



Should Christians Use Violence?

A Look at Self Defense, War, and the Death Penalty as They Pertain to the Christian

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The question of the Christian's use of violence comes up time and time again. Can a Christian use force to defend himself? What about war and the death penalty? It is the purpose of this paper to show that Jesus did not allow His followers to use violence to correct the delinquencies of sin. Christians who hold the position that it is permissible to use violence to defend themselves or others, or that it is permissible to go to war or those who approve of the use of the death penalty must seek support for this position from the Old Testament, since there is nothing to support this teaching in the New Testament. They usually will go to passages such as "an eye for an eye" or "a tooth for a tooth", and we do find this teaching in the Old Testament Law; the question then becomes, does the Old Testament Law pertain to Christians? The teaching of the Scriptures shows that it does not. The first thing to notice concerning the Law is that it was given to the nation of Israel, a physical nation. Christians belong to the kingdom of God, which is not at this time a physical nation. The Law of Moses contained over 600 commands by which the Israelites were expected to live. These commands were given because of sin and to set the nation apart from the rest of the nations of the world.

The Gentile nations, however, were not given this Law. The apostle Paul makes this abundantly clear in several of his writings. Speaking to the believers at the church in Rome, he says:

Romans 2:12-16 (KJV)¹

*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;
(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

¹ All Scripture citations are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

So, the Gentiles did not have the Mosaic Law and as such were not subject to it. He likewise indicates this in another passage - here speaking to the Jewish believers at Rome:

Romans 3:19 (KJV)

*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, **it saith to them who are under the law**: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

This is a clear indication that not everyone was under the Mosaic Law. Let's look at one more passage.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (KJV)

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; **to them that are under the law**, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

***To them that are without law**, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Here he acknowledges two groups in reference to the law, those who are under the Law and those who are not. However, someone may say that believers are considered Jews because Paul also said:

Romans 2:28-29 (KJV)

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

***But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

And therefore the Law would still apply. It can be seen, however, from the Scriptures that when God gave the Law to Moses, He was already telling of a time when the Law would end. Consider God's words to Moses.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (KJV)

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

*And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.***

Notice several things God said here. Firstly, He said He would raise up a prophet to the Israelites, like Moses from their brethren. Secondly, He said, this prophet would speak the words that God gave Him, and thirdly, God said, 'Whoever does not listen to this prophet, I will require it of him.' Let's look at the first point.

What separated Moses from all of the other prophets? He brought the Law to God's people; Moses was a lawgiver. God said He would raise up another prophet like Moses. Therefore, that prophet would be a lawgiver.

Genesis 49:8-10 (KJV)

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Jacob said that a law giver will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes. According to this prophecy this law giver would come from the tribe of Judah. That prophet would be both a law giver and from the tribe of Judah. Who is that prophet, and were the Jews looking for Him? The Jews were anticipating that prophet; they asked John the Baptist if he was that prophet.

John 1:19-26 (KJV)

*And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?
 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. **Art thou that prophet?** And he answered, No.
 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?
 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.
 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.
 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, **neither that prophet?**
 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;*

They asked John are you that prophet?

They wanted to know if John was the prophet that Moses spoke of. Others also expected "that prophet".

John 6:11-14 (KJV)

*And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.
 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, **Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.**
 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.
Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

These men knew of, and were expecting, "that prophet", and they understood Jesus to be that prophet. The Scriptures also confirm this in Luke's recording of Peter's words in the book of Acts.

Acts 3:19-24 (KJV)

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:
 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world*

began.

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people._

Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

Since Jesus is "that prophet" and the new lawgiver. He is the one, who speaks God words of whom Moses wrote,

Deuteronomy 18:19 (KJV) *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*

The second point is that this prophet would speak God's words. Jesus' own words give testimony to this point.

John 7:14-18 (KJV)

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

*Jesus answered them, and said, **My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.***

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

John 14:21-24 (KJV)

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

*Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.***

*He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: **and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.***

Thirdly, God said whoever would not listen to "that prophet"; He would require it of him. A key point to notice is that God said, "Whoever will not listen to "MY" words, which He shall speak...". So, these are the words of God Himself. The phrase "I will require it of him" would seem to mean that God will inquire of, or question, this one. However, Peter gives more detail in regard to this passage of Scripture. He says that whoever will not listen to "that prophet", shall be destroyed from among the people.

Acts 3:22-23 (KJV)

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

It would be wise then to listen to "that prophet".

Therefore having established that Jesus is "that prophet", that He is the new lawgiver, and that He is speaking the words of God, we can conclude that the teachings that Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount and other places are the new law.

Some might say that Jesus took the Mosaic Law to a higher level, and therefore, it is applicable to Christians. However, God told of a time when the Mosaic Law would end. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 42:1-10 (KJV)

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

*Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, **and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;***

To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them

that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

Here Isaiah is speaking of the coming of Christ. God says He will give Him, Christ, as a covenant of the people. He says - "Behold, the former things are come to pass." The former things are the Old Covenant, the Mosaic Law. God said, "New things do I declare." Those new things are in the New Covenant, and they are the things that Jesus taught. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave new commands, many that were revolutionary in His time. However, God has clearly stated here that when Christ would come, old things would pass away. That is the Mosaic Law. Paul (if you believe he wrote Hebrews) also states this:

Hebrews 7:11-19 (KJV)

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The writer of Hebrews gives more confirmation of this.

Hebrews 8:6-13 (KJV)

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

*For finding fault with them, he saith, **Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:***

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

*In that he saith, A new covenant, **he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.***

These passages of Scripture show that the commandment which had gone before, the Mosaic Law, has been done away with. Jesus fulfilled that Law and therefore it is through Him and his commands that the Christian is to abide. Paul said to the Jewish believers at Rome,

Romans 10:4 (KJV) For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

This passage of Scripture shows beyond doubt that for the believer, the Law had come to an end.

In John chapter 14 John records Jesus' words.

John 14:18-24 (KJV)

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.²

Jesus said, 'he who loves me keeps my commands'. He also said 'he that does not keep my commandments doesn't love me'. These are hard words, but they are from Jesus Himself, this is not an interpretation. His commands are clear, He said, 'love your enemies', 'bless them that persecute you'. One can say, but, or what if, but Jesus didn't, He said, 'he who keeps my commands, it is he who loves me'.

Since the Old Covenant has vanished away Christians get their commands from the New Testament, the commands that Jesus gave. Someone might say, "Jesus said he did not come to end the Law but to fulfill it."

Matthew 5:17-18 (YLT)²

'Do not suppose that I came to throw down the law or the prophets—I did not come to throw down, but to fulfil; for, verily I say to you, till that the heaven and the earth may pass away, one iota or one tittle may not pass away from the law, till that all may come to pass.

Well, didn't Jesus fulfill the Law? Paul said that Jesus is the end of the Law for righteousness for those who believe.

Romans 10:1-4 (KJV)

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the

² Young's Literal Translation.

righteousness of God.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

There is sufficient evidence showing that the Mosaic Law did not and does not now apply to Christians. The only laws from the Old Testament that would apply to Christians are the ones that Jesus may have carried over. However, as can be seen, Jesus did not let Christians off the hook. In fact, Christ's laws are even more demanding than those of the Old Covenant. While the Jews couldn't commit adultery, Christians can't even have lustful thoughts. Jesus said that was adultery. While the Old Testament Jews could not murder anyone, Christians cannot even harbor ill will in their hearts; for this, according to Jesus, is murder. So, in reality Jesus has called Christians to a higher standard than that of the Mosaic Law. Now, considering the issue of violence; Christians are called to a higher law than that of the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law allowed an "eye for an eye", however, Jesus said, "But I say unto you..." He is calling Christians to a higher standard. He tells them to turn the other cheek and to love their enemies, not to hate them. He says to bless them that persecute you. When Jesus said to turn the other cheek, the context was an eye for an eye. He said, don't return evil for evil, as contrasted with an 'eye for an eye'. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that Christians are not to use violence. His opinion is represented perfectly in the Beattitudes:

Matthew 5:3-12 (KJV)

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Remember, in those days, persecution could very easily mean being executed for being a Christian. However, notice that Jesus did not put any

“ifs” in His statements. He said, “Bless them who persecute you”, not bless them as long as they don’t try to harm you.

Jesus gave this warning before giving His commands:

Matthew 5:19-20 (KJV)

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

*For I say unto you, That **except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.***

Now, remember, it was the Pharisees that upheld the Law of Moses. They were deriving their righteousness from upholding the Mosaic Law. Jesus said to His disciples, ‘if your righteousness does not exceed theirs, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ He then proceeds to give them His commands.

Matthew 5:21-22 (KJV)

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, **Thou shalt not kill;** and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

***But I say unto you,** That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Matthew 5:38-48 (KJV)

*Ye have heard that it hath been said, **An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:***

***But I say unto you,** That ye **resist not evil:** but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

***But I say unto you, Love your enemies,** bless them that curse you, do*

good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus said to love your enemies. How can one love his or her enemies when he or she is doing them harm?

Luke records it this way:

Luke 6:35-36 (KJV)

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

God is merciful to the evil, and Jesus is telling Christians that they should be also. Self defense is not showing mercy. It is returning evil for evil. When Jesus was taken prisoner, He did not defend Himself. He did not retaliate. He simply submitted to the Romans. He suffered but was obedient to God, even to death. That is what Christians are called to do, if need be. Jesus said:

Matthew 10:37-39 (KJV)

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Jesus left no place for violence to the Christian. There is also an incident where Paul was stoned that is rather interesting.

Acts 14:19-20 (KJV)

And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

***Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him,** he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

Luke records that the disciples stood around him. However, Luke makes no mention of anyone trying to defend Paul. Arguably this is an argument from silence and in and of itself doesn't carry much weight. However, it does make one wonder why, if they were permitted to use violence, why these disciples didn't defend Paul.

Paul also gives quite clear teaching on this issue in Romans 12-13. In these two chapters, he uses three different forms of the same Greek word, "ekdikos". The English translations are, avenge, vengeance, and revenger.

Romans 12:4-21 (KJV)

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath**: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Here Paul basically says the same thing as Jesus do not return evil for evil.

In the previous section Paul is telling Christians how to live. He gave them the same instructions that Jesus did. Love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you. He goes on in chapter 13 to explain how God is the one who institutes governments and uses them for the purpose of administering His justice. When Paul wrote this chapter, it was the Roman government that was in charge. This is the authority that Paul said they should obey.

Romans 13:1-6 (KJV)

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

*For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: **for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.***

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

The first instance of "ekdikos" is in Romans 12:19.

Romans 12:19 (KJV)

Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath**: for it is written, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

The meaning here is,

Thayer's Greek Definitions

G1556 ἐκδικέω ekdikeō Thayer Definition: **1) to vindicate one's right, do one justice 1a) to protect, defend, one person from another 2) to avenge a thing 2a) to punish a person for a thing**

Not to defend oneself or others. Then he gives the reason why in the same verse.

Romans 12:19 (KJV)

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, **Vengeance** is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

The meaning here is,

Thayer's Greek Definitions

G1557 ἐκδικησις ekdikēsis Thayer Definition: **1) a revenging, vengeance, punishment**

Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

G1557 ἐκδικησις ekdikēsis ek-dik'-ay-sis From G1556; **vindication, retribution**:—(a-, re-) venge (-ance), **punishment**.

The word translated "Vengeance" is another form of the same Greek word.

His reason is because retribution or punishment belongs to God, not the Christian. In Chapter 13, Paul says that the powers that exist are instituted by God for the good of man. He also says that the one who resists that authority resists God and brings damnation on him or herself. Paul says that these powers (governments) are God's "revengers", they administer justice. When Paul wrote this, he was speaking of the Roman government. There were no Christians in the Roman government; he was speaking of secular authorities. He had just told the Christians not to avenge themselves, but to leave place for God's wrath. Here, Paul uses the third form of the word:

Thayer's Greek Definitions

G1558 ἐκδικος ekdikos Thayer Definition: **1) without law and justice 2) exacting penalty from one 2a) an avenger, punisher**

Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

G1558 ἐκδικος ekdikos ek'-dik-os From G1537 and G1349; **carrying justice out, that is, a punisher**:—a (re-) venger.

He tells the Christians not to defend themselves, but to leave vengeance to God and that the secular governments are God's avengers.

What about war? Well, there's really no difference. Paul says that Christians do participate in war.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (KJV)

*For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war after the flesh:** (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Looking at the Scriptures it can be seen that this is the same thing Jesus said.

John 18:31-36 (KJV)

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

*Jesus answered him, **Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?***

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

*Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,** that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

Both Jesus and Paul said that Christians don't go to war. God also spoke of a time when His people would no longer go to war.

Isaiah 2:1-4 (KJV)

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: **for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.***

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Micah 4:1-5 (KJV)

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

*And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: **for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.***

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. *But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.*

For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

In these passages Isaiah and Micah say that the word of the Lord went out from Jerusalem. That is exactly what happened with the gospel. The early Christians understood these passages to be talking about them. The following quotes are rather long; however, it's important to keep them in context to show that this is indeed what they believed. This first quote is from Justin the Martyr, written circa 160 A.D. It is from his first apology addressed to the Roman Emperor.

To the Emperor Titus Aelius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar, and to his son Verissimus the Philosopher, and to Lucius the Philosopher, the natural son of Caesar, and the adopted son of Pius, a lover of learning, and to the sacred Senate, with the whole People of the Romans, I, Justin, the son of Priscus and grandson of Bacchius, natives of Flavia Neapolis in Palestine, present this address and petition in behalf of those of all nations who are unjustly hated and wantonly abused, myself being one of them.

Chap. XXXIX.—Direct Predictions by the Spirit.

*And when the Spirit of prophecy speaks as predicting things that are to come to pass, He speaks in this way: **"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."** (Isa. 2:3) And **that it did so come to pass, we can convince you.** For from Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number, and these illiterate, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God; and **we who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies,** but also, that we may not lie nor deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ. For that saying, "The tongue has sworn but the mind is unsworn," might be imitated by us in this matter. But if the soldiers enrolled by you, and who have taken the military oath, prefer their allegiance to their own life, and parents, and country, and all kindred, though you can offer them nothing incorruptible, it were verily ridiculous if we, who earnestly long for incorruption, should not endure all things, in order to obtain what we desire from Him who is able to grant it.*

Following is a dialogue between Justin the martyr and Trypho a Jew.

Chap. CIX.—The Conversion of the Gentiles Has Been Predicted by Micah.

"But that the Gentiles would repent of the evil in which they led erring lives, when they heard the doctrine preached by His apostles from Jerusalem, and which they learned through them, suffer me to show you by quoting a short statement from the prophecy of Micah, one of the twelve

[minor prophets]. This is as follows: 'And in the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, established on the top of the mountains; it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and they shall enlighten us in His way, and we shall walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many peoples, and shall rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And each man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree; and there shall be none to terrify: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk in the name of their gods; but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will assemble her that is afflicted, and gather her that is driven out, and whom I had plagued; and I shall make her that is afflicted a remnant, and her that is oppressed a strong nation. And the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, and even for ever.'" (Mic. 4:1ff)

Chap. CX.—A Portion of the Prophecy Already Fulfilled in the Christians: The Rest Shall Be Fulfilled at the Second Advent.

*And when I had finished these words, I continued: "Now I am aware that your teachers, sirs, admit the whole of the words of this passage to refer to Christ; and I am likewise aware that they maintain He has not yet come; or if they say that He has come, they assert that it is not known who He is; but when He shall become manifest and glorious, then it shall be known who He is. And then, they say, the events mentioned in this passage shall happen, just as if there was no fruit as yet from the words of the prophecy. O unreasoning men! understanding not what has been proved by all these passages, that two advents of Christ have been announced: the one, in which He is set forth as suffering, inglorious, dishonoured, and crucified; but the other, in which He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians, who, having learned the true worship of God from the law, and the word which went forth from Jerusalem by means of the apostles of Jesus, have fled for safety to the God of Jacob and God of Israel; **and we who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons,—our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into implements of tillage,—and we cultivate piety, righteousness,***

philanthropy, faith, and hope, which we have from the Father Himself through Him who was crucified; and sitting each under his vine, i.e., each man possessing his own married wife. For you are aware that the prophetic word says, 'And his wife shall be like a fruitful vine.' (Ps. 128:3) Now it is evident that no one can terrify or subdue us who have believed in Jesus over all the world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus. For Just as if one should cut away the fruit-bearing parts of a vine, it grows up again, and yields other branches flourishing and fruitful; even so the same thing happens with us. For the vine planted by God and Christ the Saviour is His people. But the rest of the prophecy shall be fulfilled at His second coming. For the expression, 'He that is afflicted [and driven out],' i.e., from the world, [implies] that, so far as you and all other men have it in your power, each Christian has been driven out not only from his own property, but even from the whole world; for you permit no Christian to live. But you say that the same fate has befallen your own nation. Now, if you have been cast out after defeat in battle, you have suffered such treatment justly indeed, as all the Scriptures bear witness; but we, though we have done no such [evil acts] after we knew the truth of God, are testified to by God, that, together with the most righteous, and only spotless and sinless Christ, we are taken away out of the earth. For Isaiah cries, 'Behold how the righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart; and righteous men are taken away, and no man considers it.' (Isa. 62:1)

The following quote is from Irenaeus circa 180 A.D. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp; Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John. Here Irenaeus is writing a refutation against the Gnostic doctrine that claimed that Christ came from a different God, than the God of the Old Testament. Irenaeus argues that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. In his argument he applies the passages under discussion to the New Covenant and to Christians.

Chap. XXXIV.—Proof Against the Marcionites, That the Prophets Referred in All Their Predictions to Our Christ.

1. Now I shall simply say, in opposition to all the heretics, and principally against the followers of Marcion, and against those who are like to these, in maintaining that time prophets were from another God [than He who is announced in the Gospel], read with earnest care that Gospel which has been conveyed to us by the apostles, and read with earnest care the prophets, and you will find that the whole conduct, and all the doctrine, and all the sufferings of our Lord, were predicted through them. But if a thought of this kind should then suggest itself to you, to say, What then did the Lord bring to us by His advent?—know ye that He brought all [possible] novelty, by bringing Himself who had been announced. For this very thing was proclaimed beforehand, that a novelty should come to renew and quicken mankind. For the advent of the King is previously announced by those servants who are sent [before Him], in order to the preparation and equipment of those men who are to entertain their Lord. But when the King has actually come, and those who are His subjects have been filled with that joy which was proclaimed beforehand, and have attained to that liberty which He bestows, and share in the sight of Him, and have listened to His words, and have enjoyed the gifts which He confers, the question will not then be asked by any that are possessed of sense what new thing the King has brought beyond [that proclaimed by] those who announced His coming. For He has brought Himself, and has bestowed on men those good things which were announced beforehand, which things the angels desired to look into. (1 Pet. 1:12)

2. But the servants would then have been proved false, and not sent by the Lord, if Christ on His advent, by being found exactly such as He was previously announced, had not fulfilled their words. Wherefore He said, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the law and the prophets till all come to pass." (Rom. 3:21) For by His advent He Himself fulfilled all things, and does still fulfil in the Church the new covenant foretold by the law, onwards to the consummation [of all things]. To this effect also Paul, His apostle, says in the Epistle to the Romans, "But now, (Matt. 5:17, 18) without the law, has the righteousness of God been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; for the just shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:17) But this fact, that the just shall live by faith, had been previously announced (Hab. 2:4) by the prophets.

3. But whence could the prophets have had power to predict the advent of the King, and to preach beforehand that liberty which was bestowed by Him, and previously to announce all things which were done by Christ, His words, His works, and His sufferings, and to predict the new covenant, if they had received prophetic inspiration from another God

[than He who is revealed in the Gospel], they being ignorant, as ye allege, of the ineffable Father, of His kingdom, and His dispensations, which the Son of God fulfilled when He came upon earth in these last times? Neither are ye in a position to say that these things came to pass by a certain kind of chance, as if they were spoken by the prophets in regard to some other person, while like events happened to the Lord. For all the prophets prophesied these same things, but they never came to pass in the case of any one of the ancients. For if these things had happened to any man among them of old time, those [prophets] who lived subsequently would certainly not have prophesied that these events should come to pass in the last times. Moreover, there is in fact none among the fathers, nor the prophets, nor the ancient kings, in whose case any one of these things properly and specifically took place. For all indeed prophesied as to the sufferings of Christ, but they themselves were far from enduring sufferings similar to what was predicted. And the points connected with the passion of the Lord, which were foretold, were realized in no other case. For neither did it happen at the death of any man among the ancients that the sun set at mid-day, nor was the veil of the temple rent, nor did the earth quake, nor were the rocks rent, nor did the dead rise up, nor was any one of these men [of old] raised up on the third day, nor received into heaven, nor at his assumption were the heavens opened, nor did the nations believe in the name of any other; nor did any from among them, having been dead and rising again, lay open the new covenant of liberty. Therefore the prophets spake not of any one else but of the Lord, in whom all these aforesaid tokens concurred.

4. If any one, however, advocating the cause of the Jews, do maintain that this new covenant consisted in the rearing of that temple which was built under Zerubbabel after the emigration to Babylon, and in the departure of the people from thence after the lapse of seventy years, let him know that the temple constructed of stones was indeed then rebuilt (for as yet that law was observed which had been made upon tables of stone), yet no new covenant was given, but they used the Mosaic law until the coming of the Lord; but from the Lord's advent, the new covenant which brings back peace, and the law which gives life, has gone forth over the whole earth, as the prophets said: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He shall rebuke many people; and they shall break down their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and they shall no longer learn to fight." (Isa. 2:3, 4; Mic. 4:2, 3) If therefore another law and word, going forth from Jerusalem, brought in such a [reign of] peace among the Gentiles which received it (the word), and convinced, through them, many a nation of its folly, then [only] it appears that the prophets spake of some other person. But if the law of liberty, that is, the word of God, preached by the apostles (who went forth from Jerusalem) throughout all the earth, caused such a change in the state of

things, that these [nations] did form the swords and war-lances into ploughshares, and changed them into pruning-hooks for reaping the corn, [that is], into instruments used for peaceful purposes, and that they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek, (Matt. 5:39) then the prophets have not spoken these things of any other person, but of Him who effected them. This person is our Lord, and in Him is that declaration borne out; since it is He Himself who has made the plough, and introduced the pruning-hook, that is, the first semination of man, which was the creation exhibited in Adam, and the gathering in of the produce in the last times by the Word; and, for this reason, since He joined the beginning to the end, and is the Lord of both, He has finally displayed the plough, in that the wood has been joined on to the iron, and has thus cleansed His land because the Word having been firmly united to flesh, and in its mechanism fixed with pins, has reclaimed the savage earth. In the beginning, He figured forth the pruning-hook by means of Abel, pointing out that there should be a gathering in of a righteous race of men. He says, "For behold how the just man perishes, and no man considers it; and righteous men are taken away, and no man layeth it to heart." (Isa. 57:1) These things were acted beforehand in Abel, were also previously declared by the prophets, but were accomplished in the Lord's person; and the same [is still true] with regard to us, the body following the example of the Head.

5. Such are the arguments proper [to be used] in opposition to those who maintain that the prophets [were inspired] by a different God, and that our Lord [came] from another Father, if perchance [these heretics] may at length desist from such extreme folly. This is my earnest object in adducing these Scriptural proofs, that confuting them, as far as in me lies, by these very passages, I may restrain them from such great blasphemy, and from insanely fabricating a multitude of gods.

Above Irenaeus refuted the arguments of Marcion. The following is a quote from Tertullian who likewise refutes the doctrines of Marcion.

Chap. XXI.—The Call of the Gentiles Under the Influence of the Gospel Foretold.

So you cannot get out of this notion of yours a basis for your difference between the two Christs, as if the Jewish Christ were ordained by the Creator for the restoration of the people alone from its dispersion, whilst yours was appointed by the supremely good God for the liberation of the whole human race. Because, after all, the earliest Christians are found on the side of the Creator, not of Marcion, all nations being called to His

kingdom, from the fact that God set up that kingdom from the tree (of the cross), when no Cerdon was yet born, much less a Marcion. However, when you are refuted on the call of the *nations*, you betake yourself to *proselytes*. You ask, who among the nations can turn to the Creator, when those whom the prophet names are proselytes of individually different and private condition? "Behold," says Isaiah, "the proselytes shall come unto me through—Thee," showing that they were even proselytes who were to find their way to God through Christ. But nations (Gentiles) also, like ourselves, had likewise their mention (by the prophet) as trusting in Christ. "And in His name," says he, "shall the Gentiles trust." Besides, the proselytes whom you substitute for the nations in prophecy, are not in the habit of trusting in Christ's name, but in the dispensation of Moses, from whom comes their instruction. But it was in the last days that the choice of the nations had its commencement. In these very words Isaiah says: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord," that is, God's eminence, "and the house of God," that is, Christ, the Catholic temple of God, in which God is worshipped, "shall be established upon the mountains," over all the eminences of virtues and powers; "and all nations shall come unto it; and many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His way, and we will walk in it: for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2-3) The gospel will be this "way," of the new law and the new word in Christ, no longer in Moses. "And He shall judge among the nations," even concerning their error. "And these shall rebuke a large nation," that of the Jews themselves and their proselytes. "And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" ³⁴⁰ in other words, they shall change into pursuits of moderation and peace the dispositions of injurious minds, and hostile tongues, and all kinds of evil, and blasphemy. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation," shall not stir up discord. "Neither shall they learn war any more," (Isaiah 2:4) that is, the provocation of hostilities; so that you here learn that Christ is promised not as powerful in war, but pursuing peace. Now you must deny either that these things were predicted, although they are plainly seen, or that they have been accomplished, although you read of them; else, if you cannot deny either one fact or the other, they must have been accomplished in Him of whom they were predicted. For look at the entire course of His call up to the present time from its beginning, how it is addressed to the nations (Gentiles) who are in these last days approaching to God the Creator, and not to proselytes, whose election was rather an event of the earliest days. Verily the apostles have annulled that belief of yours.

Chap. I.—Examination of the Antitheses of Marcion, Bringing Them to the Test of Marcion's Own Gospel. Certain True Antitheses in the Dispensations of the Old and the New Testaments. These Variations Quite Compatible with One and the Same God, who Ordered Them.

Every opinion and the whole scheme of the impious and sacrilegious Marcion we now bring to the test of that very Gospel which, by his process of interpolation, he has made his own. To encourage a belief of this Gospel he has actually devised for it a sort of dower, in a work composed of contrary statements set in opposition, thence entitled Antitheses, and compiled with a view to such a severance of the law from the gospel as should divide the Deity into two, nay, diverse, gods—one for each Instrument, or Testament [see cap. 2, infra.] as it is more usual to call it; that by such means he might also patronize belief in "the Gospel according to the Antitheses." These, however, I would have attacked in special combat, hand to hand; that is to say, I would have encountered singly the several devices Of the Pontic heretic, if it were not much more convenient to refute them in and with that very gospel to which they contribute their support. Although it is so easy to meet them at once with a peremptory demurrer, yet, in order that I may both make them admissible in argument, and account them valid expressions of opinion, and even contend that they make for our side, that so there may be all the redder shame for the blindness of their author, we have now drawn out some antitheses of our own in opposition to Marcion. And indeed I do allow that one order did run its course in the old dispensation under the Creator, and that another is on its way in the new under Christ. I do not deny that there is a difference in the language of their documents, in their precepts of virtue, and in their 346 teachings of the law; but yet all this diversity is consistent with one and the same God, even Him by whom it was arranged and also foretold. Long ago did Isaiah declare that "out of Sion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3)—some other law, that is, and another word. In short, says he, "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people;" (Isaiah 2:4) meaning not those of the Jewish people only, but of the nations which are judged by the new law of the gospel and the new word of the apostles, and are amongst themselves rebuked of their old error as soon as they have believed. And as the result of this, "they beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears (which are a kind of hunting instruments) into pruning-hooks;" (Isaiah 2:4) that is to say, minds, which once were fierce and cruel, are changed by them into good dispositions productive of good fruit. And again: "Hearken unto me, hearken unto me, my people, and ye kings, give ear unto me; for a law shall proceed from me, and my judgment for a light to the nations;" (Isaiah 51:1, LXX) wherefore He had determined and decreed that the nations also were to be enlightened by the law and the word of the gospel. This will be that law which (according

to David also) is unblameable, because "perfect, converting the soul" (Psalms 19:7) from idols unto God. This likewise will be the word concerning which the same Isaiah says, "For the Lord will make a decisive word in the land." Because the New Testament is compendiously short, and freed from the minute and perplexing burdens of the law. But why enlarge, when the Creator by the same prophet foretells the renovation more manifestly and clearly than the light itself? "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old" (the old things have passed away, and new things are arising). "Behold, I will do new things, which shall now spring forth." (Isaiah 43:18-19) So by Jeremiah: "Break up for yourselves new pastures, and sow not among thorns, and circumcise yourselves in the foreskin of your heart." (Altered version of Jeremiah 4:3-4) And in another passage: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Jacob, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I arrested their dispensation, in order to bring them out of the land of Egypt." (Jeremiah 31:31-32, with slight change) He thus shows that the ancient covenant is temporary only, when He indicates its change; also when He promises that it shall be followed by an eternal one. For by Isaiah He says: "Hear me, and ye shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you," adding "the sure mercies of David," (Isaiah 55:3) in order that He might show that that covenant was to run its course in Christ. That He was of the family of David, according to the genealogy of Mary, He declared in a figurative way even by the rod which was to proceed out of the stem of Jesse. (Isaiah 11:1) Forasmuch then as he said, that from the Creator there would come other laws, and other words, and new dispensations of covenants, indicating also that the very sacrifices were to receive higher offices, and that amongst all nations, by Malachi when he says: "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord, neither will I accept your sacrifices at your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place a sacrifice is offered unto my name, even a pure offering" (Malachi 1:10-11)—meaning simple prayer from a pure conscience,—it is of necessity that every change which comes as the result of innovation, introduces a diversity in those things of which the change is made, from which diversity arises also a contrariety. For as there is nothing, after it has undergone a change, which does not become different, so there is nothing different which is not contrary. Of that very thing, therefore, there will be predicated a contrariety in consequence of its diversity, to which there accrued a change of condition after an innovation. He who brought about the change, the same instituted the diversity also; He who foretold the innovation, the same announced beforehand the contrariety likewise. Why, in your interpretation, do you impute a difference in the state of things to a difference of powers? Why do you wrest to the Creator's prejudice those examples from which you draw your antitheses, when you may recognise

them all in His sensations and affections? "I will wound," He says, "and I will heal;" "I will kill," He says again, "and I will make alive" (Deuteronomy 32:39)—even 347 the same "who createth evil and maketh peace;" (Isaiah 45:7) from which you are used even to censure Him with the imputation of fickleness and inconstancy, as if He forbade what He commanded, and commanded what He forbade. Why, then, have you not reckoned up the Antitheses also which occur in the natural works of the Creator, who is for ever contrary to Himself? You have not been able, unless I am misinformed, to recognise the fact, that the world, at all events, even amongst your people of Pontus, is made up of a diversity of elements which are hostile to one another. It was therefore your bounden duty first to have determined that the god of the light was one being, and the god of darkness was another, in such wise that you might have been able to have distinctly asserted one of them to be the god of the law and the other the god of the gospel. It is, however, the settled conviction already of my mind from manifest proofs, that, as His works and plans exist in the way of Antitheses, so also by the same rule exist the mysteries of His religion.

The following quote is from Origen circa 185-254 A.D., it was written in response to Celsus' criticism of Christians.

Chap. XXXIII.

The remarks which we have made not only answer the statements of Celsus regarding the superintending spirits, but anticipate in some measure what he afterwards brings forward, when he says: "Let the second party come forward; and I shall ask them whence they come, and whom they regard as the originator of their ancestral customs. They will reply, No one, because they spring from the same source as the Jews themselves, and derive their instruction and superintendence from no other quarter, and notwithstanding they have revolted from the Jews." Each one of us, then, is come "in the last days," when one Jesus has visited us, to the "visible mountain of the Lord," the Word that is above every word, and to the "house of God," which is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (cf. 1 Timothy 3:15) And we notice how it is built upon "the tops of the mountains," i.e., the predictions of all the prophets, which are its foundations. And this house is exalted above the hills, i.e., those individuals among men who make a profession of superior attainments in wisdom and truth; and all the nations come to it, and the "many nations" go forth, and say to one another, turning to the religion which in the last days has shone forth through Jesus Christ: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in them." (cf. Isaiah 2:3) For the law came

forth from the dwellers in Sion, and settled among us as a spiritual law. Moreover, the word of the Lord came forth from that very Jerusalem, that it might be disseminated through all places, and might judge in the midst of the heathen selecting those whom it sees to be submissive and rejecting the disobedient, who are many in number. And to those who inquire of us whence we come, or who is our founder, we reply that we are come, agreeably to the counsels of Jesus, to "cut down our hostile and insolent 'wordy' swords into ploughshares, and to convert into pruning-hooks the spears formerly employed in war." (cf. Isaiah 2:4) For we no longer take up "sword against nation," nor do we "learn war any more," having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of those whom our fathers followed, among whom we were "strangers to the covenant," and having received a law, for which we give thanks to Him that rescued us from the error (of our ways), saying, "Our fathers honoured lying idols, and there is not among them one that causeth it to rain." Our Superintendent, then, and Teacher, having come forth from the Jews, regulates the whole world by the word of His teaching. And having made these remarks by way of anticipation, we have refuted as well as we could the untrue statements of Celsus, by subjoining the appropriate answer.

The following quote is from Cyprian, circa 250 A.D.

18. That in the last times the same mountain should be manifested, and upon it the Gentiles should come, and on it all the righteous should go up. In Isaiah: "In the last times the mountain of the Lord shall be revealed, and the house of God upon the tops of the mountains; and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall come upon it, and many shall walk and say, Come, and let us go up into the mountain of the Lord, and into the house of the God of Jacob; and He will tell us His way, and we will walk in it. For from Sion shall proceed the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke much people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and they shall no more learn to fight." (Isaiah 2:2-4) Also in the twenty-third Psalm: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that is innocent in his hands, and of a clean heart; who hath not received his life in vanity, and hath not sworn craftily to his neighbour. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and mercy from the God that saveth him. This is the generation of those who seek Him, that seek the face of the God of Jacob." (Psalms 24:3-6)

The quotes were long but it was necessary to show the context so the reader can see that these writers did indeed apply these passages to Christians in their day. These quotes from Justin the Martyr, who wrote from Rome, Irenaeus, who wrote from Gaul, from Origen, who wrote from Alexandria, and from Tertullian and Cyprian, who wrote from North Africa, cover a wide geographical area and a span of about 100 years.

Cyprian wrote about 250 A.D. roughly 217 years after Jesus went to the cross. This shows that this was the teaching of the early church. They applied these Old Testament passages to themselves. Since this was the teaching of the whole church, it would seem logical that they were simply living out what they had been taught by Jesus and the apostles.

Having seen the Scriptural Evidence, let's look at the historical evidence. Following are some quotes from the Ante-Nicene church. This is the church from approximately 100 A.D. - 325 A.D. These quotes will show how the early Christians understood and applied the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Prior to 325 A.D. you would be hard pressed to find a writer who says that Christians can use force of any kind.

Here is a quote from Ignatius, it is important because Ignatius was a disciple of the apostle John himself. He was appointed as the third bishop at Antioch by the apostle Peter. This gives Ignatius' teaching a lot of weight. This quote was written about 105 A.D.

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1

Ignatius, Epistle to the Ephesians

Short version

Chap. XIII.—Exhortation to Meet Together Frequently for the Worship of God.

*Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when ye assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. **Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth, is brought to an end.***

Long Version

Chap. XIII.—Exhortation to Meet Together Frequently for the Worship of God.

Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when ye come frequently together in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and his "fiery darts" (Eph. 6:16) urging to sin fall back ineffectual. For your concord and harmonious faith prove his destruction, and the torment of his assistants. Nothing is better than that peace which is according to Christ, **by which all war, both of aërial and terrestrial spirits, is brought to an end.** "For we wrestle not against blood and flesh, but against principalities and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12)

Ignatius' quote is important because it shows a very early understanding that Christians do not participate in war.

Aristides speaking of Christians

Aristides 125 A.D.

They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man; and **whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them, they do not to others;** and of the food which is consecrated to idols they do not eat, for they are pure. **And their oppressors they appease (lit: comfort) and make them their friends; they do good to their enemies;** and their women, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest; and their men keep themselves from every unlawful union and from all uncleanness, in the hope of a recompense to come in the other world.

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1

Justin Martyr 160 AD.

we who formerly used to murder one another do not only **now refrain from making war upon our enemies,**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1

Justin Martyr

and we who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, **have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons,—our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into**

implements of tillage,—and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope, which we have from the Father Himself through Him who was crucified;

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 2
Tatian 160 AD.

How, then, shall I admit this nativity according to Fate, when I see such managers of Fate? I do not wish to be a king; I am not anxious to be rich; **I decline military command;**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 2
Athenagoras 175 AD.

for we have learned, not only not to return blow for blow, nor to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but to those who smite us on one side of the face to offer the other side also, and to those who take away our coat to give likewise our cloak. But, when we have surrendered our property, they plot against our very bodies and souls, pouring upon us wholesale charges of crimes of which we are guiltless even in thought, but which belong to these idle praters themselves, and to the whole tribe of those who are like them.

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1
Irenaeus 180 AD.

the new covenant which brings back peace, and the law which gives life, has gone forth over the whole earth, as the prophets said: **"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He shall rebuke many people; and they shall break down their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and they shall no longer learn to fight."**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1
Irenaeus

1. Moreover, this impious opinion of theirs with respect to actions—namely, that it is incumbent on them to have experience of all kinds of deeds, even the most abominable—is refuted by the teaching of the Lord, with whom not only is the adulterer rejected, but also the man who desires to commit adultery; (Matt. 5:21, etc.) and not only is the actual murderer held guilty of

having killed another to his own damnation, but the man also who is angry with his brother without a cause: **who commanded [His disciples] not only not to hate men, but also to love their enemies**; and enjoined them not only not to swear falsely, but not even to swear at all; and not only not to speak evil of their neighbours, but not even to style any one "Raca" and "fool;" [declaring] that otherwise they were in danger of hell-fire; **and not only not to strike, but even, when themselves struck, to present the other cheek [to those that maltreated them]**; and not only not to refuse to give up the property of others, but even if their own were taken away, not to demand it back again from those that took it; **and not only not to injure their neighbours, nor to do them any evil, but also, when themselves wickedly dealt with, to be long-suffering, and to show kindness towards those [that injured them], and to pray for them, that by means of repentance they might be saved**—so that we should in no respect imitate the arrogance, lust, and pride of others.

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1
Irenaeus*

*But if the law of liberty, that is, the word of God, preached by the apostles (who went forth from Jerusalem) throughout all the earth, caused such a change in the state of things, **that these [nations] did form the swords and war-lances into ploughshares, and changed them into pruning-hooks for reaping the corn, [that is], into instruments used for peaceful purposes, and that they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek, (Matt. 5:39)***

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 2
Clement of Alexandria 195 AD.*

For it is not in war, but in peace, that we are trained.

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 2
Clement of Alexandria*

*And **an enemy must be aided**, that he may not continue an enemy. For by help good feeling is compacted, and enmity dissolved.*

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 2
Clement of Alexandria*

Above all, Christians are not allowed to correct with violence the delinquencies of sins. For it is not those that abstain from wickedness from compulsion, but those that abstain from choice, that God crowns.

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 3
Tertullian 197 AD.

If we are enjoined, then, **to love our enemies**, as I have remarked above, whom have we to hate? **If injured, we are forbidden to retaliate**, lest we become as bad ourselves: **who can suffer injury at our hands?**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 3
Tertullian

In short, **the coming procession of a new law** out of this "house of the God of Jacob" Isaiah in the ensuing words announces, saying, "For from Zion shall go out a law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem, and shall judge among the nations,"—**that is, among us, who have been called out of the nations**,—"and they shall join to beat their glaives into ploughs, and their lances into sickles; and nations shall not take up glaive against nation, and they shall no more learn to fight." (Isaiah 2:3-4) **Who else, therefore, are understood but we, who, fully taught by the new law, observe these practices**,—the old law being obliterated, the coming of whose abolition the action itself demonstrates? **For the wont of the old law was to avenge itself by the vengeance** of the glaive, and to pluck out "eye for eye," and to inflict retaliatory revenge for injury. (compare Exodus 21:24-25; Leviticus 24:17-22; Deuteronomy 19:11-21; Matthew 5:38) But **the new law's wont was to point to clemency, and to convert to tranquillity** the pristine ferocity of "glaives" and "lances," and to remodel the pristine execution of "war" upon the rivals and foes of the law into the pacific actions of "ploughing" and "tilling" the land. Therefore as we have shown above that the coming cessation of the old law and of the carnal circumcision was declared, **so, too, the observance of the new law and the spiritual circumcision has shone out into the voluntary obediences of peace.**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 3
Tertullian

the Christian does no harm even to his foe

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 3

Tertullian

Nay, He puts His interdict **on every sort of man-killing** by that one summary precept, "**Thou shalt not kill.**"

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 4

Commodianus 240 A.D.

Many are the martyrdoms which are made without shedding of blood. Not to desire other men's goods; to wish to have the benefit of martyrdom; to bridle the tongue, thou oughtest to make thyself humble; **not willingly to use force, nor to return force used against thee**, thou wilt be a patient mind, understand that thou art a martyr.

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 5

Cyprian 250 AD.

Consider the roads blocked up by robbers, the seas beset with pirates, wars scattered all over the earth with the bloody horror of camps. The whole world is wet with mutual blood; **and murder, which in the case of an individual is admitted to be a crime, is called a virtue when it is committed wholesale. Impunity is claimed for the wicked deeds, not on the plea that they are guiltless, but because the cruelty is perpetrated on a grand scale.**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 5

Cyprian

and that by this very fact they are invincible, that they do not fear death; **that they do not in turn assail their assailants, since it is not lawful for the innocent even to kill the guilty;**

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 5

Cyprian

nor, after the Eucharist carried in it, is the hand spotted with the sword and blood.

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 6
Theonas of Alexandria 300 A.D.*

*And do thou, my dearest Lucianus, since thou art wise, **bear with goodwill the unwise**; (2 Cor. 11:19) and they too may perchance become wise. **Do no one an injury at any time**, and provoke no one to anger. **If an injury is done to you, look to Jesus Christ; and even as ye desire that He may remit your transgressions, do ye also forgive them theirs**; (Mark 11:25) and then also shall ye do away with all ill-will, and bruise the head of that ancient serpent, (Rom. 16:20) who is ever on the watch with all subtlety to undo your good works and your prosperous attainments.*

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 7
Lactantius 304-313 AD.*

For how can a man be just who injures, who hates, who despoils, who puts to death? And

***they who strive to be serviceable to their country do all these things:** for they are ignorant of what this being serviceable is, who think nothing useful, nothing advantageous, but that which can be held by the hand; and this alone cannot be held, because it may be snatched away*

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 7
Lactantius*

For it is not right that a worshipper of God should be injured by a worshipper of God.

*The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 7
Lactantius 304-313 A.D.*

*But we, on the contrary, do not require that any one should be compelled, whether he is willing or unwilling, to worship our God, who is the God of all men; nor are we angry if any one does not worship Him. For we trust in the majesty of Him who has power to avenge contempt shown towards Himself, **as also He has power to avenge the calamities and injuries inflicted on His servants**. And therefore, when we suffer such impious things, **we do not resist even in word**; but we remit vengeance to God, not as they act who would have it appear that they are defenders of their gods, and rage without restraint against those who do not worship them*

The Early Church Fathers: Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 7

Lactantius

*He also, having no pride or insolence, does not raise himself too highly, nor lift up his head with arrogance; **but he is calm and peaceful**, lowly and courteous, because he knows his own condition. **Since, therefore, he does injury to none**, nor desires the property of others, **and does not even defend his own if it is taken from him by violence**, since **he knows how even to bear with moderation an injury inflicted upon him**, because he is endued with virtue; it is necessary that the just man should be subject to the unjust, and that the wise should be insulted by the foolish, that the one may sin because he is unjust, and the other may have virtue in himself because he is just.*

This is a sample of quotes from the Early Church writers. It covers a large geographical area and a relatively long period of time, and they all say the same thing. The Christian is not to use violence. They are all in agreement. This was the teaching of the Church until it merged with the state around 325 A.D. and began to compromise its principles. There is approximately 300 years of time when the church wouldn't use violence for any purpose. This history presents serious difficulties for the modern Christian who claims that the use of violence is allowed by the Christian. He has to explain how all of these Christians for 300 years completely misunderstood what they were taught. Is it possible that every Christian who sat under the teachings of Jesus and the apostles misunderstood their teaching on this issue, every one? It seems the odds of that happening would be extremely high. The quotes above condemn the use of violence, and there are no writings from the church during this time denouncing any of those who have been quoted, as teaching something unorthodox. No, they were simply teaching what they were taught by those before them, and this goes back to the teachings of Jesus and his apostles.

Is it a matter of faith?

The real issue here might be a matter of faith. Christians will readily depend on God for their salvation, but don't seem too eager to rely on God for their physical protection. It could be that many are afraid that they may get an answer they don't like. God is capable of saving the Christian's physical life but it may be that many fear He may choose not to. However, it

would be more beneficial to be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and say,

Daniel 3:17-18 (KJV)

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Everyone will have to decide what he will believe, and answer to God for it. However, the evidence against the Christians use of violence is overwhelming. It's been shown that the Mosaic Law does not pertain to Christians, and that Jesus' teaching on nonresistance is quite clear. In addition, there is Paul's teaching on the subject. It is up to the Christian whether he will look at the evidence and be intellectually honest with himself.

In summary, these quotes show that at least up until the Nicene council in 325 A.D. it was the teaching of the church that Christians were not to use violence for any purpose. This covers a period of almost 300 years. Those who advocate a Christian's use of violence have a dilemma here. They must claim that all of these Christians, many who had direct contact with Jesus and/or His apostles, misunderstood what they were taught. Is it believable that for 300 years, thousands of Christians, again, many taught by Jesus and the apostles, misunderstood the gospel?

Were Jesus and the apostles able to properly teach the Gospel? Yes, they were, and those they taught understood the Gospel, that is why they did not use violence. The evidence is clear, the question is, will we listen?

