

for nonresistance in various periods of church history," exemplifies this view of the early church's attitude toward war. Culver says,

*Yale church historian Roland Bainton writes: "From the end of the New Testament period to the decade 170-180 there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army." Guy Franklin Herschberger adds, "It is quite clear that prior to about A.D. 174 it is impossible to speak of Christian soldiers." About this time the famous heretic, Celsus, reproached Christians for failing to help defend the Empire. charging, "If all men were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent the king from being left in utter solitude and desertion and the forces of the Empire would fall into the hands of the wildest and most lawless barbarians." [Ibid.]*

Culver misrepresents the facts as presented by erudite (albeit pacifist) scholar Roland Bainton. Immediately following the words quoted in the text above, Bainton says,

*The subject of military service was not at that time controverted. The reason may have been EITHER that PARTICIPATION WAS ASSUMED or that abstention was taken for granted (my emphasis). [Roland Bainton Christian Attitudes Towards War And Peace, Abingdon Press (1960), p. 68.]*

Moreover, when Culver quotes the ancient pagan antagonist, Celsus, (a quote which appears also in Bainton just a few lines after the above excerpt from Bainton), he fails to include the immediately following comments of Bainton:

Such words are so explicit as to warrant the assumption that Celsus knew of no Christians who would accept military service. But he was mistaken. In the very decade in which he wrote, we have our first testimony of Christians in the army, in the so-called Thundering Legion under Marcus Aurelius in the year A.D. 173. From that day forward the evidence of Christians in the ranks increases. [Ibid.]

What, then, is to be made of the fact that there is no discussion of military service prior to the late second century? What is to be assumed, military service or abstention therefrom?

It is difficult to assume that pacifism became a prevailing doctrine, given the militarism sustained by the Scriptures. It is not just the likes of militaristic Joshua, Gideon, Sampson, Deborah, David, and the prophets, but also the affirmation of military life in the New Testament record (viz., Theophilus, the Centurion, and Cornelius) which militate against the assumption. Examples of affirmations of the legitimacy of war come from Basil the Great in a doctrinal letter: