

Shall We Smite With The Sword?

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Part I

“When they that were about him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” (Luke 22:49)

The question which heads this article was put to the Lord Himself by His disciples. We discuss it in the following pages solely for the benefit of the few who “belong to Christ,” and who, owning Him as the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, hold themselves bound to obey His every command, at whatever cost.

The question is of much importance at this present time. Many are discussing it just as if the Lord had left it unanswered, or as if His answer had left the matter as much in doubt as before. We seek therefore to set forth the *Lord’s* answer as clearly as possible; for none other can speak with authority upon such a matter, and if He has not decided it, then everyone is left to do that which is right in his own eyes.

WAR NOT A REMEDY FOR ANY EVIL

The purpose, for which the disciples were minded to draw the sword, and for which one of them did actually use that weapon, was in defense of the Lord’s own Person against the enemies who came with swords and staves to take Him. There could not be a better cause than this for resorting to violence, and the shedding of blood. Hence we must conclude that, if the followers of Christ are not to fight for Him, they are certainly not to fight for Gentile rulers, and for the aims for which the nations of the world go to war.

The Lord’s answer to the question is found in Matthew’s Gospel. Speaking to that disciple who had used the sword He said:

“Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” (Matt. 26:52)

Here the eternal Wisdom gives us, not a command only, but also a principle that governs the whole subject. War is not a remedy. It settles nothing. It works untold harm and misery and breeds further wars. And the nation that takes the sword to gain its end invites its own destruction by the sword.

CHRIST’S KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD

A little later the Lord stood before Cæsar's deputy, and He gave there an example of that respect for the Gentile civil authorities which His word commands to His disciples. But our immediate concern is with His will in regard to fighting. So we note His statement to Pilate: "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" (John 18:36)

Again we have not only the statement of the Lord's will for His servants in regard to fighting, but also the *reason* underlying it. The words are too plain to need any explanation.

Is it conceivable that the Lord, while teaching His disciples that they were not to fight for Him, would give them commandment, or at least permission, to fight for Cæsar, or for Herod or Pontius Pilate, or any other Gentile ruler under whose authority they might chance to be? Had Pilate seen fit at that time to make war upon Herod, can we suppose that Christ would have joined the rants, and bidden His disciples to do the like?

No. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. His servants do not fight by His command, even for Him. Wars and fighting belong to "this present evil world." They come from the lust of men (James 4:1). Lust of gain, lust of power, ambition to be great and to exercise dominion in this world are the things that cause wars. With those things the disciples of Christ have nothing to do. They are not of the world, even as He is not of the world.

The words of the Lord already quoted (though there are more to the point) leave no room for uncertainty; for there is no warrant in all Scripture for those who teach (alas that there should be any who so misrepresent the doctrine of Christ!) that the followers of the Lamb ought, in some circumstances at least, to join the armies of the nations, and devote their energies to the spilling of human blood. But seeing there *are* those who teach thus (and they are not a few), it is needful for us to seek all the light afforded by Scripture on this subject, and particularly to examine those passages of the Bible which are cited as giving Divine sanction to participation, by the saints of God, in carnal warfare.

BUYING A SWORD

Going back a little further in the Lord's parting instructions to His disciples, we find Him saying: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one" (Luke 22:36).

These words have given rise to much discussion, and we cannot assume to settle their meaning beyond doubt. But this much at least is certain, and it suffices for our present purpose, that the "sword" which Christ's disciples were to buy,—even parting

with their garments if need be to do so,—was not a carnal sword. The next words make that plain; for when the disciples said “Lord, behold, here are two swords,” He said unto them “It is enough.” Two were quite “enough” of that sort. Moreover, from the moment Peter put up his sword at his Lord’s bidding, and the Lord performed the miracle (the last before His death) of healing the wound caused by His own servant, we do not read of any disciple using, or even possessing, a sword. On the contrary, they suffered all wrongs, persecutions and cruelties, even unto death, without resisting evil. They followed the teaching which the Spirit, through them, has given to the Church of Christ: “Recompense no man evil for evil;” “avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath;” “overcome evil with good;” “If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: for Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: * * * who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” Also the words of the Lord Himself “But I say unto you, that he resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also: (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:20-23; Matt. 5:39).

What then did the Lord mean by the words “But now, he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one”? The words “*But now*” were a warning to the disciples that a great change was at hand, and that they were to look for experiences of a totally different kind from those they were accustomed to while the Lord was with them in Person. Their daily lives had been quiet and peaceful. They went unhindered from place to place, enjoying His presence and protection, hearing His words, directed by His wisdom and guidance, and having every need supplied without care or anxiety. “*But now*”—all that was to be changed. Christ had already warned His disciples of this change saying, “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all men for My name’s sake” (Matt. 24:9). “They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My names sake. * * * And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death” (Luke 21:12, 16).

When, as recorded in Luke 10:4, Christ had sent them forth without purse, or scrip, or shoes, though they went as lambs among wolves, yet they had need of nothing; not did any one harm them or offer violence. “But now” conditions were to be very different; and the difference was to be in two things chiefly, (1) they were to experience *lack of necessities of life*, and (2) they were to experience *conflict*. The words “take purse and scrip” express figuratively the coming time of need; as frequently, by a figure of speech, what a person would ordinarily do under certain conditions is mentioned instead of describing those conditions. How literally this was fulfilled appears by the testimony of the Apostle Paul, who, speaking of necessities, says: “For I think that God hath set forth us, the Apostles, last, as it were appointed to death: * * * Even unto this

present hour we both *hunger* and *thirst*, and *are naked*, and are buffeted, and have *no certain dwelling place*; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it: being defamed we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day: (1 Cor. 4:9-13). Again he speaks of “approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in *necessities*, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in *fastings*; * * * as poor, yet making many rich; as *having nothing*, yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:3, 4, 5, 10). And yet again he tells of the stripes, imprisonments, deaths, and perils of many sorts, concluding with the words, “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in *hunger and thirst*, in *fastings often*, in *cold* and *nakedness*” (2 Cor. 11:23-27). The Lord’s words, “take purse and scrip,” would judicate, by a concise, figurative expression, the experiences of privation and need that awaited the disciples.

But above all things, the life of the Apostles, after the Lord’s departure, was to be a life of incessant *conflict*, not carnal, but spiritual. To the Colossians Paul writes, “For I would that ye knew *what great conflict* I have for you” (Col. 2:1). And he says in another place, “For though we walk in the flesh, we *war not after the flesh*. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds)” (2 Cor. 10:3, 4). And in the familiar passage wherein the saints are exhorted to put on the whole armor of God, one item of the equipment is “*the Sword of the Spirit*, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:10-17).

Furthermore, Paul exhorts Timothy to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. On the other hand in the very same chapter he says “the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men” (2 Tim. 2:3, 4). Paul also says of himself “I have fought the good fight.” These passages clearly tell us the nature of the believer’s warfare; and they exclude that in which the nations engage.

These Scriptures also indicate the meaning of the Lord’s words concerning “buying a sword.”

The spiritual warfare in which the disciples were to find themselves would be so fierce and deadly that a sword would be, so to speak, more needful than a garment. So intense was the conflict to be that no price would be too great to pay for the weapons of war that were needed to defeat the principalities and powers arrayed against them.

NOT PEACE ON EARTH, BUT A SWORD

When the Lord said: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I came not to send peace *but a sword*,” He was not speaking of a literal sword. He used that word figuratively to stand for the variance, divisions and strife which He and His Gospel would cause. In this case He has given us the explanation, saying, “For I am come to set a man *at variance* against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s *foes* shall be they of his

own household” (Matt. 10:34, 35). There is, therefore, as good ground for saying that, according to this Scripture, a man should take up the sword against his father, and the daughter should take the sword against her mother, as for saying that the disciples of Christ should engage in carnal warfare.

“WHAT SPIRIT ARE YE OF”

Going back a little further in the history of our Lord’s closing days on earth, we come to another important word bearing upon our subject. The Lord was then upon His way to Jerusalem, and to the cross which awaited Him there, and which He had plainly in view. As they journeyed they came to a certain village of Samaria whose inhabitants would not receive them, because they were on their way to Jerusalem, for which the Samaritans cherished intense hatred. “And when James and John saw this they said, Lord wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?” (Luke 9:53-56).

This incident has a special instruction for those who refer to Old Testament history in justification of carnal warfare as an occupation for saints in this dispensation. Is not what Elijah did a safe example for us to follow? What says the Lord about this?

“But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

Here is a decisive word, and coupled with it is a reason or principle which conclusively settles the matter. Old Testament precedents have no application in this case. “He that is joined to the Lord is ONE SPIRIT” (1 Cor. 5:17). And “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit of Christ is “the Spirit of love.” The purpose of His coming to earth is—not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them, even at the cost of His own. The emblem of Christ’s character in this dispensation is the lamb; that of His Spirit is the dove.

THE POWER OF DEATH

On the other hand, the work of the Devil is to destroy. War differs from ordinary murders mainly in that it is on an enormous scale. Every invention and contrivance that men can devise, every deception and stratagem to which they can resort, every cruelty and atrocity which they can perpetrate, are legitimate elements of warfare. Hence it is not merely a *questionable* proceeding—not merely a thing which it were perhaps better to avoid. War is the thing *of all things* that is farthest removed from the work of Christ. And to teach that believers may properly, under any conditions whatever, take a hand in warfare is to go as far as it is possible to go from the truth of God and the doctrine of

Christ. *War is the great, all-inclusive, sum-total of everything that is devilish.* Its object is to destroy as many men's lives as possible; and the Devil is the destroyer.

When General Sherman tersely said "War is hell" he uttered a truth. Heaven is peace. Hell is war. Christ gives peace; He made peace through the blood of His cross; He is the Prince of peace; He is our peace; and He came and preached peace to them that were far off, and to them that were nigh.

OUR DUTY TO "THE POWERS THAT BE"

The teaching that saints of God may, when required by the civil authorities, join the ranks of the army, and perform all the "service" that is demanded of enlisted men, is usually supported by reference to those Scriptures which define the believer's duty to the State. The Lord Himself referred to the duty which men owe to the state, summing it up in the well-known words, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). The Apostles Paulo and Peter have, moreover, dealt with the subject in detail. We will refer presently to their teaching.

In considering the Lord's words we would seek to ascertain whether military service is counted among the things which believers are to render unto Cæsar. When those words were spoken Christ and His disciples were, like nearly all the world, under the dominion of Cæsar. The soldiers of Cæsar filled the land, and enforced the authority of the Roman Emperor. Those very soldiers, only a few days later, in obedience to the orders of the Roman Governor, Cæsar's representative, nailed the Lord Jesus to a cross. It was simply their "duty" as soldiers of the State.

Did Christ then teach His disciples that, if required by the civil authorities, they were to enlist as soldiers and were to do whatever things soldiers are commanded by their officers to do?

A glance at the passage shows in the first place, that the Lord was not instructing His own disciples, but was speaking to the emissaries of the Pharisees and Herodians; and secondly, that the question was simply as regards paying taxes. His answer confounded those who put the question. Their sole purpose in asking it was to entangle Him in His talk, and to elicit some word that could be used as an accusation with the Roman Governor. His answer also settled the question that it *was* lawful to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, and hence to any Gentile rulers who are over us. It has, however, nothing whatever to do with the question whether it is lawful for disciples of Christ to enter upon the study and practice of the art of slaughtering their fellow-men.

Let it be borne in mind that the essence of a soldier's "duty" is to render instant, absolute, and unquestioning *obedience* to every command of his superior officers. He is put under oath to do so. It is daily instilled into his mind. And it is constantly impressed upon him that the penalty of failure to obey orders is death. The soldier has no discretion, no will of his own, no conscience. He cannot parley with his superior officer,

or ask any reasons, or test his orders by any standard, human or Divine. His one duty—admitting of no exception or modification—is to *obey orders*. The man who enlists for military service, whether voluntarily or under the pressure of conscription laws, surrenders entirely and unreservedly of his own power of choice and freedom of action. He repudiates his individual responsibility to God and man, and pledges himself blindly, by an oath and under penalty of death, to obey the commands of his officers, whoever they may be and to whatever work they may send him. Hence, in joining the ranks, a man agrees beforehand to commit any and every atrocity which may possibly be commanded under the stress of “military necessity.” And notwithstanding that the hideous details are kept out of print, we have heard something during the present war, of the deeds of horror and diabolical wickedness which have been perpetrated under the plea of “military necessity.”

But the details of military service are not put before the eyes of men when they are commanded to enlist are urged and (when conscription laws are being enforced) are commanded to enlist. Far from it. The hideous facts are concealed, and the act of enlistment is represented as a noble and courageous deed,—an act of devotion to one’s country, the act of a patriot and a hero. The true nature of war is concealed. The imaginations of young men are inflamed by misrepresentations, and their hearts kindled by enthusiasm. Their minds are turned by the uniforms, the parades, the flags, the bands of music, the plaudits of the crowd, the admiration of women. These act upon the emotions and feelings of the young men; and under these influences they take the step that leads to what they never dreamed of.

The truth is, and let us look the ugly fact squarely in the face, that the man who enlists commits himself in advance—though few in fact realize it—to the perpetration of every unnamable atrocity that war is held to justify. All this must be taken into account when we seek the answer of God’s word to the question “Shall we, who belong to Christ, smite with the sword?”

Whatever be the Lord’s teaching as to the duty of His people to the State in time of war, it is and must necessarily be *the same for every century of the Christian era and for the saints of every nation*. It cannot be one thing at one time and a different thing at another; or one thing in one country and a different thing in another. Believers in Germany and in Turkey owe precisely the same duty to the civil and military authorities of those countries, that believers in England and America owe their governments. The German and Turkish governments are just as much “powers that be, ordained of God,” as are the governments of England and America. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, defining our duties to “the powers that be,” the tyrant Nero was on the throne. If it is according to the doctrine of Christ that saints who are subject to the American government should kill Germans and Turks, then it is equally according to the doctrine of Christ that saints who are subject to the German and Ottoman governments should kill Americans. If military service be among the duties which believers owe the State, then it is according to the teaching of Christ that His people who happen to be in the

German and Turkish armies should take active part in every atrocity commanded by the German and Turkish military authorities in Belgium and Armenia.

The words of Paul that speak of our duty to the State are found in the 13th chapter of Romans. In verses 6-8 we read: "For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law: Also verse 10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

It is difficult to understand how anyone can find in this Scripture a command, expressed or implied, for followers of Christ to engage in the slaughter of their fellow-men. The essence of the exhortation is to be faithful in the discharge of every just obligation, to be in debt to none, and in particular to show respect to all rulers and to pay all taxes levied by the State. Render unto all their dues. Owe no man anything. Work no ill to your neighbor. These commandments are very broad. Certainly we do not owe it to any man to shed his blood, nor to make his parents childless, his wife a widow, his children orphans. And moreover, right in the heart of the passage are the words "THOU SHALT NOT KILL." "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, *Thou shalt not kill*, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."

There is nothing here, or anywhere else in the Scriptures, to suggest in the remotest degree that God sanctions the doing of any one of these forbidden things at the command of a human ruler. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and love is "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Clearly this passage (Rom. 13:1-10) defines our righteous obligations to rulers and other men in normal times of peace. It has nothing to do with the matter of war. If commanded by the civil authorities to do anything forbidden by God we must say as the Apostles said in like circumstances: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

But if any desire a word that tells us plainly how we are to treat enemies, it is to be found in the very same passage. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink" (Rom. 12:18-20). And to the same effect are the words of Christ, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43, 44).

Finally, the servants of Christ are "put in trust with the Gospel," and are debtors to all men, whether Greeks (civilized) or barbarians, to give them the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:4; Rom. 1:14). If we then are to go forth to kill our fellow-men, whose lives shall we take? Shall we slay the unsaved, to whom we owe the Gospel of Christ? If not those, then

are we to slay our fellow-saints, to whom we owe our love and service? The Gospel is god's call to perishing sinners to look to Him for pardon and life; and it is His power unto salvation to everyone that believes. War and the Gospel are as far apart as the east is from the west; as far as hell is from heaven.

“NON-COMBATANT SERVICE”

It is sometimes asked if a saint may not enlist for some service which does not call upon him to shed the blood of his fellow-men. As to this it is simply to be said that an army is a complex machine, which is put together for the single object of destroying the lives of men. Not every part of it does the actual killing; for there are many services which those in the firing-line cannot perform. But every part is instrumental in accomplishing that for which an army is created.

Even according to human law, the man who furnishes the weapon, knowing the purpose for which it is to be used, is equally responsible with the one who uses it.

There is but one course that is right in the light of God's Word: “Be ye separate. Have *no* fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. *Touch not* the unclean thing.”

THE WARS OF ISRAEL

The history of the Jewish nation is frequently referred to in support of the teaching that followers of Christ ought to take up arms when commanded by the authorities. Israel was an earthly people, having a country of their own, and surrounded by idolatrous nations. The wars against the wicked inhabitants of Canaan were at God's own command; but He postponed the punishment of those nations for years, for the express reason that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen. 15:16). God in that case, used Israel as His instrument in executing a righteous judgment that was fully due. On the other hand, He used at a later day, the armies of Assyria and Babylon for the punishment of His own people Israel. There is no parallel to this state of things in our era. God's people now are not members of one nation, but are strangers and pilgrims, scattered through all the nations. They could not possibly band themselves together to fight even if they wish to do so.

The experiences of the Israelites are types and shadows of the experiences of the saints. They had an earthly country and citizenship; we have a heavenly. They had carnal enemies, we have spiritual enemies. They used carnal weapons, whereas it is written, “The weapons of *our* warfare are not carnal” (2 Cor. 10:4). “For we wrestle *not against flesh and blood*, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places: (Eph. 6:12).

WHOM SHALL WE FOLLOW?

Serious consideration should be given to the fact of Satan's agency in leading the nations into war. That great enemy, with whom the people of God are called upon to wage incessant

spiritual warfare, is the one who wields “the power of darkness” and “the power of death.” Those are the powers that are let loose, and that do their very worst in time of war.

Satan is also the *Deceiver of the nations*; and it is through deception of one sort or another that nations are led to wage war. Hence there will be no peace for this earth until the thousand years during which Satan shall be shut up in the bottomless pit, and sealed therein, to the end “that he should *deceive the nations no more* until the thousand years shall be fulfilled” (Rev. 20:3). At the end of that period of peace and blessing for mankind, and as soon as Satan is released from his imprisonment, he resorts immediately to his congenial work of leading the nations into war; as it is written, “And when the thousand years are expired Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out *to deceive the nations* which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, *to gather them together to battle*” (Rev. 20:7, 8).

Moreover, deception is an important element in the art of war itself. It is easy, therefore, to trace the origin of wars,—with their deceptions, lies, desolations, destruction and miseries—to that evil being, who is a *murderer* from the beginning, and abode not in *the truth*, because there is no truth in him, and who, when he speaketh a lie, speaketh of his own, because he is a *liar*, and the father of it.

According to the words of Christ Himself, and of other Scriptures there are two from the unseen world who come to men in the capacity of leaders,—Christ and Satan. They are the exact opposite one of the other, and their aims with respect to men are in the greatest possible contrast. One of these leads men into light, the other into darkness; One leads into life, the other into death; One leads into peace, the other into war. It is simply an impossibility for a man to follow both. To the extent that he follows one, he of necessity, departs from the other.

The Lord Himself speaks of these two leaders who come among men, and He tells us plainly what their aims are: “THE THEIF COMETH not for to *steal* and to *kill* and to *destroy*”—and by war those ends are attained on the largest possible scale—“I AM COME that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Christ brings to the world life, light, love, peace, joy, blessing; Satan brings death, darkness, hatred, enmity, sorrow, misery, War is the epitome of all these. Hence war raises sharply the great issue, and presents to every believer the solemn question “Whom shall we follow?” In the light of Scripture and of all the knowledge we have of the nature of war, can there be any doubt at all as to whether the people of God should take part in it?

What shall we then say to these things? Shall we smite with the sword? Certainly not. Why not?

Because Christ commanded His disciples to put up his sword again into its sheath and said “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

Because it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong.

Because Christ commands His disciples to love their enemies.

Because while *we* were the enemies of God He did not send His armies to destroy us, but reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son.

Because Christ came into this world not to destroy men’s lives but to save them.

Because the mission of Christ is to give life, whereas the Devil has the power of death, and the destruction of human life is the work of the evil one.

Because Christ commanded His servants to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

Because Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world then would My servants fight."

Because wars proceed from the lust of men, who seek thereby to gain supremacy or advantage in this present evil world' and war is the crowning evil of the world from which we have been delivered.

Because every believer has the Spirit of Christ. Being joined to the Lord he is "one spirit" with Him; and the Spirit of Christ harms none, but seeks the good of all men, being content to suffer every ill rather than inflict the slightest injury upon any man.

Because every believer is "under the law to Christ;" and the law of Christ is, in one word, LOVE.

Because love suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things and endureth all things; and love is the fulfilling of the law of God.

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Part II

The late World-war was a test of the Christianized nations, of the church, and of individual "Christians." It showed clearly what the advanced nations of the world really are underneath the thin veneering of so-called "Christian civilization." It showed also the true condition of the professing church; and it showed how much (or how little) of the Spirit of Christ there is in those who claim to be His. For both the world and the church were taken by surprise. They had been lulled into a state of unreadiness by the pleasing and man-flattering doctrine that the human race had progressed so far from its primitive state of barbarism, and had so advanced in the promotion of good will and the brotherhood of man, that wars on a large scale were now a thing of the past. True there were some shrewd political observers who sounded the alarm from time to time, calling loudly for "preparedness;" and there were also a few who, in the light of the word of god, predicted the imminence of such a catastrophe as has now taken place. But their warnings were disregarded and they themselves derided as "pessimists."

Thus it came to pass that, when the young men of England and America were confronted with the conscription laws, those among them who truly belonged to Christ were, for the most part, wholly unprepared by teaching from the Word of God, as to the stand they ought to take. This neglect of practical teaching is the cause of many of the evils which afflict the saints of god at the present time. Instead of being taught how they ought to *walk and please God*, how to *fulfill the law of Christ*, how to *live soberly, righteously and godly* in this present age, and to adorn the teaching of God our Saviour in all their actions, the people of God are mainly occupied, by those who assume to teach them, with guesses at unfulfilled prophecy, dispensational theories, and discussions of passages of Scripture which are without effect upon their conduct. Study of the Bible is mainly in order to increase knowledge which "puffeth up," and very rarely indeed with a view to learning the will of God in order to do it.

The sad result of this neglect was that thousands of young men who truly belong to Christ—having been redeemed by His blood—and who owe their “service” to Him, took service in the armies of the nations, for the doing of the devil’s work of death and destruction. Our heart goes out to these; for surely they are rather to be pitied than blamed. The responsibility lies more with those who, being themselves safe by reason of age from enforced military service, failed to instruct the young men in the truth of the Word, and to encourage them to stand true to their Lord. But that is not all; for one of the saddest, and at the same time one of the most alarming features of the war-period, is the fact that many leaders and teachers among the Lord’s people, including not a few who are sound and evangelical, actually lent themselves to the cause of Satan in *counseling and urging* Christ’s young men to accept military service under pressure of the conscription laws.

There are however, bright spots in the dark picture; for there were a number of young men—all honor to them—who, against all pressure, all taunts, all persecutions, all deceitful advice of false teachers, refused to bear arms or to take any part whatever in the devilish business of war. I have talked with many of these, and have corresponded with others; and my heart has been thrilled and also warmed to thanksgiving and praise, for the grace given them to endure such cruel tortures and hardships for Christ’s sake, and for the faithfulness of the Lord in manifesting himself to them and sustaining them through their time of trial. There is not one of them but would, if faced again by the same alternative, gladly make the same choice. Theirs was the *true* courage; for it is far easier to run with the crowd of those whose feet are swift to shed blood, and who received the plaudits of the admiring world, than to face and endure the consequences of standing true to Christ.

And now that the war is over, and the excitement has died down, the people of the world are again going to sleep, and are dreaming dreams of an era of reconstruction and of an all-powerful League of Nations which will promptly suppress any outbreak of war, and insure peace to the world henceforth and forever. But let none of God’s saints be deceived by such delusive notions. There will be war *to the end of the age*; and it is likely that it will take the more horrible form of class-war, a war of the propertyless class against the owners of wealth and property in general. And let it not be forgotten that, among “the lessons of the war,” the one which has been *best learned* by men is the development of methods and apparatus for destroying human beings—combatants and non-combatants alike. Thousands of inventive minds are at this very moment engaged in perfecting such methods and means insomuch that it is safe to predict that the next war will be marked by horrors and atrocities far exceeding anything that has yet been known.

Therefore, *now* is the time for the saints of God, young and old, to learn the teaching of His word on the subject of taking part in war; and it is with the desire to render, if possible, some little help toward that end that this tract is now republished in revised and enlarged form.

“THE POWERS THAT BE”

It is highly important that the saints should clearly understand their relations to “the powers that be,” that is to say, to the civil authorities of the country wherein their earthly lot is cast. The fact that these authorities have been appointed by God (Rom. 13:1) carries with it certain conclusions which should be grasped by all the people of God. And chiefly should we

realize that “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; He turneth it withersoever He will” (Prov. 21:1). This means that civil government, with all its imperfections, and civil magistrates with all their faults and failures, *exist for the protection and welfare of God’s people*. It follows that, when the saints are walking in obedience to the will of God, they can count upon Him to overrule any decrees of the authorities which would coerce them to wrong doing. For rulers are not constituted by God to be a terror to *good* works, but to the *evil* (Rom. 13:3). They may, indeed, and often do, fail in that for which God has clothed them with brief authority, and may lend their support to the doing of evil works. Nevertheless, we are to keep in mind *God’s purpose* in vesting them with power; and we are to support them in all the lawful exercise of that power, to pay fully all taxes levied upon us, to submit to all ordinances that do not demand disobedience to the law of God, and above all we are to be faithful in *praying for them*, to the end that we may lead *quiet* and *peaceable* lives in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:1, 2). If we keep these things in mind, and *do accordingly*, we shall doubtless find that the civil ruler is indeed, “the minister (servant) of God to thee *for good*” (Rom. 13:4).

An illustration of this control which God maintains over the actions of the civil rulers is seen in the fact that the authorities of the United States, during the late war, did not demand that the saints of God should accept military service, but provided exemption and considerate treatment for all who, because of conscience toward God, refused to don the uniform or to put themselves under military orders. It is true that subordinate officials did not always carry out these merciful provisions, and that some young men in consequence suffered ill treatment and hardship. But exemption was nevertheless provided; and had our young men been taught how to act, namely, to show all respect for the tribunals, but to refuse (for Christ’s sake) to take part in military service, many a valuable young life might have been spared. Heavy indeed is the responsibility in this regard of those to whom the saints look for instruction in the ways of God.

In connection with the subject of our relations to “the powers that be” we quote from a periodical read by many of the saints the following paragraphs with which we are in full accord:

“Subjection to authorities, in all they are authorized to demand, and submission in all legislation they are at liberty to enact in their sphere, is plainly enjoined in the Scriptures cited, as indeed in the general teachings of the Word. If rulers exceed their authority and demand obedience in such things as involves direct disobedience to God, then their claims are not to be submitted to but rejected. Only supreme ignorance of the principles of the Word of God, or judicial blindness—which comes through trifling with them—can cause any professed teacher to say that subjection to unrighteous claims is to be given, and that acceptance of them is justification for the rejection of the higher claims of God. Not so, thought the three Hebrews in the day of Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image (Dan. 3), nor Daniel in the day of Darius’ prohibition of prayer (Dan. 6). Nor did England’s martyrs in the time of the Marian persecution, or Scotland’s covenanters in the time of Claverhouse, yield such blind submission) age to discover, and for men with less grit to formulate the sophism, that the State is a fetish to be worshipped, and that obedience to its claims in all things is the equivalent of obedience to God. We know that many Christian young men have been entirely misled by such reasonings, and the Lord may yet have something to say to those who have stumbled them by their evil counsel. The doctrine of blind subjection to all that the ruling authorities—civil, military, and ecclesiastical—may demand and compel, is one that ought to please Antichrist well, for when he comes, it will be to find a submissive, ‘patriotic’ people ready to receive and own his rule, to obey him as their master, and to worship him as their God.”

“WHOSE IMAGE?”

The false teaching by which many of our beloved young saints were misled to their death was based mainly upon the plea that whatever the authorities commanded was to be done, because to refuse obedience would be to “resist the power.” It should be enough to say, in reply to this shallow plea, that all Scripture bears witness that we should refuse any command, no matter how exalted its source, which requires us to do anything contrary to the revealed will of God (Dan. 3:16-18; 6:10; Acts 4:19, 20, etc.). Not to *resist* the authorities and the ordinances they may lawfully make is one thing; but to *accept service under those authorities* for the execution of whatever commands they may see fit to issue, it quite another thing. The servants of Christ are not put themselves in any “service” where they cannot obey their Lord and Master, and glorify Him in all they do and say. He has given them such commands as this “And *whatsoever* ye do, in word or deed, do *all* in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (Col. 3:17). We have only to ask then if a saint of God can, *in the Name of the Lord Jesus*, plunge a bayonet into the vitals of a human being, sending him to hell with curses on his lips perhaps; or can he, *in His Name*, fire a machine-gun into the quivering flesh of his fellow-men; or can he drop a bomb into a crowd of women and children, giving thanks for the havoc wrought thereby to God and the Father by Him? Those who accept military service *commit themselves in advance* to the doing of these very things—and worse. So we cannot see how any excuse can be found for those who, having assumed the grave responsibility of teaching the saints of God to walk in His ways, actually lead them into “the paths of the Destroyer.”

But, in order to keep within moderate limits, we will confine our further remarks mainly to the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ (briefly referred to in Part I) found in Matthew 22:18-21:

“But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar’s. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”

These words are marvelous in their depth, breadth and clearness. They cover the entire cases, leaving no room for uncertainty on the part of any who will to do the will of God. It needed the wisdom of Solomon to decide to which claimant the disputed infant belonged; and behold! a Greater than Solomon is here! The Lord draws a line between the things which are Cæsar’s and the things which are God’s; and He expressly commands that the former are to be rendered to Cæsar, and the latter to God. Furthermore, He makes the “image and superscription” (or inscription) the test of ownership. Have we in our possession that which bears Cæsar’s image and inscription? Then we must render it to Cæsar when he demands it. That means among other things that, no matter how oppressive the taxation, even though it should take our last penny, we are not to resist the payment of it. But how about our ransomed bodies and souls? Whose “image” is impressed upon them? Have we been “renewed in knowledge after the *image of Him Who created us*” (Col. 3:10). Have we been *inscribed* with the Spirit of God and made living Epistles to be known and read of all men (2 Cor. 3:2)? If so, then we need no further light or information. We are not to render our souls and bodies to the State, but are to yield ourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead., and our members as

instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:13); we are to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

In the light of these Scriptures it is clear that, when a saint of God, sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *Whom Cæsar’s soldiers crucified in obedience to orders and as a soldier’s duty*—yields his own body to Cæsar, to wear Cæsar’s uniform, and to obey Cæsar’s orders, *even to the killing of those who Christ came to save*, he acts in plain disobedience to the Word of Christ, for he renders to *Cæsar* that which is *God’s*. And not only so; but the service which he thus accepts calls him to do that which is of all things most contrary to the purposes for which Christ shed His own blood.

Little children, it is the last hour. The Epistle to the Romans, which enjoins submission to “the powers that be,” was written when the tyrant Nero was on the throne of the Cæsar’s. Soon the authority of Cæsar will be wielded by a worse tyrant than he; for the last to exercise Cæsar’s authority will be the Antichrist, the son of perdition. Let us then give heed to this solemn matter. Do we realize that, if the false teaching which lately lifted its head among us to the destruction of some of our choice young men be not thoroughly exposed and rooted out, it will prepare the way for God’s own saints to accept the mark of the beast? Do we realize that every argument that has been urged for inducing our young men to accept military service in the late world-war would be equally valid as a reason for accepting serviced under the last and greatest of earth’s rulers—Antichrist?

Let us not think then that, because the armies are just now to a large extent abandoned, there is no need to urge this subject upon the saints of God at the present time. This is, on the contrary, *the very time* to bring it forward, to the end that they who desire to walk in God’s ways may know His expressed will about it, and may not again be caught unawares.