

Twisted to Fit

Today, LewRockwell.com [posted a speech given by Laurence M. Vance](#) at the June 8, 2008, Future of Freedom Foundation's conference on "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy and Civil Liberties." In this speech, Mr. Vance spoke specifically on the subject of Christians and war. In his speech, he critiqued "Christians" severely for their support of war. He also drew no distinctions about what makes one a "Christian," and where, in Scripture he finds the support for his contention that war, in and of itself, is wrong for a Christian to engage in. In the very first paragraph of his "talk" he states:

"If there is any group of people that should be opposed to war, torture, militarism, the warfare state, state worship, suppression of civil liberties, an imperial presidency, blind nationalism, government propaganda, and an aggressive foreign policy it is Christians, and especially conservative, evangelical, and fundamentalist Christians who claim to strictly follow the dictates of Scripture and worship the Prince of Peace. It is indeed strange that Christian people should be so accepting of war. War is the greatest suppressor of civil liberties. War is the greatest destroyer of religion, morality, and decency. War is the greatest creator of fertile ground for genocides and atrocities. War is the greatest destroyer of families and young lives. War is the greatest creator of famine, disease, and homelessness. War is the health of the state."

And if ever there were a broad brush, Mr. Vance has used it. About four-fifths of the things given in the first sentence do not even belong together. If we examine this list, we find some things that are strongly supported by Scripture, and others that Scripture expressly condemns. However, according to Mr. Vance, for one to be a Christian, one must oppose all

items on the following list:

“If there is any group of people that should be opposed to war, torture, militarism, the warfare state, state worship, suppression of civil liberties, an imperial presidency, blind nationalism, government propaganda, and an aggressive foreign policy it is Christians . . .”

If we take this list at face value, according to Mr. Vance, King David could not have ever been a Christian.

Why?

Because King David engaged in virtually everything on this list almost his entire life. Now, was everything David did right and proper Scripturally? No, obviously not. However, there are only three specific incidents of transgression the LORD God was displeased with:

The unlawful and improper transport of the Ark of the Covenant. (I Chronicles 13, 15)

The matter of Uriah the Hittite's wife. (II Samuel 11-12)

The numbering of Israel. (I Chronicles 21)

Funny how that only when it came to building the temple was King David told by the LORD God that his wars prevented him from doing that. *(I Chronicles 22:6-8)*

However, before going further, I suppose it ought to be established whether King David was a Christian or not, seeing that most do not believe that believers in the Old Testament were.. In a word: yes, King David was a Christian. The proof of King David believing in Christ to come is throughout the Psalms. The proof that people were saved in the time of the Old Testament by grace through faith in Christ (or the Messiah) to come is extensive in Scripture and I have written about it in the following articles:

[Where Did the Old Testament Saints Go?](#)

[A Departure](#)

[A Departure, Pt. II](#)

[A Departure, Pt. III](#)

Any proper study of the Scriptures will indeed show that, as Christianity is defined (a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ – the Saviour), all believers in the Old Testament were (and still are) ((An understanding of what it means to be “in Christ” is essential to understanding how one, once born again, will never leave the status of “in Christ.”)) Christians. This applies to everyone from Adam and Eve forward. (*Hebrews 11:4*)

To return to the issue at hand: how can it be that someone who has a degree in Theology, and claims to have studied the Scripture, have such a remarkable lack of understanding of what the Scripture states about war, its origin, what a born-again child of God’s relationship to, and view of war ought to be? Instead, the extent of Mr. Vance’s citation of Scripture in his speech consists of three (3) verses, one of which is taken out of context and another is only partially quoted. Mr. Vance fronts his citations with the following paragraph:

“The early Christians were not warmongers like so many Christians today. They did not idolize the Caesars like some Christians idolize President Bush. They did not make apologies for the Roman Empire like many Christians do for the U.S. Empire. They did not venerate the institution of the military like most Christians do today. They did not participate in the state’s wars like too many Christians do today. If there was anything at all advocated by the early Christians it was peace. After all, they had some New Testament admonitions to go by:

- * Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)*
- * Live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18)*
- * Follow peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14)”*

Then, Mr. Vance goes on to begin the next paragraph with the statement:

“Aggression, violence, and bloodshed are contrary to the very nature of Christianity.”

Now, whatever evidence Mr. Vance has for his contentions concerning early Christians, he certainly does not use the Scriptures to support it, and indeed mixes things that are valid Scripturally, with things that are invalid. For instance, it is true that aggression, violence and bloodshed are incompatible with spreading the gospel. But, they are ordained and given to the state by the LORD God. The assertion that “early Christians” did not participate in state wars is patently against what the Scripture plainly states concerning Cornelius and many others in the Roman army:

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. (Acts 10:1-4)

What we find in this chapter is Cornelius’ obedience to God in sending for Peter, Then Peter coming to Cornelius’ house and preaching the gospel to Cornelius and all his house and close friends. During Peter’s preaching we find the following occurs:

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify

God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. (Acts 10:44-48)

Now, we will search in vain to find where Peter explains to Cornelius that he must leave the Roman Army to serve God. Why? Because it is not there, and it is not there because it is not required nor demanded. In fact, the relationship of the child of God to military service was explained much earlier by John the Baptist as he preached the gospel and prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ:

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. (Luke 3:10-18)

If we note what John told the soldiers, we will note the absence of any demand they leave military service. Rather, he tells them to uphold their duty in a right and just manner,

((The statement "Do violence to no man," does not mean to avoid combat in the line of duty. What it means in the context given is to not arbitrarily and capriciously, wantonly do harm to someone simply because you can. It is a frequent temptation for armed soldiers, especially stationed in a foreign land, to lash out and unnecessarily strike someone simply because they can.)) and be content with their wages. He does not say "Don't go to war." or "Leave the military." or "Don't support the Roman empire's wars." Those statements, and others like them are notably absent throughout the New Testament. Surely, if a Christian serving in the military were such a serious issue, don't you think the LORD God would have addressed it directly?

To be continued . . .
