

## Philosophy of Ministry (*theological grounding*) of Security

### *The Responsibility to Protect the Flock*

From the beginning, God ordained that evil be a part of His perfect plan unto His eternal glory (Genesis 50:20; Job 2:10; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 45:7; Habakkuk 1:5-11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Romans 8:28; 9:17-18; Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 13:8; et al.). From the moment that sin entered the world, conflict was inevitable because sin brought forth death (Genesis 3:15; Romans 6:23). The egregious sin of murder (*an image-bearer taking the life of another*) immediately followed when Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4:8, 10), and that plunged the ancient world into a spiral of compounding evil until God wiped out that population and installed *the law of capital punishment* (Genesis 6:5, 13; 9:5-6). From the moment God delegated authority to man in the garden, in the dominion mandate (*seen also in the first covenant union of marriage, ordaining the family*), mankind has been tasked with the flourishing of life, which includes the protection of life, especially those who bear God's image (Genesis 1:27-30; 2:22-24; 3:9, 24; 4:9; 6:13; 9:5-6). This was implied in creation law and made explicit both the Noachic covenant and the Mosaic law (Exodus 20:12-13; 21:12). These obligations for the flourishing and protection of life endure as long as sin remains a threat (Matthew 5:17-18; 24:35; Luke 16:17; Romans 3:31; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). Therefore, as servants of Christ and ministers of His body, we will seek to protect the flock from harm; specifically, both psychological and physical threats that may present themselves whenever the body of Christ assembles.<sup>1</sup>

### *Are Christians required to "turn the other cheek"?*

We reject the common error of using Jesus' words ("turn the other cheek") in the Sermon on the Mount to justify any degree of pacifism, which, in its most extreme and consistent forms, teaches that the right to self-defense is withdrawn (Matthew 5:38-45). We believe that Jesus' word refers to the individual Christian's witness, specifically to *not seeking personal vengeance or revenge* for being wronged, since that belongs to those authorities to which God has given and ultimately to the Lord Himself (Romans 12:17-13:4).<sup>2</sup> In Matthew 5, Jesus did not negate the responsibility to protect those under one's care, whether a father protecting his family, the state protecting its citizens, or church leaders protecting Christ's body. Christ taught, in the same place, the ongoing validity of the eternal law of God, which upholds the delegated authority of God in every sphere (Matthew 5:17-19). Jesus also taught His disciples that they would have to protect themselves and others after his departure because he would not be physically present to protect them any longer, as he did when the crowds came to take Him away to crucifixion (Luke 22:35-38; John 18:6-8).

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<sup>1</sup>We define "psychological threat" here as visual and/or verbal intimidation which could manifest itself in various forms from both within and outside the body of Christ.

<sup>2</sup>Self-defense and personal protection are not in any way forms of seeking vengeance or revenge, those are separate categories that only overlap (mostly) in heat-of-the-moment circumstances where threats are being neutralized; this is why certain laws of self-defense address the actions taken once a threat has been encountered. For instance, an intruder with a gun can be shot to be neutralized, but if he is shot further after that, it is considered a form of vengeance.

### *Be on Guard for the Flock*

In Acts 20:28, Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock,” warning of “savage wolves” that would come in, “not sparing the flock.” This warning, while primarily referring to the danger of false teachers, has further significance for the responsibility of Christians, especially elders, to protect God's people from threats that seek to harm or annihilate them. The situation of Peter drawing his sword (*which Jesus had just instructed him to have*; Luke 22:35-38) to protect the King of kings was foolish, not because the right to self-defense had been removed, but because Christ could have easily protected Himself and chose not to in order that His unique mission for redemption would be accomplished (John 18:10-11). It is perfectly righteous for Christians to protect themselves and others from injustice and public violence.

### *A Sword in One Hand, a Trowel in the Other*

The word of God records Nehemiah as a faithful believer who used his influence and authority to assist God's people in building for the future, advancing a community of public worship, and standing guard against both the spiritual and physical dangers. Nehemiah stands as an example for Christians to live both prayerfully and practically, with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other, trusting God in the things that he (the Christian) has no control over, while simultaneously using the practical means God has given without, on the one hand, making an idol out of those means, and on the other, foolishly rejecting those means as if to expect God to do everything for him. The faithful model of a Christian worker, worshipper, and warrior is one who walks this line carefully, following the example of Nehemiah to faithfully steward all that God has given.

### *Other Security Ministry Documents*

For the full package of Security Documents, including the *Program Guidelines*, *Response Checklist*, *Security Awareness & Response Document*, and *Qualification Document*, contact Tom Snoberger (tsno@comcast.net). These documents are available *only* to members of MBC; non-members may access them *only* with the elders' express permission.