

Citizenship of a Higher Order

By Christopher J. Patton

Citizenship of a Higher Order ***Biblical Reasons for Rejecting Military Service and War***

July 4, 2006

By Christopher J. Patton *(All quotes from the Bible are NASB unless otherwise noted.)*

Most Christians do not properly differentiate between their duties as citizens of heaven from those as citizens of some earthly political state. Consequently, clear, rationally balanced thinking on some very important issues is impossible for them. Possessing incomplete belief systems, they do not have the spiritual objectivity necessary to understand the world we live in and to make sound decisions of faith.

In other words, even rational thinking may be misapplied. Specifically, an appropriate course of action for a nation state of this world may present totally inappropriate behavior choices for a follower of Jesus Christ. The fact that the biblical Christian conducts himself lawfully in obedience to what most human governments require of their citizens often only contributes to the complexity of sorting things out correctly.

"What's so difficult about that!" one might say. "You just obey God rather than men!" We know that it really is not that simple because how to obey God is taught differently by different religious or spiritual leaders. Especially when it comes to one of the most important of these concerns: participation in warfare and military service. The various Christian denominations do not agree among themselves on this vital issue. They debate about what a "just war" is and/or whether or not a pastor should speak out on the issues surrounding warfare and military service. Besides, who wants to disrespect a veteran? No one. And rightly so. But that does not answer the questions of those facing the prospects of enlisting in the armed forces – especially when they may be facing some extreme economic or personal life challenges.

Most churches support "just wars." Some do so half-heartedly; that is true. Sometimes a membership is divided on the matter. Other churches support or oppose war based on patriotism or other ethical arguments that may be perceived as possessing a strong political element to them. Finally, there are a number of religious organizations that do have a history of consistent teaching in regards to military service: some of them permit noncombatant roles, others do not.

For congregations claiming to be "Bible-believing" or evangelical, I observe that denominational history influences a church's teaching on this vital issue more than a consistent adherence to the literal application of Scripture. When it comes to military service, most churches beat the patriotic drum of whatever nation they live in and support the military effort even as they embrace a literal reading of the Bible when it concerns theological matters less critical to one's engagement of this material world peopled by mortal humans who suffer and die. What is the reason for this doctrinal disconnect in "Bible-believing Christians"?

Down through history Christian theologians and "doctors of the church" have tended to focus more on their own erudite writings than on the simply reading the Word. As a result, Christianity presents a picture of religious confusion. This picture may mislead the sincere follower, and it has definitely turned off millions of otherwise decent, moral persons from faith in Jesus Christ. Historically, this is why most of the millions of those who claim to be Christian have also fought in the armies, navies and air forces around the world. In the final analysis, Christians ended up fighting each other. Frankly, this true observation evidences a lack of consistent spiritual understanding and common sense, but there are reasons for it.

The Difficulty of Understanding the Bible

The missing dimension of spiritual objectivity is provided by the Bible as read by the eyes and heart of God's Holy Spirit dwelling within the obedient believer. (Acts 5:32) Proper spiritual discernment blesses

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the believer with the ability to prioritize and balance the conflicting ethical demands and loyalties made on him or her by the state and by God. It provides an unchanging standard of guide for spiritual belief and behavior.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

This you know, my beloved brethren But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:16-25)

Although materially present as written words on a material page, Scripture must be spiritually discerned, which is impossible for the natural mind of humans. This is why the Bible has been interpreted in so many different ways and why so many decent, moral people have simply avoided the religious confusion attributed to it.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,

"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. (1Corinthians 2:6-16)

By taking a fresh look at some old scriptures, I hope to open up a missing dimension in spiritual understanding for you by sharing how I have personally sorted through some of these important issues. I do not expect that anyone reading this paper, or any of my other writings, will ever agree with me 100%. In fact, I am not the judge of any person. God is. On the other hand, I do believe that God has blessed me with insights that I am led to share in faith and humility because I also understand that learning is a

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progressive unfolding. This means that any human effort to explain Scripture, including my own, will always fall short of the eternal truth.

If nothing else, I pray that this paper will encourage you to read the Bible. None of us study the Bible enough, nor do we rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us as much as we should. Rather than debating what Augustine meant when he wrote about a "just war," we should learn how use the spiritual tools given to us through faith so that we may better discern the will of God for each of our individual lives, personally. There is no judge but Jesus, and we are all different parts of His team. Each of us has the potential to answer God's unique calling to be a member of His divine Kingdom from now into forever.

The Basics

When Jesus committed Himself to die on the cross, He knew that He would be leaving His disciples behind – as well as all those who would eventually come to faith through them. On purpose has God left me **in** the world even as He does not want me to be **of** the world. (John 17:11-17) The fact is that I was born into this world - automatically being of it, so my spiritual journey must always pointed on the way **out** of this world. (Revelation 18:4)

Like all human beings, I was born naturally imperfect, but God requires perfection in order to live eternally. Since becoming perfect is impossible to accomplish on my own, Jesus came into this world about 2,000 years ago to provide a way out of this world through faith in His crucifixion and resurrection to life. The first step is called repentance or "turning around." In reality the Christian walk is a matter of continuous course correction or quality improvement because all through it I have needed to make additional changes in how I live. So repentance is both a turning point and a continuing process. It is undertaken in faith until God takes me out of this world.

During my life on this planet, I have not always understood the whys of what I have experienced even though I have earnestly tried to live an obedient life. Nor do I always clearly comprehend how to apply the Bible's various verses to my life in a practical manner. In fact some verses seem quite contradictory until I establish their context. Sometimes the context is historical or cultural. Sometimes it is a matter of letting the Spirit guide my understanding.

The Bible's Words are Spirit even though they are written on a material page, or at least displayed on a visual monitor or heard from an audio broadcast. They can only be really understood when comprehended with God's help, and God promises to give His Spirit to those who obey Him. This means that I must act faithfully on what I understand so that God will give me more understanding. I will now share some of the basics of Jesus' teaching in regards to citizenship and warfare.

Jesus taught the multitudes,

"But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven...Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:44-48)

On trial for his life, Jesus testified to Pilate.

"My Kingdom is not of this world (age). If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36)

Moses told the ancient Israelites backed against the Red Sea,

"Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you have seen today, you will never see them again forever." (Exodus 14:13)

Paul summed up the perspective of the faithful until Jesus returns as,

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body

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of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”
(Philippians 3:20-21)

Citizenship is determined by one of three methods:

- 1. By genetic inheritance**
- 2. By location of birth**
- 3. By choice or solemn oath of allegiance**

By one or more of these three methods every person lives with an earthly citizenship of political nation state to which he or she must deal with legally, pragmatically. The true disciple of Jesus Christ is adopted into a heavenly kingdom taking the name of the Father as his or her own as a consequence of spiritual birth in an empire yet to appear on earth. (Ephesians 3:14-19) By confession the believer proclaims ultimate allegiance to the Savior Son, who is also the King of that kingdom to come to the earth, which already exists in heaven. (Romans 10:8-13; Hebrews 2:12) In this manner the spiritually regenerated follower of the Creator is by default at once a citizen of heaven as well as its ambassador by living in the world or age, because that kingdom does not yet exercise materially authority over the nations or natural families of humanity.

Thus, my logical conclusion from the above is that the modern day disciple of Jesus Christ does not fight in the wars of this world using the weapons of this world because he or she is first a citizen responsible to heaven. The disciple is an ambassador for the heavenly kingdom to come to a humanity enslaved around the world through diverse deceits of our common enemy, Satan, the god of this world or age. Since Satan sways every political state, by consequential necessity an obedient Christian must subordinate his earthly citizenship in the governments of this fallen age to his obligations to His heavenly king, Jesus.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2Corinthians 5:20)

The power to execute judgment lies with God and not with the disciple. As a begotten child of God, the believer is not to battle against the persons of any nation with physical violence, which certainly includes military service of any kind. Instead, we are called to overcome the problems of this life – whether they are of an individual or societal nature – through Jesus the Messiah.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (2Corinthians 10:3-6)

Here I will briefly discuss the above compelling reasons why an obedient believer should not engage in the wars of this world or seek to use violence to enforce his or her political or spiritual will upon another. Since all violence is rooted in sin, I believe we should all pray for a way of escape when confronted with violence directed at us personally and then be open to what God provides. I will not address the issues of individual self-defense, which is left to each of us to deal with as God guides us.

The Way of the Mediator Lord Jesus

Jesus is the one Mediator between all of humanity and the Creator Judge. (1Timothy 2:5) Through faith in Him, divine power comes to work in the life of the believer in accordance with the Father's will. Even though the disciple is born of flesh living in a fallen, material world, he or she can live after the Spirit in accordance with the ways of the heavenly kingdom to come. (Romans 8:1-17) The life of a believer is not exempt from trial but experienced with grace, the serendipitous presence of goodness where evil would be normally expected.

The teachings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount, need to be studied with the above in mind. His Way is the way of unconditional love. It is not psycho-social reciprocity. Because each person is sentenced

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to death, we do not deserve the graceful forgiveness of that penalty. But in Messiah, the believer receives this immortal reprieve and so is required to pass it on to an unbelieving world. The effect of this aspect of Jesus' way is to liberate the disciple from the spiritual and material chains of this age. Jesus breaks the cycle of psychological, emotional and physical violence by teaching us to "turn the other cheek."

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) exposes the deceitful and deadly masquerade of conditional love as true love. Conditional love is the naturally occurring love of this material age. It is composed of two essential dimensions: ego extension and reciprocity. The first expresses itself in the care for anything or anyone perceived as an extension of one's self or ego. This concept may be easily seen in a person's normal and honorable concern for family, friends, community well being and/or profession, but conditional love lacks an eternal dimension. It does not lead to eternal life.

Conditional love's fundamental nature of transactional reciprocity is complex and not always directly rational. Within the exercise of conditional love exists an exchange or contract where something of value is traded with another person or organization for something of greater perceived value. There are conditions attached to the transaction that concern the perception of at least one of the participant's sense of value. This principle provides the basis of market economics, where it is permissible, but when conditional transactions involve the essence of life, then that which is sacred has been commodified: it has been denominated in a materialistic currency of exchange.

Life is sacred. It makes no difference whether the "life" in question refers to the biological or spiritual dimension. It could be a person's labor, sexual behavior, health or even private property. Sacred life includes non-human forms as well, if for no other reason than that all life on earth exists as a system to support human life. (To me, it goes beyond that because of the Creator's commands to humanity concerning care for animal life in particular and the environment in general.) Thus, anything involving biogenesis, propagation or agricultural production, is something sacred, which is anything relating to the generation or essential maintenance of biological or spiritual life. Sacred issues by definition involve considerations beyond the commercial value that might be realized in their utilization or exchange. In other words, there are things one does not agree to do simply because there is a potential for profit in doing so.

Conditional love is the natural love of this age. It presents itself as true love, which is unconditional. But true, unconditional love is impossible apart from God because the physical universe is empowered by the natural life force, which is by essence an indivisible meld of good and evil that constantly boils with bubbles of commodified exchange in the pursuit of immediate survival. Only God in His complete expression through the Son and the Spirit is unconditional love. He defines it by His state of being and confers it to others by His grace. There is no other way to receive or experience unconditional love. Humans sometimes sacrifice their lives for others, but this can often be accounted for as being a sacrifice made to protect an extension of one's self, be it family, community or nation that benefits.

Good deeds should be done regardless, but the truth is that good deeds performed out of the mental and physical effort of an individual or an organization is at best behavioral righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount exposes behavioral righteousness as incomplete and insufficient to earn one's place in a heavenly eternity. Good deeds only count eternally if they are powered by God in us through the Holy Spirit. In other words, positional righteousness in Christ is required for salvation. Positional righteousness comes about through the process of faith in God's promises made and guaranteed or sealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus as testified by a life of repentance. To those who obey God, He grants His Spirit. (Acts 5:32)

The simple paradox of the true Christian life is that by giving up everything for Jesus, one inherits everything plus, thus the begotten child of God in reality lacks nothing and so has no material demands at the expense of others. (Matthew 6:25-34) The true disciple can give or bless anyone, believer or unbeliever, without need to receive something in return. He or she has inherited all in receiving the Holy Spirit through faith in the Son. In this manner the citizen of heaven is capable of exercising true, eternally sustainable unconditional love because of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, God Himself, which makes this possible. Unfortunately, most of us do not rely on this pure power of God as much as we

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should. Our natural habits (or "Old Man/Self") learned as citizens of this world represent the "default" option of our spiritual programming. We cannot automatically choose a Holy Spirit default, we must make every single thought or breath consciously subject to God or it is by default a product of the mortal powers of our natural mind, emotion or body.

Therefore, most believers lack the faithful vision and awareness of this true, spiritual and eternal reality, so we struggle, stumble in sin and (out of habit and a lack of faith) try to depend on our own strength to supply our needs and deal with our problems, including our enemies. The Apostle Paul best described this internal struggle in Romans 6-8. In these chapters the believer's old habitual dependence on the natural life force and identifying with the illusory material realities of this age are often referred to as the old man of the flesh.

The new man is the one "born again" in Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will bear good-for-all spiritual fruit in the lives of the faithful. Anything originating and powered by the Holy Spirit is always good for all involved and does not take from one to give to another. The Holy Spirit is the abundant source or spring mentioned by Jesus: it is the eternal waters of life found within the dry midst of our bodies of death. The indwelling Spirit's effects upon who we are and will be transcend the material dimension of time and space to embrace the unknowable dimensions of the heavenly eternity.

So how can a person truly born of the Spirit voluntarily participate in war? He or she cannot! If the believer's life is to exhibit the fruits of the Holy Spirit, then where in this list does one find warfare or other forms of oppression – violent or otherwise?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:22-26)

James 4:1-3 gives the reasons for human quarrels and wars and the way to put an end to them (v. 4-10):

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

The believer who has Christ has everything. He or she lacks nothing, for God has promised to supply all of our needs. We have no guilt, for we are totally forgiven. We look to Jesus and trust in His promises, which become a reality to us through faith. Faith is the necessary precursor and proof of the unseen spiritual realities that eventually manifest themselves in the material world, too. (Hebrew 11:1, 6 and the whole chapter of examples.) Disciples of Jesus experience most of their human problems when they lose the spiritual perspective granted by the eyes, ears and heart of faith.

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The natural man lives in a world of want founded on unsatisfied guilt. The penalty of death is ever present in the natural mind of humanity, and we devote our lives to put it off. The human brain is wired for self-preservation. Yes, there are those who purposefully confront death to "stare it in the face" with adrenaline driven daring-do behaviors where they may cheat death for an instant in order to fortify the illusion of immortality required by our subconscious egos. Others expiate their guilt by associating with those who share similar sins, consoling one another that they are decent persons undeserving of judgment. But they forget that God requires perfection in order to inherit eternity. That is something we cannot do on our own, nor with any amount of power obtained from the natural (breath of life) spiritual force.

A naturally selfish person who thinks that he lacks something will try to take it from others who have it. There are legal ways to do this and illegal ways. Despite some common exceptions of intentional altruism, those who "have" usually do not want to let go of what they consider necessary for their own survival. At the root cause of this strife is the natural human drive of self-preservation. In a material world of scarcity we grasp for the essentials of survival. We cling to life even at the expense of others dying. We lay up treasures on earth for our own anticipated needs, but these treasures become magnetic targets for those who have not. If the needy are more powerful, they take what we have for themselves – sometimes by overt force.

Perhaps we can see this stark truth more clearly in another context. Most human beings demand the death of animals in order to eat the meat that they think they need to survive. While eating meat is permitted by God, it was not originally intended for human food: bloody death is not required to sustain life. Meat eating is incongruous with the divine nature of life inherent. Although some few sacrifices may be continued as a teaching reminder of the bloody cost of naturally sinful living, the common consumption of meat, as well as war, will not be features of the Messianic Kingdom. (Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-9)

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught the paradox of not contending or fighting with evil but overcoming it with good. This truth does not operate effectively in a sustainable manner within the context of the material dimension. In fact it always fails at some point if God's Spirit is not present to intervene. But with God's Spirit present in us, a reality exists that performs His purposes externally of ourselves: in other words, a miracle will take place. This means that even those who doubt should attempt to follow Jesus' teaching way of unconditional love, which is the Father's gift to the world:

"You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

"If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

"Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

"Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

"If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:38-48)

Peace and justice do not exist in the world. They have not from the beginning due to the nature of humanity. The Bible gives one of the primary reasons why:

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There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV)

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain... (Jude 11)

There is none that does good, no not one. (Romans 3:12)

In the Bible our natural spiritual power is referred to as the "breath of life." It is the spiritual force naturally present in the universe recognized by shamans and other religious professionals. Our mortal bodies are powered by the breath of life originally received from the mouth of God. When a fleshly body and this natural life force are present together, a human or animal become living souls. While animals are "nefeshim" or "souls" in the biblical definition, they do not have the same eternal potential as people because they were not made in the spiritual image and after the formed likeness of God. (Genesis 7:21-22) Since the union of body and spirit creates a living identity or soul, death results from their separation. (James 2:26)

The Tree of Life stood in the Garden of Eden as the representation of Eternal Life through the incorruptible Holy Spirit of the Creator, which is the true light of godly love. (Genesis 2:9; John 1:1-10; Revelation 22:2) The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represented the spirit of mortal life. Mortality means that each person must die at the end of a materially bounded existence experiencing good and evil. (Genesis 2:16-17)

The Serpent (Lucifer become Satan) presented the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as spiritually potent to make humans as God. Because Adam and Eve believed this lie, they chose the fruit from this Tree instead of taking from the Tree of Life, thus human nature ever since has been an indivisible admixture of good and evil recognized universally in the East as the balanced opposites of yin and yang.

Consequently, what seems natural to people leads them to death because our nature deceives us due to its natural, inherently corrupt spiritual power source. Because the life force is an indivisible fusion of good and evil, even when we do good things, they will ultimately be balanced out by some form of evil. The net sum of this spiritual equation is zero, so all human life naturally ends in death. No good thing produced by any person using his or her innate spiritual energy can be effected without some counterbalanced evil also resulting from it at some point in time and place.

Enhancing personal spiritual power through various practices that draw additional life force powers found in the natural world does not change the equation. It always ends in zero or death. In other words the religions of this world present the yin-yang, *chi*, *prana* or natural spiritual forces as being the only spiritual power in the universe. This lie keeps people enslaved to Satan, the god of this age, who presents the mortality-bound natural life force as the eternal power of the Creator God. Thus, millions experience the effects or witness the demonstration of this good-and-evil spiritual force and believe they have a spiritual connection with the cosmos. In actuality they are blinded by the false witness of their experiential spirituality to the very existence of the authentic Holy Spirit, God of Israel.

The Way of Cain

Genesis reveals another major cause of war and violence. Beyond the proclivity of human nature to sin, there is the tendency of human civilization to oppress its citizens in a way that inspires and rewards evil. Cain invented the urban city state. He built the first city and made himself its king so that he could collect (income) taxes off of others' work. (Genesis 4:9-17) He did this because the ground was cursed wherever he went as punishment for murdering his brother Abel. (Genesis 4:12) From the creation of his city state kingdom, the way of Cain meanders its way through time to become the road to Babylon and later, to Rome.

With city states came the first wars for wealth waged in the name of various gods. After Roman Emperor Constantine gave official status to Catholicism, too many bishops of Rome and other cities inspired,

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supported and waged wars in the name of Jesus. The Lutherans and Calvinists learned their lessons well from ancient Rome in this regard. While the most famous of these "Christian" wars are the Crusades and Thirty Years War, organized Christianity has conducted numerous campaigns of violence, including the persecution of one denomination by another. However, no nationality or major religion has been exempt from this phenomenon. Military conquest was central to the spread and growth of a number of various Islamic governments over the last 1400 years as well as to the rise and expansion of the twentieth century Japanese Empire, for example.

Humanity is confounded by its own nature to construct "legitimate" reasons for nation states to pursue war, or for a person to use of violence to attain his desire(s). Sometimes these reasons are justified under the leadership of a nation state by the writings of revered religious teachers or prophets. This approach to problem solving is not limited to states. It is also widely used by political movements seeking to establish control over a territory or people. What is called war when related to states is often called terrorism when related to smaller groups. In other words, terrorism on a massive scale is warfare, and warfare on a smaller scale is terrorism.

Throughout human history, war has often been waged to secure "peace," but that desired condition of life has, to date, ever eluded us. The past thousands of years filled with strife are the result of the Way of Cain that runs in rebellion against God. It is the Babylonian error famously spread globally by Alexander the Great, perfected by ancient Rome and adapted to later conditions by Charlemagne, Napoleon and others. Consequently, it seems right and natural for Christians to fight in "just wars" for national defense and in the cause of liberty. It seems right, but it is the way of death. It is not God's way of peace and justice.

Jesus is the way of life – now and forever. His way is incompatible with human wars, persecutions, oppression and death – whether they be officially sanctioned by "legitimate" governments or not. The disciplined follower of Jesus does not follow the way of woe. He or she does not fight in a military unit or support a military objective. Biblical Christians are ambassadors for peace because they are the citizens first of a better, heavenly kingdom to come. Although the Bible teaches that the Kingdom of God will be established by a conquering army, that army is not a human one. The Bible gives no justification for a disciple of Jesus to bear the sword on behalf of any state or political movement of this age.

The Babylonian Nation State System

The militaristic, economic-political system of the modern nation state developed from ancient Babylon, through Athens, Rome, Constantinople and various other centers of western civilization – most notably Paris, London and New York. Prophetically, the story goes back to the New Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2), but the ultimate societal and cultural roots of Babylon go back to Genesis 11:1-9 and that famous Tower of Babel built to unite the world under one political and spiritual ruler. God confused the language of humanity back then in order to delay the full power and manifestation of mystery Babylon until the appointed time according to His plan.

But the Babylonian gods that those ancients worshipped are still with us. Ruling them all was and is the universal god of this age that the Bible calls Satan, the Adversary or Enemy. Jesus acknowledged Satan's power to make any person willing to submit to him the ruler of any nation he chose. (Matthew 4:9-10) Paul calls this fallen angel the "god of this age" in 2Corinthians 4:4. The Enemy's purpose from the beginning has been to create a world state that mixes the nations and unites all religions in worship of himself. He does not care how, and he masquerades as a "good god" - an angel of light, to promote his deceptive policies. (2Corinthians 11:14)

Of course, this power of the devil over the governments of this age is by God's temporary and purposed permission. Satan's (or Lucifer's) freedom of action came about as part of the package of freedoms necessitated by granting free will and the power of decision to human beings, without which true love is impossible. The true Creator God of Israel will put an end to Satan's charades one day soon and establish His righteous throne over the nations of the earth in place of the now evolving world state based on the destruction of individuality and commerce in the commodification of all life – plant, animal and human.

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When Jesus comes again, His angelic armies will fight, but even then the Eternal God's mortal servants will not be bearing arms in the service of one nation state or another. (Revelation 19:11-21) In fact, the armies of all the nation states will be gathered to fight against Him only to lose. (Zechariah 14:2-4) In the place of our modern system of seemingly independent but actually interlocking nation states, every family of Adam will have their own national government under the King of Kings, who will reign from Jerusalem as the King of Israel.

Bible prophecy reveals in the books of Daniel and Revelation that the modern nation state will evolve into an attempted global state. This world system will be led by a western charismatic leader who combines political with religious or spiritual power. He will direct the world economy and command the world's armed forces, but he will have two primary rivals – one from the Muslim world and the second from Asia. This fascinating scenario is discussed in depth in the two books I helped hi-tech inventor and applied scientist Herbert R. Stollorz to write, ***Apocalypse Prophesied*** and ***Mystery of Tammuz 17***.

The Last Days of this Present Age of War and Spiritual Confusion

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! (Matthew 18:7 KJV)

Modern western civilization and its global extensions are described by the Bible as being Babylonian in their systemic essence. Global urbanism is materially rich and engaging, based on leveraged economics and infused with powerful spiritual mysteries. God has promised to judge this modern age of Babylon as a whole, and its capital and leadership specifically. The mortal and "immortal" leadership of this world will stir up all nations to oppose the Prince of Peace, but they will be defeated and destroyed or imprisoned unto final judgment. (Zechariah 14:1-10; Revelation 18:2, 8, 21-24; 19:19-20:10)

These prophecies are sure, yet Jesus warns us not to be a part of them. We cannot use the fact that God is allowing offenses (war) in the world as an excuse to participate in them. Throughout His ministry, Jesus often quoted or made allusion to Daniel's prophecies. The most famous of these references is Matthew 24:15, where He specifically mentions the "abomination of desolation" from Daniel 9:27.

Daniel 2 describes the prophetic vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. In this chapter God revealed how all of our modern civilization ultimately derives its political, economic and spiritual heritage from Babylon. What he envisioned looking forward in time we now look backward from the present through time to identify the empires of Rome, Greece and Persia to Babylon, the statue's head or beginning. The whole system of successive empires is named after Babylon, its head. The Babylonian system of human government will continue to exist right up until the end of the age when its final global manifestation will be destroyed by a divine rock cut without hands (by Jesus the Messianic King of Kings) in verse 44-45.

This prophetic scenario is repeated in Daniel chapters 7 and 8 using different symbols. This is the section where Jesus' title as the "Son of Man" comes from. (Daniel 7:13) Further prophetic insights about the last days are found in Daniel chapters 11 and 12. In fact Daniel is told that "those who have insight will understand" the times that we live in today. Those who have this spiritual insight are called to lead those who will repent and believe into life. (Daniel 12:3) It says nothing about the faithful waging war with the sword.

When it comes to the United States of America or any other modern nation state, we are biblically talking about a human government under Satan's ultimate control. Thus, when the Bible mentions Babylon prophetically, it refers to the modern Babylon of today. Without hesitation or qualification, the clarion call of the Word of God to His servants from beginning to end is to,

"Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." (Revelation 18:4-5; Jeremiah 51:6-10)

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The bottom line is that the disciple of Jesus Christ cannot place citizenship obligations of the United States of America and any other political entity of this planet above those to the Kingdom of God. If the believer is to "come out" of states referred to as Babylon by the Bible, how could he or she serve in any military force? It makes no difference which of this earth's political entities eventually head up or fulfill the prophecies of the end time Babylon, nor does this basic issue change when the details concerning the religion or nationality of Antichrist and/or the False Prophet become obvious. It is irrelevant to try to pick sides amongst the world's governments: we are to choose God's Kingdom now.

Satan is the god of this age and the spiritual king of all its nation states. The United Nations or any other global government will not bring peace either. It is impossible for the "power of the people" in any form to end war because the spiritual power of the people is the natural life force of good **AND** evil. You cannot have one without the other. Lasting peace will only come as a sovereign act of God. Meanwhile, we do the best we can to follow Jesus while living in very imperfect and often hostile world.

The believer's obligation to be a law-abiding citizen cannot be used as a reason or excuse to override the above foundational principle in order to serve in one of the world's armed forces because our earthly citizenship is superseded by the heavenly one. We are commanded by word and example to obey God rather than people when there is a conflict between the teachings of our Lord and the requirements of the state. If it costs us our lives to do so, we have a sure promise of eternal redemption as compensation.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (Titus 2:11-15)

Paul commands us not to become the "slaves of men." What then, is a soldier? Although he may have some property and/or other "rights," a soldier or sailor is the bound servant of some human organization. He is under orders to perform violent murder and destruction even if it results in his or her death. The warrior's life is sold for a price – wages, booty, glory, duty, dedication to a cause, etc. But the believer is not in the position of being able to sell again what has already been bought. Such an action is illegal in any culture. Thus, he or she cannot serve in the military.

Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called. (1Corinthians 7:20-24)

In Romans 12 Paul summarizes the manner of life we are to live. Since our lives are bought, our bodies are presented in daily life to God's service, which is not the same as the state, for the Kingdom of God is yet to be established on the earth. The kingdoms of this age are the daughters of Babylon, all of them. Prophetically, they all oppose the realm of Jesus at His return, which we will examine later.

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Note that the believer is "not to be conformed to this world" and that Paul quotes the Sermon on the Mount at the conclusion of this section. Like Jesus, Paul exhorts the true believer to perform one kind of service after another, any one of which is totally incompatible with a life enlisted or devoted to warfare – even for purposes of self-defense or "legitimate" vengeance. "So far as it depends on" us, we are to live in "peace with all men." We do not to rely upon our own wisdom, or another's, to determine or define whether a war is "just" enough for us to fight in it. The way of Jesus is much simpler, though more difficult.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:1-21)
[Emphasis my own.]

In the following, 13th chapter of Romans, Paul does admonish the faithful to respect and be obedient to human governments as much as possible. Although human governments fall short in the judgment of God, they do serve many necessary functions in this age. He permits their establishment and does not deny their need of funds for operation. However, God does judge secular government in regards to the just establishment of moral laws as well as their fair execution with equity. Those who govern are more answerable for these matters than ordinary citizens.

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Meanwhile, the believer is to owe no one anything but love. Besides a suggestion against taking on material debt, this principle should be applied to all social interaction with others. A true Christian should not enter into any commitment that requires actions (and thoughts) contrary to the biblical definition of love. To me, this includes military service.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good.

But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:1-8)

Thus, the believer is to be a good citizen of his host country, yet he or she possesses a higher citizenship in heaven, which takes precedence over any loyalties on earth. This is especially true when it comes to the promulgation of the Gospel. "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

No one can see yet what God is constructing, yet the disciples are referred to as the building blocks of a holy, eternal and spiritual temple now begun in heaven. Jesus is the cornerstone of this temple and its High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrew 1-7)

A follower of Jesus is a Melchizedek priest in training and an ambassador of the heavenly temple (kingdom) he serves. In the resurrection he or she will be installed formally into that heavenly office. (Revelation 5:10; 20:6) The believer's present calling requires submission to human governments, but only in a way that will honor all men and fulfill Jesus' directive of, "overcoming evil with good."

Mortal combat does not pass the simplest qualifiers in this regard. Jesus' words are very simple and direct. Any justification of military force requires elaborate explanations and reasoning. Their net effect is to conditionally reinterpret biblical passages, which violates the very essence and message of the Father's unconditional love revealed in the Son and empowered in fallible mortals by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual

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house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. (1Peter 2:1-20)

God's Holy Spirit is today accessible to everyone who believes and repents. In receiving the Holy Spirit, the faithful are born again to a promised eternal life by faith in the reality of the eternal Son of God's redemption that also guarantees the eventual transformation of our bodies from the natural sentence of certain death. In faith we testify by our words and deeds that God does still indeed intervene in the affairs of a single person, a nation and/or the entire world.

Since we have access to this Spirit today, should we live any differently than how it will be in the kingdom to come with Messiah's reign on earth? If the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will make it possible for people to live together in peace with justice, joy and love for a thousand years, why should it not make it possible to fulfill Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:17-21?

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Until Jesus comes to enforce world peace, let these words guide us along the path of faith traveling in the midst of this jungle of an age. Don't leave the path and become entangled in the Babylonish undergrowth of material greed, sensual enslavement and spiritual confusion. Don't be enticed by the lures of its pitchmen. They offer deceitful rewards to destroy your unique identity and role in God's plan for humanity.

Religious affiliation does not identify the true disciple of Jesus. They are identified by the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. He or she will live for others instead of dying for them. Do your best to legally avoid military service. It takes work and preparation. There are a few organizations committing to help you to do it for yourself. Please use this material as it honestly reflects your own beliefs. Choose life and not death, and do not be surprised if your choice results in alienation from the popular culture and opposition from the powers of wealth and government.

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I urge you to listen to the calling of God to a higher order of citizenship as a child of God and heir of His eternal kingdom. Through the joys and difficulties of your walk following His higher ways, you will come to know the Creator of all that is good. You will call friend the Redeemer who has saved you from death and who comes to liberate the world from the shackles of sin, political corruption, spiritual deceit and death.

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

Jesus laid down His life for us as the ultimate friend. We are to lay down our lives for Him. The Bible as His Word guides how we are to lay down our lives for our mortal neighbors, and it does not include violence or military service. I leave you with these other words of John, the apostle of love:

If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (John 15:9)

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (1John 2:15-16)

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1John 3:1)