



What Would Jesus Shoot?

A co-religionist friend of mine asked some years ago, “What is the [Catholic] Church’s teaching on firearms...? Does it recommend an assault rifle or a shotgun?”

He was kidding, of course, but not so funny are some recent attempts by liberal “Christians” to turn Jesus into Sarah Brady. Motivated by their unique brand of religiosity in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, they say that the Lord would never condone gun ownership. Why, didn’t He state, “[A]ll that take the sword shall perish with the sword”?



Were I to steal a leaf out of the liberals’ book, I’d now become conveniently literalistic and say that if anyone wants to consider sword control, I’m game. But let’s address the matter seriously.

When the temple guards of the Sanhedrin came to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, the apostle Simon Peter leapt to the Lord’s defense, drew his sword, and sliced off the ear of a slave accompanying the guards. This is where the quoted Bible passage comes into play. The gospel of Matthew (26:52) tells us that Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “Put up again thy sword into its place: for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Quite a pacifist message, huh?

Yet there’s something generally overlooked here. Peter only had a sword to draw because he had one *on his person* — and Jesus obviously took no issue with this. In fact, even during Jesus’ rebuke, He never told Peter to throw his sword away. The command was simply to resheath it.

Why? Perhaps because Jesus had actually *ordered* the apostles to acquire swords. As Luke 22:36-38 tells us:

“But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a scrip; and he that hath not, let him sell his coat, and buy a sword. For I say to you, that this that is written must yet be fulfilled in me: ‘And with the wicked was he reckoned.’ For the things concerning me have an end.” But they said: “Lord, behold here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.”

So what is the actual meaning of Jesus’ words in Matthew? I won’t say anything definitively, but I will note that the relevant line has often been interpreted to mean “He who lives by the sword shall die by it also.” And, of course, there’s as big a difference between legitimate self-defense and living by the gun as there is between respecting the state’s legitimate role and living by government.

So what would Jesus shoot? Nothing, I’m sure. He wouldn’t get married, either; His role wasn’t exactly the same as ours. But I’m also sure that a clear understanding of Christianity shoots the liberal arguments right out of the sky.

(Hat tip: the readers who e-mailed me the Luke reference.)

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