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Can A Christian Kill For His Government?

Bennie Lee Fudge

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BENNIE LEE FUDGE

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By
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FOREWORD

The question of the Christian's relation to civil government in general, to the penal system of government, and to participation in carnal warfare has been the subject of many excellent works in the past. This booklet does not pretend to add anything new to the study of the subject. It is an effort to collect in logical systematic form, the principal arguments that have been presented by those who affirm the right of the Christian to participate in these activities, and to study these arguments in the light of the Scriptures. Then follow a few of our reasons for holding to the opposite faith.

Much that has appeared in the religious press of the brotherhood during recent months on this subject has dealt largely with personalities and sentimentality, rather than with a candid and rational discussion of the issues involved. It has been my effort in this discussion to keep personalities and emotionalism out, to represent fairly the position of those who advocate the Christian's going to war, and to deal fairly and frankly with all scriptures considered. The American Standard Version is used uniformly throughout this discussion, since it is universally recognized as being the best translation of the Scriptures in the English language.

On this question, as on infant baptism or any other controversial point, one thing is certain. The Bible does not oppose itself. One side is wrong. Somebody is teaching error. Either I am wrong in advising Christian boys against accepting combatant service, and will be held responsible before God for encouraging them to shirk their duty, not only to their country, but to God; or those are wrong who teach these young men to go willingly into combatant service, and will be held responsible in the judgment for encouraging them to violate one of the most sacred commands of God in shedding the blood of their fellow men.

Many preachers, far removed from the actual conflict itself, and under the pressure of public opinion, will remain neutral now, or will encourage the boys to go on into the business of bloodshed. Later, when the war is over, popular enthusiasm dies, they can think calmly, and the inevitable reaction against war sets in, they can change their position. The tragic part is that many of the boys who have gone into the slaughter with their blessing **will not come back** and will not have a chance to change their positions. A gospel preacher is assuming a tremendous responsibility when he encourages a sincere, conscientious young Christian deliberately to take the life of his fellows, made in the image of God, believing on the basis of the preacher's word that he is doing God a service.

May God hasten the day when the churches of Christ shall present a united front on this vital question, when all speak as the oracles of God, speak where the Scriptures speak, and be silent where the Scriptures are silent.

March, 1943

PROPOSITION

A CHRISTIAN MAY KILL

The Bible authorizes the Christian's acting as a punitive agent of the civil government, either as a law enforcement officer or as a soldier in the army.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Bible: The Old and New Testaments. It is not a question of what seems right to me, of what I want to do, of what the majority want, neither is this question to be settled by the probable consequences of our action. For the Christian the only question is, **what does the Bible teach?**

Christian: An obedient believer in Christ. We are not concerned with what the Old Testament Jew should do. He was under Moses. Neither are we concerned with the relationship of sinners to the punitive office. They are in the kingdom of darkness. Our question is, **What shall the follower of the Prince of Peace do?**

Punitive agent: One who is authorized by the civil government to execute punishment upon lawbreakers.

Civil Government: Organized human government, the legislative, judicial, and executive machinery of political government. Distinguished from ecclesiastical government. The primary functions of all civil governments are to protect the innocent and punish the criminal. The New Testament recognizes this in Romans 13. These primary functions are kept in mind throughout this discussion when referring to the institution of civil government.

I.

SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL REALMS

Luke 20:22-25, "And they asked him saying—Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Show me a denarius. Whose image and superscription hath it? And they said, Caesar's. And he said unto them, Then render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

The Christian lives and operates in two realms, the spiritual and the material. God has two institutions operating under his authority. To civil government he has given the responsibility of discipline as it pertains to the physical life. To the church he has committed the spiritual resources, and given the responsibility of order and discipline as it pertains to the spiritual life within the spiritual kingdom. One of these ordained institutions employs physical force because the nature of its work demands it. The other uses love and persuasion, because the nature of its work demands it. The spiritual things are God's, and must be rendered to him. The material things are Caesar's and must be rendered to him. To rightly divide the word we must not apply scriptures dealing with the spiritual realm to things of the material realm, and vice versa.

1. The Christian operates in two realms, the spiritual and the material.

2. In the material realm force must be applied, because the nature of the work demands it.

3. Therefore a Christian may employ force in the material realm.

REPLY

The first premise is false. In the first place, the scripture cited does not prove it. Read the quotation carefully. As we shall see later, the Christian owes certain things to Caesar and other things to God, but the words of the Master here are not a commentary upon these general relationships. The Lord is here talking about money, the denarius, the creation of Caesar, bearing his image and name. That which bears Caesar's image and superscription belongs to Caesar, was made by him, must be rendered to him, and may be used by him as he sees fit. Now, what is it that belongs to God, was made by him, made in his image, bears his name or superscription, and must be rendered to him and him alone, to be used by him as he sees fit? The child of God. Body and soul, stamped with the image of God (Gen. 1:27), and wearing his name (Acts 11:26; Eph. 3:15). My money belongs to Caesar and must be freely rendered to him for whatever purpose he may wish to use it. He used it often to persecute Christians, yet it was his and had to be rendered to him. He uses it today to teach scientific and sociological theories contrary to the Bible, to provide halls for dancing and reveling, and for other purposes that I oppose; yet it is his; he, not I, is responsible for its use, and I must render it to him. On the other hand, I belong to God (I Cor. 6:19-20), and dare not use my body—which is not mine, nor Caesar's, but God's—in any way that God has not authorized. Caesar has no voice here. Just as certainly as the penny belongs to him by creation, image, and superscription, the Christian belongs to God by creation, image, and superscription.

The premise that the Christian operates in two separate realms, the spiritual and the material, is false, in the second place, because it is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. The truth is that in this life the spiritual and the material are inseparable. The spiritual operates only through the material. This is exactly what James is talking about when he says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith" (James 2:14-18). It is impossible for us to manifest our spiritual side (our faith) except through our material side (our works). The material life of the Christian is simply the spiritual life at work. Paul recognizes this in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your **bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual service.**" Our spiritual

growth can be measured exactly by the use we make of our material bodies.

There are only two realms, so far as the Christian is concerned: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. We were once, both the material and the spiritual parts of us, in one of these kingdoms, but we are now, both the material and the spiritual parts of us in the other. "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1:13). This effort to separate the spiritual and material realms, each with his own head and laws, and having the Christian jumping back and forth from one to the other, is absurd, besides being unscriptural.

The Christian, as a citizen of the kingdom of God, lives in many different relationships. To one individual he is a husband, to another a father, to another a son, to another a blood brother, to another a brother in Christ, to some a teacher, to another a student, to one a master, to others a servant, etc. In all these relationships of life—and you will notice they are all manifested in the "material" realm—he is subject to Christ. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth," (Matt. 28:18). "That in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). He has a definite relationship to God, to his parents, his wife, his children, his neighbors, the church, the civil government, his servants, the elders of the church, the church under him if he is an elder, etc. Each of these relationships is spiritual in that it is prompted and directed by the spirit, and each is material in that physical means must be used in its execution. In none of them can the spiritual and the material be separated. In all of them he acts **as a child of God** and is subject wholly to the law of God. The law of God has given definite principles to guide us in each relationship that God intends the Christian to sustain. He has told me how to conduct myself as a member of the family or as a father over the family, as a member of a congregation or as an elder over the congregation, as a servant or as a master over servants, as a pupil or as a teacher over pupils. There are some relationships into only one side of which I may enter. I am told how I am to conduct myself toward the devil, but not how I am to conduct myself as a devil; my relationship toward evildoers but not as an evildoer; my duties toward law enforcement officers and the government, but not my duties as a law enforcement officer or a part of the government; my attitude toward God, but not my attitude as a god. It is a mere quibble to say that we are not told how to conduct ourselves as farmers, merchants, or doctors. These are simply occupations and not primary relationships of life. It is inconceivable that God should fail to tell us how to conduct ourselves in a relationship of such basic importance as civil government if he had intended for us to function in it.

We may say that the Christian does not operate in two separate realms. He operates in one, the kingdom of God. In this realm he sustains many relationships toward different individuals and insti-

tutions. There are some relationships into which he may not enter, and civil government is one of these.

II.

JEWISH AND ROMAN PRACTICE

The apostles of Christ established Christianity among the peoples subject to the Jewish and Roman governments, both of which vigorously enforced capital punishment and sustained themselves by force of arms. Therefore:

1. The converts to Christ could not know it was wrong for them to participate in government affairs or bear arms unless they were plainly so **commanded**.
2. They were not so commanded.
3. Therefore it was not wrong for them to participate in government or bear arms.

REPLY

The first premise assumes that the people among whom Christianity was established regarded participation in a purely civil government and bearing arms for it as the accepted thing. This assumption is false.

In the first place, the Jewish government, although exercising civil and military functions, was primarily an ecclesiastical government. The civil and military officials were subject to, part of, the hierarchy. Their ecclesiastical government was responsible for the enforcement of laws given directly from God. They were authorized by God to inflict capital punishment for violation of both moral and positive laws. One of the designated crimes to be so punished was Sabbath violation (Numbers 15:35), a purely religious offense. The parallel to this government will be found, not in our civil government, but in our religious government. We have an ecclesiastical or church government (Phil. 3:20, Matt. 28:19, I Cor. 5:12—6:6). **Where has God authorized this ecclesiastical government to execute capital punishment?**

As to the Roman government, the counterpart of our modern civil government, far from being the accepted thing by the people among whom Christianity was established, it was bitterly resented by them and denied the right to rule over them. Instead of having to **command** the people not to take part in the Roman government and army, the apostles had to command them to accept its overlordship and pay taxes to it. They did not **command** them to take part in the government or to bear arms for it, which they certainly would have, under the circumstances, if they had wished for them to do so.

III.

THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION

1. All men have a God-given instinct of self-preservation. Unless it is to the glory of God in obedience to a direct command of his to yield our lives to an aggressor, we are right in opposing an

attacker. We are never right in maliciously attacking another.

2. What is true of individuals is true of nations.

3. Therefore it is right for Christians to fight in a defensive war, but not in an aggressive war.

REPLY

The second premise is misapplied. One instinctively defends his own life when attacked; he does not instinctively defend the form of government, national ideals, political and social customs, territories, and other things that go to make up the nation. The very fact that a tremendous national propaganda campaign necessarily accompanies every war is proof enough of this.

One cannot lose his individual identity as a part of the nation. That is the doctrine of Nazism and Fascism. Yet that is what one must do to consider an attack upon his national institution an attack upon himself personally, or to consider fighting for the national institution an exercise of the instinct of self-preservation.

IV.

INNOCENCE AND GUILT

1. We have the divine right of self-preservation. The man who kills in self-defense is not guilty of murder like the man who kills deliberately and aggressively.

2. What is true of individuals is true of nations.

3. Therefore a man is not guilty of murder who kills in defensive war.

REPLY

In the first place, it is impossible for a man to judge between offensive and defensive wars while the war is in progress and he is involved in it. Napoleon declared in his last days that he had never waged an offensive war. The people of Germany believed in World War I and also in this present war that they were defending their fatherland. It is axiomatic in war that the best defense is a good offensive.

Again the second premise is misapplied. It is assumed that men lose their individual responsibility as a part of the nation. God's failure to punish Noah and Lot with their wicked nations shows that this assumption is false. God respected them as individual personalities and recognized their personal responsibility. The punishment of Achan in the midst of a righteous nation is another case in point, and that even in a dispensation in which personal responsibility was largely subjugated to the national. In the New Testament personal accountability is emphasized throughout.

This argument contends that a man is not guilty of murder who kills in defensive war. It necessarily follows that any man who kills in offensive war is guilty of murder. To maintain this distinction and keep in mind our individual accountability we must presuppose one nation in which every person is individually guilty and another in which every person is individually innocent. Otherwise individ-

ually innocent soldiers in the armies of aggressive nations are guilty of murder, and the inevitable killing of civilians, women, and children by soldiers in the armies of defensive nations is murder. In war I do not kill a nation; I kill a man, an individual soul, no more guilty of personal aggression against me than I am against him. This argument, instead of drawing a clear-cut distinction between the innocent and the guilty, utterly destroys any distinction.

V.

SERVANTS OF THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD

"Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).

1. The servants of the kingdoms of this world may fight to defend those kingdoms. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

2. Christians are subjects of the kingdoms of this world. (Rom. 13:1).

3. Therefore Christians may fight to defend the kingdoms of this world.

REPLY

The first premise is begging the question, assuming the thing to be proved. It assumes "All servants (including Christians) of the kingdoms of this world may fight to defend these kingdoms." Study the text carefully. Jesus is clearly distinguishing between his kingdom and the kingdoms of this world, between the nature of his kingdom and earthly kingdoms, between the servants of his kingdom and the servants of those kingdoms. He simply stated without approval or disapproval a universally recognized fact that the servants of earthly kingdoms fight for their governments.

The servants of Christ of whom he spoke that night were subjects of the Roman government. They were "in the world" (John 17:11), but not "of the world" (John 17:16). In the same way the kingdom of Christ is in the world, but not of the world. In the sense in which Jesus spoke that night one can just as well include his kingdom among the kingdoms of this world as he can include his servants among the servants of the kingdoms of this world. The contrast is primarily between his servants and the servants of worldly kingdoms, despite the fact that his servants were subjects and servants of Rome. If we today would build a postulate upon his words we must say, "The servants of the kingdoms of the world (exclusive of my servants) fight for those kingdoms."

We cannot say that the nature of the kingdoms, but not of the servants, is different—that I might fight for the kingdoms of the world because of their physical nature, but may not for the kingdom of God because of its spiritual nature. It is not the nature of the

kingdom in itself but my nature as a servant of the kingdom that keeps me from fighting for it. We claim to be fighting for the principles of the kingdom of God in the present war. We can fight for ideals and spiritual principles. I can fight for the kingdom of God—its nature does not prevent my doing so, except as its nature has changed my nature.

VI

THEY THAT TAKE THE SWORD PERISH WITH THE SWORD

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Perish with what sword? That of the civil ruler (Rom. 13:4).

1. The civil government, acting through its subjects, has the authority of Christ to wield the sword in punishment of murderers.
2. Christians are subjects of the civil government.
3. Therefore Christians, as subjects of the civil government and acting as agents of the civil government, have the authority of Christ to wield the sword in punishment of murderers.

REPLY

The major premise assumes that all subjects of the civil government, Christians included, have the authority of Christ to wield the sword. This is the very point at issue, so this is an assumption and not an argument.

VII.

MORAL AND PENAL LAW

All law is of three kinds, positive, moral, or penal. Positive law is that which rests upon the arbitrary authority of God. Moral law is that which is derived from the nature of things and sets out what is right between man and man. Penal law is that which defines the punishment due the character violating the others.

1. A thing may be wrong under the moral law and yet be right under the penal law.
2. Killing is one of these things. Moses said, "Thou shalt not kill," (morally wrong to kill), then said, "Thou shalt surely kill," (right to kill under penal law).
3. Therefore, while the entire moral teaching of the Bible is that killing is wrong, it is right to kill as penalty for violating the moral code.

REPLY

This threefold classification of law is erroneous. All law is penal law. There is no such thing as law without a penalty. However, we shall accommodate ourselves to this classification, and examine this argument from that viewpoint. We make the same accommodation in our first affirmative argument.

Since penal law is not inherent in the nature of things, it must rest upon the positive authority of God or upon purely human authority. A thing that is morally wrong can never be right without a

positive law from God to make it so. Divine penal law is simply one phase of positive law. Under the Old Covenant the moral law was given, "Thou shalt not kill." Without a positive law from God authorizing an exception to this law for penal purposes it would have been unconditionally wrong for an Israelite to kill. But God authorized a penal law, "Thou shalt surely put to death," and named the administrator. It was still wrong for anyone to kill other than the God-ordained legal administrators, but it was right for them.

In the New Covenant the same moral law still holds: "Thou shalt not kill" (Matt. 19:18). God has ordained a penal law today involving an exception to this moral law, and has named the administrator—the civil government (Rom. 13). He has not authorized the Christian as such to execute this penal law. The moral law still applies to him without a positive law from God to authorize an exception for penal purposes. The positive command to the Jew, "Thou shalt surely put to death" is striking absent with the Christian. To assert that the Christian may execute the penal law as an agent of the God-ordained administrator, the civil government, is assuming the very proposition to be proved.

VIII.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

"And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changer's money, and overthrew the tables" (John 2:13-16).

1. Jesus used force to enforce the law of the land against those who violated it.

2. He is our example in all things.

3. Therefore the Christian may use force to enforce the law of the land against violators.

REPLY

The major premise is false. The Revised Version (universally recognized as the better translation) reads, "And he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables." The Revision does not say that he used the scourge on men, but on the animals. Neither translation has force applied to men in the parallel passages (Matt. 21:12-16, Mk. 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46). Instead, every one of these accounts, including John's, tells us the means used in driving the men out: he taught them and presented the Scriptures to them. This weapon drove Satan from the field of battle in the wilderness; it drove these men from the temple; it is the sword of the Christian today. The same expression used here in both Greek and English—"cast out"—is also used of "casting out" demons (Matt. 8:16, 8:31, 9:33, 34, etc.). I suppose Jesus flogged the demons with a scourge of cords!

A second fallacy in this premise is that Jesus was enforcing the law of the land. In cleansing the temple Jesus was performing a

purely religious act that had nothing whatsoever to do with either enforcing or violating any civil law of any government. If it could be proved that Jesus employed force on men here (which we have seen cannot be proved) we would have proved that it is right to use force in keeping the worship of God pure, not that it may be used in enforcing civil laws. This argument could justify my forcibly driving a digressive preacher from the pulpit and overthrowing the piano, but could not justify my execution of a condemned man for the government.

IX.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT ORDAINED OF GOD

Read Romans 13:1-7. The civil government is ordained of God. Christians must be subject to it and support it for conscience sake, which places civil government as an institution in the realm of that which is morally right. Conscience has to do with matters morally right and wrong. The God-ordained purpose of the divinely approved institution of civil government is to bear the sword, punish evil-doers, and praise the righteous. But civil government works through its citizens and subjects.

1. It is right for a citizen of the civil government, acting as an agent of the government, to bear the sword in punishment of evil-doers.

2. Christians are citizens of the civil government, and Christians may do anything that is right.

3. Therefore Christians, as citizens of the civil government and acting as agents of the government, may bear the sword in punishment of evil-doers.

REPLY

The first premise is defective. Logically to draw the above conclusion, the first premise must be construed to mean, "It is right for **any** citizen of the civil government, acting as an agent of the government, to bear the sword and punish evil-doers." It is assumed that "the powers that be" of Romans 13:1 includes the civil government with all its citizens and subjects. Since this assumption would include Christians, the first premise is in reality begging the question.

A study of Romans 13 will show that Paul considers the Christian as entirely separate from "the powers that be." "Let **every soul** be in subjection to the higher powers." Paul is considering the government as one party, the Christian as another, the Christian subject to the government. This applied to **every soul** among the Christians. "He (the power, the administrator of civil government) is a minister of God to thee for good." Not that the Christian is the minister of God in this capacity, but that another party—he, third person, automatically excluding the Christian who is addressed in the second person—is such a minister. Notice the same distinction in the following verses: "But if **thou** do that which is evil, be afraid, for **he** (not thou) beareth not the sword in vain; for **he** (not thou) is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil."

Now comes the Christian's part in this order of things—"Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience, sake. For this cause ye pay tribute also; For they (not ye, now) are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." It is strikingly noticeable that in listing the services "due" the civil government by the Christian, Paul did not include "defense to whom defense is due" or "vengeance to whom vengeance is due." Those two duties have always been expected of their subjects by the civil governments, yet inspiration nowhere names them as due by the Christian. It is similarly outstanding that while he mentions that ye (Christians) should pay tribute, custom, honor, fear, be subject, it is always he or they when bearing the sword is mentioned. So far as Romans 13 goes, the Christian's relationship to political government is wholly passive. This is the teaching of the entire New Testament on the matter. There is not one example, command or necessary inference of the Christian by divine sanction taking an active part in civil or military government.

Since it is clear that in Romans 13, Paul considers the sword-bearer and the Christian as separate and distinct individuals, our premise, to represent correctly the teaching of the passage, would read, "It is right for some citizens of the civil government, acting as agents of the government, to bear the sword and punish evil-doers." In this case it remains to be proved that Christians fall in that class qualified to bear the sword and punish evil-doers. This is the point to be proved in the beginning, so this argument is begging the question, and therefore no logical argument at all.

X.

PAUL'S USE OF ARMED DEFENSE

"If I then am a wrong-doer and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:11).

"And he called unto him two of the centurions and said, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; and he bade them provide beasts, that they might set Paul thereon, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor" (Acts 23:23-24).

1. Paul used armed force wielded by the government to defend himself against ruthless men.

2. We are to be imitators of Paul. (I Cor. 4:16).

3. Therefore a Christian today may use armed force as an agent of the government to defend himself and others from ruthless men.

REPLY

In the example of Paul, as in Romans 13, we are taught that there are certain things that we as Christians owe the government

and certain things the government owes us. The government owes the Christian armed protection, and the Christian owes the government subjection, tribute, and prayer. On the other hand the Christian does not owe the government armed protection, and the government does not owe the Christian subjection, tribute, or prayer.

XI.

CORNELIUS THE SOLDIER

Cornelius was a soldier in the Roman army. We do not know whether he remained in the army after he became a Christian, but Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34). Peter applied this to Cornelius **before** he preached the gospel to him and therefore confirmed his moral character as a soldier.

1. Cornelius was a soldier (Acts 10:1).
2. Peter confirmed his moral character as a soldier (Acts 10:34).
3. Therefore there is nothing morally wrong with being a soldier.

REPLY

If Acts 10:34 was applied to Cornelius **before** he became a Christian, he was **accepted with God** before he became a Christian, and obedience to the gospel is not necessary to acceptance with God. The fact is that Acts 10:34 teaches that only those who fear God and work righteousness in obeying the gospel are acceptable with him. The passage did not apply to Cornelius before he obeyed the gospel.

But grant for argument's sake that Cornelius was morally perfect. He lived under either the Patriarchal or the Jewish dispensation, both of which sanctioned the execution of vengeance by God's people. Under either of these dispensations Cornelius could have been a perfect moral character as a soldier, for God specifically provided for that office. **Where has he provided for the execution of vengeance by his people today?** He has not. Cornelius was entering into a new relationship with God, under a new system of worship, new relationships with God and men, and a new system of penal laws.

XII.

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR

Acts 16:23-36. "He was baptized, he and all his, immediately" (verse 33). "But when it was day . . . the jailor reported the words to Paul" (verses 35, 36).

The jailor was baptized between midnight and 1:00 A. M. When it was day he was still holding his position as jailor. Nothing is said about Paul's telling him he was wrong in doing so, which he certainly would if he had been wrong.

1. The jailor, after he became a Christian, occupied a punitive office as an agent of the government.
2. What is right for him is right for Christians today.

3. Therefore it is right for Christians today to occupy a punitive office as agents of the government.

REPLY

This argument, like those on Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, etc., is based on the silence of the scriptures. No one has ever given up all his bad habits or relationships or learned all the truth in the first six hours of discipleship. Acts 19:19 tells of believers who had continued to practice magical arts for a time. We have a record of their learning better and quitting. Acts 6:7 tells of Levitical priests who became obedient to the faith. Nothing is said of their giving up their office or of their being told that a Christian could not serve in such a capacity. Polygamy was common in the first century, but there is no mention of the apostles teaching against it or of anyone ceasing to practice it. By this line of reasoning we conclude that it is right for a Christian to hold the Levitical priesthood, practice polygamy, and hold a punitive civil office. The same line of reasoning is used upon this same text in Acts 16 to prove infant baptism. The jailor's household was baptized, and nothing is said about there being no infants in it: therefore infant baptism is authorized by the Bible! An argument that proves too much proves nothing at all.

XIII.

COMBATANT AND NON-COMBATANT SERVICE

All agree that a Christian may pay taxes and render certain non-combatant services to the government during war times, whether in the army or out of it. All this is directly in the prosecution of the war. There is no difference in principle between combatant and non-combatant service. It is just a question of participating a little or a lot.

1. A Christian may perform services that are indispensable to the man who does the killing in war.
2. This makes the Christian responsible for killing men in war.
3. Therefore a Christian may kill men in war.

REPLY

We deny the second premise. We owe the government every service that does not conflict with the law of Christ. If I owe a legitimate debt to a man whom I know to be a bootlegger, I am duty bound to pay him that which I owe, as long as it does not involve a sacrifice of Christian principle. I must pay him the money I owe him, even though I know he will use it in the manufacture and sale of illicit liquor. It is his money, not mine—I merely have it borrowed for a time. I am not responsible for the use he makes of his own money. I owe the government taxes. It is Caesar's money, not mine. I am not responsible for the use he makes of his own money. If I owe my bootlegger neighbor work I can pay it by pulling corn for him or by delivering food for his family, knowing in so doing I am releasing him to go to the still and make whiskey. I am not responsible for what he does with his time and labor. The service that I am rendering him is his. I owe it to him. But I cannot go to the still

and help make whiskey. To do so would conflict with a greater and previous obligation to the Lord. In like manner I can pay the government any service I owe it by producing foodstuffs or by caring for the wounded, but I cannot shoulder a gun and kill my follow-man.

XIV.

THE HEBREW WORDS FOR "KILL"

The word "kill" in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" Ex. 20:13) is "ratsach" and means murder. The word "kill" in the commandment "Thou shalt surely kill him" (Deut. 13:9) is "harag," and means to slay. It is sinful to murder, but it is not sinful to slay. The official slaying for punishment of crime therefore is not murder.

1. It is sinful to murder or "ratsach", but is not sinful to slay or "harag."
2. Killing in punishment for crime is slaying or "harag."
3. Therefore killing in punishment for crime is not sinful.

REPLY

The first statement is false. The only difference between "harag" and "ratsach" is that the former is the more inclusive. They are used almost interchangeably in the Old Testament. If we try to say that murder is prohibited and slaying permitted, using the English Bible, we are confronted with the fact that "ratsach" is translated "slain" in Judges 20:4 (A. V.), Prov. 22:13, and Psa. 62:3. But Ex. 20:13 forbids to "ratsach", and therefore forbids to slay. On the other hand, if we go back to the Hebrew and say that it is a sin to "ratsach," but not a sin to "harag," we find "harag" the word used in Gen. 4:8 of the killing of Abel by Cain, in Gen. 4:15 of the slaying of Cain forbidden by Jehovah, in Gen. 4:23 of the murder of a man by Lamech, in Gen. 37:20 of the proposed killing of Joseph by his brethren, in Judges 9:5 of the killing by Abimelech of his brothers, in I Sam. 22:21, of the slaying of the priests of Jehovah by Saul, in I Kings 18:13, of the slaying of the prophets of God by Jezebel, and in II Chron. 21:4 of the slaying by Jehoram of his brothers. In every one of these cases the Hebrew word is "harag" and in every one of them it is translated "slay." But we are told that it is not a sin to "harag" or slay!

This same word "harag" is translated "murder" in Psa. 10:8, Jer. 4:31, and Hos. 9:13 (A. V.). Therefore if it is not a sin to "harag," it is not a sin to murder. Both words are translated by three English words: "kill", "slay", and "murder".

When the Hebrews spoke of killing in war they had to use one of their general words for "kill," usually "harag" or "muth." We have already seen by the scriptures that "harag" is used repeatedly of murders. "Muth," the other general word used to refer to killing in battle, is used in I Sam. 22:18 of the slaughter of the priests of Jehovah by Doeg, in 2 Chr. 22:11 of the destruction of the royal family by Athaliah, in I Kings 13:24 of a man slain by a lion, in 2 Kings 15:14

of the assassination of Shallum by Menahem, in 2 Kings 15:30 of the murder of Pekah by Hosea, etc. According to Davies' Lexicon our English word "murder" is traced back to this word "muth," used of killing in war as well as of other killings. The word "nacah" used frequently of killing in battle, is used in Ex. 2:12 of Moses slaying the Egyptian, in 2 Sam. 13:30 of Absalom's murder of his brothers, in I Kings 16:11, 16 of the murder and assassinations by Zimri, in Jer. 40:15 of the plotted murder of Ishmael, etc. "Chalal," translated "slay" or "kill" in battle a number of times, is used in Isa. 53:5 to refer to the wounding or killing of Jesus, which is called murder in Acts 7:52. Every word in the Hebrew language translated "slay" or "kill" and applied to killing in warfare is also applied to murder. The Hebrew language does not make a distinction between killing in war and other killing.

The lexicons hear out this statement, as do the scriptures cited above. Only two words (muth and harag) are specifically applied by the lexicons to killing in war. Gesenius says of "harag": "kill, slay, implying ruthless violence, especially private violence," as its first meaning, and derived from that, "Hence of wholesale slaughter after battle. Also of slaughter in a revolt." Davies says of this word: "To strike, to smite down, hence to murder, kill. To slay, slaughter in war." Of "muth" Gesenius says: "Of killing men in personal combat or in war." Davies traces our English word murder to "muth." Both lexicons include "murder" and "killing in war" in the same definition or even subdivision of a definition of both words.

It will be asked, But why did not God use one of these words in the decalogue instead of "ratsach," which is never applied to killing in war? The answer is "ratsach" is the only word of the ten Hebrew words translated "kill" that applies only to the taking of human life. To have forbidden to "harag" would have prohibited killing beasts, vines, or anything else. A prohibition of "zavach" would have eliminated animal sacrifices; "Chalal" applies to piercing or boring anything, and in killing refers only to death by piercing, as with a spear or sword; to forbid to "tavach" would prohibit killing animals for food. If the word had been "muth" it would have meant literally "to cause to die" and would have forbidden anything causing the death of anything else. A prohibition of "nacah" would forbid slapping with the hand or even clapping hands in applause. If "nakaf" had been used it would have forbidden the Jews to encircle anything or round off any of their vessels. "Katal" is a poetic and late word in the language; while "shachat" includes the killing of animals for both sacrifice and food. The word "ratsach," used by God in the sixth commandment, is the only word in the Hebrew language that means the killing of man by man without restricting the means of killing, and at the same time does not include more than the taking of human life.

The argument has been made that "ratsach" applies only to pre-

meditated private killing, or murder. In the Pi'el or intensive form of the word this is true, according to Gesenius, but in the Kal form it is not true. The prohibition in Ex. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17 is expressed in Kal. The Kal form of the word is cited by Gesenius as being used for premeditated murder fifteen times, for accidental killing twenty-one times, and for killing in justice by the divinely and legally appointed avenger of blood twice. Throughout Numbers 35 the word "ratsach" is used consistently to refer to all three parties, the murderer, the accidental slayer, and the legal avenger. A good example of the interchangeability of the Kal form of "ratsach" with other words meaning "kill" is Num. 35:30. "Whosoever killeth (nacah) any person, the murderer (ratsach) shall be slain (ratsach) at the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person that he die (muth)." Also Num. 35:27: "The avenger of blood shall slay (ratsach) the manslayer (ratsach)." If God had intended to prohibit premeditated and private murder but at the same time imply a condoning of other forms of killing he would have used the Pi'el; form of the word, which means just that. But he did not use the Pi'el; he used the Kal form which means to kill, to slay a human being; homicide; manslaughter; the taking of the life of man by man, regardless of the means or motive.

It is the stating for the Jewish dispensation of an eternal principle of God, which has applied in all ages of mankind. It is a general prohibition of killing one's fellow man. True, God made exceptions to this general rule—killing in justice by divine appointment, and going to war at divine command. The first exception is made in the same word of the commandment, "ratsach," (Num. 35:27, 30). The other uses the general terms for kill or slay, which we have already shown to be applied to murder and used synonymously with "ratsach" in many places.

This distinction has proved to be a distinction without a difference.

XV.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

History shows that during the early ages of the church Christians were connected with the military service.

"There were, up to this time, many Christians connected with the military service, both in the higher and lower ranks; and they as yet had never been compelled to do anything contrary to their conscience" (295 A. D.) Neander, Vol. 1, page 146.

"The persecution having begun with those brethren who were in the army," Eusebius, Book 8, chapter 1.

Cyprian and Tertullian also mention Christians serving in the army.

1. The Christians in the early ages of the church were in position to know what was right.
2. They engaged in military service.
3. Therefore military service is right for the Christian.

REPLY

The authorities cited simply show that Christians served in the army in the second and third centuries A. D. They do not show that it was generally accepted by the church, or that it was right. Neander,, the historian quoted above, argues at length his opinion that the early Christians were wrong in refusing service. When he made the statement quoted, he referred only to certain individuals among the Christians. When treating of the attitude of the church in general toward military service, he says.

"Many Christians, again, from a conscientiousness worthy of all respect, thought themselves bound to take passages like Matt. 5:39 in the literal sense. **That tone of mind very generally prevailed . . .** It revolted their Christian feelings to suffer themselves to be employed as instruments of pain to others, to serve as the executors of laws which, in all cases, were dictated and animated by the spirit of rigid justice, without any mixture of mercy or love. . . .

The Christians stood over against the state, as a priestly, spiritual race; and the **only way** in which it seemed possible that Christianity could exert an influence on civil life was (which it must be allowed was the purest way) by tending continually to diffuse more of a holy temper among the citizens of the state."

The time of which both Neander and Eusebius spoke (295 A. D., which, incidentally, was during Eusebius' lifetime) was after the apostasy and corruption of the developing Catholic Church was well under way. The entire selection from which the above sentence of Eusebius' was taken, describes the condition of the church at that time:

"But when on account of the abundant freedom, we fell into laxity and sloth, and envied and reviled each other, and were almost, as it were, taking up arms against one another, rulers assailing rulers with words like spears, and people forming parties against people, and monstrous hypocrisy and dissimulation rising to the greatest height of wickedness, the divine judgment with forbearance, as is its pleasure, while the multitudes yet continued to assemble, gently and moderately harassed the episcopacy. This persecution began with the brethren in the army."

This passage proves that at that age of the church Christians were (1) lax, (2) slothful, (3) envying and reviling each other, (4) at the point of taking up arms against each other, (5) forming rival factions, (6) practicing monstrous hypocrisy and dissimulation, (7) rising to the greatest height of wickedness, (8) serving in the army. It no more endorses one of these things than it does the others.

The reference to Cyprian does not mention military service at all. Tertullian mentions Christians serving in the army and states his disapproval of it.

A CHRISTIAN MAY NOT KILL

Proposition: The Bible forbids the Christian's acting as a punitive agent of the civil government, either as a law enforcement officer or as a soldier in the army.

I.

GOD'S PENAL LAW

The Sermon on the Mount

Moral law is that which inheres in the nature of things and sets forth what is right between man and man. Positive law is that which depends upon the arbitrary authority of either God or man, which does not inhere in the nature of things. Penal law is that which names and enforces the punishment due the character who violates either of the others. Since penal law does not inhere in the nature of things it must be classified as a division of positive law. The fact that different acts are punished by law in different countries and that different penalties are meted out in different countries for the same crime shows that this is true. Divine penal law is no exception to this. In the Mosaic dispensation God placed the death penalty upon witches and sabbath-breakers. Today he does not. Divine penal law is not inherent in the nature of things, but rests upon the arbitrary authority of God, and is therefore subject to change.

Moral law has never changed, throughout God's dealings with men. Positive law, including penal law, has changed with the dispensations. In the patriarchal dispensation few positive or penal laws were given to man. The law covering murder was given in Gen. 9:5, 6, "And surely your blood, the blood of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it: and at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood; by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." The crime; shedding man's blood; the penalty: by man shall his blood be shed; the administrator: every man's brother, i. e., the nearest of kin of the slain man. It is noteworthy that this law was not given before the flood—in fact it was forbidden in the case of Cain (Gen. 4:15). It is also worthy of notice that God always names the crime, the penalty, and the administrator of penal laws.

The law of vengeance laid down in Gen. 9:5, 6 passed down in some form or other to almost all races. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article **Avenger of Blood**, says,

"**Avenger of blood**, the person, usually the nearest kinsman of the murdered man, whose duty it was to avenge his death by killing the murderer. In early societies crimes of violence were regarded as injuries of a personal character to be punished by the suffered or his kinsfolk. This right of vengeance in many countries was the subject of strict regu-

lations and limitations. The law of sanctuary, and the institution of bloodmoney, and the wergild offered the wrongdoer a mode of escaping from his enemies' revenge."

Just as the sacrifices, the rituals, and the institutions of the Jewish age grew out of those of the Patriarchal, so the law of avenging blood in the Jewish grew out of the law of vengeance of the previous dispensation. The Mosaic law is treated excellently in the International Standard Encyclopedia under the article "Go'el," as follows:

Go'el (redeemer).

Go'el is the participle of the Hebrew word *ga'al* (to deliver, to redeem) which aside from its common usage is frequently employed in connection with Hebrew law, where it is the technical term applied to a person who as the nearest relative of another is placed under certain obligations to him. (1) If a Jew because of poverty had been obliged to sell himself to a wealthy "stranger or sojourner," it became the duty of his relatives to redeem him. See Lev. 25:47 ff. (2) The same duty fell upon the nearest kinsman, if his brother, being poor, had been forced to sell some of his property. See Lev. 25:23 ff; Ruth 4:4 ff. (3) It also devolved upon the nearest relative to marry the childless widow of his brother (Ruth 3:13). (4) In Num. 5:5ff, a law is stated which demands that restitution be made to the nearest relative, and after him to the priest, if the injured party has died. Lev. 6:1 ff. (5) The law of blood-revenge made it the sacred duty of the nearest relative to avenge the blood of his kinsman. He was called the *go'el ha-dam*, "the avenger of blood." This law was based upon the command given in Gen. 9:5f: "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," and was carried out even if an animal had killed a man; in this case, however, the payment of a ransom was permitted (Ex. 21:28ff). A clear distinction was made between an accidental and deliberate murder. In both cases the murderer could find refuge at the altar of the sanctuary; if, however, the investigation revealed presumptuous manslaughter, he was taken from the altar to be put to death (Ex. 21:12ff; I Kings 1:50; 2:38). In Num. 35:9ff definite regulations as to the duties of the Go'el are given. Six cities were to be appointed as "cities of refuge," three on each side of the Jordan. The congregation has judgment over the murderer. There must be more than one witness to convict a man. If he is found guilty, he is delivered to the Go'el; if murder was committed by accident, he is permitted to live within the border of the city of refuge; in case the manslayer leaves this city before the death of the high priest, the avenger of blood has a right to slay him. After the death of the high priest the murderer may return to his own city. Ransom cannot be

given for the life of a murderer; no expiation can be made for a murder but by the blood of the murderer (Deut. 19:4ff; Josh. 20; 2 Sam. 14:6ff). According to the law the children of a murderer could not be held responsible for the crime of their father (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6). The order in which the nearest relative was considered the Go'el is given in Lev. 25:48f.: first a brother, then an uncle or an uncle's son, and after them any other near relative. This order was observed in connection with (1) above, but probably also in the other cases except (4).

From this it will be seen that in the Jewish dispensation much of the personal element of revenge is eliminated. The avenger of blood becomes the agent of the civil government in avenging himself. In this dispensation the law was, "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex. 20:13); the penalty, "No expiation can be made for the land for the blood that was shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it," (Num. 35:33); the administrator, the legally appointed Go'el or avenger of blood, the nearest of kin of the slain man.

At this point it will be well for us to study carefully the distinction between "avenge" and revenge." Webster's Unabridged Dictionary says:

In present usage, to **avenge** is to inflict punishment, either in behalf of oneself or of others, for the sake of vindication or just retribution; as, to avenge an insult; to avenge the injuries of the helpless and innocent; "He (Moses) avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian" (Acts 7:24). To **revenge** is to inflict pain or injury in malicious or resentful retaliation.

The Twentieth Century Dictionary says:

"Avenge" and "revenge" radically are synonymous, but modern usage makes a valuable distinction in the use of these words, restricting "avenge" to the taking of just punishment, and "revenge" to the infliction of pain or evil maliciously."

On the same point, under article "Avenge" and "Avenger," the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia has this to say:

"Avenge:

The general idea connected with this word is that of inflicting punishment upon the wrong-doer.—The usual Hebrew word is "nakam" or derivatives, "to avenge." — In the New Testament "avenge" is translated from the Greek "ekdikoo," "to do justice," "to protect."

"Avenger:

The person who inflicts punishment upon the evildoer for a wrong experienced by himself ("nakam," "to avenge,") or by someone else "ga'al," "to redeem"). In the New Testament **avenger** occurs only once: "The Lord is an avenger in all things" (I Thess. 4:6). It was the duty of the nearest

relative to execute vengeance upon the murderer of his kin; he became the Go'el."

The same source, article "Revenge," says,

"Revenge:

The same Hebrew and Greek words are used to express the idea of "to avenge" and "to revenge" (Hebrew "nakam" or derivative; Greek "ekdikeo" or derivative). In English these words are synonymous in that they are both used to express the infliction of punishment upon the wrong-doer, but "to take revenge" may also imply a spiteful, wrong, or malignant spirit. In the latter case the Revised Version preserves "revenge" (Jer. 20:10; Ezek. 25:15; 25:17 is an anthropomorphism), but, wherever it is synonymous with "avenge," this word is used (Num. 31:2, 3; Psa. 79:10; Nahum 1:2; Rom. 13:4; 2 Cor. 7:11; 10:6; the Authorized Version has "revenge" in all these cases)."

Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines "ekdikeo":

"A. to vindicate one's right, to do one justice; to protect, to defend, one person from another; to avenge one's self.

"B. to avenge a thing (i e. to punish a person for a thing)."

Ekdikeo comes from two words, **ek**, out, and **dikee**, right, justice, penalty. Its root meaning is to mete out right or justice in penalty, synonymous with modern English "avenge", not with "revenge." In every case in the New Testament it is used in this sense. The Authorized or King James Version does not distinguish between the two words, but the Revised Version adheres strictly to the distinction.

Keeping this distinction in mind and using the Revised Version, we see that the Jews were forbidden to revenge: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor and not bear sin because of him. Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:17-18). They were never forbidden to avenge themselves in meting out justice to the offender, but were commanded thus to avenge themselves.

This command to **avenge** blood in just punishment did not in any way conflict with the prohibition against taking vengeance or **revenge** in illegal, spiteful, personal retaliation.

The New Testament was given to people who were familiar with this system of exacting justice or avenging, whether it be in the loss of a tooth or the loss of life. This was a fundamental principle of the Mosaic penal code. "He that smiteth any man mortally shall surely be put to death. And he that smiteth a beast mortally shall make it good, life for life. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him: breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be rendered unto him. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good: and he that killeth a man shall be put to death. Ye shall have

one manner of law, as well for the sojourner as for the home-born" (Lev. 24:17-22). This was the **penal law** of the Jewish dispensation. This was the law governing the Jew's acting as an agent of the government in punishing crime.

Now read Matt. 5:38-42. "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

We are told that this passage cannot be taken literally, as it would give the sinner the advantage over the Christian, in that he could ask him naked, keep what he got, and then compel the poor fellow to go with him two miles in January! Grant that the Saviour uses this forceful language to illustrate a principle. Now, **What is the principle?** Here it is: the right of avenging, of exacting justice through the ordinary process of law, a fundamental principle of the Jewish penal system, is in the most forceful language forbidden to the disciple of Christ. Even lawsuits are forbidden. This was revolutionary doctrine to the Jews. Equally revolutionary was the command to be subject to the Roman conqueror, going willingly with him if he impressed them for service—a thing repulsive to the proud and independent spirit of the Jew. Jesus is not referring to a moral law here. **He is referring directly to the penal law** of Lev. 24:17-22 and to the relationship of his disciples to the civil government of Rome. His comment upon the moral law of Ex. 20:13 had already been given, recorded in Matt. 5:21-22, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire."

1. Lev. 24:17-22 sets forth as a fundamental principle of Jewish penal law the right of the Jew to act as a punitive agent of the civil government in meting out justice to the criminal.

2. Jesus referred directly to this law, and denied to the Christian the principle contained in it.

3. Therefore the Christian is forbidden to act as a punitive agent of the civil government in meting out justice to the criminal. (Romans 12 and 13).

Notice the parallel between the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and that of Paul in Rom. 12 and 13. In the Sermon on the Mount (1) Jesus treated the moral law, that which is right between man and man (Matt. 5:21-22). (2) He treated the penal law

as it applied to his followers (Matt. 5:38-40). (3) He treated the relation of his disciples to the civil (Roman) government (Matt. 5:41).

Now look at Paul in Romans 12 and 13. (1) He discusses the moral law, "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:17-18). Paul realized that sometimes there are aggressive characters with whom we cannot live peaceably. He commands us to keep peace with all men, even such characters as this, so far as it depends on us. This, of course, is all we can do, since we cannot be responsible for an aggressor's unprovoked attack upon us. Now suppose I have such a neighbor, one with whom I cannot be at peace. What shall I do? This question takes us out of the realm of moral law, and puts us into that of penal law, of defining and executing punishment upon the character who violates the moral law.

(2) Paul discusses penal law as it applies to Christians. "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but rather give place to the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Verse 19). This prohibition is not against revenge, personal, resentful, malicious retaliation, which would be a violation of moral law itself. This is a prohibition against avenging, exacting justice, meting out that which is rightly and justly due the criminal. This is a prohibition of the very thing that these people had practiced for centuries. Moreover, it is a prohibition of a thing that for centuries had been done through orderly processes of law. In avenging one's self or avenging another the Jew had simply acted as the punitive agent of the civil government. That is the very thing Paul forbids the Christian to do in Rom. 12:19. "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but rather give place to the wrath of God; for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord." Christians, you are not to execute vengeance or justice; God has provided another agent for doing this.

(3) Paul discusses our relationship to the civil government (Romans 13:1-7). The government is one party; the Christian, another. The Christian is to be subject to the powers that be. The powers that be are God's ordained agents for doing that which the Christian is forbidden to do, "He is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." The Christian owes (is due) the government subjection, tribute, custom, fear, honor. The government owes (is ordained of God to give) the Christian protection.

1. "Avenge" is used without exception throughout the Bible to refer to the execution of justice, of punishment rightly due a criminal, through the channels of divine or civil government, never to personal revenge.

2. The Bible forbids the Christian to "avenge."

3. Therefore the Bible forbids the Christian to act as a punitive agent of the civil government, either as a law enforcement officer or as a soldier in the army.

II.

JUDGING THOSE WITHOUT

All vengeance or justice belongs to God (Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30, I Thes. 4:6). It is impossible for the finite mind to comprehend or define full justice. In his execution of vengeance or justice God uses various agents. The forces of nature are used to punish the violation of nature's laws. If I jump from a tenth-story window I have violated nature's laws for my safety, and the force of gravitation speedily punishes me by hurling me against the pavement below. The force of gravity and the pavement have acted as ministers of God in executing vengeance upon me, but neither are in any way conscious of their God-ordained place in this scheme of things. God used the heathen Roman government as his minister for good, to punish the evil-doer and to protect those who did well, but the Pagan Roman officials were in no way conscious of their God-ordained place in the great penal system of the universe. God used the Jewish government for the same purpose, and they executed their charge in full realization of their duty to God in the matter. God will use the lake of fire and brimstone to punish those who reject him. So hell itself is a punitive instrument of God.

Since all vengeance belongs to God, our question now becomes, to what extent does God use the Christian as his punitive agent? We see at once that he is not used as an agent in punishing violations of natural law. I have no right to inflict punishment on a man for jumping from a tenth-story window or for eating too many green apples. To the forces of nature itself belongs the right of punishment here. It is equally evident that I cannot condemn one to hell nor punish him while he is there. God has other agents for this purpose. On the other hand there is one unquestioned place where the Christian is to act as a punitive agent of God. He is to exact justice, vengeance, punishment when punishment is due, upon his own children. He is failing in his duty to God if he does not do so, just as the forces of nature or of hell would be failing in their God-ordained purpose if they failed to punish those law violators committed to their keeping; just as the civil government would be failing in its God-ordained purpose if it did not execute justice upon criminals. Any punitive agent of God is responsible to him for executing that vengeance intrusted to it. It necessarily follows, therefore, that if God has entrusted me, as a Christian and as a citizen of the civil government, the responsibility of bearing the sword to punish evil-doers, and if for any reason whatsoever I fail to take the sword to accomplish that mission, I have failed in my God-ordained trust, and will be accountable to God for it. There is no escaping this conclusion. If I have that responsibility and, being physically able, am not now in the armed forces of my country, I am as gully of neglect of duty as is the father who stands by and allows his children to grow up undisciplined.

But to what extent does God desire to use the Christian in his

penal system? Turn to I Cor. 5:9-13. "I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators; not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world; but as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no, not to eat. For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves."

Paul often teaches by question. "What have I to do with judging them that are without?" The obvious answer is, "Nothing!" The Christian has nothing to do with judging them that are without, men of the world. Them that are without God judgeth, as we have seen, through the penal systems of civil government. But **I can have nothing to do with this.** On the other hand I have committed to me the solemn charge of judging, exercising discipline upon, those violators of God's laws who are within. "With such an one no, not to eat." "Put away therefore the wicked man from among yourselves." "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us" (II Thess. 3:6). "Deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:5).

So completely is the Christian to separate himself from the penal system of the civil government that he is even forbidden to go to law against his brother in the civil courts. "Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbor, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?—It is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" (I Cor. 6:1, 7). This agrees with the words of the Master, "And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

If the divine plan outlined in I Cor. 5 and 6 were carried out, the Christian would never take part in the penal system of civil government; and the church would never have a reproach brought against it by the penal systems of the land, for it would either reform or expel the sinning brother from its ranks. "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same" (Rom. 13:3). As Christians it is our duty to administer discipline, to judge, in the church. The limit of our powers there is putting away the wicked man from among us. Then, God, through his other agent, the civil government, will judge him as one without. But I am to have nothing to do with judging them that are without. Today too many of us have nothing to do with judging them that are within, but are spending our lives in the penal systems of the civil government—legislatures, courts, law enforcement officers, armed forces—judging those who are without.

1. The civil government, through its punitive agents, judges them that are without.
2. But the Christian can have nothing to do with judging them that are without.
3. Therefore the Christian cannot act as a punitive agent of the civil government.

III.

INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH

Another fundamental difference between the Jewish and Christian economies is that the Jewish was a national system; the Christian is international. The Jewish religion was confined to one race and nation of people, under one religio-political government, and in the confines of one territory. It was therefore possible for the Jews to have a political capitol, and for them to have one physical house to which they all might resort on stated occasions for worship.

Since all of God's covenant people were contained in one nation, and since all of that nation were in covenant relationship with God, it follows that in the divinely approved wars of the Jews with their heathen neighbors all of God's people and nobody but God's people were on one side of the conflict. They were severely condemned for entering into military alliance and fighting by the side of unbelievers. To do so was to rely upon the human strength of the Gentiles rather than upon the God of Israel.

Christianity is an international religion. "Go ye into **all the world**, and make disciples of **all the nations**" (Matt. 28:19). In only two ways can members of this universal religion take part in war. They may band themselves together, like the Jews, include all Christians and exclude everyone else, and make war against the world, the enemies of God today. Or they may enlist in the armies of the various nations of the world and make war against one another. In that case you have Christians fighting by the side of unbelievers and making war upon their brethren in Christ, who in turn are also fighting by the side of unbelievers. This sort of thing was never allowed even under the imperfect dispensation of the Old Testament.

But may the Christians band together as the people of God and wage carnal warfare upon the unbelievers, as did the Jews? With one accord all will answer, No. "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh." "Love your enemies; pray for them that persecute you." What kind of reasoning is it that will not allow Christians to band together and war against the world, but justifies them in joining forces with the unbelievers to make war on one another? This is a knot that the most adept war advocate cannot untie.

Read carefully Heb. 13:1, "Let love of the brethren continue" and picture brethren firing at one another across a no-man's land. Read the prayer of Christ in John 17:11 "that they may be one, even as we are," and imagine God fighting on one side of a battle with the brethren on that side, while Jesus is on the other side strengthening the

disciples over there. Look at Romans 12:10 "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another," and try practicing your affection by gently dropping a bomb on the brethren. "Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged" (James 5:9).

No man can possibly make war against his brother and practice these scriptures, and many others like them. Apply the following scripture to brethren in opposing armies on the battlefield: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassions from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but **in deed** and truth" (I John 3:14-18).

With the international character of the church of our Lord, with Christians in all nations—as God commanded and intended there be—and with Christians commanded always and unconditionally to love one another **in deed**, it is impossible for brethren in Christ to engage in combatant nationalistic warfare.

1. The religion of Christ is an international religion.
2. Christians are forbidden to fight against one another.
3. Therefore Christians cannot fight in international carnal warfare.

IV.

GOD'S USE OF PREPARED PEOPLE

Either God uses people for the type of work that they have prepared themselves to do, or he arbitrarily makes an individual what he is in order that he may use him in a particular way. This latter view would make of man an automaton, destroy his personal responsibility, and make God responsible for the character of each individual. This position is manifestly untrue, so we conclude that God uses people for the type of work for which they have prepared themselves. Examples throughout the Bible bear out this conclusion.

Why did God save Noah and his family instead of any other eight souls among the millions of their day? Simply because Noah and his family were the only ones who had prepared themselves for salvation. Why did God choose Abram from the multitudes of Babylonia? Did he arbitrarily make Abram to be righteous, while the others were wicked? No; Abram was chosen because of his character that he himself had developed. In like manner, why was Moses chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, but Pharaoh to oppress them? Why did God not use Moses as an oppressor and Pharaoh as a deliverer? Did God arbitrarily make Moses a righteous man and Pharaoh a wicked one that he might use them in their respective capacities? All will answer, No. Pharaoh was a stiffnecked and cruel man by his

own will. God raised him to the throne that he might show his power through him (Ex. 9:16). God did not create his character that he might use him in this way; he used him because of his character. Examples could be multiplied. Judas Iscariot was used of God to betray Jesus (Acts 2:23) because he was the type of character to do that work. Simon Peter could never have been used for that purpose, for, with all his faults, Peter was not a deliberate traitor. Likewise, Thomas could never have been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom, but Peter was the logical man for the responsibility. Paul was prepared by citizenship, disposition, and education for the apostleship to the Gentiles, and God used him there. It is an inspirational thought to Christians that if we prepare ourselves for real service in the Master's kingdom, he will provide the opportunity for that service. On the other hand, if we prepare ourselves for infamy, opportunities will be presented for infamy.

With our premise established that for any work God uses those who are best prepared for that work, we ask, who is the better prepared for punitive work, the child of God or the man of the world? It is true that God has decreed that evildoers be punished, that murderers' blood be shed, that the sword be wielded, and that pain be inflicted. It is his privilege to choose from the inhabitants of the earth his agents for this work. He also chooses for any work those best fitted for it. Who is the better fitted for the work of punishment, bloodshed, infliction of pain, and wielding the sword, the follower of the meek and lowly Nazarene or the man of the world?

The Christian is taught, "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you," (Matt. 5:11, 12). The man of the world does not have this teaching.

The Christian is taught, "Every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matt. 5:22). The world knows nothing of this teaching.

The Christian is commanded, "Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). To the world this is foolishness. The disciple of Christ is told, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your father who is in heaven, for he maketh his son to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matt. 5:44-46). The world scoffs at this doctrine.

The guiding principle of the man of the world, even the best moral character, is justice. He often expresses it, "Give even the devil his dues." Whatever a man deserves, be it good or evil, give it to him.

Accord to every man his "rights" and insist upon your own "rights." The guiding principle of the Christian is love. He has no "rights." They were all signed over to the Lord in baptism. He is forbidden to execute justice (Rom. 12:19). That cherished "right" of the sinner, the Christian has waived to the Lord.

The follower of Christ is told, "Render to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17). "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:19-21). Whatever this teaching may prepare one for, the Christian has it and the sinner does not.

Again, "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8). "Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15). "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (I John 4:7, 8). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (I John 4:20). "Mercy glorieth against judgment" (James 2:13). "One only is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?" (James 4:12). "Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not because ye ask not" (James 4:1-2). Any work that can be performed better without these principles can be done better by the man of the world, for he does not have them, whereas the Christian is bound by them.

The Christian must pattern his life after that of Christ. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:21-23). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). By all of his examples, teaching, and spirit, the Christian is unfitted for the work of judging and punishing. The unbeliever, the non-Christian, with his philosophy, emphasis, and practice of justice, is peculiarly fitted for that work.

1. God uses people in the work for which they are best prepared.
2. If the Christian prepares himself according to the Bible he will not be fitted for the work of judging or punishing people.
3. Therefore God does not intend for the Christian to take part in the work of judging or punishing people.

V.

FOR WHAT MAY A CHRISTIAN FIGHT?

Ask yourself this question. If a Christian may take part in carnal combat, for what may he fight? If he lives under an atheistic government which works against the church of God in every possible way, is he to fight to defend such a government? Does he fight for personalities, for the nation as such, or for principles? Shall he take the extreme nationalistic attitude of "My country, right or wrong!" or shall he say, "My country, as long as she is right"? If the whole world be converted to the former view—as much of it is today—it will make wars tenfold worse, for it will deify the State. If we take the latter view and hold that we are to support the State only so long as it stays in its God-ordained sphere; that in going to war against outlaw nations we are punishing them for getting out of their God-ordained sphere, to be consistent we must take up arms and give our lives in an effort to punish our own government in case it goes out of its divinely regulated sphere. This the early Christians were accused of doing, and this they strenuously denied. But I am under the same obligation to take up arms to punish the United States government if it does wrong that I am to take up arms to punish the German government for wrongdoing.

Do we fight to defend our homes? If so, the only possible justification for the Christian's so doing is the instinct of self-preservation, since there is no scripture to justify it. We have shown before that fighting in organized war is not based upon the instinct of self-preservation. Moreover, in war, if I am fighting to defend my family, I am to an equal degree fighting to defend the personalities of millions of unbelievers, atheists, infidels, drunkards, adulterers, etc. No one will justify me, as a Christian, in doing that.

For what may a child of God fight? We answer, for only one purpose has God at any time sanctioned his people's fighting. That purpose is the defense and spread of his kingdom. Throughout the history of Israel, whenever God sanctioned a war, it was either to chasten his people and bring them back to the principles of his kingdom, or it was to defend and spread his national kingdom of Israel. In either case the ultimate aim is the establishment of his spiritual kingdom, the Church. To keep a lineage and a religion through which Jesus should come, it was necessary to defend the people and to repeatedly chasten them and bring them back to God.

Those today who would defend the Christian's engaging in war do so on the ground that we are fighting for freedom of speech, press, and worship; that we are fighting for the principles of Christianity; that we are fighting for the defense of Christianity itself. Boiled down, we may fight for the defense and spread of the kingdom of God. In the final analysis no Christian will contend that we may fight for any other purpose. We cannot fight for personalities; we cannot fight for the nation as such apart from the principles for

which it stands; we can only fight for principles, and then only for the principles of the kingdom of God.

Now, let us see what the Holy Spirit says about the use of carnal weapons and carnal warfare to defend and spread the kingdom of God. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds)" (2 Cor. 10: 3, 4). "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God . . ." (Eph. 6: 12ff). Paul is talking about our spiritual warfare — the means that may be employed in the defense and spread of the kingdom of God. He emphatically forbids our using carnal weapons for this purpose. But this is the only purpose for which God has ever authorized his people to fight, and the only purpose for which anyone today will contend that the Christian should fight. When Paul said, "Though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war according to the flesh,**" he was speaking directly upon our subject.

1. The only purpose for which God's people have ever been permitted to fight is the defense and spread of his kingdom.

2. Christians are forbidden to engage in carnal warfare in the defense and spread of the kingdom of God.

3. Therefore Christians are forbidden to engage in carnal warfare for any purpose.

VI.

IS IT A GOOD WORK?

"That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17).

This passage of scripture has been often used — and rightly so — to condemn innovations in the worship of God. But if we stop to think a moment, it is evident that its meaning cannot be limited to works of worship. The scriptures furnish the man of God with instructions as to his work as an elder, as a neighbor, as a father, etc. In fact, they furnish the man of God completely unto **every good work**, just as Paul says they do. Every basic relationship of life into which God intends his people to enter—every good work—is furnished with rules of conduct in the scriptures.

Let us notice some of these.

As a child toward parents. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).

As a father to his children. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

As a husband to his wife. "Husbands, love your wives, even as

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25).

As a wife to her husband. "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).

As servants to masters. "Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:5ff).

As masters to servants: "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him" (Eph. 6:9).

As an elder to the congregation. "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:2, 3).

As a Christian to the elders. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief for this were unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

As a teacher to his students. "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

As a student toward his teacher. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6).

As neighbor to neighbor. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (James 2:8).

As brethren in Christ. "In love of the brethren be tenderly affected one toward another, in honor preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

As Christians toward the world. "Being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ" (I Peter 3:15, 16).

As a man of the world toward the church. No instructions given to the Christian along this line. But the man of God is furnished completely unto every good work. Therefore the position of the man of the world is not a good work for the Christian.

As Christians toward the devil. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:8). "Be sober, be watchful; your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

As Christians toward our enemies. "Love your enemies, do good

to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you" (Luke 6:27, 28).

As a devil or as enemies. Not one word is said for or against the Christian operating in either of these capacities. But the scriptures furnish the man of God completely unto every good work. They do not furnish him to be a devil or an enemy. Therefore these are not good works for the Christian.

As a Christian toward God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37).

As a god. Nothing is said about how the Christian is to conduct himself in the capacity of posing as a god. Examples of Herod (Acts 12) and Paul (Acts 14) show that we should not assume this character. The scriptures furnish the man of God completely unto every good work. They do not furnish him for this work. Therefore it is not a good work for the Christian.

Since the scriptures furnish the man of God completely unto every good work, it follows that every work or relationship for which the scriptures furnish the Christian is a good work for him. Likewise, that any work or relationship for which the scriptures have not furnished the Christian is not a good work for him. We have seen that the scriptures furnish instruction for children toward parents, parents toward children, husband to wife, wife to husband, servants to masters, masters to servants, elders toward the congregation, members of congregation toward elders, teachers to students, students to teachers, neighbors to neighbors, brethren toward brethren, Christians toward the world, toward the devil, toward our enemies, and toward God. We therefore conclude that all these relationships or works are good for the Christian to engage in. Nothing is furnished as to how the Christian is to conduct himself as a man of the world, a devil, an enemy of anyone, or a god. We must therefore conclude that these are not good works or relationships for the Christian.

With our premise thus demonstrated that the scriptures furnish the man of God unto every work or relationship that God desires him to enter, let us look at our subject. There are two sides of this relationship of the Christian to civil government.

As a subject of the government, to the laws and administrative officers of the government. "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers . . . Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:1, 7). "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil life in all godliness and gravity" (I Tim. 2:1, 2).

As an administrative officer of the government toward the subjects of the government. Not one word is said as to the Christian's duties in this capacity. He is furnished—furnished completely—unto the work of a subject of the government. That complete furnishing

is that he is to be subject, obey the laws, pay tribute and custom, render honor and fear to officials, and pray for the rulers. But he is not furnished with one word of instructions about serving as a part of the penal system of the government. Therefore, since he is furnished unto all good works, we conclude that it is a good work for a Christian to act as an obedient subject of the government, but not a good work for him to act as a responsible part of the government.

1. The man of God is furnished completely unto every good work.

2. He is not furnished to be a part of the government's penal system.

3. Therefore it is not a good work for the Christian to be a part of the penal system of the civil government.

VII.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Some of the greatest teachers in the church lived during the first two hundred years after the time of the apostles. Some of these men were taught by the apostles themselves; others by pupils of the apostles. These great teachers (usually referred to as the Ante-Nicene Fathers, because they lived before the Council of Nicea in 324 A. D.) were not inspired; in fact they often wandered into erroneous doctrines; but since they lived so near the days of the apostles, it is worthy of notice when they speak unanimously upon a subject. We can at least find the general attitude of the early church toward a subject. Keep in mind also that the further we come this side of the apostles, the further the church had gone into apostasy. The Council of Nicea, 325 A. D. was the first great step in the development of the politico-religious system of Roman Catholicism.

The historian Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, pages 562-563, says:

"The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defense of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp and magistracy, and by the active contention of public life, nor could their humane ignorance be convinced that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice or by that of war; even though their criminal or hostile attempts would threaten the peace and safety of the whole community. It was acknowledged that, under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of Heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed that such institu-

tions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defense of the empire.

Several of these early church writers mention Christians serving in the Roman army, but it was not a common practice, and not one—so far as I have been able to find—of these teachers sanctioned their doing so. Celsus, the Pagan philosopher, in his work, "The True Account," written 176 to 180 A. D., attacks Christianity on this point with great force and candor. He says,

"Does not the emperor punish you justly? for should all do like you, he would be left alone,—there would be none to defend him; the rudest barbarians would make themselves masters of the world, and every trace, as well of your own religion itself, as of true wisdom, would be obliterated from the human race; for believe not that your supreme God would come down from heaven and fight for us."

How like the arguments presented today, not only by Pagans, but even by disciples of Christ!

The great Christian writer, Origen, refuted the charges of Celsus in a book called, "Against Celsus." The historian, Neander, Vol. 1, page 272, sums up the replies of Origen on this point, (Book 8, chapters 72-74) as follows:

"We are rendering the emperors a divine assistance, when we put on a divine armor, wherein we follow the command of the apostle; (I Tim. 2:1). The more devout the man, the more is it in his power to render the emperor a far better service than can be done by ordinary soldiers . . . The Christians render greater service to their country than other men, by forming the hearts of the citizens, and teaching them piety towards that God on whom the well-being of the state depends, and who receives those who, in the meanest cities have led a good life, into a city which is heavenly and divine."

To another proposal made by Celsus to the Christians, namely, that they should undertake the administration of civil affairs in their country, Origen replies,

"But we know, that in whatever city we are, we have another country, which is founded on the word of God; and we require those who by their gift of teaching and by their pious life are competent to the task, to undertake the administration of the offices of the church." Book 8, chapter 75.

When Justyn Martyr was confronted with the accusation that the Christians were unpatriotic for refusing to serve in the army, he defended them by saying,

"Tribute and customs we seek uniformly, before all others, to pay to your appointed officers, as we have been taught

to do by our own Master (Matt. 22:21)". Apologetics, chapter II.

In answer to Celsus' charge that the church of Christ had its beginning in a rebellion against the Jewish state, Origen replied.

"And yet, if a revolt had led to the formation of the Christian commonwealth, so that it derived its existence in this way from that of the Jews, who were permitted to take up arms in defense of the members of their families, and to slay their enemies, the Christian lawgiver would not have altogether forbidden the putting of men to death; and yet He nowhere teaches that it is right for his own disciples to offer violence to anyone, however wicked. For He did not deem it in keeping with such laws as His, which were derived from a divine source, to allow the killing of any individual whatever." (Against Celsus, Book 3, Chapter 7).

Tertullian, who was born about fifty-five years after the death of the Apostle John, wrote,

"I think we must first inquire whether warfare is proper at all for Christians. . . . Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain and the prison, and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs? Shall he, forsooth, either keep watch-service for others more than for Christ, or shall he do it on the Lord's day, when he does not even do it for Christ himself? And shall he keep guard before the temples which he has renounced? . . . Then how many other offenses there are in the performance of camp offices, which we must hold to involve a transgression of God's law, you may see by a slight survey. The very carrying of the name over from the camp of life to the camp of darkness is a violation of it. Of course, if faith comes later and finds one pre-occupied with military service, their case is different, as in the instance of those whom John used to receive for baptism, and of those most faithful centurions, I mean the centurion whom Christ approves, and the centurion whom Peter instructs; yet, at the same time, when a man has become a believer, and faith has been sealed, there must be either an immediate abandonment of it, **which has been the course of many**; or all sorts of quibbling will have to be resorted to in order to avoid offending God" (de Corona, Chapter 11).

In another work, Tertullian wrote,

"But now inquiry is made about this point, whether a believer may turn himself into military service, and whether the military may be admitted unto the faith, even the rank and file, or each inferior grade, to whom there is no necessity

for taking part in sacrifices or capital punishment. There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament (military oath), the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to two masters—God and Caesar. And yet Moses carried a rod, and Aaron wore a buckle, and John (Baptist) is girt with leather, and Joshua, the son of Nun, leads a line of march; and the people warred; if it pleases you to sport with the subject. But how will a **Christian man** war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away? For albeit soldiers had come unto John, and had received the formula of their rule; albeit, likewise, a centurion had believed; still the Lord afterward, in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier. (On Idolatry, Chapter 19).

Regarding the Christian's holding a civil office, Tertullian describes the kind of office that one may hold, as follows:

"And so let us grant that it is possible for any one to succeed in moving, in whatsoever office, under the mere **name** of the office, neither sacrificing nor lending his authority to sacrifices; not farming out victims; not assigning to others the care of temples; not looking after their tributes; not giving spectacles at his own or the public charge, or presiding over the giving them; making proclamation or edict for no solemnity; not even taking oaths: moreover (what comes under the head of **power**) neither sitting in judgment on any one's life or character, for you might bear with his judging about **money**; neither condemning nor forecondemning (the judge condemns; the legislator forecondemns); binding no one, imprisoning or torturing no one—if it is credible that all this is possible." (On Idolatry, Chapter 17).

Schaff, in his "History of the Christian Church" Vol. 2, page 43, names among the causes of the persecutions of the Christians by the Romans their aversion to the imperial military service and their disregard for politics.

"Then, too, the conscientious refusal of the Christians to pay divine honors to the emperor and his statue, and to take part in any idolatrous ceremonies at public festivities, their aversion to the imperial military service, their disregard for politics and depreciation of all civil and temporal affairs as compared with the spiritual and eternal interest of man, their close brotherly union and frequent meetings, drew upon them the suspicion of hostility to the Caesars and the Roman people, and the unpardonable crime of conspiracy against the state."

McGriffert, "The Apostolic Age," page 628, names their "notorious lack of patriotism" as one of the causes of the persecution of the Christians by Nero.

"Once brought to his (Nero's) notice, their notorious lack of patriotism, their reputed atheism, their unsociability, their alleged devotion to the black arts, and their general unpopularity might well lead him to see in them the best possible person to accuse of the crime which he had himself committed."

VIII.

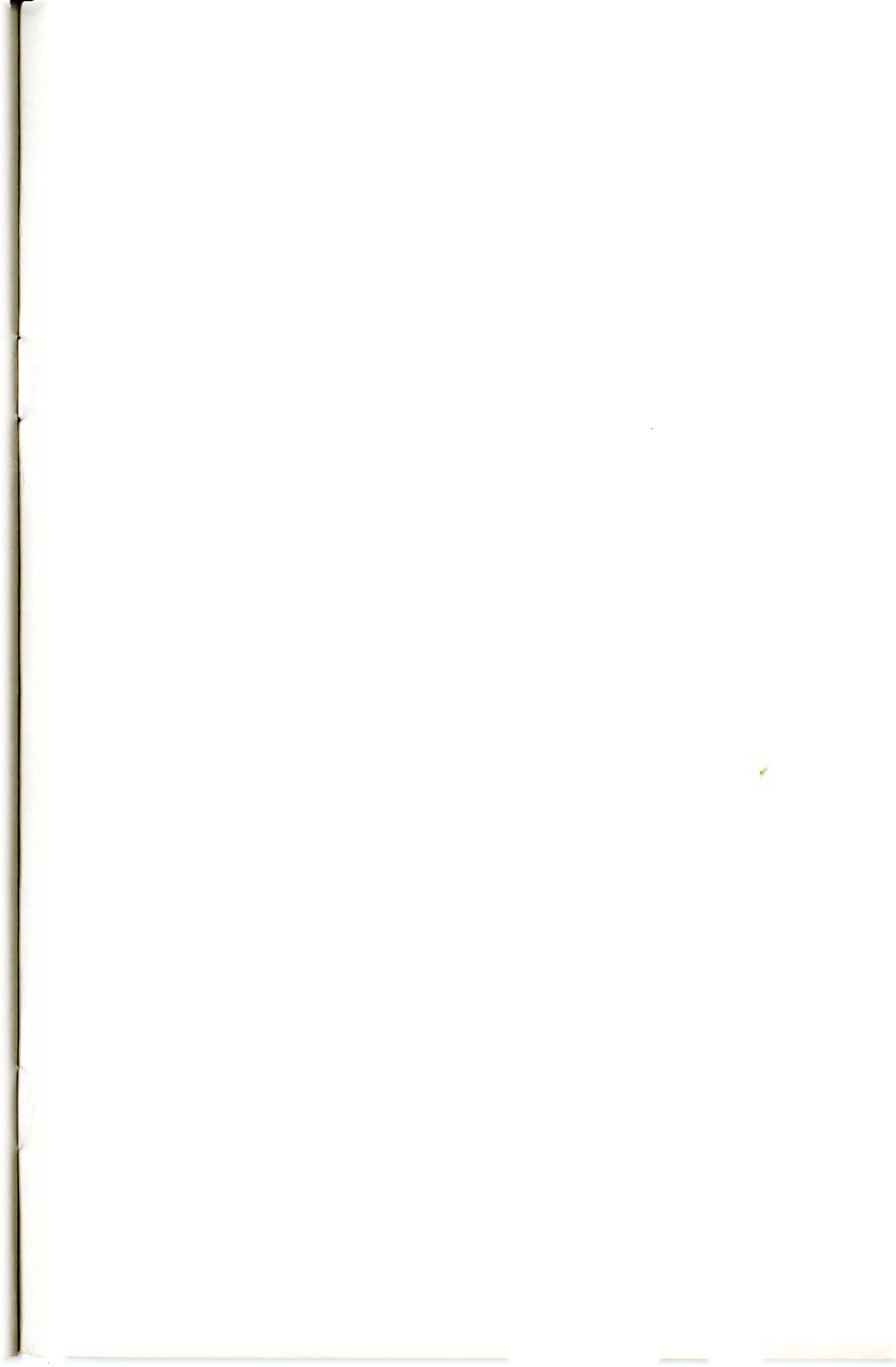
CONCLUSION

The Bible does not authorize the Christian to act as a punitive agent of the civil government, either as a law enforcement officer or as a soldier in the army. Instead, it forbids his doing so. This does not mean that the Christian is disloyal or is not a good citizen. The Christian is the best citizen any government can have, for he pays his taxes, obeys all laws, and prays for his rulers for **conscience'** sake. The government is one party; the Christian is another. The Christian, by God's decree, **owes** the government taxes, subjection, honor, fear, and prayer; also by God's decree the government **owes** the Christian armed protection.

I can do anything for the government that I can do for an individual or a corporation; and, outside the things **due** the government by God's decree, I can do nothing for the government that I cannot do for an individual or a corporation. I can serve in the employ of the government as a teacher, as a doctor or first-aid worker, as an agricultural worker, etc., but I cannot serve in any capacity that makes me responsible, either as legislator, judge, or executioner, for the infliction of punishment or death upon my neighbor.

Our brethren in Japan and other countries of the world are now being tried as by fire, but God in his goodness has blessed us in America with the most considerate government known to man in its respect for the conscience of its citizens. It would make no difference in our duty to God, no matter what laws the civil power passed, but our Congress has provided for non-combatant service for the conscientious objector.

Let us unceasingly thank God for our beneficent rulers, ask his wisdom to guide them, and avail ourselves of the opportunity they have so graciously provided for serving our country in a capacity that will not conflict with our nature as children of God.





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