

926 The Voice of God (*this is an edited version of my blog 926*)

I watched an (anti-) war movie, Hacksaw Ridge, a true story account of a conscientious objector in the American army in WWII. It is a very impressive movie by Mel Gibson about an American pacifist combat medic who refused to carry or use a weapon; he became the first conscientious objector to be awarded the Medal of Honor. This blog, however, is not about conscientious objection, it is about another aspect of the movie: Faith. Myself, I am not a 'person of faith', I do not follow a religion and I am interested in the issue of faith and how people deal with their experience of, or commitment to their faith. What makes a person of faith tick? Indeed, what does it mean to have faith ... in God and/or Jesus Christ? I don't know, but in this movie the main character displays an incredible rendition of his faith and its application. This is the story: Desmond Doss, when in training is despised and bullied by his fellow soldiers, who cannot come at the idea that someone wants to sign up, yet not carry or use a gun; they mistake him for a weakling and a coward. But it turns out Doss is among the most brave and strong soldiers. One aspect of his bravery I find telling ... and here is the twist (well, at least as I see it) in Hacksaw Ridge: Doss prays and asks his God to talk to him, to give him a sign of sorts (even though he had insisted to a US army physician that he was not mad, did not hear "voices from God" and had no intention of accepting a psychiatric discharge). This predicament that he finds himself in was before addressed in the movie Silence. When anybody asks God to respond and give a sign - any sign - to encourage the devout believer, they are met with ... Silence. I wrote in my critique of Silence (blog 797) about faith: ... *the Christian faith is a torturous undertaking. If you pray to God, if you hope for a sign, a tangible response to your torment, you will be met with Silence. The film will instill in believers a sense of dread (I only can imagine, of course, being a non-believer myself). Because their faith doesn't make life easy in the context of rational discourse as to whether their God exists or not. For the non-believer the exercise is torturous too; myself, I find it incomprehensible that intelligent people submit to the notion that Jesus Christ was sacrificed for the sins of humanity ...* So Doss asks his God to speak to him. He then listens intensely. But all he can hear is the moaning of an injured soldier. He goes and rescues that soldier. Next he says to God, "please, one more" and again hears (the voice of God?) a soldier in pain asking for help. This is repeated over and over. I have an essay GOD 1. The last sentence reads (I talk about the four kinds of God): *The fourth type of God I can believe in: It is the seat in us of compassion, goodness & integrity - a belief that guides & comforts us and gives us strength.* I added the attribute of 'strength' after seeing the movie Hacksaw Ridge - because this is the outstanding attribute of the young soldier's faith: It did give him strength ... indeed above-human strength. And he truly heard the voice of God. But therein does lie a problem: Some people may hear the voice of God compelling them to do good; others may hear a voice - which they deem to be God's - to do evil (murderous religious fundamentalists). In which case God had turned into the devil.