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War and Politics the Christian's Duty

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Chapter One

Back to the Bible

What do you think?

Should Christians go to war?

Many people who regard themselves as Christians would answer something like this: "Well, we Christians ought normally to be peace-loving people, but there are times when it is our duty to fight. We should fight to defend what is good, and to destroy what is evil. "

This sounds fine until we start asking a few questions. For example, how can a man know for sure what things are good enough and important enough to fight for, and to kill or be killed for? Different Christians have different ideas about their Christian duty; some would be prepared to fight for one reason, some for another. Who is to decide who is right? Again, what should a man do when he is ordered to fight for his country when he knows it to be good in some ways and bad in others?

Most people would say that it is a Christian's duty to fight for his country. There have been two world wars, and in each of them thousands of Christians have obeyed the call to become soldiers. In obedience to their governments, people who claim to follow Christ have fought on both sides - Christians have fought and killed Christians. Can this be right?

Religious wars have been fought in some countries. Christians of one kind believed it was their duty to fight other Christians who differed from them. Was this right?

And what about those countries where wicked rulers have made unjust laws? Some Christians think they should overthrow such governments, using force if necessary. What do you think?

No! "What do you think?" is not the right question. What you or I think is not important. Instead we should ask: What does God tell us to do?

What does the Bible say?

Too many people who call themselves Christians follow their own thinking, and the result is confusion and conflict. The very name, **Christian**, has been brought into contempt because men have relied on their own judgement instead of seeking guidance from God.

Because the bible is a message from God, the important question to ask is: What does the Bible tell us about war? Does the Bible tell us that we should fight, or does it say that we should not?

The Christians Duty

The following words from the New Testament provide the answer:

“I (Jesus) say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matthew 5: 39)

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord” (Romans 12:19)

These instructions are not difficult to understand. **Christians must not fight.**

True Christians

Christians must not fight. This may seem to be an astonishing statement. If it is correct, we are bound to ask whether many who claim to be Christians are really Christians at all.

True Christians are faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are unusual people who live in the world but do not really belong to it. Christians are never in the majority and will therefore find themselves behaving differently from most of their fellows. It was the Lord Jesus himself, the founder of Christianity, who said “The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (Matthew 7:14)

Chapter Two

Turning the Other Cheek

We have looked at two passages of Scripture that state that Christians must not fight. Now let us consider these passages more carefully. The first is from the Sermon on the Mount, and the speaker is the Lord Jesus:

“I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matthew 5: 39)

Here is Christ’s answer to those who say we should fight to defend what is good and to destroy what is evil. “Do not resist one who is evil”

His words are more than a command not to fight. A slap on the face is a deliberately hostile and provocative act, an invitation to hit back, if one dares. Jesus is telling us **that even under such insulting treatment** we must not fight. We must not hit back, nor even defend ourselves against attack.

In line with this, the Lord went on to say:

“I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good... for if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:44-48)

Instead of fighting our enemies, we must love them, pray for them, and try our best to help them.

Paul says the same thing:

“Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them... Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12: 14 - 21.)

It is easy to see that here Paul is teaching the true Christian attitude to personal enemies. If we must follow these commandments, person to person, it could not be expected that we would have a right to join an army and fight against an enemy nation.

Note that Paul instructs Christians to see to it that they **always** act peaceably. The other person may try to hurt with words or blows, but the Christian must be a peacemaker and a peacekeeper. Also see how Paul, like the Lord Jesus, insists that, far from repaying evil for evil, we must do good to those who treat us badly.

The next two passages show that God's servants must resist even the temptation to quarrel:

"Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness." (2 Timothy 2: 23 - 25.)

"Remind them to . . . speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men." (Titus 3: 1,2.)

The Great Example

In all that he said and in all that he did, the Lord Jesus put into practice what he laid down for his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. Luke tells us about a time when the disciples, James and John, were angry because the Samaritans had treated their Master as an enemy. They wanted to call fire down from heaven, as Elijah once did. The Lord rebuked them for their warlike spirit, and led them on their way. (Luke 9: 51 - 56.)

When Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, he added this counsel to his disciples:

"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains . . ." (Luke 21: 20, 21.)

They are not to fight for their city, not even to defend it from the invading army.

When Jesus was being arrested by his enemies, Peter drew his sword to defend him - to defend the most holy man who ever lived. If ever there was a righteous cause to fight for, this was it! Yet even this was forbidden:

"Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26: 52.)

Peter never forgot his Lord's example of complete submission to his enemies. Years later, he exhorted the early believers:

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps . . . When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly." (1 Peter 2: 21 - 23.)

Problems.

Most people who call themselves Christians reject the teaching of the New Testament about turning the other cheek. "Useless!" they say, "it just won't work."

They seem to forget that in saying this they criticize the Lord Jesus Christ. In effect they are telling **Him** that he doesn't know what he is talking about. Of course they can reject the Lord's commandments if they want to, but at least they should realise and admit frankly that they are not Christians.

Why are people unwilling to turn the other cheek?

Some argue: "If everybody in our country refused to fight, we should soon be overrun by our enemies." When they say this, they are forgetting that the Lord's words were not intended for

everybody, but only for his **true** disciples - the few, unusual people who live as though they were strangers in a foreign land. Is there any likelihood that everyone would follow this Christian way of life of their own choice? Of course there isn't! Remember: "[The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.](#)" (Matthew 7: 14.) However, if we could imagine everybody in one country acting in this unlikely way, we should just as easily imagine everybody in the other countries doing the same. And the result would be no war. Splendid!

The question is sometimes asked: "What would you do if you saw someone attacking a member of your family?"

A simple answer to this question is by no means easy. Shield the person attacked? Restrain the attacker, using as little force as possible? It is difficult to know what action one might take in these circumstances. But the Bible says very comfortingly: "[God . . . will not let you be tempted beyond your strength.](#)" (1 Corinthians 10: 13.) If it is the desire of our hearts to do God's will, and if we really try, God will most certainly help us.

The God who forbids revenge also promises His care: "[Vengeance is mine, I will repay,](#)" says the Lord. Surely God knows how to look after His own. Would we really be more secure trying to look after ourselves?

Chapter Three

Understanding the Times

True Christians do not fight. This is the plain teaching of the New Testament, and we must accept it.

But some one might say: "What about the Old Testament? We read of godly men fighting in the Old Testament."

This is correct. Joshua and David are two examples of godly men who fought. What is more, God commanded them to fight, and He helped them to win their battles.

There is a good reason for this. The ancient kingdom of Israel was God's kingdom. It was God who brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. It was God who led Israel through the wilderness and established them in the Promised Land. Indeed, God ruled over Israel as a King, and for this reason He was displeased when the people asked Samuel the prophet for a human king.

"But the thing displeased Samuel when they (the people of Israel) said, 'Give us a king to govern us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken to the voice of the people in all they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected **me** from being king over them.'" (1 Samuel 8: 6, 7.)

God gave the people of Israel human kings, **but they ruled over God's kingdom, and they ruled for God.** The following words make this very clear:

"Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father." (1 Chronicles 29: 23.)

See also verse 11 of the same chapter.

Joshua was the man who led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. But first the Canaanites, a wicked and cruel people, had to be conquered. This conquest was commanded by God, and God helped His people to carry it out. In this way the ancient kingdom of God was established.

This kingdom was further strengthened by King David. He too fought battles in obedience to God's instructions. He defeated many enemy nations who wanted to destroy Israel.

The kingdom lasted nearly five hundred years. When the people obeyed God's laws they prospered. Most of the time, however, both the people and their rulers were disobedient to their heavenly King. At last they became so wicked that God used the Babylonians to destroy the Kingdom that he had established. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon did not realize at the time that he was being used by God to punish the Israelites. But Israel should have understood this, because God's prophet Jeremiah had made it clear to them that God was using Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument of punishment. So those Israelites who fought

against Nebuchadnezzar were really fighting against God. That is why God warned them not to fight.

(See Jeremiah 21: 4-9.)

Thus the king of Babylon destroyed the ancient kingdom of Israel - the first kingdom of God.

A Message of Doom and a Message of Hope

Before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first kingdom of God, the prophet Ezekiel spoke a message of doom to Zedekiah, the last king of Israel:

"And you, O unhallowed wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come, the time of your final punishment, thus says the Lord God: 'Remove the turban, and take off the crown; things shall not remain as they are; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it; there shall not be even a trace of it until he comes whose right it is; and to him I will give it.' " (Ezekiel 21: 25-27.)

No more king; no more kingdom!

That message of doom was also a message of hope. See how Ezekiel uses that word **until**: ". . . there shall not be even a trace of it **until** he comes whose right it is; and to him I will give it." So the kingdom will be restored when the appointed king appears.

Who is the appointed king? The man born to be the king of the Jews is the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember the words of the angel to Mary, the Lord's mother, not long before his birth:

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1: 32, 33.)

The Lord Jesus did not fulfil this mission when he lived on the earth nearly two thousand years ago. Only when he returns to the earth "with power and great glory" (Luke 21: 27) will he be a king - over Israel and over the world. Then the words of Revelation 11: 15 will be fulfilled:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

From the signs that the Lord Jesus himself gave (recorded in the second half of Luke 21, and other scriptures), believers can be sure that the day of the Lord's return to establish the kingdom of God is very near.

The Duty of God's Servants

The ancient kingdom of God is gone. The greater, world-wide kingdom of God is yet to come. We are living in the long period between the ancient and the future kingdom of God - a period that is called, in scripture, "the time of the Gentiles" that is, the times of the nations of the world.

During the "times of the Gentiles," great empires have come and gone, kings have conquered and been conquered; nations have destroyed and been destroyed. To people who do not know God's purpose, it looks as if the course of history has been shaped by powerful, evil men. But

those who have been enlightened by the Word of God have learned to look at world events in a different way. They know that God is in charge. He is working to a plan which has been revealed in a prophetic programme set out beforehand in the Scriptures. Bible readers know that God sets up kings and deposes kings. "The Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men." (Daniel 4:17.)

It will not always be like this. Men's greed, oppression, wickedness and lust for power will only last until God sends Jesus to the earth to set up a righteous government.

The present is just a meantime - a period of waiting, watching and witnessing for the people of God. Confident that God is really in charge, and that the promised kingdom is not far away, God's servants do not interfere, do not meddle with the affairs of the nations. They do not fight, and they do not take an active part in politics. They are a people apart from the rest.

Chapter Four

Pilgrims in an Alien World

"They are not of the world"

Why are Christians forbidden to fight? One answer is provided by the Lord Jesus himself:

"My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." (John 18: 36)

Christ's kingship belongs to a future age. For this reason also, his servants do not involve themselves in the politics of the nations of the world. They do not really belong to this age. They are waiting for God's coming kingdom.

That is why Jesus rebuked Peter, when he drew a sword to defend his Lord. "Put your sword back into its place," he said, "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52.)

Although Christ's true followers live in the world, they are not worldly people. Just before his crucifixion the Lord Jesus prayed for his disciples in these words:

". . . they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17: 14-16.)

Similarly, Peter speaks of the followers of Christ as "aliens and exiles. . . among the Gentiles." (see 1 Peter 2: 9-12.)

A Noticeable Difference

There should be a noticeable difference between Christians and other people. The true Christian is an honest, unselfish, God-fearing person, who does not strive to be more rich or powerful than other men. Because he has separated himself from this present evil world, he refuses to become involved in the sinful practices of the world. Refusing to fight is only a part of the difference between him and other men. If a man who claims to be a Christian refuses to fight, but is worldly and sinful in other respects, he is a hypocrite. The true Christian does not look for great reward or prosperity **now**. For him, the times of the Gentiles are a period of preparation. A full blessing comes with the coming kingdom of God

Here are two scriptures that tell us that followers of the Lord Jesus Christ must be altogether different from the people of the world around them:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2.)

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world." (1 John 2: 15,16.)

Law -abiding People.

Although the followers of the Lord Jesus are not of the world, and although they refuse to fight to defend themselves or their country, it would be a great mistake to think of them as troublesome people. Those who obey the commandments of Christ are the most law-abiding of men. In obedience to their Lord, they do not kill or hurt people, not even in self-defence; they do not commit adultery, steal or lie. Police forces, law courts and prisons could all be done away with if all men were sincere Christians. The nations would no longer need to spend vast sums of money for the prevention and punishment of crime, and people everywhere would feel more secure and at peace.

Because most people refuse to follow Christ whole-heartedly, we cannot expect these happy conditions until the kingdom of God comes; but even now, those in authority never have trouble with the true followers of Christ, even in countries where there is a great deal of crime. Real Christians are the most trustworthy of citizens.

"Be subject to the governing authorities."

There is another reason why Christians should be good citizens.

It is because they have been instructed by their Master to obey the rulers of their country. Consider the following quotations from the New Testament:

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience." (Romans 13: 1-5.)

We should note that all authorities are appointed by God - "there is no authority except from God." For this reason those in authority are God's servants, though usually they are not aware of this fact. This means that when a Christian disobeys the rulers of his country, he is really disobeying God.

Paul goes on to say that we should pay all our taxes and all our debts:

"For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due. Owe no one anything. . ." (verses 6, 7, 8.)

Here are two more passages of Scripture that speak for themselves:

"Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men." (Titus 3: 1, 2.)

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil: but live as servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor." (1 Peter 2: 13-17.)

Servants

Those Christians who are servants are similarly required to obey their masters. This obedience is to be given freely, whether the master is watching or not; and it must be given to unreasonable masters as well as to good masters. The passage from Peter's letter, quoted above, continues like this:

"Servants be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing. For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly." (1 Peter 2: 18, 19.)

Paul puts it this way:

"Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord." (Colossians 3: 22.)

Slaves

This quotation from Colossians reminds us of the fact that there was slavery in those days. There was much that was evil in the slavery of Roman times, and we are bound to deplore the offensive features of such a heartless society. The important thing to note, however, is that Paul did not complain about the hardness and cruelty of life in those days, although he himself suffered by it. He made no attempt to change the government; he did not try to tackle these problems politically, and he obviously did not want other members of the Christian church to do so, either.

Paul's command to slaves is that they must be obedient. If a slave is offered his freedom, he should certainly take it (1 Corinthians 7:21), but he must not run away from his master. At one time Paul met and converted a runaway slave - and then sent him back to his master. (Read Paul's letter to Philemon.) A Christian slave always had the great comfort of knowing that he was a "freedman of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7: 22), and that he would enjoy perfect freedom in the coming kingdom of God.

Some Christians were masters, and the instruction to them was that they should treat their bondservants well, because - they were themselves the servants of Christ:

"Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (Colossians 4: 1.)

Those who despise Authority.

Strong words of condemnation are spoken against those who claim to be Christians, but who despise their rulers and masters. Their rebellious attitude goes right against the teaching and the example of the Lord Jesus. Such people are not only discontented and disobedient, but they make others like themselves. No wonder Peter describes them as "[bold and wilful . . . not afraid to revile the glorious ones](#)" (2 Peter 2: 10, 11.). Jude also severely condemns those who "[reject authority](#)" - see Jude 8 - 11.

Caesar and God.

The duties of a Christian towards the government can be summed up in the words of the Lord Jesus:

["Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."](#) (Matthew 22: 21.)

Jesus said this when his enemies had tried to trap him. "[Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?](#)" they asked. Most of these Jews would have been delighted if they could have got rid of this burden of taxation which hurt both their pride and their pocket. Yet if Jesus had given them any encouragement to rebel, these same Jews would have been glad to report it to their Roman enemies, in order to get him into trouble. How disappointed they must have been with an answer that told them to give both to Caesar and to God their dues.

Christians must never forget that it is their duty to obey 'Caesar.' They must obey laws, and pay taxes; they must do these things cheerfully; and they must also encourage others to do the same.

Rare Occasions.

Usually there is no conflict between our duties to 'Caesar' and our duties to God. Indeed, as we have seen, when a Christian is obedient to 'Caesar', he is also obeying God.

There are rare occasions, however, when obeying a human government means disobeying God. For instance, three God-fearing men were given orders by the great king Nebuchadnezzar to worship a golden image (Daniel 3). Although these men were the king's most faithful servants, they refused, because God, who was greater than Nebuchadnezzar, had forbidden the worship of idols.

There was an occasion when the Jewish rulers tried to stop the apostles from preaching the gospel. But because they had been commanded to preach, they could only answer: "[We must obey God rather than men.](#)" (Acts 5: 29.)

It is possible for Christians today to find themselves; in a similar position. There may be times when people are told by their government to do things that are contrary to the laws of God. When this happens, true Christian believers will say: "[We must obey God rather than men.](#)" For example, if the country in which we live is at war, we may be called to fight. However severe the penalties for disobedience, God's servants will not hesitate to refuse. Their master has told them to love their enemies, and this they must do.

Conscientious Objectors.

In some countries the penalties for refusing to fight are severe. Some Christians have suffered imprisonment, and some death, because they have steadfastly refused to go to war.

In many countries, however, a more sympathetic attitude is shown to those whose conscience will not allow them to fight. Conscientious objectors, as they are called, are often permitted to do useful work for their countries (like land work or forestry), and they will be happy to serve in this way while other men serve in the armed forces. But whether their governments are sympathetic or severe, true Christians will not fight.

Chapter Five

The Christian and Politics

We have seen from the Bible that the true Christian does not belong to this present age. We must never lose sight of this fact. Let it be repeated, that to the true Christian the present is a meantime, a period of waiting, watching and witnessing for the coming kingdom of God.

It is for **this** reason that followers of Christ do not fight, and it is for this reason that they take no part whatsoever in politics. They are citizens of a kingdom that is still future.

Our Representative.

From time to time countries hold elections. People are asked to vote for the political party or the leader they wish to see in power. How can a follower of Christ vote for a party that is not dedicated to serving Christ? How can he vote for any other representative when he has already voted for the Lord Jesus as his Leader?

A follower of Christ recognises that to vote for another leader would be an act of disloyalty to his real Leader. But in obedience to that Leader's command he is willing to accept whatever human government is in control, knowing that "[there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.](#)" Because he is willing to give loyal and cheerful service to **whatever** human government is in control, it would be unseemly for a follower of Christ to take sides, to pick and choose, favouring one and rejecting another. He can assure every ruler of every government in every country that he will obey all the laws of the land (unless, of course, that obedience would mean disobeying God's law); and his promise of obedience will have greater weight if he can honestly say that he has never taken sides in politics.

In the same way, it would be wrong for a follower of Christ to lend his support to a political creed or ideology. Men claim to be conservative, capitalist, liberal, socialist, communist, fascist, nationalist, racist. How can one who campaigns for the coming kingdom of God show any enthusiasm for these lesser political ideas, when he knows they are doomed to failure? He will not be interested.

In the first century, many Christians had to live in a slave-owning society (*see again page 13*). Paul's instructions to Christian slaves were that they were to obey their masters - bad masters as well as good. Although Paul's hopes were fixed on better things, he did not condemn the slave society; but he often stressed the need for a spirit of contentment, which would make the hardships much easier to bear. His own personal example was "[I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.](#)" ([Philippians 4: 11.](#)) And when he wrote those words, he was in prison! If then Paul taught his fellow-Christians to accept that sort of society cheerfully, we may be sure that it is our duty to submit to governments which permit freedom and an easier life.

Christians have no right to grumble, and they certainly ought not to agitate, demonstrate or strike; they should not even dream of taking strong action against a bad social or industrial

situation. When the Lord Jesus returns, all the evils of human society will be swept away, but until that time comes it is the Christian's duty to render cheerful obedience to those who govern.

Of course it is right for a Christian to speak out against the blasphemy, the profanity, the wickedness and the neglect of God's Word that disgraces the world - but that is another matter.

International Brotherhood.

There is another reason why the followers of the Lord Jesus ought not to get involved in the politics of the countries where they live. It is because, as believers, they are members of a great international brotherhood. Speaking to Christians everywhere, Peter says:

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy, Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2: 9-12.)

Aliens and exiles! The writer of this booklet lives in the U. K. When he visits other countries he does not expect to vote in their elections, and they don't want him to. But during his stay in these countries he is expected to keep their laws, pay all debts and keep out of trouble. The members of this great international brotherhood must act like this **wherever they are** - at home or abroad - because they do not really belong to any country.

It would obviously be wrong for those who belong to this universal fellowship to adopt a narrow nationalist or racialist attitude that would exclude or condemn to a lower place their brethren from other lands.

It is good that the servants of God are able to say both to their brethren in other lands and to the authorities in all countries that, in obedience to Christ, they are also obedient to **all** human governments; and that they would not set themselves against the policies of any government, at home or abroad. It is good that they are able to say that they have always acted like this.

Jehovah's Witnesses - So called.

The members of the religious sect known as **Jehovah's Witnesses** regard all human governments as instruments of the devil, and they believe it is their duty to condemn them all. As a result of the strong words that they speak against governments, they bring trouble on themselves, which they wrongly think of as "**persecution for righteousness' sake.**" Whereas it is our Christian duty to speak out against sin, it is not our duty to rebuke governments. This is quite against the spirit of Paul's words to Timothy:

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a Quiet

and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." (1 Timothy 2: 1-3.)

John the Baptist spoke out bluntly against the personal wickedness of Herod, but not against his oppressive rule of the nation.

Brethren in Christ.

The name Christian means different things to different people. It is used by a host of religious sects that differ from each other and from the teaching of the Bible. It is used by people who do not obey the Lord's commandment about loving one's enemies, and by those who meddle in the politics of nations.

The name **Christadelphian** (meaning 'Brothers In Christ') has been adopted by a small group of Bible-reading, Bible-believing Christians, who, in obedience to their Lord's command, refuse to go to war, and do not involve themselves in political matters. This has always been their attitude, and in this, as well as in other matters, they are similar to the Christians of the first century. Thus the famous Bertrand Russell, in his book, **Power: A New Social Analysis**, wrote:

"Christianity was, in its earliest days, entirely unpolitical. The best representatives of the primitive tradition in our times are the Christadelphians who believe the end of the world to be imminent and refuse to have any part or lot in secular affairs."

The following words were written by a Christadelphian to Christadelphians. They also refer to this distinctive feature of the community - its unwillingness to get involved in politics:

"The more our world becomes enmeshed in its own toils of human government and political alignment, the more have we need for separation. The uniqueness of our position is quite remarkable, and we must maintain it. Our international brotherhood has its headquarters and present seat of government in heaven. Meanwhile, in quiet submissiveness and ready obedience we behave ourselves fittingly in the lands of our pilgrimage." *

** From **Politics and Christ**, by Harry Tennant (**The Bible Missionary** . No. 55. page 40.)*

Chapter Six

When God's Kingdom Comes

What will happen to the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns to reign over the earth?

The Scriptures teach us that those whom the Lord claims as his own will be given great responsibilities in the coming kingdom, First, however, those believers who have died will be raised from the dead, and then, if judged worthy, together with those of Christ's true followers who are still alive, they will be made immortal. (The resurrection of the dead is taught in many parts of the Bible, but the great chapter on this theme is 1 Corinthians 15). *

** Read **Resurrection** a booklet in this series.*

And what will happen after resurrection and immortality? The following scriptures provide the answer:

"Then Peter said in reply, 'Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?' Jesus said to them, Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' " (Matthew 19: 27, 28).

"Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and thou hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5: 9, 10).

Those who are found faithful will help the Lord Jesus Christ in the government of the earth. This truth is expressed in various ways in different parts of the Scriptures. Isaiah foretells a time when "a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice." (Isaiah 32: 1).

And it is written in Daniel's prophecy:

"The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them." (Daniel 7: 27).

An Invitation and a Challenge

To everyone there comes the Lord's invitation and challenge. Our personal destiny depends upon our personal response to the call of Christ.

"The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us." (2 Timothy 2: 11, 12.)

War and Politics The Christian's Duty

- * "The true Christian does not belong to the present age."
- * "Christians must not fight."
- * "Real Christians are the most trustworthy of citizens."

These sample quotations are enough to show the importance of this booklet. The Bible presents a challenge too great for most Christians to face.

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