government, which is a government ordained by Satan, it has traveled.

Therefore, it ought to be absolutely clear that Jesus was not addressing His remarks to civil authorities, who had divine authorization to execute vengeance. Instead, He was addressing the common man and was, therefore, dealing *only* with personal ethics. As such, they were not new at all. Jesus' illustrations here reflect the disposition of the true child of God and are the most practical ever given to man. The individual who understands and implements this personal set of ethics will learn to cultivate the kind of life God created mankind to live from the very beginning.

When these illustrations are compared with other scriptures, one should be able to easily conclude that nonresistance to the evildoer is not without limitations. For example, the command to give away our coat and cloak, along with the injunction not to refuse him who would borrow from us, must be interpreted in light of other Scriptural obligations and duties (cf. 1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; 2 John 10-11). Nothing Jesus said in these verses encouraged slothfulness, injustice or wickedness, and He certainly did not repudiate due process of law. However, even when due process is not available, for whatever reason, the child of God is not excused to do wrong by personally extracting an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth vengeance.

Matthew 5:43-48 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Now we come to the most fundamental and critical issue of what it means to be a true child of God. Because our Heavenly Father is a loving God, we too must be loving people. This section, more than any of the others we've looked at, establishes the fact that the Lord is countering misinterpretations of the Law of Moses, rather than refuting it. “You shall love your neighbor” was definitely from the Law of Moses (cf. Leviticus 19:17-18), but “hate your enemy” can't be found anywhere in the Old Testament. In fact, the Old Testament required the child of God to love his enemies (cf. Exodus 23:4-5; Proverbs 25:21,23; 24:17-18). However, the supposed right to hate one's enemies, which had been incorporated into the “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20), probably derived from a false interpretation of Leviticus 19:17—an interpretation which incorrectly distinguished between a neighbor and an enemy. Although the Law of Moses had properly instructed the Jews about their treatment of “the stranger” or Gentile (cf. Leviticus 19:10, 33-34; 24:22; 25:35; Numbers 15:16; Deuteronomy 10:19), they incorrectly classified “enemy” to include any Gentile, and because the rabbinic tradition had wrongly taught them to hate their enemies, they therefore despised all Gentiles, even those who were closely related to the Jews, as were the Samaritans. The attitude Jesus is here addressing is understood by what Jesus said in Luke 10:25-37:

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves? And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

In this passage, the Lord uses a hated Samaritan to teach what the Law had in view when it talked about one's responsibility to love his neighbor. The Jews hated the Samaritans so badly that when they resorted to name-calling, they not only called Jesus a “bastard” (cf. John 8:41), but a “demon possessed Samaritan” as well (cf. John 8:48). In their way of thinking, there wasn't

anything much worse than a demon-filled Samaritan “bastard.” [I realize how crass this sounds, but sometimes we just need to come to grips with what the Bible actually says.] But the Samaritan Jesus mentions, motivated by compassion, rather than hate, demonstrated what loving one's neighbor was really all about. [Another example of Jesus reflecting favorably on a Samaritan is found in Luke 17:15-19.] As human beings, there are none who are not our neighbors, and this is what the Law of Moses, when properly interpreted, taught—and this is what Jesus taught these Jews in His Sermon on the Mount treatise. He made it clear that, by their racist and haughty attitudes, they were violating their covenantal duties. Instead of hating their enemies, whoever they thought them to be, they should have been loving them, for their enemies, due to the fact that they too were created in the image of God, were their neighbors. Far from being part of a new and revolutionary ethic, this was precisely God's law under the Old Covenant, as it is today under the New Covenant. To hate those who hate and use us, who insult us, who sue us and force us into service against our wills, has never been hard, and it was this that made up the “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.” But to love our enemies, that's the hard part; the narrow way that few are able to find. But it is in this narrow path the children of God walk. Jim McGuiggan, on page 10 of his excellent little book *The God of the Towel*, comments on this kind of love, by reflecting on the perfection of God's love, a love that causes it to rain on both the just and the unjust: “His is no ‘if’ love (I’ll love you if you do what I say!). His is more than ‘because’ love (I love you because...). His is an ‘anyway’ love (I love you no matter how your are!).” It is this equality of God's love that is such a big part of what God being “perfect” is all about. Therefore, it should not surprise us that children of God are called upon to be perfect just as our Father in heaven is perfect (cf. Matthew 5:48).

Conclusion

This rather lengthy soliloquy was undertaken to demonstrate that the several contrasts made in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount were actually between the true morality prescribed in the Law of Moses and the so-called “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees”—a “righteousness” based on perverted interpretations and misapplications of the Law itself. If my premise has been demonstrated to be true, and I believe it has, then Jesus' sayings here are to be viewed in an entirely different light than pacifists have viewed them. This is not a new set of ethics reserved just for the Christian age, but represents the morality contained in the Law of Moses as well as Christianity. Therefore, just as “swear not at all” was qualified by permitted oaths under the Law of Moses, so was “resist not an evil person,” for under the law of Moses an evil person was to be punished by the judicial system, not the individual, so that justice might be done.

The basis for this set of ethics or morality, of course, is nothing less than the eternal character of God. His inherent goodness determines whether something is right or wrong, and since the eternal character of God does not change (cf. Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), the status of moral principles remains the same in every Bible age. The Sermon on the Mount serves to demonstrate that there is a continuity of Biblical ethics that is ignored by pacifist exegetes. It is this continuity that has New Testament writers citing Old Testament passages when speaking of moral duties (cf. Romans 12:19-20; 13:9-10; James 2:8, 11). The morality of Moses' Law cannot be surpassed, therefore, moral duties under both the Old and New covenants are not totally dissimilar, as the radical pacifists contend. A Jew who functioned officially as an executor of God's wrath under the Law of Moses was under obligation, in his personal set of ethics, to love his enemy and not resist an evil person, just as Christians are today. Therefore, just as it was true that those who administered the sword under the Law of Moses could do so without violating their

personal obligation not to take the law into their own hands, so Christians today who function as sword bearers do not incur guilt when they inflict punishment or death in the God-ordained pursuit of Justice and Righteousness.

In His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord tells us what true religion is all about—and by “true religion” I mean religion unencumbered by the think-sos of men. It calls us to the highest standard of practical, spiritual living, and the one who practices its precepts and principles will be in a position to “prove” to a lost and dying world “what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2b). But we must not become careless, as some have, thinking that this sermon is an exhaustive or complete set of personal and social ethics. [I call this “bumper sticker morality.”] Although the Lord’s sermon explicates many moral responsibilities, it does not encompass all. Generally speaking, it discusses person to person relationships, therefore, many social duties and ethical predicaments will arise in life that Jesus did not here discuss. For example, civil government’s role in achieving social justice is not examined in the Sermon on the Mount, not because it would no longer be sanctioned (cf. Romans 13:1-7), but because it was not the subject of the Lord’s attention. It is perfectly reasonable, and therefore legitimate, to think He thought civil government would continue praising good and punishing evil, just as it was commissioned to do under the Law of Moses. That this interpretation is correct is proved by Romans 13:1-7, where an apostle of Christ sets forth the function of civil government under the New Testament which, because of the Lord’s mandate of the separation of church and state (cf. Matthew 22:21), no longer exacts punishment for purely religious offenses, as the courts did under the theocracy of the Old Testament.

Unfortunately, and as it applies to the issue before us, radical pacifists, just like the scribes and Pharisees to which Jesus addressed His sermon, have so misinterpreted and misapplied the Lord’s sermon that they are now more than willing to condemn the guiltless, just as their religious forefathers did in Jesus’ time (cf. Matthew 12:7).

In the next chapter, we’ll examine the difficult issue of nuclear weapons.

What About Nuclear Weapons?

On Sunday morning, August 6, 1945, the cross hairs on the bombsight of the Enola Gay, an American B-29 Superfortress, was fixed on the Aioic Bridge in the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Within minutes of the dropping of "Little Boy," the nickname of the first atomic bomb used on a metropolitan center, Hiroshima lay in ashes. Of its 343,969 civilian residents, 78,150 were killed. Another 37,425 were wounded and 13,000 were missing. More than a decade later on the T.V. program, "This is Your Life," Mr. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, a Methodist minister in Hiroshima on that fateful day, met face to face with the copilot of the Enola Gay, Robert A. Lewis. Both men were asked to relate the first thoughts that raced through their minds after the blast. Mr. Tanimoto said he fell to the ground saying, "Oh God, what has happened?" Capt. Lewis, after circling the city and observing the pillar of smoke, said he'd thought, "My God, what have we done?" This is reflected in his journal, which says:

Fifteen seconds after the flash there were two very distinct slaps and that was all the physical effects we felt. We turned the ship so we could observe results and there in front of our eyes was without a doubt the greatest explosion man had ever witnessed. The city was 9/10 covered with smoke and a column of white cloud, which in less than three minutes reached 30,000 feet and then went up to 50,000 feet. I honestly have the feeling of groping for words to explain this or I might say, my God, what have we done? Everyone on the ship is actually dumbstruck, even though we had expected something fierce.

Today, at the beginning of a new millennium, Mr. Tanimoto's and Capt. Lewis' questions continue to be appropriate when thinking about nuclear weapons.

As I've tried to make clear in this study, it is not possible for me, as an advocate of "Just War" doctrine, to morally justify President Truman's decision to drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To argue, as he did afterwards, that the decision ultimately saved untold American and Japanese lives is of no value to me as a moral argument. Yes, there is the very real possibility that the President's decision did save many more lives than it took, and this remains one of the major reasons given by those who defend it. But that a particular action is pragmatic and utilitarian does not a morally satisfying biblical argument make. Yes, there was every reason to believe Mr. Truman's decision saved American lives. It was believed by some that the war with Japan, which still had an estimated two million plus soldiers available for fighting in defense of the homeland, could continue late into 1946. In fact, that an all-out invasion of Japan would have resulted in a furiously resisted, last-ditch effort on the part of the Japanese to defend their island had been amply evidenced by the Battle of Okinawa, which took place in April, May and June of 1945. In that battle the Americans experienced almost 80,000 casualties, the Japanese garrison experienced more than 90,000 men killed in action (only 10,600 prisoners were taken), and worst of all, the Okinawans lost more than 100,000 people,

the vast majority of whom were civilians. All this being true, many facts remain unknown to most Americans. The following article, I think, provides a much better understanding of the events of that time:

Almost six decades after the fact, the 1945 unleashing of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima continues to be the subject of impassioned debate. Every year the bombing anniversary—which falls on August 6—occasions heated exchanges between those who question the atomic bombing and those who adamantly defend President Harry Truman's use of the weapon on Japanese cities. In this debate Truman's most fervent defenders are World War II veterans and their self-appointed champions in the media.

Most Americans have heard World War II veterans claim that the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved their lives. This historical argument often leads to another: that those who fought against the Japanese, or who expected to be part of an invasion of Japan, are of one mind in believing that the use of the atomic bomb was unquestionably the right decision at the time.

Relayed through family stories, media portraits and political soundbites, this "you weren't there and therefore don't have any right to offer your views" argument discourages thoughtful discussion of one of the most important decisions in American history. And it contradicts the more informed opinion of some of the top officers these veterans served under.

Indeed, contrary to conventional opinion today, many military leaders of the time—including six out of seven five-star officers—criticized the use of the atomic bomb.

Take, for example, Admiral William Leahy, White House chief of staff and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the war. Leahy wrote in his 1950 memoirs that "the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender." Moreover, Leahy continued, "in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children."

President Dwight Eisenhower, the Allied commander in Europe during World War II, recalled in 1963, as he did on several other occasions, that he had opposed using the atomic bomb on Japan during a July 1945 meeting with Secretary of War Henry Stimson: "I told him I was against it on two counts. First, the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing. Second, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon."

Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, the tough and outspoken commander of the U.S. Third Fleet, which participated in the American offensive against the Japanese home islands in the final months of the war, publicly stated in 1946 that "the first atomic bomb was an unnecessary experiment." The Japanese, he noted, had "put out a lot of peace feelers through Russia long before" the bomb was used.

Lacking the knowledge of these and other military leaders, rank-and-file veterans tend to support the bomb's use. Contrary to popular belief, however, not all Pacific war veterans applaud the atomic annihilation of two Japanese cities.

Responding to a journalist's question in 1995 about what he would have done had he been in Truman's shoes, Joseph O'Donnell, a retired marine corps sergeant who served in the Pacific, answered that "we should have went [sic] after the military in Japan. They were bad. But to drop a bomb on women and children and the elderly, I draw a line there, and I still hold it."

Doug Dowd, a Pacific-theater rescue pilot who was slated to take an early part in the invasion of Japan if it had come to that, recently stated that it was clear in the final months of the war that the Japanese "had lost the ability to defend themselves." American planes "met little, and then virtually no resistance," Dowd recalled. He added, "It is well-known [now] that the Japanese were seeking to make a peace agreement well before Hiroshima."

Or take Ed Everts, a major in the 7th weather squadron of the Army Air Corps. Everts, who received an air medal for surviving a crash at sea during the battle at Iwo Jima, told us that America's use of atomic bombs was "a war crime" for which "our leaders should have been put on trial as were the German and Japanese leaders."

While the great sacrifice and heroism of veterans should never be forgotten, their often impassioned defense of the bombing of Hiroshima does us all a disservice. It substitutes a simplistic history for a complex set of events. It narrows historical evidence about a White House decision to the question of what soldiers in the Pacific believed, when the relevant historical question is what decisionmakers thought at the time.

It allows us to forget, or easily marginalize, those brave and patriotic men—such as Admiral Leahy and Sergeant O'Donnell—who have questioned President Truman's fateful decision.

Last, it creates a fog of patriotic orthodoxy that makes it hard for Americans to have an honest debate and disagreement about this contentious issue. Criticism of the atomic bomb should not be interpreted as disrespect for World War II veterans. Americans once knew better.

This Hiroshima anniversary, veterans who are critical of the atomic bomb should come forward so that we Americans will come to understand that members of the "Greatest Generation" do not march in lockstep on this issue. (By permission of Uday Mohan and Leo Maley III, "Military: Hiroshima ... The Anniversary We Misremember," writing for History News Network, <http://hnn.us/articles/167.html>, July 30, 2001. History News Network is a web site of History News Service, <http://www.h-net.org/~hns/>.)

The reason Mr. Truman did not heed advice to explode the bombs over purely military targets, or in the absence of such targets, to explode the bombs close enough to Tokyo that all could see but not immediately be destroyed by the explosions, is something I've already addressed, at least in part, in a previous chapter. By the time the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States had, with few reservations, accepted and carried out

a concept of Total War—a policy which said civilians, if not quite “legitimate targets,” are sometimes “necessary targets.”

But in spite of the fact that Sherman’s “War is Hell” concept of war-fighting had already been accepted by American leaders as a military option that was sometimes expedient, there was still, at the beginning of the war, what seemed to have been a genuine reluctance to resort to the indiscriminate bombing of German cities. Consequently, both Churchill and Roosevelt had denounced the Nazi bombings of cities as odious and shocking. The British government had even gone so far as to announce that bombing nonmilitary targets was not part of its policy, no matter what the Nazi’s might do. But we all know the “rest of the story.” The Allies reneged, claiming they had a right to do so because Germany did not observe the same restrictions. So, after Germany’s raid on Coventry, England in November 1940, the British Bomber Command was instructed to simply aim “at the center of a city.” In other words, because the Third Reich, which was clearly an evil empire, didn’t respect the principle of noncombatant immunity, the Allies adopted the evil empire’s methods by breaking the same rules, like their “he did it first” argument could somehow hold water.

In turn, the Allies’ indiscriminate use of their own weapons bore much evil fruit in the “obliteration” or “saturation” bombings of Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin in 1942 and 1943, and Dresden in 1945. The bombings of Hamburg and Dresden created firestorms of unimaginable horror. As many as 135,000 people are believed to have been killed in the two days of raids on Dresden, which were considerably more than the deaths that would later be caused by the two atomic bombs themselves. Especially disturbing is the fact that thousands of those killed in Dresden were civilian refugees who were fleeing before the Russian advance. This list would not be complete without mention of the estimated 100,000 people who died in the March 1945 incendiary raid on Tokyo. So it is clear that even before the rise of the Atomic Age, the United States’ indiscriminate use of “conventional” weapons had already violated the principle of noncombatant immunity. Therefore, when Mr. Truman made his fateful decision to drop atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he was simply following the precedent set by the “War is Hell” policy that was by then already in place—a policy that had caused the deaths of thousands upon thousands of noncombatants.

This, then, is the backdrop against which Mr. Truman’s decision to use nuclear weapons was made. So with this picture in mind, I ask the question once again, “Was Mr. Truman’s decision right?” And once again, I respond, “No, it wasn’t”

Many disagree. They think Mr. Truman’s decision was prudent—the “greater good,” and all that. On the other hand, many who agree with me that the indiscriminate use of weapons of war against noncombatants is wrong, do so for reasons far different from the one I am here defending.

Pacifists, peaceniks and other anti-war groups do not commonly believe there is anything about war that can be classified as “just.” I believe these folks are wrong. However, and I hope this is evident, in my defense of the Just War doctrine, I will not rubber stamp a “This is right!” slogan on everything my country has done with reference to armed conflict. In fact, I have been disappointed that too much talk from the non-pacifist’s side of the fence seems to fall into the “My country, right or wrong!” category. I am sorry to say I have even heard Christians talking about—and this was before the present occupation—turning Baghdad into a parking lot by an ex-

plosion of a strategically placed thermonuclear weapon a couple of thousand feet over the Iraqi capitol. Unfortunately, even New Testament Christians have bought into the indiscriminate killing of noncombatant men, women and children. Such thinking was a mistake in August 1945, and it is a mistake today. If this is to be the face of twenty-first century warfare, then I fail to see how Christians could ever hope to have any part in it

By default, the activist believes that fighting for his country can't ever be wrong, while the pacifist, by default, believes war can't ever be right. Consequently, it is only the selectivist who must struggle with the facts which will determine whether a given war is just or not. If all this is true, and I believe it is, then it helps to focus the spotlight on one of the most difficult problems faced by the selectivist as he tries to make his decision of whether or not he'll participate in a given war: *Who has the authority to decide which wars are just or unjust?*

Who Has The Authority To Decide?

The activists will no doubt argue that chaos would reign if every individual in a country could make up his own mind whether or not to obey a certain law. What would be the result, they will argue, if everyone could decide which civil or domestic laws they would obey? Would not the result be anarchy and pandemonium? Yes, it would, but in making such an argument, activists are "mixing apples with oranges," so to speak. The question of war (i.e., whether it is right or wrong) is not to be confused with the Christian's obligation to obey every lawful ordinance of the State. In fact, the Bible says the Christian is under obligation to do just that (cf. Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). Instead, the question is about morality itself, namely: Can war be moral? If the answer to this question is yes, then the next question must be: Under what circumstances is war moral? Besides all this, and as has been previously noted, civil rulers do not have the authority to command that which God prohibits or, in turn, to prohibit what He requires. Therefore, if a war does not have a just cause, then a Christian is prohibited from participating in it. In addition, if a war is just, but the Christian is called upon to do something in that war that is unjust, then he must refuse such an order.

Even so, and this is extremely important, the Christian is not permitted to determine which wars are just or unjust on the basis of his own *subjective* feelings. Rather, he endeavors to discover which wars are just or unjust on the basis of *objective* moral principles—principles that are, in turn, derived from the Bible itself. Thankfully, God has revealed in His word, by precepts and principles, the kinds of wars that would be just or unjust. The principles of justice and righteousness that unfold in the Bible, from beginning to end, are what permits the selectivist to determine whether a war in which his government has asked him to participate is just or not. So, although it is true that the selectivist must discover the facts for himself, and this admittedly is not always easy (as we'll discuss in a moment), he is not without Biblical guidelines in assessing these facts once they are accumulated. Consequently, the selectivist is not an anarchist operating totally on his own. Instead, he makes his decision, if he's properly interpreted the Scriptures, with God's guidance.

I have argued thus far, and I think rightly so, that the pacifist and activist are wrong because they have incorrectly interpreted Scripture. But in doing so, I wish to make clear this caveat: *Even though he's come to the right conclusion concerning a Christian's right to participate in a just war, the selectivist can still, if he's not careful, involve himself in sin by participating in a war he has determined to be just, but isn't, or by doing something in an otherwise just war that is*

not, itself, just. The remedy against such mistakes is a prayerful, diligent study of God's word coupled with a keen interest in national and international events.

But how, it is asked, can the Christian know *for sure* he isn't being lied to by his government or the media? That is, how does he know he's not simply being manipulated by his government or the media? Well, he'll never know "for sure," for nothing this side of heaven is for sure. Governments lie, and so do the media. So, living a righteous life in the real world is made even harder by the fact that lies are all too frequently told to advance the "good" or "righteousness" of some cause, even though the cause may actually be neither righteous nor good.

Therefore, when all is said and done, it all comes down to faith—that is, *what* do we believe in and *why* do we believe it? If there is convincing evidence that our government cannot be trusted to tell us the truth about the need to go to war, then how could an honest man conscientiously fight for a country in which he can place no trust, or for a cause he cannot trust is true?

Consequently, if the government to which one belongs has not made a habit of telling the truth about things like the need to go to war, then the Christian, in the absence of corroborating evidence, would be operating on blind faith, and blind faith isn't really faith at all. Real faith does not just believe something, it believes *in* something—that is, it trusts in what it believes (cf. Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, a government that repeatedly lies about such things to its citizens cannot be trusted, and a government that cannot be trusted is a government not worth fighting for.

Faced with such complexities, many opt for either pacifism or activism. However, a view isn't wrong just because it's difficult. After all, being a balanced Christian is the most difficult thing one can do in this sin-sick world. Balanced Christianity is salty (cf. Matthew 5:13). As such, the only option open to the salty Christian is that of being a "selective conscientious objector"—a position that says the Christian must refrain from participating in any action or war that he deems, based upon his understanding of God's word, to be unjust. There is nothing easy about such a position. It will cause the selectivist to be at odds with both pacifists and activists, and sometimes the government itself. For if the government to which one belongs does not recognize the selectivist's conscience, then one can be shamed, imprisoned, or even worse. Again, this between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place religion to which Christians ascribe is not easy, but it is the only way we can glorify God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

"Beware The Leaven Of The Pharisees"

Admittedly, Just War theory, although it derives ultimately from Scripture, is a tradition that has been developed by men. Therefore, just like the oral traditions of the Talmud, Just War doctrine, if we're not careful, can contradict and even displace what God has actually said in His word. Consequently, Just War doctrine, whatever it is perceived to be at any given moment in time, is but a tool (a grid, if you will) that aids its user in the discernment of correct and permissible actions involving the vagaries of life in a world marred by sin. In other words, first and foremost, Just War theory is a "systematic theology" of war that serves not only the individual, but the State as well. In fact, it is in the realm of statecraft that its value can be especially appreciated, particularly in a time, like now, when the dark clouds of war lie menacingly on the horizon. (By the use of the term "statecraft," I simply mean those things associated with the administration of government, namely, "politics," as this word is understood in its most classical meaning.)

Contrary to what most people think, the Just War theory is not owned by a certain religious group or band of public intellectuals. Its teachings are not Catholic, Protestant, or whatever, and it is clericalism of the worst sort to suggest that religious leaders and public intellectuals “own” the Just War tradition in any singular way (for more on this, see George Weigel, “Moral Clarity in a Time of War” in *First Things*, December 2002). In fact, it is in its value to, and use by, government—whose primary function is to do justice—that the Just War theory has demonstrated itself to be of much help, even assisting, over the years of its existence, in the development of the moral consensus *for* or *against* war that is being reflected today in international discourse and law.

Special Service Infers Special Obligations

So, if I am right about my understanding of Romans 13:1-7, and its implications for both citizen and government, then it is safe to say there is a realm of political discernment necessary to those whose vocation is public service that is not required of regular citizens. Similar to those who serve New Testament churches as pastors (viz., elders and bishops), watching out for the souls of those in their charge, and who will one day give an accounting of their rule to God (cf. Hebrews 13:17), political leaders, who are obligated by God to uphold righteousness by doing acts of justice, will give an account to God for their actions. Consequently, the citizen is dependent upon his political leaders for moral clarity in a time of war, as well as all other times.

This means, and just bear with me a moment here, when a salty Christian sits on a jury, he will do everything within his power to arrive at a just verdict. If witnesses, under penalty of law, give perjured testimony, and such testimony becomes critical in determining either the guilt or innocence of the defendant, the blame for any unjust verdict does not pass to the jurors who, in all prudence, operated in good faith, nor to the court system that attempted, to the best of its ability, to operate justly. Likewise, a policeman, operating in good faith and exercising due diligence, does not commit a crime when he arrests an alleged lawbreaker for a crime he did not commit. Hopefully such would be rectified in a court of law, but even then a policeman would not be held liable for the false arrest if, in the judgment of the court, he acted prudently. Furthermore, even if the courts did not correct the injustice of one falsely arrested for a crime, but instead found the falsely accused person guilty, guilt would not automatically pass to the court system as long as it exercised due process of law consistent with Biblical principles. However, anyone who gave false testimony, or who manufactured, or in any way criminally tampered with evidence, would bear the guilt for any such travesty of justice.

By the same rule, no guilt would pass to a soldier who fights in what he, acting prudently, believes to be a , even when it is later discovered that the true reason for the war was clouded by lies. The issue, then, is this: *What would a reasonable and prudent man do?* This is all God has ever required, and this is true whether it has to do with faith in Him, or whether it has to do with the circumstances of life. Therefore, those who require absolute knowledge before they can act in a world tainted with sin must become ascetics, withdrawing from the very thing to which they are commanded to be salt and light (cf. Matthew 5:13-16). Such cannot be right, or so it seems to me.

Since the Christian must always sit in judgment upon the activities of his government, fully supporting it when it is right, but refusing to do so when it is wrong, the onus is on public officials

to be serious and truthful about what they say at all times, but especially at those times when they are asking citizens to consider war.

President Bush has had some very tough decisions to make since 9/11. His political rivals in Congress who are “playing politics” (and I use the word “politics” here in its degraded sense), are doing a disservice to those they have sworn to serve and protect. Without diminishing the death and destruction of those 9/11 attacks, they would simply pale in comparison with the explosion of a suitcase-size nuclear device in just one of our major cities. This, the Bush administration has told us, is “a real and present danger.” Intelligence sources indicate suitcase-size nuclear weapons, which were developed by the former USSR, are presently being bought and sold on the Weapons-of-Mass-Destruction black market, which we are being led to believe can supply not just atomic weapons, but a deadly array of biological and chemical weapons as well. Consequently, when one or more of our major cities is disintegrated, gassed, or infected by one or more of these weapons (and don’t forget that simultaneous attacks in “pairs” are the signature of al-Qaida operations), it will then be too late to do anything about it.

In the meantime, American politicians not only continue to pooh-pooh the President's “Axis of evil” statement, but they play politics at the expense of America's security. Yes, the security of America is admittedly problematic; but this is due, in large part, to the unprecedented freedoms its citizens enjoy—freedoms ironically that many of the “nay-sayers” feel obligated to extend to those captured enemy combatants whose sworn purpose is to destroy them. But while claiming that the President has done nothing to protect us since 9/11, these hypocritical leaders, some of whom are already campaigning for the Presidency themselves, have the unmitigated gall to turn around and criticize the President for practically everything he's done. Moral clarity in a time of war demands seriousness from public officials, and it's time for our public leaders, be they Republicans, Democrats, or Independents, to be deadly serious in what they are doing and saying, as the future peace and order of the United States depend on it. May God bless our leaders, particularly President Bush, with sobriety and wisdom in the days ahead, is my prayer.

I've taken the time to say all this because (1) the Christian's mind does not operate in a vacuum and (2) no matter how much we hold to the truth that God has provided, in His Son and the Scriptures, a once-and-for-all guide for moral conduct, we still have to struggle with the harsh realities of life in a fallen world. Honest, cogent thinking about war, even when it takes place within the framework of Just War theory, is assaulted by its gruesomeness, and such is made even worse by the introduction of nuclear weapons into the scheme of things. Admittedly, it has been the questions having to do with obliteration bombing and the use of nuclear weapons that have given me the most problems over the years when trying to defend or justify my position on war-fighting. In fact, there was a time during the development of my current position, when I tried to justify both. As you now know, I can no longer conscientiously do so. However, in thinking about the question of nuclear weapons, it is helpful to understand the history of their development and use over the years.

The Rise Of America's Nuclear Arsenal

The nuclear scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project, which began in 1942, did so because it was feared the Nazis were about to create their own atomic bomb. It was rumored they were working on one as early as 1939. Many of the scientists were European refugees who realized what a Nazi victory would mean for their native countries and for the rest of the world.

Therefore, they did not accept the assignment to make the atomic bomb reluctantly, as has been reported in some quarters. In fact, they sought it out, even taking the initiative by urging President Roosevelt on with the critical importance of America matching the efforts of the Nazis. But as scientists they had no political power or following, so when it was learned in November 1944 that the Germans had made little progress in their efforts, they were powerless to end the project they had helped to start. With their work largely completed, the technicians were in charge, and the politicians in charge of them. In other words, it was "a done deal," if you will. Albert Einstein said, "If I had known that the Germans would not succeed in constructing the atom bomb, I would not have lifted a finger" (Robert C. Battledore, *The Irreversible Decision: 1939-1950*, page 38).

In March 1945, Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, informed President Roosevelt that "the bomb" would be ready for testing in July. On April 12, at the death of Mr. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman became President, and the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb would fall on his shoulders. On May 8, the Germans surrendered. During June, preparations were underway for the invasion of Japan which was scheduled for November 1. On July 16 at 5:29:45 A.M., the Atomic Age officially began with the detonating of the world's first atomic "device" at "Trinity," Nevada. That which had been conceived and created primarily to stop the Nazi war machine from achieving world conquest was no longer needed. However, having arrived, it was not about to be "disinvented."

From July 17 to August 2, Winston Churchill, Harry Truman and Joseph Stalin met at the Potsdam, Germany. On July 26, in what has come to be called the Potsdam Proclamation, an ultimatum calling for Japan's unconditional surrender was issued. On July 28, Mr. Suzuki, the Japanese Prime Minister announced he would "ignore" the offer. Consulting with a wide range of advisors, Mr. Truman made his fateful decision, and on the morning of August 6, an atomic bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy," exploded 1800 feet over the city of Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, a second bomb, called "Fat Man" was exploded over the Japanese city of Nagasaki. Almost immediately, the Japanese announced their surrender. The war was over, and clearly the continued threat of nuclear weapons had hastened it, but the terror caused by an explosion and mushroom cloud on an August morning in 1945 had only just begun. It would grow to be something much more terrifying than the terror of the 12.5 and 20 kiloton bombs that had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The immediate post-WW II years revealed that a Communist spy-ring was operating within the Manhattan Project, which was evidenced by the Soviet's startling August 16, 1949 detonation of their own atomic bomb. After an extensive investigation into the matter, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested in the summer of 1950. At the conclusion of their controversial trial, they were sentenced to death. Judge Kaufman, in his sentencing address, said in part::

I consider your crime worse than murder. Plain deliberate contemplated murder is dwarfed in magnitude by comparison with the crime you have committed. In committing the act of murder, the criminal kills only his victim. The immediate family is brought to grief and when justice is meted out the chapter is closed. But in your case, I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb has already caused, in my opinion, the Communist aggression in Korea, with the resultant casualties exceeding 50,000 and who knows but that millions more

of innocent people may pay the price of your treason. Indeed, by your betrayal you undoubtedly have altered the course of history to the disadvantage of our country.

On the evening of June 19, 1953, Julius Rosenberg and his wife Ethel were executed at Sing-Sing Prison in New York. By that time, there was no doubt our former allies, the Russians, had become our mortal enemies. Intending to stay ahead of the Soviets, Mr. Truman insisted on the development of a “super” or hydrogen bomb, which in turn resulted in the Arms Race/Cold War that plagued the world until the fall of the Soviet empire in the early 1990s. During this time, the United States' nuclear strategy changed several times. In the Dulles era of the fifties, the US and Allied policy was to threaten “massive retaliation.” Echoing this, President Eisenhower, in his 1958 State of the Union address, spoke of “the prospect of virtual annihilation” which awaited the aggressor. The sixties brought nuclear stalemate and, in 1962, Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, developed the “counter-force” concept, which said that retaliation would be limited to military targets. The key words under this plan became “flexible response” and “graduated response,” which, it was argued, would help contain the use of nuclear weapons. However, many of the “experts” seemed to think containment was impossible, in that it was believed any use of nuclear weapons would inevitably escalate to a final conflagration. The seventies saw the heating up of the Cold War and a reverting to a total-war concept that culminated in the strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) that dominated US nuclear policy for the next twenty-plus years.

In the midst of such thinking, President Reagan announced his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a network of weapons designed to intercept and destroy ICBMs, rendering them “imponent and obsolete.” This was an attempt to turn thinking toward the idea of effective defense rather than a MAD retaliation. Unfortunately, Mr. Reagan's initiative was met with all sorts of opposition (both Left and Right), from scientists who questioned its feasibility, to those who objected to the “militarization of space,” and those who expressed concern over eliminating the equilibrium that then existed between the two great superpowers. In response, Reagan argued that SDI was, indeed, feasible, and that the US would be willing to work jointly with the USSR to develop the system, going so far as to assure the Soviets we would even help them pay for its implementation.

Mr. Reagan's initiative was bold, to say the least, and it seems to have changed the course of nuclear history, moving it farther away from the morally indefensible policy of Mutually Assured Destruction that threatened nuclear holocaust. Although there must be no doubt that our world still lives under the shadow of those two mushroom clouds that rose so menacingly over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in those early days of August 1945, the United States is now in the process of testing Reagan's vision of intercept weapons designed to “kill” intercontinental (ICBMs) and submarine launched (SLBMs) ballistic missiles. The program underwent change during the Bush '41 and Clinton presidencies, but it was Reagan's embrace of the idea—namely, that government, in order to meet its God-given responsibility, must at least try to develop a means of protecting its citizens from missile attacks—there can be no doubt that it was actually Reagan's vision that continued to spur the research and development of such defensive weapons. And from the standpoint of Just War theory, Mr. Reagan's idea was a giant step in the right direction.

With the surprising dissolution of the old Soviet Union in 1991, many conservative pundits (viz., George Will, Irvin Kristol *et al.*) claimed that Reagan's SDI program, his buildup of the mili-

tary, and his ideological crusade against Communism had delivered the knockout punch to a deteriorating Soviet system that had actually been on the ropes since the early 1980s. But it was SDI, they went on to say, that was “the key” to Reagan's winning strategy, as the Soviets had to realize there was no way their ailing system was going to be able to keep up with, in what promised to be the next arms race, the US's decisive technological advantage. From my own conservative standpoint, I believe this assessment was correct. Others, of course, wanted to give most of the credit to Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev. Clearly, Mr. Gorbachev was an important player in these events—the right man at the right time, and all that. But anyone who thinks that one man inside the Soviet Union could have brought about the collapse of that evil empire is either a bit too naive about things in general, or too ignorant of the Soviet system in particular. No, it was strong pressure from the outside, weakness from within, and the failure of Communism itself that ushered in the fall of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic.

Today, those who continue to resist a defense-based initiative in the development of weapon systems, do so for several clearly discernible reasons. First, there are those who believe war is immoral, period (viz., pacifists and other anti-war activists). To these people, war is simply not an option, even in self-defense. Second, there are those who believe the United States of America to be the locus of evil in the world today and, as such, a determined enemy of “peace” (viz., anti-American activists). These come with many different labels—Communists, Socialists, Islamists, *et cetera*). However, the “peace” these people are talking about is one in which their particular way of thinking is inflicted upon everyone else, which sounds to me a lot like totalitarianism. Third, there are those individuals who believe the nuclear stalemate between the two superpowers was a good thing, as it kept everyone in check. These folks long for the “good ol' days” of détente. Finally, there are those who honestly believe an effective defense against ICBMs and SLBMs is not possible. Put all these together and you continue to have a very effective vocal consensus in this country and around the world against what has been called “Star Wars” weaponry.

I believe it was most unfortunate that strategies for the use of nuclear weapons were spawned from the “War is Hell” philosophy that was used to justify the intentional targeting of civilians through the obliteration bombings of cities during World War II—a philosophy I've already identified as being immoral. Then, in the “tit for tat” arms race of the post-WW II years, massive thermonuclear weapons (viz., hydrogen bombs) were first tested and then implemented by both the US and the USSR. During those years, America even toyed with the idea of a vital first blow with nuclear weapons. Although such a plan appeared to be strategically sound, it was eventually rejected as immoral, or so it seemed. Since then, the United States has repeatedly said it would never start a nuclear war, which was interpreted by many to mean that the US would never employ a “first strike” use of nuclear weapons. However, this interpretation isn't correct, for the US has never rejected a first-use policy. In fact, the US has made it clear that if its conventional forces were ever being overrun by superior forces, it would consider using “theater size” nukes to even the odds. This policy was made clear to the Soviets who, at the height of the Cold War, had marshaled, along with the Warsaw Pact, overwhelming conventional military forces on the borders of Western Europe.

Additionally, the US has repeatedly denied that its no-first-strike policy would prevent it from employing a “preemptive strike,” if and when necessary. A preemptive strike, of course, is nothing but a “first strike” launched against an enemy who is poised to strike for the express purpose of keeping him from doing so. For example, if the US had known in 1941 that the attack on

Pearl Harbor was imminent, they would have surely launched a preemptive strike on Yamamoto's carriers before they had the chance to launch their infamous attack. Such would have been viewed as both prudent and moral. Of course, the problem with a preemptive strike is that it clouds the point of who really started the war. This is why a preemptive strike, although it may be both prudent and moral, is seldom resorted to. When this is employed, it is usually frowned upon by bystanders and others not directly involved in the conflict.

More attractive, morally speaking, was a strategy of retaliatory strikes. This move from first strike to retaliation would give the US a capacity for deterrence, but not the ability to win a military victory. With such thinking came the idea that *any use* of nuclear weapons would be so terrible that every effort needed to be put forth to make sure these weapons of mass destruction were never used. During this time, there was the reintroduction and further development of the MAD strategy which said if you ever attack us with nuclear weapons, we will unleash on you a nuclear holocaust. Due to such thinking, the concept of civil defense, which prepared citizens to survive nuclear war during the 1950s and early 1960s, was eventually abandoned as useless, as nuclear war was thought to be so terrible that "surviving" no longer seemed like a "good thing." With this kind of thinking, nuclear weapons became useful from deterring others from attacking us, but not for actual use. Therefore, if the US was ever forced to use its nuclear weapons, those weapons would have failed in their purpose. Therefore, "the basic axioms of the nuclear age," according to Lawrence Freedman, were: "the impossibility of defense, the hopeless vulnerability of the world's major cities; the attraction of sudden attacks; and the necessity for retaliation" (*The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 2nd edition, page 44).

Today, with the old Soviet Union dissolved, many seem to think the threat of a nuclear holocaust no longer looms on the horizon. This is foolishness gone to seed. Yes, tensions seem to be reduced between East and West, but the United States is not the only superpower left in the world, as is foolishly being bantered about today. As General Colin Powell said when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "No matter what happens in the Soviet Union, no matter how many walls fall down, no matter how many elections are held, or who the President may be, the Soviet Union will remain a military superpower—a nuclear military superpower with the ability, if not the intention, to destroy our way of life in 30 minutes" (Richard MacKenzie, "A Soldier Still on Guard," *InSight—On the News*, October 8, 1990, page 17). Even though the SALT I, SALT II and START treaties, along with other efforts, have reduced nuclear stockpiles by 75%, the Russians still have over 20,000 nuclear weapons in their arsenal, while the US has just over 10,000 weapons.

To give you a feel for what this looks like, you need to think of the 18 Ohio class nuclear-powered submarines that carry 50% of the United States' strategic nuclear weapons. Just one of these "Boomers," as they are called, has 24 silos loaded with a multiple warhead nuclear missile (viz., the Trident II D-5). The US, in compliance with the START treaty, has declared each of these missiles to contain 8 multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs), with each of these carrying a 300 to 475 kiloton warhead. This means that just one of the 192 MIRVs on a single Boomer (using an average kiloton figure) is more than 30 times more powerful than the 12.5 kiloton bomb dropped on Hiroshima. It seems clear that only a few of these would be required to "get the job done." Therefore, it is important to realize that the threat of nuclear holocaust is still a very real possibility in this troubled world in which we live.

My Conclusions Concerning Nuclear Warfare

As I've already said, nuclear weapons are not going to be disinvented. They are, and will continue to be, a very important part of the arsenals of both East and West. However, as we've described them here, such weapons are "unusable," in that if they ever are used they could very well start a conflagration that would cause the deaths of hundreds of millions of people. Consequently, and applying the just-war template, MAD strategy—although it worked insofar as the US and USSR never engaged in nuclear war (although we certainly got close during the Cuban missile crises of 1962)—is immoral, in that it purposely targets the enemy's cities and the civilians who live in them. A deterrence is one thing, but a deterrence that can't be morally used is quite another. Therefore, the US has made it clear that, although it intends to keep its options open, it would, in fact, retaliate in force under certain circumstances. However, US nuclear strategy cannot be moral until and unless it concentrates its nuclear weapons on the enemy's military capabilities, rather than his cities. Executing such a strategy would not mean that civilians would not die, for they most certainly would die collaterally. But as long as the civilians were not being specifically targeted, guilt would not incur.

I am pleased the United States has renounced intentions of a war-winning nuclear strategy, making it clear it would never attack first with a supposed "knockout" nuclear strike. However, our government's talk of reserving the right to resort to preemptive strikes has led many to believe, and I think with good reason, that the US would strike first under certain circumstances. As misunderstood and threatening as preemptive strikes are, particularly in the case of nuclear weapons, I do not see how our government, or any government, for that matter, can morally give up this prerogative. In other words, to permit a nuclear attack on its citizens that could be prevented or at least diminished by a first strike would be a failure of the very thing governments are ordained by God to do. Further, it appears that the preemptive threat forced both superpowers to be careful of any movements that would alarm the other. After the Cuban missile crisis, where the US military, for the first and only time, went to Defcon-2, which is but one step away from actual war, both sides were even more careful not to do things that would unduly threaten the other side. It can be argued then that the ever present threat of a preemptive strike caused both sides to act more circumspectly. Therefore, I think my Just War cohorts who believe the US government must *unequivocally* renounce *all* "first strike" intentions err on this point (cf. Darrell Cole, *When God Says War Is Right*, 2002, pages 130-133).

I am further pleased the United States has stopped development of bigger and more indiscriminate nuclear weapons, as such promised nothing but a further journey into the abyss of immorality and mutual destruction. During the fifties and sixties there had been talk of bombs so destructive that, once exploded, they might set off a chain reaction that would destroy the world. During those times, the US is known to have tested a 15-megaton hydrogen bomb, which is more than a thousand times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The Soviets, on the other hand, announced they were developing a 100-megaton weapon. Much of this seems to have been madness, pure and simple, and I'm glad both sides finally came to their senses. But fairness demands it be pointed out that some of these weapons were experimented with due to the need to destroy deeply embedded weapons, not cities. Missiles back then were not as accurate as they are today, therefore it was necessary to have bigger weapons to get the job done.

Today, missile systems that are “smart” and extremely accurate are able to take out deeply embedded targets with much smaller warheads. This is why the MIRV warheads on those Trident II D-5s mentioned earlier are only in the 300-475 kiloton range. Clearly, we no longer need the big mega-tonnage once thought necessary. Therefore, the United States now has the ability in place to fully develop and implement a nuclear deterrent that is not inherently immoral, as was the MAD strategy. Instead of an immoral response to an enemy's immoral attack, which is all MAD promised, and which in turn is inherently unjust, we can accurately aim any response on our part only and directly at our enemy's military forces, which would effectively prohibit any victory on his part. Although enemy noncombatants would die in such a response, they would not be deliberately targeted, as they are under MAD strategy. Consequently, guilt for collateral deaths would not incur. This way, civilian deaths, even though they ultimately could be in the millions, play no part in our intended response. The good we would hope to accomplish by such a response would be to save our civilization. Millions of innocent civilians might be killed by our response, but we might save just as many, if not more, of our own innocent civilians. To me, this is a response that meets the requirements of Just War theory and is consistent with the principles of justice and righteousness taught in the Bible.

The Future

The US military has presently drifted away from simply planning a nuclear holocaust towards the possibility of nuclear war-fighting. This, as I see it, is a good trend, for it should be apparent that unusable weapons, whether they be nuclear or conventional, are immoral, and are so precisely because they are, in fact, unusable. In other words, if we are going to spend bundles of money to make and maintain nuclear weapons, there ought to be a moral scenario where they may be righteously used. As the U.S. continues to develop technologically, it may eventually be possible for the military to develop a shield that protects us from ICBMs fired at us by other nations, rogue states, and terrorist organizations. Such technology, although controversial, is something I believe ought to be pursued. Unfortunately, up to this point, there have been no clear-cut rules, no guiding moral principles, behind the aforementioned trend. So far, all that has happened has arisen from either accidents or technology (viz., more accurate guidance systems meant we could use smaller warheads against hardened sites) or the inarticulate but nonetheless real horror of actually doing what our nuclear weapons are capable of doing, which is creating a thermonuclear holocaust of gargantuan proportions. Estimates during the Cold War said that a Soviet attack against America would kill sixty-five percent of our people. Consequently, I agree with Joseph P. Martino's conclusion in his excellent and thought-provoking book, *A Fighting Chance: The Moral Use of Nuclear Weapons*:

We have a lot of lost time to make up. We can only pray that we will be granted the additional time necessary. We must begin by rejecting both defeatism (“It can't be done!”) and moral obtuseness (“It shouldn't be done!”). Then we must undertake the hard task we have neglected all the years since Hiroshima, those of learning how to use nuclear weapons morally, and of building weapons we can use in good conscience should the need arise (page 282).

Clearly, the moral use of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons remains a problem for those who hold to any form of Just War theory. Strategies for using such weapons that derive from the “War is Hell” World War II doctrine of obliteration bombing, where the goal was to attack large areas of cities, or even whole cities, will always be unacceptable to those who believe all as-

pects of war-fighting, in order to be morally acceptable, must be consistent with the principles of Justice and Righteousness expounded in the Bible. We are, I believe, at a critical juncture. The moment requires critical thinking about, and assessment of, the way we, as a people, have come to think of the issues associated with war-fighting. If we do not rise to the occasion and totally abandon the concept of purposely targeting civilians, then I fear that we, as a nation, will be relegated to the dustbin of history. Remember, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

What About The United Nations?

In the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a new type of pacifism has arisen which asks the question of how an all-out nuclear war could ever be considered to be morally acceptable, since it would obviously inflict more injury on the world than it could possibly correct. Although this new pacifism has been identified by several names (viz., “relative pacifism” and “neopacifism”), it has come to be called “nuclear pacifism.” The moral principle invoked by nuclear pacifists is the one that says it is never right to cause more injury than one seeks to mend, regardless of the provocation. Convinced that all-out nuclear war cannot serve a rational or moral end, they argue that not only would such a war be immoral, but that even a defense based upon waging such a war is immoral, and further that the continued development of such weapons of mass destruction is also immoral.

But if the truth be told, many nuclear pacifists aren't “pacifists” at all, at least in the true sense of the word. Their concern fixates on the “terror” of nuclear weapons, and all this quite apart from any convictions about armies, navies, and the role of government. In fact, they still want policemen to protect them and their loved ones, and they still want their rulers to stand up to enemy states. All they are advocating is a new and special limit on the fighting of wars. Therefore, they are really supporters of the Just War doctrine. In contrast to this, historical pacifism views war as not only a social evil, but a sin. Therefore, consistent, honest pacifists wouldn't be caught dead arguing against nuclear weapons on practical grounds like their destructiveness, expense, *et cetera*, which are in turn things nuclear pacifists argue all the time.

Be that as it may, religious/philosophical pacifists have largely co-opted the nuclear pacifist movement, seeing it as a more viable way to advance their agenda, which, in the end, is to outlaw war altogether. In truth, historical pacifists have no more business in the nuclear arms argument than a Protestant minister does at a Roman Catholic retreat for clergy or a Democrat does at a Republican caucus. Even so, pacifists over the years have furiously entered into the campaign to bring about, to one degree or another, the total elimination of nuclear arms from the arsenal of the United States and other NATO countries. During the Cold War, nuclear disarmament, as advanced by the “peaceniks” and other antiwar advocates, was the ever-present, ongoing argument that said it was, in fact, “Better to be Red than dead!” Today, more than half a century after the start of the Cold War, this argument is still with us in the fairly common held idea that modern warfare is so terrible that it must be avoided at all cost, even when one of these costs is justice itself.

Enter just here the United Nations, which by charter is committed to the peaceful resolution of all disputes and conflicts between states and peoples. Under such a mandate, justice is sacrificed on the altar of “Peace at any price.” However, God's word makes it clear that peace is an enterprise of justice (cf. Isaiah 32:17 and note that the Hebrew word translated “righteousness”

can also be translated as “justice”). The United Nations, although touted by its adherents as “our last, best hope for peace,” has never brought about peace, and it never will. Those who use such slogans are like chickens with their heads cut off (all reflex and no reason), who fail to realize that the United Nations, by virtue of its own charter, will always be forced to genuflect to raw power, rather than effect true justice. Who today, but headless chickens, could argue that the existence of the United Nations has even started to eliminate the need of warfare as a means of defending oneself from aggression? The world, due to its fallenness is a very dangerous place, and even more so today than when the United Nations came into existence on October 24, 1945. As we think about the subject at hand, I believe it is beneficial to understand just how dangerous the world’s present trust in the United Nations really is.

The New Babel

In Genesis 11:1-9, we learn of a human race, united in both language and purpose, that had determined to build a tower in the Plain of Shinar. The construction of this tower was to serve as a monument to human achievement. The attitude of its builders was indicative of those who had rejected God as their Creator. Dr. Merrill F. Unger, in his well-known dictionary of the Bible, identifies the basic motivation underlying the entire project as “God-defying disobedience and pride” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 114). Addressing this in his book, *New Age Globalism*, H. Edward Rowe wrote:

We must not miss the central warning that resounds through the corridors of the long centuries to our time. The tower builders structured a mighty global organization, independent of God. They dedicated it to the establishment of a human unity which would secure them against the prospect of being scattered apart throughout the world (page 6).

The Bible, of course, teaches us that God was very much displeased with their effort and, as a result, He “confounded their language” and “scattered them abroad,” which was the very thing they were trying to prevent!

Unfortunately, the descendants of the Babel builders are still with us today. Their plan for creating a “global society” is evident in their various writings. In *Humanist Manifesto II*, under the heading, “World Community,” we read:

We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty as to move toward the building of a world community... We look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government.

Elsewhere in the same document, we read, “What more daring a goal for humankind than for each person to become, in ideal as well as practice, a citizen of a world community.” According to this manifesto, “No deity will save us: we must save ourselves.”

As a result of the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Proposal, as well as the 1945 Yalta and San Francisco Conferences, the United Nations Charter came into force on October 24, 1945. On December 14, 1946, the U.N. accepted a gift of \$8.6 million from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to buy the eighteen acres of land on New York’s East River upon which the current U.N. building sits.

The next year, the U.S. Congress approved a \$65 million interest-free loan to finance the construction of the glass, stone, and steel tower dedicated to the enshrinement of “collective security.” Between 1945 and 1987 alone, the United States contributed \$17 billion of the estimated \$87 billion spent by this organization. During that time the so-called “nonaligned nations,” which make up the majority of the United Nations delegations, voted the communist line fully 85 percent of the time in the General Assembly. So, like the Tower of Babel before it, the United Nations, worshipping the false gods of man, all in the name of unity and security, represents a denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Creator, Sustainer, and Savior of the world. The builders of this modern-day Tower of Babel place man above God and their Almighty Super State above man.

“The initial optimism with which the world was aglow after World War II has long since faded before the gruesome reality of some three-hundred plus civil and regional wars that have raged since 1945, including Korea and Vietnam” (Fred Bruning, “The U.N. At Forty,” *The Courier-Journal*, September 22, 1985, page D1). In addition, during these past fifty-seven years, there have been no shortages of bombings, assassinations, hijackings, terror attacks and other such demonstrations of man’s inhumanity to his fellowman. Although the recent “defeat” of communism and the “one-hundred hour” war to “liberate” Kuwait has bolstered the optimism of some, the 9/11 terror attacks on America grimly demonstrate that these were nothing to get excited about.

The Underpinnings Of Both Projects

Obviously, then, both projects—the tower on the Plain of Shinar and the one on New York’s East River—convey significant information about the people they represent. Dr. Rowe, who I mentioned previously, in identifying these indicators as they relate to the Tower of Babel, wrote:

Philosophically, it represents belief in the priority of the materialistic realm over the spiritual.

Theologically, it involves a substitution of a false god for the True and Living God.

Psychologically, it implies confidence in the achievement of security by means of a global man-made unity.

Educationally, it means problem solution based on adequacy of man rather than guidance of God.

Administratively, it exhibits an unfounded assurance of the self-sufficiency of organized man without reliance on God.

Anthropologically, it proclaims the glories of human pride and self-aggrandizement.

Of course, one has little difficulty applying these same indicators to the United Nations.

“Whose Top May Reach Unto Heaven”

The builders of the Tower of Babel were determined to build a tower “whose top may reach unto heaven.” It is interesting, then, that Alvin Toffler, in his popular book, *The Third Wave*, wrote:

Globalism presents itself as more than an ideology serving the interests of a limited group. Precisely as nationalism claimed to speak for the whole nation, globalism claims to speak for the whole world. And its appearance is seen as an evolutionary necessity—a step closer to a “cosmic consciousness” that would embrace the heavens as well (page 308).

Quoted in an official brochure of the World Federalists Association, the late Bertrand Russell summed up the case for “One-World-ism” with these words: “Science has made unrestricted national sovereignty incompatible with human survival. The only possibilities are now world government or death (*World Peace Through World Law With Justice...Developing New Avenues To World Order*, 1101 Arlington Blvd., Suite S-119, Arlington, Va. 22209). Lord Beveridge of England put it this way: “World peace requires world order. World order requires world law. World law requires world government (Phillip D. Butler, “Parliamentarians for World Order,” in *The Canadian Intelligence Service*, Vol. 33, No. 5, May 1983, page 41). Way back in June, 1976, former presidents of the National Education Association (an organization that continues to be one of the UN's strongest supporters) had this to say about educators and their role in developing a new world order or “global community”: “It is with...sobering awareness that we set about to change the course of American education for the twenty-first century by embracing the ideals of global community, the equality and interdependence of all peoples and nations, and education as a tool to bring about world peace” (from the Forward to A Declaration of Interdependence: Education for a Global Community, a summary report of the NEA Bicentennial Program, an NEA publication dated June 26, 1976). The title of this document is even more interesting when one considers that on January 30, 1976, the World Affairs Council announced the *Declaration of Interdependence*, which was signed by 32 U.S. Senators and 92 U.S. Representatives in Washington, D.C., and read in part, “Two centuries ago our forefathers brought forth a new nation; now we must join with others to bring forth a new world order.” This document further stated, “To establish a new world order...it is essential that mankind free itself from the limitations on national prejudice....” And again: “We call upon all nations to strengthen the United Nations...and other institutions of world order...” (in A. Ralph Epperson, *The Unseen Hand*, p. 371).

So, we ought not to be surprised that former ambassador to the United Nations, and former president, George H. Bush, who was between 1977 and 1979 a director of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations (a body of so-called “wise men” who have dominated foreign policy making by the United States government since before World War II, and who came up with the idea of the United Nations), would fight the first Persian Gulf War under the aegis of a United Nations Security Council mandate. On January 29, 1991, during his now infamous State of the Union/New World Order address, Bush '41 made it clear that the fate of Kuwait was not the main issue:

What is at stake is more than one small country, it is a big idea—a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law. Such is a world worthy of our struggle, and worthy of our children's future.

Then, in his March 6, 1991 address to Congress commemorating the successful conclusion of the Persian Gulf War, Bush '41 said:

Until now, the world we've known has been a world divided—a world of barbed wire and concrete block, conflict and cold war. Now, we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order.... A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders.

Then, when the wounded-pride dictator of Iraq lashed out against his own citizens, we strickly refused to intervene. Why? We could not support the Kurds and Shias, we were told, because doing so was not part of the United Nations mandate. But now more than a decade later, and with the son of Bush '41 in the White House, we are being shown the gruesome pictures of Iraqi Kurds, defenseless men, women and children, who Saddam Hussein unmercifully gassed in northern Iraq—people we were told we could not defend because we didn't have a UN mandate.

I am not so naive as to think Bush '41 actually allowed himself and the United States of America to be used by the United Nations. In fact, it was most definitely the other way around. Bush '41 effectively manipulated the United Nations apparatus to do what he wanted it to do. The United States had, and still has, strategic interests in that very unstable part of the world, and Saddam Hussein, it was agreed on by all who took part in the first Persian Gulf War, needed to be taught that he could not exercise his military muscle without some serious consequences. But much to the chagrin of Bush '41, who Saddam Hussein outlasted in office by a decade, the diabolical dictator of Iraq was a much more determined, ruthless, and powerful tyrant than he thought.

Even so, there must be no mistake that the real military might that was exercised in the first Persian Gulf War belonged to America—not NATO, not Britain, and certainly not the United Nations. When it was all said and done, the United Nations did what Bush '41 wanted it to do. Many argued then, as some are arguing now in view of current events, that this was a good thing because our cause was just then and it's just now. Fine, some would say, because all's well that ends well. This may sound pretty good, but suppose for a moment that the action undertaken had not been just, and then you will begin to understand the point I am trying to make here: The danger with one-world-government is that it can be, and more than likely will be, used by imperialists and tyrants to manipulate the greater masses for the so-called “greater good”—something that would not be good at all, but evil. With this thought in mind, it is interesting to know that Isaiah Bowman, at a U.S. Council on Foreign Relations meeting in May 1942, actually suggested a United Nations type organization as a way for the U.S. to exercise its strength to assure “security” in the world, and at the same time “avoid conventional forms of imperialism” (Memorandum T-A25, May 20, 1942, CFR, War-Peace Studies, Hoover Library on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford, CA).

When I originally wrote some of this material in January of 2003, I could not help seeing the irony of a united mankind, in the name of “collective security,” and under the auspices of the United Nations, assembling itself, once again, in the very place where mankind, because of an ungodly and ill-conceived unity platform, was originally scattered by God. Unlike many pundits, I applauded George W's willingness to “go it alone.” His “You're either with us or against us” re-

marks, although vilified by many as arrogance, actually reflected the words of Jesus, who said, “He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matthew 12:30). I know Jesus was God incarnate and therefore could have said this without the charge of arrogance being attached to it. But instead of seeing these words as representing arrogance, why can't we understand them for the common sense truth they represent? Those in the international community who harbor terrorists and give financial succor to them are against us, not for us. Those who become friends with our enemies quite logically become our enemies. Therefore, if the many nations of the world can't agree that terrorists and those who aid them need to be brought to the bar of justice, particularly when this necessarily involves war, then they too are enemies of the United States of America. Does this mean we declare war on all our enemies? Certainly not! But when our enemies direct their assaults against us, they can expect to be attacked in order that justice might be done. So to those who naively believe that war is never the answer, Biblical-based reason says, “Get real!”

There is, of course, only one way for the world to be united, and it has absolutely nothing to do with governments' exercise of the sword—whether this be in courts of law or on the battlefields of war. The great apostle Paul taught that this unity or “oneness” can only be recognized by those who understand that Jehovah, their Creator, demands they kiss His Son in obedience (cf. Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 2:12). Yes, nationalism is ordained by God (cf. Acts 17:26b) and with this ordination comes duties and responsibilities that cannot be abridged by man's devices without serious consequences. But ultimately, the solutions to mankind's problems are of Divine, not man-made and ill-conceived, origin. The sovereignty of every nation is to be respected as its people seek the Lord (Acts 17:26-27). It is He, and He alone, who is the Savior of humankind. His earthly kingdom, the church of Christ, has already been established, and “all nations [must flow] unto it” to be saved (cf. Isaiah 2:2-3). It is in this everlasting spiritual kingdom, and not the United Nations, that men out of every nation on the face of the earth will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks” (Isaiah 2:4). And it is only in this spiritual relationship that “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Micah 4:3).

Obviously, then, the United Nations, a supra-national organization, is not, nor could it ever be under its current charter, a vehicle for *true* peace—that is to say, “peace with justice.” It is the duty of individual governments, not the United Nations, to serve and protect its citizens (cf. Romans 13:1-7). Saying this does not mean I'm against alliances or coalitions, particularly when common interests so dictate. However, the direction in which the United Nations is headed is not a coalition or alliance of nations where each nation retains its own sovereignty, directing its own affairs and actions. Instead, in its present state, it is a man-made vehicle for world government that cannot, by its very nature, have the best interest of American citizens at heart. For this reason, I am against it. As a vehicle of debate and discussion, and for genuine consensus building, it has some value. But as a decision making body, and with the World Court under its auspices, and with an army of so-called “peace-keepers” directly under its command, the sovereignty of all nations, including ours, will be sacrificed on the altar of “universal peace.” Remember this: a peace without Justice and Righteousness, even if it were universal in scope, would not be worth having.

Conclusion

In concluding this study, I wish to make it clear that I believe that until, and unless, we are willing to make the logical projection of Biblical principles to their broadest applications in a society, we're not really communicating the gospel to that society at all. Although it is true that American culture has already been widely influenced by Biblical truths, nevertheless, it was necessary for certain Biblical principles to be "contextualized" in our society. By "contextualized," I mean a process of contextualization that is defined as the application of Biblical truths to the circumstances and situations to be experienced in a particular (or "target") culture. For instance, it was necessary that the principle of the master-slave relationship articulated in the New Testament almost two thousand years ago be "contextualized" into the employer-employee relationship of our modern American society. Unfortunately, some who failed to do this believe the New Testament says nothing about our modern employer-employee relationship. This, I think, is similar to the error pacifists make when they argue that the principles taught in Romans 13:1-7 are limited to the justice effected only by domestic law enforcement.

To properly understand the question we have considered in this study, it is necessary to understand that Church (the kingdom of God) and State (civil government), although separate, are not mutually exclusive. Failing to understand this has caused some to believe Christians cannot scripturally function in both of these spheres at the same time. This was the position articulated by David Lipscomb in his book *Civil Government*. In it, Lipscomb repudiated any active participation in civil affairs, even to the point of not voting. He argued that human governments, owing their origin to man's rebellion against God, as he had wrongly concluded, were not proper spheres for Christian involvement. Although Romans 13:1-7 makes it clear that civil government is a creation of God, not man, Lipscomb's ideas were readily received by many Christians in the South after their devastating Civil War defeat. Raised in the South, and now having lived most of my life there, I am sorry to say that I have frequently been confronted with either Lipscomb's position or one of its modern-day variations. I say "sorry" because the Lipscomb position presents a totally unscriptural view of civil government that has caused churches of Christ, which are predominately located in the South, to be without much impact in civil affairs.

Consequently, New Testament Christians, emerging from the difficulties of the 19th century and eschewing participation in civil government, as Lipscomb and others had influenced them to do, were much affected by the secularization that swept the 20th century. They bought into, nearly "lock, stock, and barrel," the secularization lie. In doing so, they gave themselves over to a traditional, uncritical and totally unscriptural view of the separation of Church (the sacred) and State (the secular). Yes, and as was previously pointed out, Christians do have an obligation to distinguish between the secular and the sacred; but it is just as true that we must never try to totally separate them, as Lipscomb thought. To do so would be to deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ over *all* of life—sacred and secular. Nevertheless, too many modern Christians have

given themselves over to a view of church and state that forces them to divide their lives into that which is sacred and that which is secular. This false dichotomy has forced an unscriptural compartmentalization of religion. Within the confines of an ever decreasing arena, New Testament Christians unashamedly proclaim belief in, and reliance upon, God; but outside these parameters—"cage" might be a better word—they have developed a reluctance to even mention His name.

So, although religion in the private sector may give the appearance of flourishing today, in the public arena it has been almost totally neutralized. As a result, Christianity may still be privately engaging to some, but it is socially irrelevant to most. The central sectors of society (business, technology, science, medicine, law, politics, *et cetera*) have been stripped of religious influence. As Americans, and, unfortunately, as Christians, we have thought it most proper to internalize our religion. This "privatization," or secret discipleship (i.e., the "Joseph of Arimathea Syndrome" of John 19:38), has added to the current secularization of America. But, more importantly, it has caused *true Christianity* (the kind we read about in the New Testament) to be without any real impact in public life. Afraid to mention the name of the Lord publicly—except within the limited confines of the local church and family—for fear of being thought of as un-American, uncivil, unprofessional, anti-social, sectarian, and fanatical, Christians now find themselves without any real impact in their communities. Instead of being the salt that savors and the light that shines out of darkness (Matthew 5:13-16), many of us have allowed the so-called "Wall" secularists erected between Church and State to force them to publicly blend in with the rest of society. And embarrassing as it all is, secularists became victors by default, in that they are occupying territory that we Christians have willingly, but mistakenly withdrawn from. Thinking it our duty to espouse a principle that forces us to eliminate the Lord from *ALL* of government and *MOST* of society, we created the 20th century monster called "Secularism." Alive and well in the 21st century, this Frankenstein, which is now poised to destroy us, is an unnatural creation that should have never been fashioned in the first place. In truth, we have been digging our own graves—conduct we'll call the "Gravedigger Effect."

Seduced By A Metaphor

No student of the Bible would deny that Jesus taught there was to be a distinction between Church and State. During His earthly ministry, Jesus said: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Even so, I feel confident the Lord never wanted His disciples to believe there was to be a separation of God and the State—that is to say, a complete divorcement of God-based morality from civil government. The "Wall," or in its more expanded form, "the wall of separation between Church and State," first articulated by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to the Danbury (Connecticut) Baptist Association, is a seductive metaphor that has subsequently misled many. The concept of an inseparable wall between Church and State, whether one believes it to have been taught by Jesus or espoused in the Constitution of the United States, surrenders to a simplistic understanding of a complicated subject. It is a gross hermeneutical error to use Matthew 22:21 as a proof-text for an absolute and inseparable wall between government and religion. Proof-texting or "Bumper Sticker Theology," as I prefer to call it, must give way to a conceptual or overall view of the Lord's teaching on any given subject. For example, the faith taught in John 3:16 cannot really be understood without the teaching found in James 2:14-26. Likewise, we would expect the truth taught in Matthew 22:21 to be amplified elsewhere in God's Word. And this is exactly

what we find. In Titus 3:1, the Christian is taught to be “subject to rulers and authorities,” which is just another way of saying, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.”

Those who have thought government to be absolutely autonomous and free from a God-based morality have failed to consider many Bible passages, including Colossians 2:10, where Jesus is said to be “the head of all principality and power.” Not only is He “head over all things to the church,” but He is “far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21-22). There is but one exception to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and this is the Father, “who put all things under Him” (I Corinthians 15:27). As Christians, there is simply no excuse for not knowing what Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way; namely, “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men” (Daniel 4:25).

For the Christian to have believed that in order to honor Jesus Christ it was necessary for him to eliminate the Lord from *ALL* of government and *MOST* of society, is totally irreconcilable with the truth taught in the Bible. It is just such unquestioned allegiance to the erroneous doctrine of “the Wall” between Church and State that has caused churches of Christ to be without any appreciable impact on society and, as a result, very ineffective in their evangelistic efforts. Having rested our hopes on apologetics (the defense of a doctrine), we have sorely neglected discipleship (the living of a doctrine) [see Galatians 2:20]. Jesus taught us that we are to be the “salt” and “light” of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). With but little thought given to the context, we can readily understand that the Lord was not referring to our “saying,” but our “doing.” Christians function as salt and light when others see our “good works and glorify (our) Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16b). A world groping in darkness is benefited by the disciplined lives of a “chosen generation, a royal nation, a peculiar people” (I Peter 2:9). So, when a Christian, who the Bible says has been created in Christ Jesus for good works (cf. Ephesians 2:10), is not living a godly life (i.e., is not actively doing Justice and Righteousness), he no longer can save himself from this “perverse generation” (Acts 2:40), nor can he act so as to preserve this nation from God’s righteous indignation. Consequently, we should pray for, and seek to become, salty Christians who understand that although our Lord has returned to heaven, we are called upon to faithfully serve the *time*, *place* and *people* of a lost and dying world until that glorious day when, having been found faithful unto death (cf. Revelation 2:10), we’ll hear the One to whom we’re betrothed say, “Well done my good and faithful servant.”

As members of that great and glorious body of Christ, let us be determined to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God as we serve our Families, our local Churches, our local, state and federal Governments, our Employers and Employees, and last of all, but certainly not least, our Neighbors. When we do so, we can be sure we are glorifying the One who purchased us with His own blood.