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CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

A Thesis presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

By

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CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

Introduction

"The Christian's life in this world is not lived in separate compartments, the spiritual and the temporal. It is one life, the life of a child of God, and in all the various situations and relationships in which the Christian finds himself he is motivated and governed by those principles which have been implanted in him in his regeneration and which are nurtured and developed by the means of grace. It is impossible, therefore, to separate his life as a Christian from his life as a citizen; in his relation to the state, the nation, and the government the Christian rather finds but an additional opportunity to manifest and exercise the Christian spirit that is in him."¹

1. Johann Michael Reu, Christian Ethics, p.349.
I have underlined two sentences for special emphasis.

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

I. Church and State

The doctrine of the distinction between Church and state has been taught ever since Israel got their first king. Different situations, however, have often changed its interpretation.¹ In order better to understand our present-day doctrine it is well briefly to trace its ecclesiastical history in so far as it has influenced the Lutheran position.

It all goes back to the days of Samuel when, upon the insistence of the Israelites, God gave them a king.² The old theocratic form of civil government was changed. A new department was added. Alongside the ecclesiastical body there arose also the body politic. Both were under the direct control of Jehovah. Both were divinely ordained and governed. The theocracy was gone in form but still present in essence.

1. For a more general history see Frank Gavin, Seven Centuries of the Problem of Church and State. Gavin treats the problem from the secular as well as the ecclesiastical point of view. He maintains that expediency, political and ecclesiastical, almost always govern the existing views on this problem. While there is much truth in that conclusion, there is also connected with it a lesson for us. We ought not be "taken in" by the so-called Zeitgeist, even though the average run of ecclesiastical and political thinkers are. For our conclusions we are to be guided primarily by the Scripture whether or not it agrees with the general spirit of thought in regard to this question.

2. I Samuel 8.

The first king, Saul, confused the doctrines of distinction and separation. He became arrogant and arbitrary about certain things and was consequently punished for his action.³ That was, of course, the danger which threatened all the following kings: to separate Church and state and make the state independent of Jehovah's rule. This attitude developed more and more as time went on. Wallace correctly comments:

The politicians of Isaiah's time, like many since, wanted the prophets to quit mixing religion and politics. They demanded that the prophets prophesy not at all, or else prophecy smooth things, not right things, even prophecy deceits (illusions), or (what was better), to get out of the way, to turn aside and cause the Holy One to disappear from sight.⁴

The voice of the prophets having disappeared from the scene, the doctrine of distinction became one of rank separation.⁵ More than that, it became one of rank animosity. This was due, very likely, to the moral decay on the part of the people and the rulers, plus the hellenization by the Greeks and Ptolemis, climaxed by the corrupt government of the Herods. The ideal theocracy, where Church and state were departments of God's government, was gone as far as the Jewish leaders were concerned. According to the popular view, there was no longer such a thing as a divinely instituted government.

3. Cf. I Samuel 13.

4. James Wallace, Fundamentals of Christian Statesmanship, p.59.

5. The old theocracy was nominally restored again under Ezra and the priest-kings of the Maccabees, but history tells us that their reign was short-lived.

It was Jesus who corrected that misconceived and distorted view. Once again He restored the doctrine of distinction together with its doctrine of divine right. The doctrine of distinction He emphasized when He rebuked the bigoted nationalism of the Jews and said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's."⁶ That He held the doctrine of divine authority for government is evident in His words to Pilate: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above."⁷

Because the state was divinely ordained therefore it could expect and demand its due. Thus we find Paul repeating the injunction: "Render therefore to all their dues, etc."⁸ It wasn't so much a separation which Jesus and the Apostle stressed as it was the divine relation between the two.

The next one to pick up the thread was Augustine, in his De Civitate Dei. But by this time the situation had changed. Once again the State and the Church had come under the direct rulership of God. A doctrine of complete separation of the two would have been impracticable and impossible. Thus we find Augustine advocating a distinction and defining each as to idea, origin, purpose,

6. Matthew 22,21.

7. John 19,11.

8. Romans 13,7.

and practise.⁹

This doctrine of distinction was adhered to theoretically during the Middle Ages. Practically, however, there was confusion. It was Luther who, in theological circles, once more brought out the distinction between Church and state.¹⁰ Steering clear of both Machiavellianism and Calvinism, Luther also did not resort to a drastic doctrine of complete and absolute separation.

Carlson, in scholarly fashion, reminds us: "The center from which Luther's utterances on social and political issues must be understood is the idea of the two kingdoms or 'regimes'."¹¹ It is most important to recognize that the Lutheran doctrine of Church and state, as taught today, is somewhat different from that of Luther's time. Especially is this true when viewed from the spirit of the teaching or the interpretation. Luther held that Church and state were distinct and separate according to Office, but not according to estate. Like Augustine, so Luther taught only one estate - the invisible Christian

9. "The two states, separate in idea, origin, purpose, and practice, are yet dependent the one on the other, giving and taking influence. The civitas dei needs the practical support of the civitas terrena in order to be a visible state. The civitas terrena needs the moral support of the civitas dei in order to be a real state." H.F. Stewart, "Thoughts and Ideas of the Period," The Cambridge Medieval History, I, p.588.

10. Edgar M. Carlson, "Luther's Conception of Government", Church History, December, 1946, pp.257-270.

11. Edgar M. Carlson, ibid., p.257.

Church. To that belonged all Christians, be they princes or bishops, laymen or clergy. There were, however, the two distinct offices (Aemte) - the worldly and the churchly. To the first belonged the Prince, to the second the Bishop. As Christians, both Prince and Bishop belonged to the Church and had the duty to exercise their universal priesthood. As officers they were to rule in their particular realm. The Prince was to care for the physical welfare and the Bishop for the spiritual welfare of the people.¹²

Luther held that there were two regimes, one worldly or secular¹³ and one spiritual. The first was no less a regime of God than the second. It has been brought into being by God. His distinction was one of essence by way of clarification in opposition to the confusion of the Middle Ages.¹⁴

Luther's doctrine was taken over in the confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the same. "This entire topic concerning the distinction between the kingdom of Christ and a political kingdom has been explained....that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, etc."¹⁵ Because Luther's position was Scriptural, therefore

12. Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften, St.Louis Ed.,V,c.697. E.G.Schwiebert, The Medieval Pattern in Luther's Views of the State.

13. "Secular" for Luther meant "administrative". Neither Luther nor we attempt to give the state a purely secular or worldly character. That would militate against the divine character of the state taught by Scripture.

14. Edgar M. Carlson, op.cit., p.259.

15. Triglot Concordia, p.331.

he could easily reconcile himself to his political convictions and actions.¹⁶

Since Luther's day, however, the field of political thought has undergone a revolution. Western political theory is no longer made and preached by men who are at the same time members of the Church, as they ostensibly were in Luther's day. Today we find that popular political thought not only distinguishes between Church and state, but actually teaches a vicious doctrine of complete separation, such as even Lutherans often complacently advocate. When allowed to run wild this doctrine results in the inevitable as we saw it happen in the cases of Russia and Germany, where it worked itself into a hopeless situation.

If we, like Paul and Luther, understand that both Church and state have been brought into being by God, then we will also understand the distinction, not separation, taught in the Lutheran confessions. "Separation of Church and state" is a misleading phrase. It ought rather read: "Distinction between Church and state." In no case can we ever have complete, absolute separation. Such a doctrine would lead into the Middle Ages or into Russia, where the

16. While Luther used Scripture, Melancton, who has quite a following in Lutheran circles, used Aristotle. Thus it happens that Melancton and his disciples advocate a dangerous doctrine of absolute separation of essence between the political and religious spheres of life. In this connection see Peter Petersen, Geschichte der Aristotelischen Philosophie im Protestantischen Deutschland, the Introduction.

two really were separated due to obliteration of the one or the other. A doctrine of "distinction", however, can define both realms as departments of God's rule. It is this that we must bear in mind in order to have any intelligent discussion as to the Christian's relation to the state.

In closing this chapter we quote Paul H. Buehring on the subject.

In order to answer the question (What is the proper relation of state and Church?), it will be necessary to review briefly the sphere and the purpose of each, according to the divine intention. The state is an institution of God's providence, having a government that is vested with divine authority to perform its functions, chief of which is to safeguard and protect the inherent personal, social, and religious rights of its citizens and to promote their general wellbeing. It deals only with the natural life of man, and its jurisdiction extends over its citizens as human beings only. For the maintenance of an orderly social life it has the power to enforce external obedience to its laws and to punish transgressors, but it has no power to control convictions and conscience. The Church, on the other hand, is an institution of divine grace, and its purpose is to bring the salvation of Christ to sinners through the administration of the means of grace. It has to do primarily with the spiritual life of man, and with his physical only in so far as it affects the spiritual.¹⁷ Its governing principle is not law, but love; it operates not by force, but by persuasion; it aims to secure not merely external compliance but inward convictions; its ends are not temporal well-being but eternal salvation.¹⁸

17. This statement must be understood in its context. Buehring does not make spiritual belief a prerequisite for physical help.

18. Johann Michael Reu, op.cit., pp.342.343.

II. Popular Political Philosophy

The Concordia Cyclopedia, page 145, informs us that "Civil government may be regarded in the abstract as an institution or ordinance determined by laws and serving a certain end, or it may be viewed concretely in the person or persons governing, who have become vested with lawful authority." This is, of course, a very general definition on which a different exegesis must be written for every different political society. Whether viewed abstractly or concretely, civil government meant one thing to the Romans and another to the Normans. So today, we, in the United States of America, are concerned with a type of government which is unique, and which deserves unique attention.

Whether to distinguish between state and government is debatable. The dictionaries make a distinction. Winston defines "state" as "a body of people united under one government; a commonwealth; body politic; the civil powers of such a community." "Government" on the other hand, is defined as "the act of administering the affairs of a state or community", thus making government the function of the state. However, here we are again faced with general definitions which must be interpreted in the light of one's own government.

Thus Munro defines government as "the mechanism through which the public will is expressed and made effective."¹ This American definition is stated in burlesque by Carl L. Becker who says: "For us state and government are one thing - a body of men whom we have delegated to do certain necessary and prosaic things."² It is not so much the philosophical definition with which we are concerned as it is the practical application of an underlying philosophy. This becomes extremely difficult when one attempts to identify the American system with any particular philosophy. This becomes quite evident when one reads M. Campbell Smith's The Origin of Government, in which the author traces government to three main theories. The first traces government to the deity (the theocratic state of the Jews, the divine ancestry of the Roman rulers, the divine right of the kings of the Middle Ages). The second is the contract theory of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. The third theory is that of government based on expediency.³ One can see off hand that all three have had, or have some bearing on our political way of thinking.⁴

Though we fail to find a direct, underlying philosophy, yet we are led to believe that the Americans have

1. William Bennett Munro, The National Government of the United States, p.1.

2. Carl L. Becker, "Political Freedom; American Style", Safeguarding Civil Liberty Today, pp.4.5.

3. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V, p.358.

4. In Chapter IV we approach this matter from the Biblical point of view.

certain principles which make up a philosophy. Munro, in an excellent chapter entitled "The American Philosophy of Government", lists sixteen principles which make up the political creed of the average American. We subscribe to every one of these principles except the last, and even that is still debatable and by no means a settled question. The principles referred to are the following:

1. A settled belief in the superiority of the republican form of government.
2. A representative democracy.
3. A written constitution which forms the basis of government.
4. Sovereignty in the United States rests with the people.
5. Federalism - the division of power between the nation and the states.
6. The principle of checks and balances in the government itself.
7. A government of laws, not of men.
8. Judicial review on the basis of the Constitution.
9. Equality before the law.
10. Trial by jury.
11. Iniversal suffrage and the secret ballot.
12. No establishment of a state religion.
13. Local self-government.
14. Government by the political parties.
15. Economic individualism.
16. International isolation.⁵

This then, is the popular view. Whether or not a Christian can subscribe to it in its totality is another question which will be dealt with later in this thesis. "But let us remember we are living in a democracy. Democracy means rule by the people. It means, in other words, that sovereignty in our nation is vested in the people. We, the people of the United States, are the rulers of

5. William Bennett Munro, op.cit., pp.545-560.

this nation. And the men in Washington, in our State capitals, and in the seats of our municipal governments are but our agents and delegates, bound to respect the will of the people."⁶ Who is better fitted to understand this than an American Lutheran who himself is part of another democratic form of government, the Lutheran congregation. We leave it up to the reader to draw the obvious comparisons.

6. Alfred M. Rehwinkel, The World Today, p.63.

III. No Divided Loyalty

Christians are often tempted to live their lives in separate compartments; to be citizens of God's kingdom at one time and of the state at another. It is an evil thing when a Christian, living in the United States, yields to the temptation in either of two forms: divorcing himself entirely from any relation with the state or neglecting his citizenship in God's kingdom of grace. As long as he lives on earth he is a member of both. This dual citizenship need not, however, presuppose a divided loyalty.¹

According to his physical birth the Christian is a citizen of the state. He has no choice in the matter. He becomes a citizen of the state by virtue of his creation. On the other hand, it is by virtue of his regeneration that he becomes a citizen of God's kingdom of grace. Thus we see that the Christian has been placed in both spheres of life by the working of God Himself.

It becomes evident immediately that there is no divided loyalty. The Christian citizen, in serving the state, is serving God, the same master whom he serves in the kingdom of grace. Matthew 6,24² cannot be applied in

1. Political historians wax eloquent on this subject, claiming that, as Sabine says, "The Christian position implied two classes of duties, spiritual and secular." See George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory, pp.183-187.

2. "No man can serve two masters, etc."

this situation. For the state is not, as is sometimes supposed, the reign of Satan, much less his product.³

If such were the case then the Christian would most assuredly have to separate himself from any connection with the state. But quite the opposite is true.

This is aptly illustrated by S. Parkes Cadman, who says:

But their obedience and subjection are given as unto God; for the sake of their Lord, and not for the sake of man. Here are not two governments, each independent of or opposed to the other, but one unreserved allegiance, including political loyalty, and always superior to it.⁴

In this connection it is also well that we read carefully I Timothy 2,1-8, where Paul exhorts us to pray for the government. The immediate reason for such prayer is that "we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." The result is that such a peaceable life will make for a better place in which to bring the elect to the knowledge of their Savior. Thus the allegiance to the state is given as unto God and for the benefit of the neighbor.

3. It must not be supposed that Luther considered the state as the regio diabolis. Cf. Edgar M. Carlson, op.cit., Furthermore, it must be remembered that when Scripture calls Satan the "Prince of this world" it does not identify the world with the state. The two terms are by no means synonymous.

4. S. Parkes Cadman, Christianity and the State, p.178.

IV. Subject and Citizen

The Bible takes the existence of civil government for granted. Nowhere does it dwell directly on the institution of it. It may dwell on the institution of a certain kind or form of government, but not with the institution of essence itself. Thus when we come to Romans 13, we find Paul simply taking the existence of government as a fact, instituted and ordained by God to be sure, but no explanation as to the when, where, and why of such institution.

Though it is barely enough to know that civil government is a divine institution, yet it is beneficial to study how that came about. An interesting account is given by P. F. Siegel, who writes:

Let us go back to the day when Noah left the ark after the flood, which had destroyed every living thing from the face of the earth with the exception of Noah and his family. Smelling the sweet savor of the sacrifice which grateful Noah had offered to the Lord, God promised never again to curse the ground for man's sake, never again to interrupt the course of seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, while the earth remaineth. He blessed man and told him to replenish the earth and rule over it. And then He promised He would protect their most precious possession, their life. "Surely your blood of your lives will I require. At the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man" (Gen.8:20;9:5). But God did not intend to punish personally and immediately every infraction of man's right to live. He delegated this authority of avenging murder to human agents. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be

shed" (Gen.9;6). Thus did God Himself institute in the rejuvenated world the authority and duty of man to safeguard the life of his fellow man and to punish the shedder of human blood by shedding his blood.

Here God instituted governmental authority, although He did not prescribe any special form of government. Noah, the father of the family, was the first head, the first ruler, the first government in the new world, vested by the Lord Himself with judicial authority, even the power of the sword, for the punishment of evildoers. A few centuries later we see Abraham, the housefather, ruling at the same time as the sovereign of the family, leading his servants into battle against the unjust and predatory kings in order to save his nephew, Lot. And he is not faulted, but blessed by the Lord (Gen.14). God Himself called Moses to be deliverer and ruler and lawgiver of Israel (Ex.3;1-22), and Joshua as his successor (Num.27;15-23)(Joshua 1;1-9). It was God who chose Saul to be the first king over His people Israel (I Sam.9;16), who rejected him (I Sam. 13;13,14), and who chose David in his stead (I Sam. 16;1-13)(II Sam.7;8-11). And God did not only appoint the kings of Israel. At His command Hazael was anointed to be king over Syria (I Kings 19;15)(II Kings 8;13). Daniel makes the general statement: God "removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan.2;21), and tells Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty ruler of the world, that the God of heaven had given to this king of kings a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory (Dan.2;37); and "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan.4;17. cp.vv.25,31,32; 5;21). Christ tells wicked Pilate, the Roman procurator, who boasted of his authority which he so arbitrarily and unjustly used, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19;10). Paul very emphatically teaches the divine institution of government, irrespective of its character or form, so long as it has power to rule. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom.13;1,2). And three times (vv.4,5) he calls government the "minister of God", a servant, or attendant, who carries out the will of his Master, through whom God maintains order and discipline in the world.¹

1. P. F. Siegel, "Civil Government", The Abiding Word, ed. by Theodore Laetsch, pp.508-510.

Thus he traces it from the beginnings right down to Paul. All this corroborates also the natural basis, or the historical basis, on which the state rests², and from which flows one of the primary duties of the state - to protect the inherent rights of the people.³

The chief passage in the New Testament which speaks a political language is Romans 13,1-7. On this we have based most of the dogma concerning a Christian's relation to the state. As we shall see later, when speaking of this matter, much more must be considered than these seven verses. In the present chapter, however, we want to consider this important passage by itself. Since I do not claim to be a political genius I take the liberty to quote the lengthy and thorough explanation of this passage offered by James Wallace. I have studied many more explanations, but none has given me the satisfaction, especially in this connection, that Wallace's has.

The greek word translated "power" in Romans 13,1-7, occurs over one-hundred times in the New Testament and in the ARV is usually and more accurately translated "Authority". In verse 1 Paul uses the plural as more comprehensive, including both the imperial and provincial rule of Rome, or very much as we use the word "Authorities".

At the close of chapter 12, Paul had exhorted Roman Christians to live at peace with all men and not to

2. Johann Michael Reu, op.cit., pp.323 ff.

3. Carl S. Mundinger, "Dangers Confronting the Church Today", The Abiding Word, p.501.

take the vindication of justice into their own hands, but to give place unto the wrath of God, that is, obedience to the civil authorities of the State.

There are three outstanding teachings in the passage:

1. God's relation to the State or government. This finds a sixfold expression: a) There is no properly constituted authority or State but by God - direct agency of God. b) The existing authorities are ordained by God - again direct agency. c) To oppose civil authority is to oppose the ordinance of God. d) The ruler (or the State) is God's minister to thee for good. e) It is (I repeat) a minister of God, vindicating justice, (so the word means) by the infliction of (divine) wrath on the evildoer. f) They (the rulers) are God's public-service men (so the Greek means), "being steadfastly attentive to this very object", that is, as above stated.

2. The mission of the State is to be a terror to the evildoers, a praise to those who do well, that is, to enforce the laws against crime and protect the innocent.

3. The duty of obedience to the State arises because it is God's institution; opposition to the State is opposition to God. Men are to be in subjection to the State not only from fear of punishment, but for conscience' sake."⁴

When Paul taught subjection he was speaking as a subject of a different type of government than were Augustine and Luther. Yet, diverse as these governments were, the place of the individual remained about the same. Not long after Luther's time, however, political science was to experience a revolutionary change. Established forms of government were overthrown. More and more the individual began to have something to say about the type of government he wanted. Subjects now became citizens. There is

4. James Wallace, op.cit., pp.314-321.

a difference between the two terms. Technically, a subject has nothing to say about his government. This may be modified, of course, as it has been done in the British Empire. But we are not speaking of exceptions here. The citizen, on the other hand, is a very important individual endowed with sovereign rights and privileges in the state. In our country a citizen must be subject to his government only in so far as the will of the majority dictates, not necessarily to the arbitrary will of those in whom the management of government is vested.

There are certain duties which a citizen has in common with a subject, according to the Romans passage and related ones. They are four: Honor to the government; Obedience; Service; and Prayer or intercession.⁵

But there is more to Christian citizenship than mere "passive obedience".⁶ A Christian must also be an active citizen. To be that he must know more than Romans 13,1-7. He must know also Romans 12, and he ought carefully read beyond verse 7 of chapter 13, where, in verse 8, Paul again calls love the fulfilling of the law. The Christian citizen must know the whole of active, intense, social life practised on the basis of Christian principles and ethics which flow out of love.

5. P. F. Siegel, op.cit., pp.517 ff.

6. Commenting on Romans 13,1-7, James Denney, in the Expositor's Greek Testament, says, p.695: "The use made of this passage to prove the duty of 'passive obedience', or 'the right divine of kings to govern wrong', is beside the mark. The Apostle was not thinking of such things at all."

V. Salt of the Earth

The material in the previous chapter was concerned primarily with the basic thought of Christian obedience and subjection to the government, the aspect which is generally well-known and almost solely discussed in Lutheran circles. It is not so much, as Wallace would have it, that we have held tenaciously to the doctrine that "the mission of the Church is purely spiritual and has nothing to do with government or political questions",¹ as it is the fact that we have overstressed the idea of passive obedience and subjection, and have neglected the fundamental principle of love as it is found in the New Testament.

On the face of it, the New Testament is only casually concerned with a Christian's place in the political sphere of life. It says very little about the whole thing as such. It is this which has caused some of us, a majority I believe, to believe there is more to be said about it. It is indeed true that the New Testament gives us few "laws and regulations" concerning our life in politics as such, but that is just the beauty of the doctrine of the New Life. Whereas the Old Testament laid down profuse

1. James Wallace, op.cit., p.10. Thorough reading of Wallace detects millennialistic tendencies throughout. This is the other extreme which must be avoided.

laws and regulations covering every sphere of activity, the New Testament does not categorize the way we should live in all the various walks of social activity. Rather, it gives us fundamental, comprehensive principles which cover all situations. This must not be overlooked. While ethics teachers among Lutherans have written on the general law of Christian love, one finds very little application as to how this principle works out in the different social relationships.

We are not trying to improve man by changing society. That is not the Christian way. Christianity is unique also in this respect. It aims to improve society by changing man. The historian, Will Durant, speaking from the secular point of view, quite correctly comments: "Caesar hoped to reform men by changing institutions and laws; Christ wished to remake institutions, and lessen laws, by changing men."² Because of that it is our sole purpose to awaken in the Christian the principles of Christ so that he will more readily perform his duties over against society.

To do that it must be shown that the Christian is vitally concerned with society. We believe that the whole New Testament deals with social relationships, and it is up to us to prove this.

2. Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p.562.

Once a Christian has become a regenerated person he becomes a leaven in this world. This is a fundamental idea promulgated by both the Savior and the Apostles. A Christian is "in the world, but not of it", as the Savior points out in His sacerdotal prayer. His entire new nature in Jesus Christ is absolutely foreign to the ways and wiles of this world. It is God's most holy purpose to put this regenerated person into a dead, spiritually dark mire, and to bring about life.

Lest the reader be tempted to believe that the writer is guilty of approaching an undue optimism, we refer to the words of Paul H. Baehring once more.

The importance of a correct understanding and evaluation of Christian Social Ethics will become evident from the following considerations. According to the Sermon on the mount, Christians are to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world; and yet St. John writes, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (I John 2,15). An overemphasis on the latter precept may easily lead to a timid retreat from contact with the world in its various social organisms because the Christian exaggerates its power, fears its allurements, and would at all costs avoid its corrupting influence. Thus the light will be hid under a bushel, the salt will lose its savor. On the other hand, it is possible to overemphasize the former precept, assume an optimistic attitude which expects too much, plunge headlong into all sorts of activities to bring about a "reform" of society and attempt to build the kingdom of God on earth with carnal instead of spiritual weapons. The former may be characterized as the "other-worldly" view, held by medieval monasticism, pietism, puritanism, and some small radical sects; the latter is the "this-worldly" view of the broad stream of present day Protestantism, especially its liberal modernistic wing. Only when the Christian knows how to avoid both extremes, clearly understanding both the opportunities and the limitations

of his social life, will he be able to find a satisfactory answer to the many questions and problems that confront him in his various contacts from day to day.³

We intend to keep that proper balance.

We said before that it is God's most holy purpose to put the regenerated person into a dead, spiritually dark mire to bring about life and light. That is why Christians are called "salt of the earth" and "light of the world". "Salt and light are active agents. There is no such thing as a neutral light or neutral salt."⁴ When not in use these "active agents" are, of course, of no benefit. They are of value only insofar as they are put to work in permeating other substances with their influence. Thus, when Scripture calls Christians "light" and "salt" it means that they should be a powerful influence in all the social walks of life. "Salt" and "light" represent the Christian in his life. The basis of that life is faith. The products become evident in the good works. The guiding principle is love. The Christian's life is one of love - love to God and love to the fellow man. It does not express itself in love of the world or of the things that are in the world. Thus Christ placed great emphasis on it all when He called this principle the second great commandment.⁵

3. Johann Michael Reu, op.cit., pp.257-258.

4. Alfred M. Rehwinkel, op.cit., p.65.

5. Matthew 22,39.

According to I Corinthians 13,13, love is the primary virtue in Christianity.⁶ "This love is more than the philanthropia of the ancients, which was really nothing more than a sense of justice and fairness regarding the claims of others to whatever they were entitled to receive. The Christian's love for the neighbor is agape deliberate, purposeful love, unselfishly seeking always the true welfare of the person loved and ready to make even the greatest sacrifices for him."⁷ According to Galatians 5,6, Paul describes the process as faith working through love.

It is our claim that this principle of love toward all men ought also exert itself particularly in the political sphere of life. Though not specifically mentioned in that connection (and yet one cannot isolate Romans 13, 1-7 from the immediately following exhortations), it applies to this sphere by virtue of the general character of the principle. If it must guide us in all the various social relationships then it must also guide us in our status as citizens. And while we so carefully read and propound Romans 13,1-7, we ought not forget the equally important and more general admonition given in the previous and succeeding verses. To say that the New Testament teaches only honor, obedience, and service by prayer as

6. A. D. Mattson, Christian Ethics, pp.338 ff.

7. Johann Michael Reu, op.cit., p.357.

duties is legalism.⁸ To add to these fundamental teachings the more important and general law of love is real Christianity.

8. In this respect it is well to know the Roman Catholic interpretation which is shot-through with legalism. Cf. John A. Ryan, The State and the Church.

VI. The State and Social Ethics

The question now comes before us: how can we apply the law of love in the political sphere of life? Before we can answer that, however, it is necessary to see how the state is involved in social relationships.

We commonly accept three main spheres of social activity in which the Christian finds himself involved: the church, the family, and the state. Here we are concerned with the state. The state is a social institution, founded and ordained by God. As such it is an instrument of God by which He seeks to enhance the social welfare of mankind.

But what should guide the laws of the state? Since the state is made up of all kinds of people - people of various religions or no religion at all - it must be guided by the natural law written in men's hearts. This is the same law as contained in the Ten Commandments, which are basic for good social order. We hold that the state is accountable to God for its actions, not by virtue of any new birth, but by virtue of its nature.

The next basic teaching of Scripture bearing on our subject is that the state is founded on justice and equity; that its primary and essential purpose is the enactment of just and equitable laws; that it is instituted by God for this purpose; that in the fulfillment of its mission it is more and more to become the agent and organized expression of His

character and purpose; that the state, like the individual, is judged by the divine standard of righteousness and justice; that lawmakers, judges, executives (kings, presidents, governors) are God's servants, charged with the responsibility of bringing to all people the blessings of a just, efficient, and humane government. In short, as presented in Scripture, the state is endowed with attributes of personality. It has mind, feeling, will - a moral nature.

The accountability of civil rulers and of nations to Almighty God and His righteous judgements against them for national wickedness are set forth in the history, prophecy, and psalmody of the Bible with startling emphasis and reiteration. No wide cleavage or separation between the principles of God's moral government and the government of kings, states, or nations is recognized. Righteousness, justice, and equity do not mean one thing to the former and something different to the latter. Examples: Ex.23,6-9; Dt.16,18-20; Dt.25,13-16; David; Jehoshaphat; Nehemiah; Amos; Hoseah; Isaiah.¹

Here we have an apparent anachronism. The state is guided by the natural moral law. The Christian, in his relation to the state, is guided by more - the Christian principle of love. The two approach the same thing from opposite poles. As Carlson points out, we must reject two views in this connection: 1. that the Sermon on the mount applies to the state, and 2. that Christianity has only an individualistic ethic and has nothing to say to the community.²

The country in which we live was ostensibly built on

1. James Wallace, op.cit., pp.42.43.

2. Edgar M. Carlson, "Can the State be Christian?", The Augustana Quarterly, January, 1947, pp.51-59.

Christian principles. Let us not be confused about this however. "Christian principles" as viewed by Jefferson and the Deistic founders of our country, are something altogether different from our principle of Christian love. They were, to be sure, guided by the principles of Christian ethics, in a general way, but they approached the matter from a different angle.³ We must always keep in mind that Christian citizens see only one way of solving social problems - penetration based on Christian love.

Indeed, one might ask, what good will it do? We are not primarily concerned with that. Our primary concern is to see to it that we do it. We do not look at the results first and gauge our actions accordingly. Rather, we look to our actions and let the results come as God wills it.

3. John Orr, English Deism, Chapter VI.

VII. Christian Penetration

At first one might wonder how this subject fits into the general outline of the thesis. It is not my intention to duplicate the material presented in Chapter V, which deals with a fundamental principle to be observed by Christian citizen. This chapter deals with the practical application of the principle. Though I shall not be exhaustive, yet I shall enumerate some concrete examples of how the Christian citizen can penetrate the political sphere of society.

This penetration, by the way, is not to be identified with any "fifth column" activity or anything similar to it. As we shall see, there is nothing underhanded at all about the way in which a Christian citizen ought to exercise his permeating activity as "salt and light." On the other hand, we believe it is quite unnecessary to mention that the Christian citizen does not intend to institute reforms and changes by stormy revolution, as was stated in Chapter V. Though a Christian citizen's activity in the political world is revolutionary, properly understood, yet it does not entail a revolution.

The penetration of which we speak is nothing more than that which the Christian exercises in the other two spheres of social contact. He exercises it because he is a Christian. He is not forced to be that way. It comes natural to him even as do the other activities of the New Life.

Let us begin our enumeration, referred to above, by asking some questions. The first is, "How can one exercise the principle of Christian love while voting?" Here I find immeasurable opportunities for the Christian citizen. Here the Christian, having a deeper insight into the conditions and times, will first of all look for certain qualifications in the respective candidate. Both the platform of the candidate and the party will be considered seriously. The domestic policy of the candidate will be scrutinized. Is justice and equity in the social and economic relations promised for all? Does the candidate seek first of all the welfare of the citizens whom he wishes to serve? What is his foreign policy? Is he a bigoted isolationist or a troublesome interventionist? Will other people in other countries profit by his administration? These are some of the questions which the Christian citizen wants answered before he exercises his franchise.

Where does the principle of Christian love enter in when one votes for a slum clearance project, for instance? Certainly the answer to that question is quite apparent. The social welfare of many people is at stake. If the Christian loves his neighbor he will not only vote so that the underprivileged might be benefitted, but he will seek to get others to vote the same way. Let us suppose the State Legislature is voting on a similar project.

Whom do we see at the Capitol, lobbying? Those who are interested in preserving their financial status. Where are the Christians? Why are they not making use of the same privilege in order to better social conditions?

Another way in which one can find ample opportunity to exercise the spirit of love in the political sphere is by seeking office. More and more do we find Lutherans in the offices of public service. This is good and commendable. Yet too many Lutherans are complacent about this phase of activity. They leave politics to the politicians. Again and again a strange dialectic crops out.

Of course, if the motives for seeking office are identical with those of the cheap politicians, then the Christian will avoid seeking office and justly so. But the motives need not always be identified with greed, political and financial aggrandisement, and lust for fame and power. When a Christian seeks office the motives are altogether different. He sees in a political job the chance to do good, the chance to help and befriend his neighbor. He sees in a political job the chance to enhance his Christian influence. He sees, in short, the chance, to widen the scope of his Christian penetration.

Christians ought to consider seriously the admonition by William Bennett Munro, who says:

Every American citizen, Gentile or Jew, ought to read and ponder the parable of Jotham in the Old Testament (Judges 9,8-15). It is the oldest and

one of the best parables in the literature of democracy. "The trees went on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us." But the olive tree replied, as many a professedly good citizen has done when asked to take public office: "Why should I leave my sunny slope, and the fatness of my soil, to be promoted over the rest of you?" So they repaired to their second choice, the fig tree. "But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" And to the vine they went with the same result. Presently, however, they came to the bramble bush with their invitation to rulership. And the bramble bush, true to type like a modern politician, quickly said: Sure, I'm the man you're looking for; just put your trust in my shadow. Whereupon he let fire come out of the bramble to devour the substance of the soil until even the Cedars of Lebanon were consumed.

When the olives, the fig trees, and the vines in the arboretum of a nation's citizenship disdain to do their duty, the bramble bushes of politics will step in and give any country, or any community, the kind of government it deserves. The excellences of a constitution avail little if the actual machinery of government be not based upon a sound sense of individual obligation. The world has never yet been able to construct a successful democracy on a foundation of popular indifference.¹

Another way in which a Christian citizen will find more than ample opportunity to exercise his Christian love is by joining civic organizations. I know of two in my own personal experience. I am speaking of the Rotary Club, which has chapters in almost every urban community, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce, of which I happen to be a member. My membership in the latter was motivated by nothing else than the spirit of service.

1. William Bennett Munro, op.cit., p.104.

I saw in it a chance to enhance the social welfare of the community in a way which I would otherwise have missed. Among other things, it gave me an opportunity to take a very active part in a safety campaign which would make for safer driving in the county.

I repeat, the motivating factor for my joining was the spirit of service, in turn motivated by a sincere love for the well-being of my neighbor. Others, not to incriminate any one in particular, take part in these drives for reasons of personal gain through business contacts, etc. Yet I found that a number of the members, sincere Christians, shared the same motivation as I. What I regretted was the fact that there weren't more Lutherans holding membership in that organization.

There are, of course, other civic organizations to which we can and should belong. A very important one today is the Parent Teachers Association. No Christian parent can afford not to hold membership in such a praiseworthy and influential organization.

At this point, however, I must refer to another personal experience which has caused me feelings of remorse. I have in my acquaintance a Lutheran Christian who spends much time writing letters to congressmen, senators, judges, and councilmen. Remorsefully I admit that I used to minimize her sincere efforts. I always ended up by saying: "What good does it do you?"

But, as I said at the close of Chapter VI, we are not concerned primarily with the results, but rather with the proper action. Christian action is gauged by itself, on its own merits, not by the outward results of such action. Furthermore, if I and many others, had done what that Lutheran Christian was doing, I dare say the results would not have been negligible. The point is that we are responsible for what goes on in Washington, in our State capital, in the the city hall, in the community hall. By our letters to our representatives we can exert our influence. These letters will contain not only criticism, but also praise and commendation.

Criticism must always be made in the spirit of love, never from any other motive. Christian citizens must at times criticize their government, especially when justice and righteousness are violated. They will criticize severely when moral ethics are being way-laid by the officials. Here one must keep in mind two things: 1. The Christian not only has the right but is obligated to speak on purely moral questions, in church or out of it; and 2. when a Christian speaks on burning moral questions as wound up in political or other alignments he must understand thoroughly evry phase of the situation.²

2. Nolan B. Harmon, Jr., Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette, pp.61.62. Whereas Harmon deals solely with the minister as a citizen, we believe that his words in this respect refer also to the layman.

Finally, in order to maintain justice and righteousness in the political and social order, Christian citizens must always be interested in preserving and safeguarding the civil liberties. One need but read only such a work as the Edward L. Bernays lectures of 1944, given at Cornell University, entitled Safeguarding Civil Liberty Today, in which the essayists stress how important these liberties are, and how easily they can be lost. Christians, more than others, are extremely interested in preventing injustice. They can do so by exerting their Christian influence. In this respect they exert their Christian influence because they love their fellow men.

VIII. Citizenship, Patriotism, and Chauvinism

In closing this thesis, we feel that a few words concerning these topics are in order. Citizenship, patriotism, and chauvinism are not identical. They are not all good qualities. If carried to the third stage the logical procession of thought is evil.

We have discussed citizenship in its various phases. Our definition of it would read something like this: Christian citizenship is that phase of a Christian's life whereby he serves God and his neighbor in the political sphere of life. This includes both passive and active obedience, both of which were discussed in this thesis.

Citizenship naturally develops into patriotism, though the two are not identical. Patriotism is an emotion which is hard to define. It is that emotion which makes us "love the rocks and rills" of our beloved country. It is that emotion which fills us with a due sense of pride because we are her citizens. It is the emotion which fills our hearts with a special love for our country and its people, a love which transcends love for any other country. Even as one loves his own family more than another, so one loves his own country more than any other country.

In a Christian, this emotion of patriotism is more

highly developed than in an ordinary person. It is genuine, unwarnished love. It is not blind. It moves one also to criticize and correct when that is necessary. At times that love demands stern witness to conviction. Yet it is always done in the spirit of love.

Patriotism dare never develop into chauvinism, especially not in the Christian. Chauvinism is that blind devotion whereby one makes the foolish statement, "My country, right or wrong!" It is that braggart patriotism whereby one seeks to sanction and excuse any and every deed of the government, irregardless of whether it is right or wrong. Chauvinism is not guided by the laws of love, but is a form of patriotism gone wild.

We mention this because only too often are Christians tempted to be motivated by this evil emotion. They see only their country, not its evils and shortcomings. Many of our young people want to be heroic and patriotic, when the whole business is nothing more than sham and shame. Rather than say, "My country, right or wrong!", let us learn to say, "My country, right, to be kept right; wrong, to be shown wrong!", and then to put that precious desire into operation.

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