

The
Christian's Relation
to
Christian Governments

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ROMANS 13: 1-7.

“In the last days perilous times shall come”: so wrote the apostle Paul to Timothy, and while for many a long day now the Lord's people have felt that they were in those last days, yet none can deny that, along certain lines, we have in our day questions to meet, difficulties to solve, perplexities through which to find our way, more intricate and involved than any that have preceded.

We have not, indeed, at the command of a pagan government, to choose between throwing a few grains of incense to Diana or being ourselves thrown to the wild beasts. We have not to confess belief in “transubstantiation” to the satisfaction of Rome, or be burned at the stake. We have not to assemble on mountain or moor, or in caves and catacombs, in order to worship God. We may read our Bibles anywhere with no fear of rack or torture. These all tested the sincerity and purity of the faith of our fathers; but are there no tests as to the purity and sincerity of our own? Has our enemy lost all

such weapons? Surely not; for our scripture assures us that the nearer we approach to the end, the *more* perilous—not less—will our path become; and far more subtle are the tests to which we have to answer, even though they are attended with less physical suffering or danger; and they will be amply sufficient to expose the true nature of our profession whether it be genuine or spurious, true or false. Among these tests at times comes up our relation to what are termed the Christian Governments of the day, under which we enjoy freedom from the very severities that tried our fathers.

One can but approach the subject with some degree of trepidation; first, because most people have already made up their minds; secondly, because so diverse are these convictions that one can hardly hope to avoid running counter to *some* of them and so possibly lay oneself open to charges more or less serious in proportion to the strength with which opposing views are held. But putting aside such fear, my purpose is to review, as far as I am enabled, from the only source of truth: What is Authority? What is its *source*? When did it become *Christian*? The *change in the Christian's relation*, in consequence.

First, then: What is Authority? It will suffice for our purpose to answer this from our dictionaries as "the right to command and power to enforce obedience". Then it is applied to the persons exercising that right, and, in that case, is called "government".

What is its Source? The answer to this is not quite so easy, for there are two of quite opposite character.

But it would seem an axiom that he only who *has* can give—therefore he only who *has* authority can *give* it to others; and so as to have authority, one must be above those *over* whom it is exercised, therefore authority *must* come “from above”; and, traced to its primal and only possible source, from *God*, the Highest.

But this seems to have long been the basic question in the political world: Does authority come from above or from beneath? In the ever-growing tendency to exclude God altogether, or merely use His holy Name for rhetorical purposes, the answer has been universally accepted in all democratic countries—that is, virtually throughout Christendom—that authority comes from “the people,” and that is, “from *beneath*,” for the people must certainly be *below* that which is *over* them. It is the natural reaction from the unjustified formula on which I believe the late German emperor acted, “The divine right of kings”. Had he emphasized the divine *responsibility* of kings, that is, the responsibility of kings to the King of kings, it is not too much to say that there would have been no war in Europe, and ten million young men, whose bodies are now in the dust, would have run out their race to its natural end. We, however, to-day have more directly to do with the opposing formula that “all government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed”.

We must not be influenced by these formulas one way or the other, but seek to get such light as we can from its alone source, the Word of God. Nor should we expect, nor shall we find, that its verdict is con-

trary to simple commonsense, which also tells us that even if we grant the correctness of the popular democratic formula about the just powers of the government resting upon the consent of the governed, and admitting that this is the best form possible to-day in man's hands, all others having failed, yet there must be such exceptions and limitations as greatly to weaken it, if not to render it nugatory altogether.

For instance, the Home is a little State. Here the father with his consort is in the place of supreme authority over the children, who are the subjects, or "the people"; nor would it do for a moment to assert that *that* authority rested upon the consent of the governed in that sphere, or there would soon be chaos in the nursery. The school is also a State, in which the government cannot rest on the will of the governed, or there would soon be anarchy instead of lessons, and, in some cases, an unending holiday instead of schooling. "But," it is answered, "both in home and school the subjects have not attained the legal age, or 'years of discretion,' and it is this that necessitates the limitation. What is quite correct in these cases is not at all so when that condition is passed and the legal age attained."

We may admit this fact, and yet it does not affect in the least the fundamental principle that authority can never come from beneath, but from above. Let me ask you to consider just one case that will make this principle indisputable. Our Lord Jesus when risen from the dead said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"; *who* could have given Him that power?

Think, I beg you. Could we poor men who certainly had none? Could it come from "the people?" Could the angels, who were themselves without such power, but under it? Could it then rest on the will of those who had nothing to do with giving it to Him? It must, in that case at least, and indeed in every case, in order to be real power, be *from above*. Was not that too precisely what the Lord told Pilate: "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above"?

Even on the attainment of full age, the children do but go into a larger school, in which the same principle must be admitted. Take the army and navy, for instance: there is authority among adults; does it rest on the consent of the governed? They tried that recently in Russia, putting it to the vote of the army whether there should be a battle or not, and the result of the trial told the answer as to its success. *Now they have iron discipline.*

I think too that I could appeal to *you* to consider the world at large, and ask: Have we reached in Democracy such a climax of perfection as to bring the political world into rest? Or is everything, even to this hour, in a state of turmoil and flux; and, it is greatly to be feared, in the wrong direction? Has not Democracy proved itself as completely a failure as any of the forms that have preceded it?

But it is still urged that equals may surely elect one of their number as chief—call him Emperor, King, President, Captain, what you will—and may give voluntary submission to that elected chief. Nor to this can

there be any objection, apart from just one consideration. It assumes that there is no one above all those equals, who has claims upon them, and authority over them all. In a family, brothers, having an equal standing, may elect one of their number as their head, be governed by him in every situation that may arise, seek his will and direction in every circumstance; but that ignores, beyond all controversy, the father's presence and will altogether, unless *he* has himself directed them so to act.

Yet there is "no authority but of God: the powers that be are of God," no matter what they are. So if people elect a president, the presidency, although from "beneath," yet being the authority, is "of God"; that is, he who takes the place of president thereby assumes no less a place than that of being "God's minister" (Rom. 13:6), with all its dignities, but with all its responsibilities too, for God does not abandon His claim to authorities being His servants because men ignore it. Nor (and I pray you mark it) does this truth *lessen* the dignity of the office, or its claim, from all God-fearing men, of honor and obedience; for the magistrate stands as the very representative of God, inasmuch that these are called "gods," as the Lord in John 10:34 quoted from Ps. 82:1.

But whilst this is true, we must remember that God does not appoint personally Mr. Harding, nor any other individual. Nor has He directly appointed the democratic form of government; but we live in "man's day," and that means that the government of the earth is left in men's hands to see what they will make of it. Nor does God relinquish His

supreme authority by so doing: it is but one of the temporary trials of man, and, alas, evidences itself precisely as that "sign" of Moses' rod, ever the figure of authority, which when out of its proper owner's hand became a serpent. The present revolutionary ferment all through the earth, is, I can but believe, the final evidence of its serpent character when out of the Hand of Him to whom all authority is given in heaven and in earth, and the immediate precursor to His resumption of that "rod". If that "serpent" is indeed a divinely given picture of all government of this earth till it returns to our Lord Jesus, it surely evidences a very wide distinction between Christianity and human government.

But my desire is fairly and frankly to consider difficulties that may be raised, and here is one: "You will admit," it is said, "that the government of the earth was committed to the Gentiles in the day of Nebuchadnezzar; are *we* not the Gentiles to whom that commitment has come? And surely the fact of our owning Jesus as Lord, does not fit us the *less* for governing, but rather the *more*. Therefore, because committed to the Gentiles, it is rightly carried out by Gentiles even though Christian."

Quite logical and right, save for that one important factor that you have overlooked, and that is, that God in His word plainly denies your conclusion; for, by that Word every Christian is by his very calling "*heavenly*," and a pilgrim wending his way to his true home—his Father's house. There is a sense in which he is not even "living in the world," far less reigning as a king in it, or in any form of civil authority; but he is at once

to take up the pilgrim staff, and acknowledge himself no more *of*, although still *in* the world, as was his Lord and Saviour—as He said: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Jno. 17:14). The government committed to Nebuchadnezzar has therefore *not* fallen to the Christian.

When did the change come between the day in which the authorities of the world were heathen, and when Christian? The answer is clear: It was when Constantine took the government of the earth as the first Christian emperor, A.D. 324. At once the government became externally changed. It had been heathen, as not knowing the true God, but worshipping a multitude of false deities, Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, Diana, and the rest; but behind these, as our scripture tells us, they really were worshipping wicked spirits called demons (1 Cor. 10:20). Thus the devil and his rebellious hosts had secured the worship of mankind, and he was, in very deed, “the god of this world”. But at the establishment of Constantine as supreme ruler, it became externally, and by profession, Christian. Gradually the whole world, embraced in this world-empire, became professedly Christian. Up to that time to be baptised to Christ involved a measure of the same reproach and persecution as were given Christ Himself; from that time this turned rather to respect and honor.

But did this really alter the basic principles of Christianity? Most surely not. Its standards, its truths, remained as unchangeable as the God who established them, and as the Person of Christ. It was still *His*

place and relation *to* the world and its government that must still serve to guide the Christian in his relation *to* that government. Christ was not yet on the throne of the earth, which was still usurped by the devil. Neither he nor his demons had consented to abandon their claims to the earth simply because its human ruler had made a profession of faith in Christ! On the contrary, it is precisely at this moment that the Lord writes to His Church, and writes in a tone of gentle reproach, as the context evidences: "I know where thou *dwellest*, where Satan's throne is . . . where Satan *dwelleth*"—that surely does not look like an expulsion of Satan by the Emperor's profession of Christianity. But what follows from this sure fact? *All the world of Christendom, by its profession, was pledged to become a company of pilgrims and strangers through this earth, still Satan-ruled, awaiting its one true King to return, assume its government, and cast out the usurper.* I believe that to be incontrovertible; and how infinitely weighty it is!

But how could they possibly be pilgrims through, if reigning *in*, the world? The apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians, that they were already reigning as kings (I Cor. 4:8). Of course this is irony; but it is irony the purpose of which is perfectly clear—no Christian should even think of taking any part in the government of this world, as long as the One whom he owns as its true King is not on its throne, **but rejected.**

Nothing was altered essentially when Constantine ascended the throne of the world. Assume that you

and I had been living in the very early days of this age. The whole world is anti-Christian. The heathen emperor is, we will assume, a persecutor like Nero; and we share in that persecution, being in prison under sentence of death, and expecting nothing but the carrying out of that sentence. Assume then that 250 years are dropped out of history (it will not affect the principle) during one single night; and the very next day a professing Christian is on the throne of the world. Nero is gone: Constantine is in his place. Our prison doors are thrown open; our fetters are knocked off; our death-sentence is annulled; we are free! All the governments of the earth are no longer *against* us, as they were last night, but are actually *for* us—protecting, in the place of persecuting! What a change! Yet it is not our life or our liberty that we esteem of first importance. We could have saved these last night had we been untrue to our Lord; so we look about and ask: “Where is the Lord Jesus? For where He is will still govern all our path, all our ways, all our thoughts; for we have no home but where He is. Has *He* then returned? Is He then on *His* own throne?”

“No,” is the answer, “nor do we expect Him now. We have obtained much more light than we had last night. We are now looking for a millennium of blessedness with Him still away in bodily presence. In fact our whole interpretation of the Scriptures has radically changed—people are no longer converted to ‘wait for the Son from heaven,’ for we esteem that to be a ‘knowing Christ after the flesh’; and from *that* we have been delivered; but we all expect, and await, the in-

evitable passing out of this scene by death, as people have ever done, and so we go to be with Him; and what difference does it make after all whether we go to Him, or He comes to us? You see we now believe that His reign is a spiritual reign in the hearts of His people; and that this is what Peter referred to in speaking of the times of refreshing that should come—the Lord is reigning now.”

“Well,” we respond, “then surely you must have a very poor idea of that reign, and a miserable sample of it to-day. Christ is reigning, you say, and yet it is a matter of indifference to leave the very place where He is reigning! It is quite true that last night, when we knew well that He was *not* here, we did esteem it ‘very far better’ to depart to be with Him than to continue in a world that rejected Him; but when He shall return in glory, and be seated on His Throne, filling the whole earth with the fulness of blessing, peace, and abundance, it will be a most sorrowful thing to be banished from it when basking thus under His beneficent sway; for a death at that time will be a direct penalty for open sin (Is. 65:20). Ah, man’s heart, we see has not changed. We judge everything by the light of Christ and where He is. Since then *He* is still in heaven, *we* are still strangers and pilgrims on earth; and by His grace will wend our way heavenward till we get to Him. And if it be true that you have a Christian on the throne, let us, with all respect for his high office, assure him that even *he* is by his calling heavenly, and he too is but a stranger and pilgrim here. Let him maintain that attitude of fidelity to the Cross of Christ, and see how long it will be

possible for him to sit on this world's throne; for it will not be by a mere external profession, but by an actual change in the very heart of man that the Cross of Christ will be loved, the path of the Cross be taken, and He who suffered on it be indeed the treasure that has won that heart."

But this too introduces us to some difficulties that we must not evade: for instance, what of Romans II:II, 13? Paul writes, "Salvation is come to the Gentiles," and, "I speak to you Gentiles"—does not that recognise the Gentiles or nations (for one Greek word covers both) as being Christian *as nations*; so for us to speak of "Christian *nations*" is not such an anomaly as some would insist; and then does it not really follow from this that these "Christian nations" must have Christian government? And so *Christians* must be governors, for you surely would not go to Africa or China for them.

This deduction is not altogether justified by the scripture to which appeal is made. The apostle does *not* address them, when professing Christianity, as "nations" in the plural but in the singular. Salvation comes *to* them indeed as Gentiles (vers. II, 13); but as soon as they professedly receive it, national separations are dropped, and there is a change in the number of the pronoun he uses. As the testimony of God on the earth, with that privilege and responsibility, he drops the plural "you," and writes: "Thou (mark, not "ye"), being a wild olive tree". The nations, American, British, French, German, etc., cannot be "thou". No, there is no recognition of Christian na-

tions here at all—it is a single witness, now characteristically Gentile, having its place and part in the tree of testimony, the “olive”. The testimony of God has for a time passed from the natural branches, the Jew, to the Gentile. It is the responsible witness to the Lord Jesus, His essential deity; hence His supernatural birth of the virgin; and hence His impeccable humanity; hence the perfect efficiency of His atoning sufferings and the eternal efficacy of His blood; His just claims to the earth; and His return in power to assert those claims.

There is not one word in that chapter of what we may call national sentiment; not a letter of appeal to patriotism; not a suggestion of exhortation to maintain the right as between nation and nation; or to substitute a good governor or government for a bad one—in a word, not one hint of what we call “politics,” where it would certainly be, if anywhere. Whether that witness has been indeed true to its responsibility, I can leave you to say; or whether it is on the point of being “cut off,” as surely as (looked at in a somewhat different character) it is about to be spewed out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16) in awful disgust, that I can leave you to judge. *If then this be true, the whole present testimony of Christendom is radically false.* It should be waiting for Christ to come and govern the earth, not attempt to govern it without Him. It should be hastening onward and upward, and not settling down where Satan’s throne is.

This gives birth to another question: Are not the Times of the Gentiles continuing through the present

day? If so—and who can dispute it?—does not that really mean that Gentile government, whether it be Christian or anything else, must also continue without break to the end of this day? Further, is not this confirmed by the Image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, speaking clearly of that Gentile government going down to the very return of the Lord?

But you will remember that in that Image there was no break visible—no suggestion of a Church that was altogether heavenly; but it speaks solely of Gentile *world-empires*. There is no place in that Image for the present day at all. That the Times of the Gentiles have not yet come to their definite end would appear certain, since what marks their continuance is the treading down of Jerusalem *by* the Gentiles, as it still is, although in as modified a way as in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The hostile Gentile, the Turk, who had his foot on Jerusalem has indeed been expelled; and again there is a Jewish "Tirshatha", or Governor, over Palestine (see Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65, 70) in Sir Herbert Samuels. But, mark, he *has been appointed by the Gentile*; and that surely means that Jerusalem is no more truly autonomous or free, than in that day in which the Tirshatha Nehemiah confessed, "Behold, we are servants". But no one surely can see such crises in Jerusalem's history as have passed before our eyes without questioning whether there may not be progressive fulfilments to these "Times", and the *first* of these being the expulsion of the Turk in 1917, giving solid assurance that we are very near the hour that shall see their final definitive ending. It is to her true Messiah, the Lord Jesus, that Jerusalem is to owe her full and final

deliverance from all Gentile domination, and not to any Gentile overlord, however benevolent he may be.

With this, too, our own prophetic book is in perfect accord. Rev. 11 tells us, in that sign-language that characterizes it, that even to the very end—during the last forty-two months—under the “sign” of the “court” being “cast out”, not measured, the Gentiles are to tread down the holy city. The “measuring line” is emblematic of the divine interest, and the return of this toward Israel (see Zech. 2:1-4). But in Rev. 11 not the whole is thus measured, but a part only, and that part is figured by “temple and altar”. Further, since the “court” is given up still to the Gentiles for forty-two months, and then their trampling on it will end, it would seem clear that this gracious measuring of the temple and altar—that is, the beloved Remnant of faith identified with their worship (1 Cor. 10:18)—must exactly synchronize with the beginning of that period; that is, it is the middle of the last week of Daniel 9:27, and at the very time that the Roman Prince causes sacrifice and oblation to cease; then, and not till then, does God recognize a worship and a sacrifice;* but if the Times of the Gentiles will be going on then, they certainly must be *now*.

Thus while those “Times of the Gentiles” *are* going on, the “Image” is *not*; for in that Image, while there is a succession of empires, such as we can now trace in history, there is never anything but *one single empire* at one time; never, as to-day, a lot of antagonistic nations,

* For a fuller consideration see Notes on Rev. 11 in “Our Hope”.

but *one world-empire* down to and at, the very end ; although then, at that time of the end, that one is made up of ten confederated States, unified by and under one federal head, of which we get a foreshadowing in the present feeble attempt at a "league of nations". That attempt will surely prove abortive, as far as any permanency goes, as long as a man who shall be recognized by them all as their federal head is lacking. It awaits that "coming man", and thus, until he comes, Nebuchadnezzar's image has no reference to the present day at all. Our place is in an unseen parenthesis where the legs join the feet.

To recur then to our question : What should be the attitude of the Christian to these falsely constituted Christian governments? With their profession of Christianity he has no more to concern himself than did Paul's contemporary brethren with the moral character of the Roman Emperor, the flagrancy of whose evil life did not weaken in the slightest degree the claim of his high office to honor and obedience. It may be quite true that modern rulers have erred as seriously as the scribes and Pharisees of old, who sat them down in Moses' seat to which God had not invited them ; but that is not *his*, but *their* concern—*his* is to obey the powers that be.

Indeed, I can but feel assured that we Christians who live in the atmosphere of Democracy, in which there certainly is not *too much* reverence likely to be paid to any "powers", need much to be reminded how pleasing to God that reverence is. It is, we must remember, a very grave danger in such

a day of apostasy as that in which we live, for how does the Word of God speak of such days, and the people that make them? Listen! "These dreamers defile the flesh, *despise dominion*, and *speak evil of dignities*" (Jude 8); and could anything be more weighty than the illustration given of the "*archangel*", even the highest angel, not *daring* to bring a railing accusation even against the "*Devil*". It is an inevitable deduction that even to him—the Devil—there still attached the dignity of his high position, not annulled even by his sin, and that still commanded a certain respect. The Lord's people then ought surely to be actually characterised and known in the present levelling atmosphere in which we live, by speaking with genuine respect of all in authority.

Nor does the Christian look upon authority, when thus separated from the person who is exercising it, as being *hostile* to him, but quite the reverse, as *friendly*. He is profoundly thankful to God for the government under which he lives, and rather argues that if the Holy Spirit insisted on submission to government when represented by a Nero or a Caligula, much more, not less, when by such men as our Presidents and Executives are to-day.

Further, he is to *pray* for these governors, and all in places of authority; the end however being "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty . . . for God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4)—that is, the prayer has a spiritual, *not a political* purpose—not for earthly prosperity, or victory in

war, but that the word of God may not be impeded in its course, and that end obtained by a firm, just government. Abraham, true figure of the faith, as well as of the *place* of a true Christian to-day, affords, in his relation to the doomed cities of the plain, a picture of the value, even to this doomed world itself, of a place of separation from it; as Lot does on the other, as "sitting in its gate" and sharing thus its government, of the uselessness of a Christian who takes a corresponding place in the world. It may not be the estimate of the world as to the respective values of the Abraham and Lot spirit and place; but it is the *true* one.

Let us still look fairly at the fresh difficulties that this raises; for may it not with reason be said that, "If Christians have nothing to do with actual government, how shall that large part of the earth called Christendom be governed at all? Shall it be left without any government? That would certainly delight the anarchist (at least till *he* attained the place of authority himself, and then his convictions seem to change quickly and radically, and the rule of a Lenine may be as autocratic as that of a Nebuchadnezzar), but surely no sober man would consider the possibility for a moment."

Most truly so, and the reasonableness of the objection shows how difficult the day is—the Christian must not assume government, and yet there must be government in Christendom! But we shall agree, I am sure, that our difficulties must never weaken the force of the Scriptures in the slightest; but ever and always must we let those Scriptures solve those difficulties. In their

light we discern clearly enough that what occurred in the day of Constantine, and is popularly spoken of as "the triumph of Christianity", was really the victory of our enemy, the Devil. For ever since then, the pilgrim Church of Christ (by profession) instead of following the divine Guide, the Holy Spirit, whom He in His love has sent to lead her home through this desert-world, has settled down to *dwell* there; and she, who by her profession should be separated "as a chaste virgin" from every rival alone to her Lord, began, and has continued, to "commit fornication with the kings of the earth"—that is, the Church has made her meretricious alliances with the civil governments. That this began so long ago, while it indeed gives the error the dignity of age, and is one element that makes the last times difficult, only results in a clearer evidence of its divergence, as time has gone on, from the one standard, and gives all who have eyes to see, to recognize how serious was that first false step, and how much it has cost.

The only answer then to the difficulty raised as to how shall Christendom be governed, if not by Christians, is the principle that the Lord laid down in, "Let the dead bury their dead"—*let the world govern the world*; and if the worldly, professing Christian so desires, he must assume that dignity, but let the child of God who values the smile of God have nothing to do with it. For the present sphere, where Christ is professedly owned as Lord, is either the Kingdom of Heaven or it is nothing. The principles then of that kingdom, as enunciated by its King in "the sermon on the mount", must be allowed to be the irreducible stan-

dard for the administration of that kingdom. How will—how *can*—any Christian government answer to that standard, when even a policeman has no standing—where the thief of a coat, under a form of law, may secure a cloak also, and so a premium be given to his dishonesty? Wherefore then serveth the Sermon? It was added to make men feel their absolute helplessness in view both of its demands and of its grace, and thus to prepare the way for that supreme Sacrifice of the Cross, to which all the ways of God had been slowly yet surely moving all through the ages. The nations called Christian, ignoring both their ungodliness and helplessness, putting themselves under it, have but evidenced once more the utter failure of man under every form of trial.

To come then to what is practical: Let us divide professing Christendom into two parts—it will suffice for our purpose—and give to each a representative man. The first, standing for by far the larger number, will deny that the Christian path is nothing but one of simple obedience to any government. On the contrary he esteems it his duty to purify earth's politics by his presence and participation in them. He will desire to improve the government under which he lives, and, as the best way of doing so, if possible, will himself climb into Caesar's seat, with all its dignities, of which he thinks much, and with all its responsibilities to God, of which he thinks little. The reproach, "Ye have reigned as kings without us" will, in his case, fall on deaf ears. We have already dealt with his arguments, and need not repeat. It is the popular view, held by

the great mass of professors, and he who contravenes it must not expect to *be* popular.

But another will so have his mind on Christ and the things above, not on the earth, that all his present sentiments and conduct will be governed by *His* present place and its significance. He will give submission up to what he himself esteems right, to whatever authorities on earth there be, and yet will seek, first and foremost, His Lord's will and pleasure in every emergency that may arise.

This one is by no means without his dangers too. We are creatures of extremes. And there is an extreme to which he can be carried, in which he is blind to everything but his own view. He cannot see any balancing truth at all, and mercilessly condemns all who do not govern their path by *his* light.

I believe that there is between these a *via media* that is the path of safety, and that to discern it, we must not occupy ourselves with either danger, or we shall fall into its opposite, but with Him who is ever alone "the Way", and whose Name shall be to us a guiding Star that shall, in the dark night through which we walk, keep us from both. That Name is like those precious vessels committed to the care of the priests by Ezra to be carefully guarded through their journey to their homeland (Ezra 8:24-33), and which we too must surely no less carefully guard from reproach, as far as it depends on our conduct, till we too reach our Rest, our Home.

"How will our conduct affect the Name?" must be then the only question that shall govern that conduct.

For instance, the Government makes a demand in the form of *taxation* for money to carry on its functions. We have, in such a case, a very clear word from the Lord, and we "pay tribute" without concerning ourselves in the least with the way the money will be used—even although there may be a very grave possibility of its being used in a way that would not have our approval; that responsibility is not ours. There is probably no difference as to this that we need consider.

But again in certain times of stress, the Government adopts another plan, by which it is left to the freewill of the people to buy its *bonds*, the proceeds of which are for the same purpose as the taxes, and it may be for the prosecution of a war. Here the Christian is admittedly quite free to hold aloof altogether. But he asks himself: "How will the *Name* I bear be affected? How shall I commend Him best, and be clearer read as an epistle of Christ?" Then he remembers an occasion in which money being demanded of the Lord, He too, although also quite free from obligation, laid down a principle in the words: "Nevertheless, *lest we offend them*" (that is, lest we put a stumbling-block in their way), "give for Me and for thee". So this Christian, in a situation that might result in "offence", does not at least spare *himself*, lest he lay "the Name" open to the charge of being merely a cover for self-seeking—a convenient excuse for parsimony and covetousness. The Name is his "star" that guides him in his conduct.

Or, to go a step further, he *himself* is claimed by the Government for military service. Here he recog-

nises at once that it is impossible to bring into line with his Lord's teachings, the examples of His apostles, and the truest instincts of his own spiritual nature as led by the Spirit of God, active participation in the bloodshedding of the battlefield, however clearly he may recognise the justice of the conflict in which his country may be engaged; from that he shrinks with an insuperable repulsion. But is "the Name" to be slurred? Is the Name to be again charged with being used as a convenient cloak whereby *he* is to escape danger? Is he quietly to enjoy the peace and security that the generous devotion of others gives him, by their sufferings and deaths, with no participation himself in those sufferings and dangers? The sword is but *one* of God's "sore judgments" (Ezek. 14:21). If He send the others—they mostly come together—pestilence and famine; are all Christians quite immune? Is it even within their *power* to withdraw from sharing in those judgments? May they assuredly expect, for instance, to be kept in perfect health while others are sick and dying all about them? Will *they* be marked out and discerned as being truly Christians by having a sufficiency of food, while their fellow-countrymen are starving and perishing with hunger? Most assuredly not—at least, if they have learned how to divide the word of truth, and not assume that the promises of earthly prosperity given specifically to the pious Jew hold equally good for the Christian, whose blessings are as distinctly spiritual and heavenly as those of the Jew are material and earthly.

Thus the Christian young man pleads for some place as fully filled with hardship and danger as any, but one

in which he may heal and help, instead of wound and kill. Nor can he restrain his profound gratitude to God that, in His gracious providence, there are many such in which the Name of his Lord is saved from reproach, and he, not only from shedding blood, but special doors are opened wider to him in the scenes of suffering to tell of the virtues of that blessed One to those whose ears and hearts are opened by those very sufferings to receive the message of mercy and love. "*The Name*" is his guide, the Key to all his difficulties of this kind.

Yet while he will thus act, himself shrinking from slaying, he will surely not fail to recognise, as can none of really sound mind, the vast distinction between the *murder* that is forbidden by the sixth commandment—the malicious gratification of personal hate in the taking of life—and the soldier carrying out, at the dictates of his conscience, his obligations as he esteems them to the State. It is impossible to identify the Christian soldier, even though we *may* esteem him to be mistaken, with the murderer; it is utterly unscriptural and an insult to ordinary human intelligence to make such a foolish charge. Yet it *has* been done; but it greatly weakens any argument that needs such support.

Nor will we misapply Scripture, and for instance, tearing Eph. 5: 11 from its context, as some also have done, apply the words: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"—not to those shameful things done in the darkness of secrecy, as the context makes clear were in the writer's mind, but

to the soldier, who certainly does *not* act in secret at all, but may be governed by motives quite as pure, if not as enlightened as his critic, as in such examples as a Jackson, a Lee, a Havelock, or a Hedley Vicars, and a myriad successors of those worthy centurions of whom we read in the New Testament. This irreverent distortion of Scripture is in itself no light evil.

Thus, I am assured, that "the way of the cross" is not to condemn hastily and severely others of our brethren who do not as yet see with us. We must remember that they too have certainly some Scripture support; for there, soldiers—centurion after centurion—come before us, frequently with strong approval, and never with disapproval on account of their occupation; nor are ever directed to leave their posts. If the people ask John Baptist: "What shall we do?" he answers in a word that touches the heart of man's covetousness, and obedience to that word will give evidence of the sincerity of the professed repentance: "He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none" (Luke 3:11). So to the soldiers' question, he answers: "Do violence to no man." But can that mean, Throw away your weapons, and betake yourselves to a civil life? So some have asserted, and by the very assertion have greatly weakened the cause they desired to serve; for they are reduced to ignoring the next words entirely: "Be content with your wages." Would not any reasonable man, with no motive for distorting the plain meaning, take that as a clear direction rather to go on earning those wages with which they were to be content? In the light of these words those earlier ones

as to doing violence are quite clear as directing the soldier not to use his armed power in violence against the unarmed civilian; although it leaves him quite *free*, when and if the Cross has given a clearer, sweeter, holier light, to abandon that means of earning wages altogether.

It is utterly repellant both to Scripture and reason to place the soldier on the level with the murderer; the very assumption of such ground is not evidence of either a sound mind or heart, and is well calculated to drive enquirers into the opposite extreme.

Nor does the Holy Spirit lead us to be callous or indifferent to the sufferings of our fellow-men. Are *we* not, at least, still as much *in the body* as all others? It is true that in a very real, but purely spiritual sense we are not alive, but "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20)—not "living in the world", so as to be subject to its *religious* ordinances (Col. 2:20); but in another, and no less real sense, we are still living men with all the responsibilities of every relationship of living men; nor can we, if we *would*, escape from sharing the present sufferings of our fellows. Mark the wide distinction: the same apostle who sternly warns us *against* being subject to *religious* ordinances, as being the commands of men, no less sternly insists on our being subject to *civil* powers, also *men*. The Christian does not stifle all sympathy with the people he still calls, as did Paul, his "own nation". New birth, or new creation, has not taken him out of that nation at all—it has "delivered him from the power of darkness, and

translated him into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13), but he still shares the fortunes, and is subject to the divine chastenings that may be sent on his country, whether famine, pestilence, or sword—all fall equally on him with all others.

I am aware that many (and among them, I admit I am one) see that our own apostle Paul declined a little from the height of his own teachings, when, in Acts, chaps. 20 and 22, led by that human affection of which I spoke, and with which we cannot help feeling sympathy, he left the field of labor to which his Lord had plainly sent him, and turned his face toward Jerusalem, *from* which he had been sent—many a suggestive mark gives its evidence of this; so that we are sometimes dubious as to taking all that he did, when going in that direction, as having all the authority of a God-directed example. Thus his claim to Roman citizenship in Acts 22:25 may possibly be open to some question. But not a vestige of such a question attended his path when, obedient to the heavenly vision, he was going *from* Jerusalem to the Gentiles to whom he *had* been sent, and more specifically when he first touched Europe at Philippi. In all this part of his course he is so manifestly led of the Spirit in every turn and step—gives such internal and external proofs of this, that his claim to the rights of a Roman citizen in the prison at Philippi may be accepted as a divinely prompted act (Acts 16:37).

It is significant and true that he did not make that claim, as he might have done, to save himself from suffering—*that* was all past. He was silent when the

rods ploughed his back, and did not speak till the road to freedom was clear. His motive, then, was not to escape prison or stripes; but this absence of all self-seeking surely does not *weaken* the testimony that his protest, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned being Romans", gives as to his new birth not having annulled his Roman citizenship at all; he still was a Roman citizen, subject to the laws of Rome, and under the protection of those laws.

"But," it is asked, "does not such a claim contradict the plain teaching of this same apostle given too to these same Philippians? 'Our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven,' they hear him teach in his letter to them, and yet they remember that when he was with them he said, I am a Roman citizen. Surely there must be a contradiction between the teaching and the conduct."

Though it may appear so on the surface, there is, we may be sure, no real contradiction. The word* used in Phil. 3:20 is somewhat difficult to render in its precise equivalent in English; nor is it, in its precise form used anywhere else in Scripture; but it implies a far greater interest, activity, and participation in the affairs of the State to which Paul refers, than that resultant from what we may call the accident of natural birth. Its first meaning is "The administration of a State" (Robertson), or "The art of a governor" (Lid. and Sc.), and when it comes to such participation as this involves, we know where our deepest heart-interests lie.

* "Politeuma."

But that no more affects, in itself, the relation of the Christian to the governments of earth on which he is still living, than does the fact of his having another life in the Spirit from Christ, the last Adam, annul in every sense, his being still a living man, with a life derived from the first Adam. Sex distinctions, social distinctions, national distinctions, which do not indeed exist "in Christ", the last Adam, are most certainly still existent in all who are still living in the body the life derived from the first. A man is still a man; a woman still a woman; an American is still an American; a Frenchman is still a Frenchman; just as Paul was still "a Jew of Tarsus, of Tarsus in Cilicia—a citizen of no mean city".

For once more let me repeat that the Scripture does not read: "We are delivered from the authority" of *the government of the United States*, but "from the authority of *darkness*", and the two are not quite synonymous. The antithesis lies between two purely *spiritual* kingdoms—not one among men on earth, and the other spiritual in the "heavenlies". This needs to be kept clearly in mind would we rightly divide the Word of Truth. The true Christian in these difficult days proclaims that the national sins arise from the very claim to *being* "Christian nations", connected with indifference to the claims of that beloved Son of God: a wicked Laodicean indifference that even prides itself on its "liberality", and can ignore, or even embrace every spiritual evil that is opposed to the cross of Christ, from the soul-destroying teachings of that harlot Jezebel (Rome) to the blatant and blasphemous mouthings of atheism that are now openly proclaimed

in our streets. From the slightest fellowship with all such he unreservedly withdraws, welcoming, rather than shrinking from, the reproach that he knows well he will thus incur. On the other hand—and I pray you mark it—before God he humbles himself, *as still having a part in that sinning profession*, that faithless witness, as did Daniel, and is also approved because of that self-humbling, as was the greatly-beloved Hebrew prophet.

To sum up: My purpose has been, not to be swayed to extremes on either side, both of which bring reproach on the Name of the Lord Jesus—for, in true Christianity, He is All; we are nothing. Our lives are His; for us to live is Christ; and if He be glorified even by our death, that is not our destruction but our "*salvation*", as said the representative Christian, Paul. Nor does our humbling sense of failure to live up to this, alter it as our only standard: the coming so short of it only stops all boasting, and replaces this with penitence and self-abhorrence.

We would, if governed, not by that natural cleaving to life and shrinking from death which is normal to every living creature, but solely by that sweet light of Love that comes from that central cross on Calvary, under all normal conditions, rather suffer death ourselves than inflict it on others, and esteem it the most honorable way of finishing our short earthly course. But, on the other hand, we would not in a day of difficulty, perplexity, and confusion on every side, condemn all who do not see with us in this; nor evidence in that condemnation a

spirit of belligerency and carnal animosity not far removed from that which we, with them, repudiate; while it is possible that in some cases, spiritual pride, a sense of superior holiness, may in a true divine light put us far below them.

What is our greatest need? To know the Lord Jesus better even by these perplexities through which we walk. May His light direct us, His Love constrain us, till we do see His Face; and may that be by His soon coming for us!