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THE BIBLE AND THE STATE.

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Among the topics to be more fully opened up in the pages of history without doubt will be the relative influence of God's word on national life and character, especially in those lands that are destined to play a most important part in the closing drama of the world's events. If prophecy is explicit concerning any one thing it is certainly emphatic in asserting and reasserting the claim of the ultimate triumph of God's purposes and decrees

Divine revelation, by its internal witness, is to accomplish its heaven-given mission. It is not to return void, or fruitless, in its conflict with Satan's kingdom. That there will be opposition we have from Holy Writ itself. It is inherent in its very nature that the Word is to antagonize error and superstition, that in consequence it will arouse discussion, and even direct hostility, wherever it attempts the conquest of the hearts of men. "The entrance of thy words," says the Psalmist, "giveth light." And the light, awakening the thought of man to higher ideals, challenges the things that have prevailed hitherto, and calls to the higher service of the Kingdom. It refines its possessor with the addition of heavenly graces, and it is self-evident, that in proportion as its field of operations becomes steadily widened, so will the impact of the truth it carries be felt and seen more openly in the life and habits of the people of every land.

The observer of the times can distinctly trace, even in the contradictory situation of our own day, many visible results of the Christian enlightenment already prevailing over large areas of the world's population. In the midst of this the most terrible of all wars protests are loud and long against the repetition of such tragedies, and even some of the nations involved are openly declar-

ing that it is their aim, above everything else, to crush the spirit of militarism which has made this conflict almost inevitable.

Such has been the effect the gospel has produced by its beneficent influence over those who have received it, and just as that truth has been faithfully presented and honestly accepted, so has its uplifting stimulus been helpful and invigorating.

This general fact then being understood as an outstanding feature in our modern life, there comes with it a rather intricate and confusing problem which calls for a solution. That query, in short, is to determine to what extent, and in what way, consistent with itself, Bible truth, as apprehended by evangelical Christians, is to be asserted and to lay claim to dominancy in the civil and political life of the time.

The laws of nations are for the most part designed for the promotion of good citizenship, as also for the general welfare of the state at large. Governments of the more advanced nations have long since learned that the mistake of empires, that have been relegated to oblivion by the general consent of mankind, was made in sacrificing the rights and the happiness of the individual to the tyrannical caprices of rulers, or at the best, for the sake of the military glory and ascendancy of the nation as a whole. A marked change in this ideal is traced by the historian of our time, and to this much-desired change scriptural truth has contributed important values.

To-day the laws of earthly powers may be said in a measure to foster and protect the rights of the individual citizen, but their main sphere, in the very nature of things, is circumscribed by secular bounds. They would aim, not so much at the reformation and salvation of man, as at the general welfare and support of public interests under a given flag. The laws of God have a wider range. They cover not only man's welfare and his mutual relationships in the land in which he lives, but they

recognize the universal fellowship of a higher kingdom, and to this end would cultivate those graces which will fit him for a heavenly citizenship. They look beyond the local and often misguided attachment of a single race or language, to the fraternity of the saints at large, whose conversation and whose citizenship are in heaven. And yet, though supremely spiritual, these same laws touch with more than a passing hand the minutest details of secular life. They would shape directly and indirectly man's best course in his earthly career, superadding the higher training and richer equipment for the heavenly life.

It is here that our problem comes. Often to our finite vision the one seems to clash with the other. Public opinion, that twentieth century taskmaster, led largely even yet by unspiritual elements, sets up a standard at variance with that which must be maintained by God's people. To the Christian himself the greatest bewilderment comes because of a lack of adjustment in his mind of the one system to the other. How far, he asks, can the Christian life assert its bearings upon our present career in the world? Can we round out the full claim of our everyday citizenship without disturbing the equilibrium of the spiritual laws that link man to his Creator?

The Roman Catholic position, with a very close parallel in the Greek church system, has been that the powers of this world should be subject to the sway of the church, and that man's civil relations are to be wholly dominated by religious decrees, which are supposed to be founded on the word of God. The followers of those societies have ever contended that civil courts and physical force were to be used to maintain control over all matters both temporal and spiritual. Hence came in due time the persecutions and bloody deeds which for centuries stained the annals of the papacy.

Assuming the orthodoxy of their system and the infallibility of its head, Catholics went from one position of arrogant control to another, until the nations groaned un-

der the pressure, and revolt came. The very precarious footing of that religion to-day in the land of Italy, where its official head has long been, evidences the disapproval of Christendom concerning Catholic assumptions. Others, partly approaching Rome's position, have been content with the maintenance of a state religion, moderating largely the intolerant spirit of the old mother of harlots. Even yet grave enormities came in. The political power, contributing to the support of a state church, naturally insisted on the right of supervision over public expenditure, and claimed often the privilege of appointing the leading functionaries of the body so established and upheld by government patronage. Ere long it came to pass that the church, instead of ruling the state, came into the other entanglement of being ruled by the state; in other words, secular control asserted itself in a body whose supreme claim was that it was purely spiritual.

Against both these positions Baptists have ever stood firm. We maintain that God's word is not to be diverted from its course by alliance with the powers of this world, but is to continue its mission along its own lines. According to our view the advocates and exponents of Bible truth, while maintaining their principles in the government of the land and in the training of individual character, are yet to be ever solicitous lest the freedom and scope of the gospel be in any way hindered by secular attachments. To us the Master's words, "My Kingdom is not of this world," have a far-reaching and important signification. That kingdom is none other than the stone cut out without hands, which is to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. It is to be distinct from the kingdoms of this world, yea, even antagonistic to them. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

Have we ever noticed that our Lord, when on earth, never dropped a remark inciting His countrymen, the Jews, against their oppressors? Their love of their nationality and their hatred of the Romans elicited no response from Him. Nor does a single apostle deviate from his direct mission of preaching the gospel to undertake a second-rate service from patriotic motives. Nowhere are they found pointing out in detail the flagrant sins and corruptions of the Roman government, or inciting public indignation against unjust and unwholesome laws which abound in the penal code of that empire. They clung tenaciously to the great principle enunciated definitely by Paul to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

On this point it is interesting to note an innovation which has come into later Christianity, utterly diverse, if not antagonistic, to apostolic precedent. It is the fashion of the so-called Christian nations of to-day to attempt to link up God and His providential doings with current public opinion, and even with the partisan view they may individually hold. Lincoln once said during the late Civil War that both sides invoked the blessing of God upon their arms; both sought to bend the purposes of Jehovah to their side of the struggle. It was well nigh fatal to any minister, North or South, during that stormy period, to speak or pray counter to the prevailing opinion of the section in which he labored.

And to-day, in the great European conflict now going on, Christians of every name are found arrayed against each other, not only on the battlefield, but at the throne of grace, in their prayers and utterances delivered as servants of the King of kings. German Christians, so far as heard from, are loyal to their country and seek to uphold her arms. Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, an English Baptist minister, who happened to be detained for three months in Berlin after the outbreak of the war, says that everywhere he found Christians resolutely with their native

land. Even his host, a well-known Baptist pastor, Siegmund Schultze, he writes was "a patriotic German, of course, but a man with a rare greatness of soul and an intense desire to do justice to all points of view, while steadfastly maintaining his own." The Kaiser, he says, "bade the people to go to the churches, and they went, and continued to go, in crowds. The sense of the gravity," he adds, "of the national situation has aroused a spirit of prayer, and not only are the Sunday services crowded, but large gatherings take place on week days."

The Rev. J. G. Lehmann, a Baptist minister at Kassel, writes, "I receive hundreds of letters from the field, in which our friends tell us that all scoffing and resistance against religious influence is stopped, and that many of their comrades, who had given up all belief in God, come to them and ask for religious tracts and papers, and ask them to pray for them, and gladly listen to all they might say of their own convictions and experiences. We believe that this war has a divine mission, and our brethren in Russia will have cause for gratitude * * * and no German doubts that the victory will be on our side."

And the great body of Evangelical ministers in Germany, to show their state of feeling, have publicly protested against a German law which prevents their serving in the army as soldiers. In their patriotism they seem eager to defend their country, whose very life, as they view it, is now threatened by the jealousy of the nations surrounding her.

On the other side again we have a similar statement from Rev. Ruben Saillens, the veteran Baptist laborer in northern France. His patriotism is equally apparent. He writes, "Many are calling upon God to help us in this national distress, and they do it by the only channel they know of—the church and the church's prayers. I did not meet," he adds, "with a single drunkard during the first week of mobilization, while traveling from north to south and seeing hundreds of thousands of soldiers in trains

and various cities. No lewd songs, no bragging. A stern, patriotic resolution to go through it, a firm sense of the justice of our cause prevailed among the men. I feel deeply for my nation. I believe German Christians do not see right in this matter. I pray that their eyes may be opened. I try to keep the spirit of the New Testament, while upholding the principles of justice and retribution which seem to bring us back to the Old Testament. Both are true."

This same spirit has its counterpart in many a British pulpit, and not a few have laid down their ministry to follow what they esteem to be their duty to their country.

Is there not a mistake in the patriotic zeal of these brethren? Is it not out of course for followers of Him, who came to seek and to save men and give them eternal life, to turn aside as ambassadors of the great King and voluntarily join in this fiendish slaughter of their fellow-men? Dare we place the citizenship of this world above the citizenship of the Kingdom, and so array Christ's followers that they become murderers of their brethren?

The problem of the everyday duty in the round of life looks more and more intricate as we press for a solution. How, the Christian asks, am I to cultivate the things that make for peace in the world, and at the same time live in harmony with God's word? At every turn in our common affairs we are confronted with the laws of the heavenly life. Shall we enforce moral questions by the arm of civil law? Or must we look on with a mere protest when outrageous evils abound all about us? Is it sufficient to declare the deliverances of Holy Writ, and then to stand and suffer until the grossest enormities are perpetrated?

With varying views Christians have approached these questions and answered them in different ways. Extreme advocates of Sabbath observance have insisted that the power of the law should be invoked to preserve the sanctity of this divine institution. They would go so far as to

preclude the possibility of all Sunday traffic, abolishing the railway train and the common street-car, closing general public business—in short, giving the day wholly to the quiet and retirement which would best fit man for spiritual culture, and renew his physical vigor for the duties of the coming week.

In the great temperance agitation a still more aggressive policy is asked for. Enthusiastic workers in this department of social reform have not infrequently assumed the right to frame and enforce laws that would virtually compel men to be temperate. Not satisfied with the contention that the interests of the state require sobriety in its citizenship, they would array Christians as such as a body of prosecutors in civil courts, openly attacking this strongest entrenchment of the enemy's forces. They would have the church of Christ organize as a belligerent power, and marching to the seats of world government, would demand compliance with the inspired oracles on the question.

Christian education, too, comes up for attention. The devotees of religious culture in certain quarters, in accordance with their views, would urge the introduction of the Bible into our educational institutions, with certain courses of catechetical instruction in connection therewith. They would place the word by law into every school as the chief text-book, making all other education subservient to it. But do they forget that that message of spiritual origin cannot receive its proper interpretation at the hands of unspiritual instructors, but requires the vehicle of a regenerated life to give it effectiveness with others? Sooner or later the anomaly in the situation presents itself, and resulting confusion inevitably comes.

Thus, in almost all the complexities of life, this question is continually cropping out—where does Christian duty begin, and where must it end? How far does God's word obligate its supporters to maintain its teachings, and assert them in their citizenship in the world?

The writer of this paper can see no alternative between the ground commonly accepted by Baptists, and the Romanist position. These two bodies stand at the very antipodes of Christendom on all these points. As Baptists we are either to hold to the untrammelled freedom of the word, standing for its complete disentanglement from every form of political alliance—for a policy of non-interference in matters of conscience and religious belief—or fly to the other extreme of compelling men to accept our views, thus taking the track long followed by Mohammedans, Brahmins and Buddhists, and which has had its most striking counterpart in Christian lands in the galling yoke of the Greek and Roman Catholic systems. Shall we put up the sword into its place, wherever that may be, and shall we hear the words of Him who spake ever in love and pity for the erring, and sought to win the hearts of His followers by the superior virtue of His teachings, or shall we take the intermediate ground of Lutherans, Anglicans and Presbyterians, and try to ally the one with the other?

As Baptists we have ever rejected state patronage in behalf of God's work. We protest against the very principle of the thing. Even apart from this the results in the most favorable cases have not been good. Experience has proven that when government funds have been granted for religious purposes the more vitiated systems have profited most by them. Asserting larger claims these have usually received the greatest amount of help, while others, apprehending the spiritual life and teaching in clearer form, have presented a milder plea, and in consequence have been smaller beneficiaries through them.

In the United States congressional report for 1894 concerning the appropriations for Indian schools, it is stated that \$359,215 went to the Roman Catholics, while but \$102,670 went to all other bodies combined, and this it will be remembered is a nation whose population is but one-sixth Roman Catholic. The inference is plain. That

body whose conscientious scruples are least delicate, is sure to press the boldest claim, and so secure the lion's share, while those who have come closer to the spirit of Christ's teaching are less assertive, and modestly submit to constant imposition.

Need we wonder that intelligent citizens, discovering the unfairness, petitioned Congress to withdraw the aid altogether? And is it not plain that under the present political systems no hope of equity in this respect can ever be looked for?

As a people we maintain that the cause of God should stand upon the consistent loyalty of its followers. The word is committed to His people to give it to all the world. That commission is binding upon them and on them alone. And it is our conviction that that word is destined to find its way through the most difficult obstructions, insinuating its spirit into all manner of affairs, social and political, until it shall leaven the whole mass.

Time would fail us to discuss the various phases of influence emanating from the circulation of God's word. That its purifying touch is moulding the thought and life is well known to all who have become savingly acquainted with it. Like apples of gold in pictures of silver it shines out in redeemed humanity wherever it has gone, and its distinctive language has long since passed into the proverbs, the poetry and the oratory of many nations. In the realm of literature perhaps more than anywhere else is its mark plainly traceable. Instead of the mythological classics of the Greeks and Romans, with the foolish legends and amours of imaginary gods and goddesses, once prevalent in the earlier types of literature, there has now been given to the world in the languages of many peoples improved standards of ethics and life, almost wholly due to the higher ideals furnished by divine inspiration. It is safe to say that no literary creation of the latter centuries has any prospect of a permanent place in the world's best thought which runs counter to its teachings.

Statistics go to show that important gains are being chronicled in the circulation of the word. In spite of all the opposition in the past, the difficulties, which even yet may come in its way, we rejoice to know that the word is running swiftly abroad, and seems likely ere long to have free course in all the earth. Dr. Hitchcock informs us that during the nineteenth century over 160,000,000 copies of the Bible were issued in no fewer than 320 different languages. Bible societies increased from one in 1804 to eighty in 1900.

The signs are at hand to tell us we are approaching a glorious day, when the word of God will be more and more widely read and appreciated. Let us hope that in that acceptance its spirit and teachings will be fully comprehended, and that we can ever trust the Sword of the Spirit to accomplish His own mission, until all shall know the Redeemer's will. Then may we look for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth, even as it is in heaven, and then too shall the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. That that auspicious period may speedily dawn upon this world, so long blighted by the enemy's hand, is the devout prayer of the pure in heart in every land.