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Is it right that a believer should be a politician? This is the question before us. And, to treat the matter clearly, let me state some points which belong to such a character, if they are not the very conception of it.

I understand, then, by a politician, one who takes a considerable and constant interest in the civil government of his own country, and of the world at large. He praises the rulers when he thinks they deserve it, and condemns them when, as he believes,

they govern amiss. He lifts up his voice against injustice, fraud, deception, corruption, restraints on liberty. He will resist what is evil, as far as he may by law. He exercises every civil privilege to which he is entitled to influence the government of his country. If opportunity were offered, he would take office and power in the world, and exercise it for his fellow-citizens' benefit. I. How, then, can we tell whether

I. How, then, can we tell whether this is right in a believer or not? By looking to Jesus as our pattern. His life is recorded to this end—"leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter ii. 21). Everything He did was pleasing to His Father. "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29; Matt. xvii. 5); and, since

every perfection was found in Jesus, whatever He did *not* do or sanction is not pleasing to God.

Was Jesus, then, a politician? Did He take any interest in the political government of His country? Did He pass judgment on the persons or measures of the civil rulers of Palestine? Did He stand up for the politically oppressed, and rebuke the political oppressor? Did He exercise authority of any kind in civil matters?

1. His conduct is the very reverse of the politician's. Had He been one, His political feelings must have been peculiarly drawn out by the circumstances of the day. In His days the last shadow of Jewish liberty departed, and His country was oppressed beneath the iron

gauntlet of Rome. Such a state of things would have thrilled and agitated to its core the breast of the independent citizen, the lover of liberty. In the gospels we only gather the political changes of the land from the most distant hints of the narrative.

2. When occasions occur on which, if politics be right for the Christian, the Saviour must have declared Himself. He uniformly puts them aside. One of His hearers beseeches Him to engage his brother to divide an inheritance with him (Luke xii. 13). Here the politician would have shown himself. Jesus refuses to listen to the matter, or to exercise even the lowly power of an arbitrator. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" If the Christian's duty

is to take the office of judge or divider, Jesus ought to have taken it as our perfect example of what is right; but He thrusts away with firm hand the political element of the question, and only warns the disciples against covetousness.

3. John the Baptis, His own forerunner, the greatest of women-born, is slain through the arts of an adulterous princess, and by the orders of an ungodly king. How does Jesus meet the event? Does He lift up His voice against the oppressor and murderer? No. John is imprisoned, but Jesus speaks not of the injustice; he is murdered, but He utters no cry against the cruelty or tyranny of Herod. John's "disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart" (Matt. xiv. 10-13). The case is solemnly announced to Him by John's own followers. As pointedly He is silent. The Saviour was no politician.

4. Take another incident. "There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices" (Luke xiii. 1). A politician would have been on fire at this national outrage. Religious antipathies met with political. Here was a field whereon to inveigh against Roman cruelty, and to rouse the Jews against a tyranny that trampled on the true religion. A pagan profaning with bloody hands the worship of the true God! What would the politicians of our day have said had a party of the King's troops fired into a dissenting chapel while they were at worship, and shot some dead while on their knees? Would not the politician account it almost treason to be calm?

What is Jesus' reply? "Except ve repent, ve shall all likewise perish." The politics of the question are wholly passed by; the moral and spiritual view of the matter is alone regarded. This is an especial, a most decisive case. Doubtless it made the blood of every native Jew boil with rage. But Jesus drops no word of indignation against the governor's crime, nor applauds the Galileans as martyrs for their country. Jesus, then, was no politician.

5. The politician must maintain his civil rights, not only (he would

tell you) for his own sake, but to teach authority not to overstep its just boundaries. An unjust demand upon his purse in the way of tax he would esteem himself bound to resist. But how does Jesus act in such a case? The demand of the tribute-money is made upon Him (Matt. xvii. 24). He proves His exemption, but He works a miracle to pay the demand.

6. A question is raised by His countrymen, and referred for His decision—Whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the Roman emperor or not. This critical question must have drawn out the politician. Involved in it lay the right of the Romans to rule Judea, and impose taxes at their will. The oppressions of the governor were before His eyes. The Cæsar that

swayed the sceptre was profligate, cruel, a murderer. Yet He bids the Jews pay tribute even to an idolator, and though the emperor might apply the money to the support of idolatry.

Jesus, then, was not a politician. Am I a disciple of His? Neither then am I to be one. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." If Jesus did not intermeddle in civil government, it is because such conduct would not be pleasing to God. Jesus neither acted politically Himself, nor sanctioned it in others. To be engaged in politics, therefore, either as an actor or speaker, is no part of my duty as a Christian. His perfection is my pattern; and therefore it becomes me to refuse, as pointedly as He did, to mingle in politics; for this is my calling, to be not of the

world, even as Jesus was not of the world (John xvii. 14).

II. But did not Paul plead his Roman citizenship when they were about to scourge him? Did he not, when his life was in danger, appeal unto Cæsar? True; and the Christian is permitted, therefore, when on his trial, to plead the provisions afforded by the law to save himself from death or injurious treatment. But neither of these points form part of the character of a politician, such as we have described him.

Take the strongest case. Paul and Silas are dragged by interested men before the rulers of Philippi. The magistrates, without any form of trial, scourge them, and thrust them into prison (Acts xvi. 19-24). What would a politician have done in such

a case? Would he not have thought it due to his Roman citizenship to carry the cause to Rome, and to make an example of these tyrannous magistrates, that all throughout the empire might know that the rights of a citizen were not to be trampled on? Does Paul do so? No. He requires, indeed, that the magistrates should not dismiss them privately, but come themselves and set them free. But he exacts no apology; he lays no information against them. This would have been to act the politician, and this he does not do.

III. Many of the principles put forth in the epistles decide the present question.

1. What is the Christian's position? He is a "stranger and pilgrim upon earth" (Heb. xi. 13-16; 1 Pet.

ii. 11). Then he has no inclination, right, or title to political power. By profession he surrenders it. Who may take part in the government of a country? Natives only, not strangers. What has an Englishman, living in France, to do with the government of France? The Christian is, moreover, a pilgrim, and has less reason still. If a stranger may not interfere in the policy of a foreign country, much less one who is not even residing in it, but merely passing through it on his way to another land. To meddle with politics, then, is to put off our character as strangers and pilgrims.

2. To take up the politician's character blinds the Christian as to his true place before God, and mars the

testimony which he ought to give to the world. The witness of the Holy Spirit to the world (which, therefore, the believer is to take up and manifest by his word and life) is, that the world is sinful; because it believes not on Jesus, and that it is under condemnation, together with its Prince, only spared from day to day by the patience of a long-suffering God (John xvi.). The Christian is to testify that the Lord Jesus is coming to execute upon it the due vengeance for its iniquity, and that, therefore, it becomes all to flee from the midst of it to Christ. All who do thus flee to Christ become part of His flock-the Church, which is not of the world, but gathered out from it.

If, then, the Christian readily surrender the world's good things,

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pleasures, and privileges, he lives as

becomes the child of faith, and, like Noah, condemns the world. Lot, escaping out of Sodom with nothing but his staff, bore a strong testimony that he believed that the wrath of God was about to descend on it. 3. At this point the prophetic question comes in. Those who think that the Christian should act as a citizen of the world, imagine also (and this fresh error is necessary to render them consistent) that the world is becoming better, and that in the happier times that are approaching the gospel will, by virtue of the means now employed, prove triumphant everywhere. Is this the truth? What saith the Scripture? What is the motto of our dispensation? "Many are called, but few

are chosen." "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" (Acts xv. 14) And what is the close of it? "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits" (1 Tim. iv. 1). "In the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. iii. 1). When the world "shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. v. 3). The world is evil, and will be evil when the Saviour returns-will be caught in its iniquity, and destroyed with His judgments.

4. But if the Christian may not rightfully use his political privileges as the private citizen, much less may he take office in the world. But it

is said, What! are not Christians the fittest persons to hold power? No. they are of all the most unfit. For they have a Master to serve whose laws are quite opposed in principle to those of the world. And the magistrate must execute the world's laws, as being the world's servant. The law of the world, when at its highest perfection, is strict justice. But Christ has to His disciples repealed this, and taught us mercy as our rule (Matt. v. 38-48). Could any worldly government act out the Sermon on the Mount? When one of its citizens had been assaulted and robbed, could it dismiss the convicted robber, because the Saviour commands us not to resist, or to ave ga evil? Its principle is, "Punish according to the offence," and by that

it abides. If so, the Christian (if he understands his place) cannot be a judge or wield the power of the world's law. He is commanded-"Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. vii. 1). As he stands himselfon the ground of mercy before God. mercy is to be his rule towards man. Judgment now is to him judgment "before the time" (1 Cor. iv. 5). God claims yengeance as His own. "Vengeance is mine." It is not, therefore. His saint's office. But the magistrate is "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 4). He, then, who sees this can never consistently touch the civil sword. The saints shall indeed one day "judge the world" (1 Cor. vi. 2). But now, because we are the sons of God, "the world knoweth us not,

even as it knew Him not" (1 John iii. 1).

5. The same thing might be shown from Paul's rebuke of lawsuits; for these seem matters of necessity almost, as men are apt to account them. How much more, then, would he have rebuked the seeking of the world's privileges or honours? Paul had to counsel the believers in the world's loftiest. imperial city. He had to indite directions to those who lived amidst the perpetual strife for consulships, prætorships, quæstorships, and every kind of honour. Were the Christians, then, to engage in the struggle? "Mind not high things; but condescend to men of low estate" (Rom. xii. 16). Is not this decisive?

The Epistles show how the Christ-

ian is to conduct himself as a father, a master, a subject. But no rules are given to him as a magistrate or citizen. What must we infer, then? That God does not recognise Christians as acting for Him in either of these two conditions. The politician rebukes the real or supposed misgovernors of his country. The Christian is to "speak evil of no man; to be no brawler, but gentle." He is not to despise government, or speak evil of dignities, or to bring against them railing accusations (2 Peter ii. 10, 11; Jude). He is to-"show all meekness unto all men." The politician's motto is, " Agitate, agitate, agitate!" The Christian's, "That ye STUDY to be QUIET, and to do your own business" (1 Thess. iv. 11).

6. To the extent that the Christain is a politician, his heart is engaged after the things of the world. A new thorn is planted in his breast, to choke the good seed and make it unfruitful. A new weight is hung about his neck, to hinder him in his race. To the extent that he is a politician, he comes under the censure passed upon the false prophets. "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John iv. 5.) He is a soldier of Christ, who, contrary to his Captain's will and pleasure, is "entangling himself with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4). It is the Christian's condemnation to be living like others. How surpassingly strong is that word, "Are ye not carnal, and WALK AS MEN?" (1 Cor. iii. 3).

Look to the practical result of this doctrine. Are political Christians the most heavenly-minded, useful, gentle followers of their Lord? Or have not the love and zeal of the Nonconformists sadly declined since they have come forward to take a prominent part in the world's strifes and partisanships? Do they not confess that the work of the Lord has not prospered? This, then, is one of the reasons. They have descended to the world's level, and have drunk into its spirit. Let me exhort the believer, then,

Let me exhort the believer, then, to surrender all interference in politics. "Let the dead bury their dead." Your concern is the kingdom of God, your city the one to come, your citizenship in heaven. Refrain from the world's politics, for Jesus was no

politician. Refrain, else you mar your witness to the world, that it is evil and lying under judgment. Are you not a stranger and a pilgrim? Then meddle not with that world which you have left.

The world is ripening for judgment, and all your efforts cannot improve it in God's sight. Gather out from its doomed streets as many as you can, but leave the city alone. Lot cannot mend Sodom, but Sodom can, nay, will, corrupt Lot.