

LESSON 10

THE ETHICS OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction

This lesson deals with ethical principles concerning Christian citizenship. Christianity has something to say about this sphere of man's relationships just as it does about the others which have been mentioned. The Christian should not feel that politics is 'dirty', as some have tended to imply by stating that Christians should dedicate themselves to other pursuits. We should recognize that there is a great need to apply Christian principles in this aspect of life. Some of the questions of concern in this chapter are:

What should be the Christian's attitude towards civil authority, especially if it is totalitarian?

Should the Christian vote in elections?

Can the Christian participate actively in political activities?

Is it proper for a religious group or denomination to receive government money for support?

Should the Christian Church seek special advantages, such as tax exemption?

Should the Christian participate in war?

These are vital questions which the Christian must answer as he exercises his responsibilities as a citizen.

The Biblical Basis of Civil Authority

The Old Testament

From the very beginning of human life, there has been some kind of authority and a system of government to regulate man's conduct. In the Garden of Eden, God showed His authority by establishing laws related to the eating of the fruit from some of the trees. But, from the beginning, man has been a rebel towards authority. As more and more people were born to inhabit the land, the importance of regulating human conduct became increasingly necessary.

At first, government was tribal or familial and the head of the family or group of families was the supreme authority. For example, the patriarch Abraham exercised his will over all his household. The same pattern was followed with his descendants, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses was a great leader of the Hebrew people. Although at times they complained about his leadership, his power was sufficient to keep the group of freed slaves united until they were ready to move into the Promised Land. The Bible contains the interesting record of a visit between Moses and his father-in-law Jethro. As Jethro observed Moses' activities in ruling the people, he decided to make some recommendations. He counselled Moses to pick out certain capable men to judge over the minor complaints of the people, so that he could dedicate himself to the more serious cases and to the appeals and requests of the chosen judges. Moses followed the advice of his father-in-law and named judges over tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands. The results were that he could rest more

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

From the beginning, there has been some kind of a _____ and a system of government to regulate man's c _____; but from the beginning, man has been a rebel towards a _____.

(authority, conduct, authority)

At first, Old Testament government was _____ and _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Moses became the strong leader who kept the freed Hebrew slaves u _____ until they moved into the promised land. Moses developed a system of _____ which helped him in the governing of the people.

(united, judges)

and all were more content (Exod. 18).

During the time of the Judges, this same pattern was followed. The many barbarous acts of this dark period of Jewish history revealed the need for more rigid control over man's behaviour on the part of authorities. Since other nations had their kings, the Israelites began to clamour for a king to rule over them also. Samuel, who was a prophet, priest, and judge, finally consented to let them have a king.

During the reigns of the various kings over the United Kingdom, the government was called a *theocracy*, which meant that God was the ultimate King. The earthly king was God's representative and spokesman. Some kings were God-fearing and ruled over the nation with justice, but others were evil and 'did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD' (2 Kings 13:2). The United Kingdom was divided into Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom). Conditions continued to disintegrate until the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B. C., and the Southern Kingdom was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B. C.

During all this time, the people were submissive to civil authority at times and rebellious at other times. The sacrificial system carried with it the support of the religious leaders and, to a degree, the civil leaders. Taxes were levied to support public projects, such as the building of the Temple. Some people met their tax responsibilities by contributing labour to the project. Citizens participated in defense against the enemies as the need arose. Each one accepted his responsibility as a member of the tribe and nation.

The New Testament

Christianity was born in a country under an alien and oppressive government. Rome controlled by means of local procurators, who gave much freedom to the local government officials. The Sanhedrin was the highest court of the Jews in Jesus' day. This court was comprised of seventy people who listened to civil and religious cases. Most of these cases had something to do with religion. For example, Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin for blasphemy because He called Himself the Son of God.

Jesus gave teachings which illustrate His attitude towards civil leaders. In the matter of paying taxes, they tried to find a basis for accusing Him. They asked, 'Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?' Knowing their purpose, Jesus took the initiative and established a principle which is all-encompassing, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's' (Matt. 22:17-22). In this statement, there is the admonition to respect constituted civil authority, submit to it, support it economically. There is also, by implication, the principle of separation of Church and State.

Jesus did not have much sympathy for Herod; He called him a fox (Luke 13:32). He also stated that Christians should be able to settle their differences without going to the pagan court. 'Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison' (Matt. 5:25). When they came to Jesus to collect the temple tax, which was collected from every male Jew over twenty years of age. He resisted but arranged for Peter to

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

After the time of the Judges the Israelites went to a system of government which required a _____.

(king)

Although Israel was ruled by kings, God was the ultimate king. This type of government is called a _____.

(theocracy)

Christianity was born under an alien and oppressive government (Rome) which controlled through local p_____.
The highest Jewish court was the S_____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:17-22 admonishes one to:

1. respect constituted civil a_____.
2. s_____ to it.
3. support it e_____.

Matthew 22:17-22 also implies separation of _____
and _____.

(1. authority, 2. submit, 3. economically, Church, State)

pay it (Matt. 17:24-27). Although Jesus resisted the laws and practices when He thought they were unjust, in the final analysis He was submissive. He finally lost His life as the Roman and Jewish forces converged up on Him to bring about His crucifixion.

Paul seems to have had a more sympathetic attitude towards the Roman Empire than Jesus. He was proud of his Roman citizenship and used it on occasions. Romans 13 teaches submission to duly constituted authority and states that it has its power from God. To resist civil authority is to resist God (Rom. 13:2). According to Paul, the functions of civil government are to protect the good and punish the bad. He seemed to approve of capital punishment under certain conditions, 'For he beareth not the sword in vain' (Rom. 13:4b).

Paul also insisted that Christians should be able to settle their differences without going to court (1 Cor. 6:1-7). Since the judges would most likely be unbelievers, they would have no real basis for judging the differences between two Christians. 'Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?' (1 Cor. 6:1). Paul used his Roman citizenship to defend himself before his accusers and took advantage of it to preach the gospel to those in Rome. Ultimately he lost his life at the hands of the emperor. We see here the paradoxical principle of submission to authority which is unchristian and even antichristian. Eventually the forces of Christ won over the power of Rome, and Christianity became the predominant religion in the Western World.

Peter had several conflicts with the religious leaders in Jerusalem. His preaching and healing created problems for them, and they repeatedly tried to incarcerate and threaten him. His response was, 'We ought to obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29). He encouraged Christians to be faithful to God in spite of the persecutions that come from civil authorities.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

(1 Pet. 4:12-13)

John has been criticized for his unchristian attitude towards the Roman Empire, which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation. But we should remember that this book was written by one who had been exiled by this pagan force, which was exercising brutal treatment on the Christians because of their faith. He wrote to Christians who were scattered throughout Asia Minor, many of whom had been forced to leave their homes because of persecution by Roman officers. There were epochs of extreme persecution during the reigns of Nero and Domitian. John also compared the present age with the future dream of an ideal kingdom in which there would be no need for rulers because God would be the great King.

The cases just cited illustrate that the writers of the Bible were influenced by specific experiences which they had with civil government and political leaders. Although there is not a systematic presentation of the Christian's duty towards organized government in the Bible, we can derive principles from the teachings related to the specific circumstances of the writers. These should become guides for attitudes and

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

READ Romans 13:

This chapter teaches submission to duly constituted _____ and states that this authority has its power from _____.

(authority, God)

Paul admonished Christians to settle their differences outside of _____.

(court)

Peter advised that when a Christian must choose between faithfulness to God and obedience to government he must choose to _____.

(obey God)

John spoke out against the Roman Empire in its brutal treatment of _____.

(Christians)

practices regarding government.

Christians in the first centuries respected the established civil authority as something necessary to maintain peace and order. Although there were conflicts between Christians and some antichristian leaders, Christians maintained their attitude of submission. Paul counselled the slaves to remain submissive to their masters, knowing that rebellion on their part would result in mass slaughter. He also knew that to follow Jesus' teachings would ultimately bring freedom to everyone and thus would abolish slavery.

Christianity and Systems of Government

Christianity has existed in the world under many different forms of government, varying from those that are totalitarian and despotic to those which give complete religious freedom. Christianity had its beginning under the Roman Empire, which combined polytheism with political authority by holding that the emperor was divine. Later, Christianity was accepted as one of the many religions that existed in the Empire and eventually became the official religion. The Christian faith enjoyed prestige and power as the state religion, and the Roman Catholic Church dominated the religious and political spheres through the Middle Ages. Small sects that did not agree with the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church were subjected to persecution. In other countries and continents, governments were usually opposed to the spread of Christianity as missionaries arrived. Across the centuries Christianity has been extended more quickly when the political governments were sympathetic to religious liberty, but Christianity has not been stamped out in areas where the attitude of political leaders has been antagonistic.

Some countries have had totalitarian forms of government, such as Nazism, dictatorship, and communism. Opposition to the established leaders has brought retaliation from them. Totalitarian governments force their citizens into one uniform way of life. The thoughts of man, as well as his behaviour, are controlled as much as possible. Censorship of the press and other forms of communication is common. Those who express contrary opinions or try to oppose this situation are usually incarcerated or are deprived of their freedom in other ways. In order to gain freedom, numerous writers and scientists have fled from Russia and other totalitarian communist countries.

Democracy is a political system which gives freedom to man to live in such a manner that he can enjoy the liberties of speech, free press, and other means of communication. He exercises his freedom in a responsible way by voting in political elections in which he has a voice in choosing political leaders. Democracy is government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people'. The majority of voters in a free election decide who is to rule over them. There are checks and balances built into different departments of the government. Executive, legislative, and judicial departments clearly define the lines of communication and authority and give people the basis for confidence. The constitutions of most countries guarantee certain liberties to all the citizens.

It cannot be said that democracy is the political system which the Bible defends, but democracy does give everyone a greater degree of freedom to follow the teachings of the Bible. Despite the fact that many Christians through the centuries

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. First century Christians saw civil authority as unnecessary in maintaining peace and order. _____
2. Even in conflicts with unchristian leaders, the early Christians maintained an attitude of submission. _____

(1. False, 2. True)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Three totalitarian forms of government are: _____, _____, and _____. A totalitarian government forces its citizens into _____ way of _____ and even tries to control their _____ as well as their _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Democracy is the opposite of totalitarianism. Democracy gives freedom to live in such a way as to enjoy the liberties of s _____, f _____ press, and other means of c _____.

(speech, free, communication)

have had to practise their faith in an antagonistic political environment, they have, nevertheless, moved forward and contributed to the change of that environment.

Protestantism has often been identified with democracy because the countries which have been influenced mainly by Protestants have been more inclined towards a form of government that encompasses democratic principles. In the countries where Roman Catholicism has predominated, there has been less freedom for other groups to exercise their religious beliefs. In countries where other religions have been either the official or dominant religion, Christian missionaries have often found it difficult to obtain visas, and Christians are unable to live in freedom because of opposition from religious or civil leaders.

Church and State

Since the Christian Church has to exist alongside organized government, compatible relations between ecclesiastical and civil bodies are important. In some cases, the Church is given much freedom to carry on its functions, but, in other cases, there are restrictions. Let us look at three possible relationships between Church and State.

Identification

Countries which have an official religion or which accept a branch of the Christian Church as its official religion tend to identify Church and State as one. The theocracy over Israel and Judah during much of the period of the kings illustrates this practice. Although the king was a political leader, his authority was derived from God, the ultimate King. The priests carried on their religious functions of presiding over sacrificial rites. They also fulfilled other functions which today might be considered to belong to civil officials. Many of the ceremonial laws had to do with leprosy or other uncleannesses; today those responsibilities might be delegated to a department of health. The people paid tithes, which actually amounted to three and one-third tithes, and this money was used to support governmental agencies and programmes, as well as to maintain the Temple and to support religious leaders.

Identification of Church and State may be seen today in countries which have a state church, such as the Anglican Church in England and the Lutheran Church in Germany. The Church is supported with funds which the government receives from its citizens and is in some way a supporter of the State and its purposes for the people. Citizens of the country are born into the Church and continue throughout life in it unless they deliberately separate themselves from it.

Domination

There are two facets to the theory of domination. There is the possibility that the Church will be dominated by the State in cases where the State is totalitarian. Or the Church may dominate the existing government if the State is weaker than the Church. The former Soviet Union is an example of State domination because the Church existed there only by and according to the freedom which the State permitted it to have. The Church was limited in many ways. Religious services were conducted only in church buildings designated for that purpose. No evangelization or use of publicity to promote

AS YOU READ THE TOPIC **CHURCH AND STATE**, NOTE THREE POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.

FILL IN THE BLANK.

The relationship of **identification** exists in countries which have an official r_____.

(religion)

THE RELATIONSHIP OF **DOMINATION** IN CHURCH AND STATE HAS TWO POSSIBLE FACETS. MATCH TO INDICATE THESE FACETS.

Church domination _____ of Church

State domination _____ of State

(Church domination of State; State domination of Church)

Christian activities was permitted.

In other countries, especially those where the Roman Catholic Church is strong, the Church tends to dominate the political scene. The basis of this domination is found in the teachings of Pope Gelasius (fifth century) who taught the idea of the two swords. One sword is the secular power of kings, and the other is the spiritual power of the Church. The spiritual sword is superior to the secular, and the secular sword is wielded only with the permission of the spiritual sword.

An illustration of this fact is an incident that happened in Colombia, South America. The president named a woman as governor of the Department of Risaralda. She had been divorced and was remarried. When the ecclesiastical authorities found out about it, they became indignant and openly opposed her designation, saying that to have a divorced woman in that position was a violation of the morality of the Church. Controversy developed, and many people expressed their opposition to the stance of the Church. Finally, the woman announced that she would not take the position.

Pope Hildebrand illustrated the theory of domination by referring to Church and State as soul and body. According to him, the soul (or Church), is more important than the body (or State). Thomas Aquinas said that the State should cooperate with the Church in establishing a perfect community.

These statements and illustrations show that the matter of the existence and relationship of Church and State must be defined in order to have harmony.

Separation

A third theory holds that the State can and should be independent of the Church in carrying out its functions. The Church likewise should be independent of the State. The two can carry out their tasks and functions more effectively as separate institutions. This theory permits religious liberty to each individual. Field has called this 'the greatest achievement ever made in the cause of human progress'.¹ Separation of Church and State is the relationship that prevails in the United States of America. When the colonies were established in the New World, there was freedom of religion. Many of the settlers had come to America mainly in search of the freedom to worship God according to their consciences. When the States were united and a constitution was elaborated, this principle became a fundamental tenant and basic to the American way of life. Since there were so many people with diverse points of view about religion, it was felt that the best way was to give to each the freedom to exercise his religious beliefs according to his own conscience.

In the case of separation of Church and State, the Church receives no aid from government. The State cannot interfere in the beliefs and practices of the various churches, and there is no pressure from the State for a person to be identified with a church. At the same time, churches do not expect financial support for their activities. In the United States, there have been cases where the Roman Catholic Church has tried to receive tax money for her schools. A controversy arose a few years ago over the issue of the government's providing milk each day for school children whose parents were not finan-

¹David Dudley Field, 'American Progress', *Jurisprudence* (New York: Martin B. Brown, 1893), p. 6.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The Roman Catholic Church's domination of the State is influenced by the ideas of Pope Gelasius with his teaching of 'two _____'. He taught that the spiritual sword is superior to the _____ sword.

(swords, secular)

Another relationship of Church and State is _____, in which the State is independent of the _____ and the Church is independent of the _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

One basic aspect of separation of Church and State is the freedom to _____ according to one's conscience.

(worship)

LIST TWO RESULTS OF THE FACT THAT IN SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE THE CHURCH RECEIVES NO AID FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

1. _____
2. _____

(1. The State cannot interfere in the beliefs and practices of the Church; 2. There is no pressure from the State for one to be identified with the Church)

cially able to afford it. Free milk was denied children in Catholic schools because this provision would have been an infringement on the principle of separation.

Baptists have traditionally defended and adhered to the principle of separation of Church and State. Baptists have a heritage which comes from Anabaptists, a group which existed apart from the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation. Some Baptists reject being called Protestants, although doctrinally they are closer to Protestants than Catholics because of their emphasis upon the doctrine of justification by faith. Roger Williams, a pioneer Baptist preacher in New England, fought for this principle of separation in the colonies.

There are still groups which seek to get government funds to support their religious activities. A constant battle is being waged on this issue. Catholic groups are the most aggressive in seeking aid, since their theory of relation is one of domination and not of separation. In some places in the world, Baptists have been offered government funds to help in the support of schools and other enterprises. But, in most cases, this kind of help has been refused because history teaches that to receive aid ultimately involves being controlled. In some countries, schools which are administered by Baptist churches have received aid for a time. But then the government has demanded that these schools meet its requirements, in some cases to employ teachers of the Moslem faith to teach Islam. Separation appears to be a superior principle to follow since greater freedom is possible.

Civic Responsibilities

Participation in political activities

To advocate separation of Church and State does not mean that the Christian should not be involved in politics. He should be informed and willing to participate as much as any other citizen. Several times the author has discussed political elections with friends in churches. Frequently the response has been, 'Well, I didn't vote. None of the candidates were Christians, and so I didn't see any use in voting.' This viewpoint represents an attitude of isolation on the part of Christians and means that political conditions will not improve until Christians exercise their influence by voting in favour of those people and programmes which can best further the cause of Christ. Groups with unchristian interests are thereby unhindered in gaining their objectives.

The Christian should be interested in world affairs, especially those involving his own nation. He should seek to become informed about what is happening and formulate his own views and convictions. He can exercise his opinions when he has the opportunity to vote. He can use his influence in favour of the people and the programmes which, in his opinion, are most compatible with the best interests of all the citizens of the country.

The Christian should be faithful in paying his taxes. Governments can be supported only by the income received through taxation and other means of revenue. Since citizens of a country enjoy the benefits of that citizenship, they should do their part in the support of government officials.

Great opportunities are available for Christians to live their

FILL IN THE BLANK.

A principle which is basic to separation of Church and State is: To receive aid ultimately involves being _____.

(controlled)

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Separation of Church and State means Christians should not be involved in politics. _____
2. Christians should be informed and willing to participate in politics. _____
3. Christians should exercise their influence by voting for people and programmes which can best further the cause of Christ. _____

(1. False, 2. True, 3. True)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

As citizens of a country, Christians should pay taxes because they enjoy the benefits of that _____, and they should help support the _____.

(citizenship, government)

faith and exercise a positive influence through active participation in political life. If a Christian can become a judge, mayor, governor, or even president of his country, he has a great opportunity to serve God and man. Many countries have Christian statesmen who are highly respected and who exercise a positive influence in the political affairs. Although at times it is difficult to maintain Christian principles and convictions because of the ungodly opposition, the Christian has both a challenge and a responsibility which will ultimately have its own reward.

Involvement

War is one of the greatest moral problems that exists. Sorokin made a study of the various wars in the course of history and concluded that there had been a total of 977 wars between nations from the year 500 B. C. until 1925 A. D.² The United Nations invests millions of dollars annually in efforts to maintain world peace. During this century, there have been two world wars which have thrown civilization into trauma, and several other wars, although not as extensive, that have nevertheless been costly in terms of human life and money. Why do we have war? What problems are solved by violence? What is God's attitude towards war?

From the time that Cain rose up and killed his brother, man has been in conflict one with the other. The pages of the Old Testament are filled with more or less constant battles between the Israelites and their neighbours. Although these battles were not on a wide scale, they represented serious confrontations among the people of that day. After reading about all these wars, some have come to the conclusion that God approves of war. Old Testament passages do state that God was on the side of the Israelites and led them to victory (1 Chron. 5:22), but this fact should not be interpreted to mean that God approves of war as a means of settling differences.

In Old Testament times, the people looked longingly to the ideal future age, which was to be characterized by a time of peace. Isaiah and Micah both dreamed of a future day when the implements of war could be transformed into implements of agriculture during the time of peace.

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.

(Mic. 4:3-4)

This picture of perfect peace is more in keeping with God's ideal for man.

One of the terms used to refer to Jesus is 'Prince of Peace'. Isaiah described His coming as the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). The life and teachings of Jesus point to the goal of peace for mankind. He promoted peace and harmony among men in His day. One of the Beatitudes has to do with the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). He counselled man to love his enemies (Matt. 5:44). Even in the moment of His death He prayed, 'Father,

²P. A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), pp. 496-7.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Christians should seek elective positions in government in order to exercise a positive _____ in political affairs.

(influence)

The Old Testament people looked for the ideal _____ age, which was to be characterized by _____. Isaiah and Micah dreamed of a future day when implements of _____ would be turned into implements of _____.

(future, peace, war, peace)

Jesus was referred to as the _____ of _____. Jesus promoted _____ and _____ among men. In the Beatitudes, He spoke of _____. Jesus counselled men to love their _____.

(Prince, peace, peace, harmony, peacemakers, enemies)

forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). That Jesus was against war and a peacemaker cannot be questioned.

Does God permit war? He created man and placed him here upon the earth with the responsibility of bringing into subjection all creatures upon the earth. Man was given freedom to exercise his will. He is responsible for his actions in the world. Man's rebellion against God's ideal and against his fellow-man creates war. Although God is sovereign and all powerful, He has restrained this sovereignty in order to give man the opportunity to create peace, happiness, and harmony. God can stop wars at any point at which He wills. But He depends on man to work out differences in a way that will be a credit to him and his ability to use wisely the freedom that God has entrusted to him.

Should the Christian participate in war? In order to answer this question, distinctions need to be made between the varying aspects and circumstances of war. There are offenders and defenders in war. At times unchristian leaders become covetous and declare war on neighbours with the sole purpose of taking over some of the natural resources, geographic advantages, or economic advances which others have achieved. It is unfortunate when one is forced to participate as the aggressor in a war of this nature. In other cases, one's country may be the object of such aggression, and the only alternative may be to assist in the defence of one's nation. In this case, a Christian may be more justified in participating.

In some cases, a Christian has to decide whether or not he is a pacifist and should declare himself as one in order to avoid being drafted into military service. To take such a step is very serious because of future repercussions in getting jobs and being discriminated against in other ways. Some have taken the course of obeying the civil authorities to the point of going to war and participating as one who is obedient to superior authorities and not as one who is personally responsible for the actions in which he engages. As a servant of the State, one fulfils his obligation and is not personally responsible for the consequences. This form of rationalization seems to be more acceptable than to develop an attitude of hate towards the enemy or vindictiveness because of its aggression.

People can find arguments for both sides of the issue when they examine the life of Jesus. There are cases in which Jesus used force. He drove the money changers out of the Temple with a whip (John 2:12-22). He also stated that he had not come to bring peace to the world but a sword (Matt. 10:34). He criticized the Pharisees with aggressive accusations (Matt. 23:1-33).

But there are other cases in which Jesus' attitude was different. He said that we should turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39). He illustrated that the best way to destroy evil was through love and mercy. When the soldiers went to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of one of them. Jesus told him to put away his sword, 'for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword' (Matt. 26:52). Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that we should love and forgive our enemies. He also counselled to agree with one's adversary quickly (Matt. 5:25). Thus it is impossible to say that Jesus was categorically in favour of or against violence and the use of force.

There have been those who have taken the extreme position

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

War is caused by man's rebellion against God' i _____ and against his f _____.

(ideal, fellow-man)

The question of a Christian's participation in war perhaps should be determined by whether his country is the _____ or _____.

(offender, defender)

AS YOU READ, NOTE SOME DIFFERING VIEWS CONCERNING A CHRISTIAN'S PARTICIPATION IN WAR.

Some people believe the Christian may participate in war as one who is obedient to superior _____.

(authorities)

Arguments for both sides of the question of Christian participation in war may be found in the life of _____.

(Jesus)

of pacifism. Leo Tolstoy accepted that position later in his life and did not even want to admit the place of police and other officials to maintain order in the nation. Some religious groups do not vote, salute the flag of their country, or fulfil other patriotic obligations under the pretext that such acts constitute idolatry. Kirby Page, in his book *Jesus or Christianity*, criticizes Christians for being warmongers in contrast to the non-violent example of Jesus. He states that more bloodshed has taken place in the name of religious movements and warfare than in civil wars. Culbert Rutenber, in his book *The Dagger and the Cross*, illustrates that to use violence and force is not to solve the world's problems.

Other contemporary theologians are not sympathetic with pacifism as a viable Christian position. Reinhold Niebuhr says that the Christian at times must accept the lesser of two evils because he does not have the option of choosing simply between good and bad.³ He also insists that the Christian's responsibility is to promote justice and that civil authority is required more to be just than to be loving. Brunner agrees with this point of view and says that it is more important for the State to maintain order and security than to make men love one another.⁴

Maintaining a position that is without problems or contradictions is impossible. He who is a pacifist is a citizen of a country that probably spends great amounts of money on military installations and police forces that defend him from violence. Most people have to resist evil in some way or another; otherwise, the forces which destroy happiness, peace, and harmony will prevail.

One finds it impossible not to be in a compromising position. The non-pacifist recognizes that his position is far from ideal. Brunner says that in modern wars all are conquered and there are no victors.⁵ The pacifist recognizes this truth. Although he does not carry arms in open warfare, he pays taxes and thus finances the war. As Harkness says:

The dilemma of the non-pacifist Christian is how to continue to love one's enemies and those of his nation even while he seeks to destroy their lives, property, and power. The dilemma of the pacifist is how to act for constructive building while aggression and tyranny are rampant and those about him believe that military force is the only mode of restraint.⁶

What can the Christian Church do? There are several possibilities. It can proclaim the true message of the evil horror that war is, and it can announce that there are other ways which are wiser and more viable to solve international conflicts. The Church can educate its members in the love of Christ for all mankind. It can be more aggressive in taking the missionary message of peace and harmony to all the world. As more and more come under the rulership of Christ, there will be less and less tendency to fight wars.

The Church can also support world organizations which are serious in their purpose to maintain peace. It can support pro-

³Reinhold Niebuhr, *Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1940).

⁴Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 462.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 469.

⁶Georgia Harkness, *Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 216.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Tolstoy's views of pacifism went so far as not to admit the place of _____ and other law-enforcement officers.

(police)

Page says that Christians are _____ in contrast to the non-violent example of _____.

(warmongers, Jesus)

Niebuhr and Brunner insist that the Christian is responsible to promote _____ and that civil authority is required; it is more important for the State to maintain _____ and _____ than to make men love one another.

(justice, order, security)

LIST SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO WHAT THE CHURCH CAN DO.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

grammes which help develop nations. It can live a consistent gospel and, thereby, prove to the world that the Church is serious and sincere about what Christianity can do for mankind.

Capital punishment

Another contemporary issue which is related to civil government is the question of capital punishment. In Old Testament times, there were ten crimes which merited capital punishment (Exod. 21:12-21). The ancient Code of Hammurabi was characterized by swift action in meting out capital punishment. A woman had the right to get a legal separation from her husband, but if it could be proved that she was to blame for the failure of the marriage, she was drowned.⁷ Another case is illustrated in the builder who built a house with certain structural defects. If the son of the owner was killed when the house collapsed, then the son of the builder was killed also. Also, if a surgeon performed an operation that was erroneous, then his hands were cut off.⁸

In England, the death penalty was administered quite freely until the end of the eighteenth century. Children were executed for such minor acts as pulling up turnips or cutting down trees.⁹ The history of those centuries contains records of the execution of children of seven years of age.

In recent years, some forty countries which formerly practised capital punishment have abolished it.¹⁰ The principal reasons which have been given for its abolition are: the practice is barbarous and antiquated; it does not solve the problems nor produce any good effect upon the people; and other solutions to the problem of crime should be found.

A close look at the biblical passages which deal with capital punishment indicates progress in man's dealings with the antisocial acts of his fellow-man. The first part of the Old Testament contains ten crimes which justified capital punishment:

1. homicide (Gen. 9:6; Exod. 21:12-14; Num. 35:16; Lev. 24:17)
2. adultery (Lev. 20:10; 19:20-22)
3. bestiality (Exod. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15)
4. blasphemy (Num. 15:30; Lev. 24:11-16)
5. the touching of something sacred (Num. 4:15, 20; 2 Sam. 6:7)
6. witchcraft (Exod. 22:18)
7. kidnapping (Exod. 21:16)
8. cursing of parents (Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9)
9. striking of parents (Exod. 21:15; Deut. 21:18-21)
10. sexual violation (Deut. 22:25)

We need to remember that these laws were given at a time when the level of morality was either the law of the jungle or 'an eye for an eye'. They had not yet heard of the Golden Rule.

In the New Testament, Jesus emphasized love for one's enemies—a quality of love that removes hate and vengeance from the heart. When the scribes and Pharisees brought the woman who had been surprised in the act of adultery to Jesus

⁷Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1954 ed., s.v. 'Babylonian Law', by Cyril John Gadd.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Arthur Koestler, *Reflections on Hanging* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), pp. 15-20.

¹⁰Ernest Havemann, 'Capital Punishment Is Not the Answer', *Readers' Digest*, May 1960, p. 114.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Another issue that faces a Christian in his civic responsibilities is capital _____ which has been part of the legal codes since ancient times, as seen in the _____ of _____ and in the laws given in _____.

(punishment, Code, Hammurabi, Exodus)

LIST SOME REASONS GIVEN FOR THE ABOLISHING OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the test.)

AS YOU READ THE TEN CRIMES WHICH WERE PUNISHABLE BY DEATH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, BE SURE TO READ THE SCRIPTURES RELATED TO EACH.

(John 8:3-11), they said that the Law condemned her to be stoned. But Jesus forgave her and told her to sin no more. He also challenged the accusers with the words, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' (John 8:7).

Doubtless the spirit of the teachings of Jesus would incline to be against capital punishment. He rejected the 'eye for eye' level of living and gave the teaching that we are to forgive instead of engaging in retaliation (Matt. 5:39). The Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12) gives no room for a vindictive attitude. Jesus, Paul, and John taught that love ought to characterize interpersonal relations (Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:10; 1 John 3:18; 4:12, 20).

Those who defend capital punishment as being relevant for our day use the argument that it serves as a deterrent to crime. Even though this sounds logical, statistics do not verify this idea. There is much evidence to the contrary. When capital punishment was abolished in Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Norway, Austria, Sweden, and Switzerland, there was no evidence of increases in the number of crimes.¹¹ If capital punishment deters crime, then executions should be held in public or in the presence of other criminals in order to persuade people of the horror that crime brings.

Another argument for capital punishment is that there is no punishment that can equal the taking of life as a retribution on those who have committed murder. But others insist that life imprisonment, solitary confinement, and torture may be more painful than the quick pains of death. Some reduce their arguments to a purely economic basis and say that it is so much cheaper to execute than to finance a long term of imprisonment.

There are many others on the opposite side of the argument. They insist that capital punishment is irreparable and that there is always the possibility of condemning a person who is innocent. Benjamin Franklin and Lafayette said that if there is any danger of human fallibility, then no one should be executed.¹² Some estimate that as many as five percent of those executed are innocent.¹³

We also must ask ourselves if capital punishment is just to deprive another person of life. Christianity has a redemptive message, and there is always the possibility that the criminal can be rehabilitated. There are many cases of people being converted to Christianity while in prison and becoming testimonies of the love of God for criminals. They become good stewards of that which happened to them and invest their lives in trying to keep young people from taking the steps which lead to crime.

Homicide is a very serious crime before God, man, and society. Punishment for such actions should be serious, but, at the same time, it should be redemptive and free from a spirit of vengeance. The death of Jesus on the cross and the love and pardon of God are constant symbols that human life is of value and that God can reform any person. As we present the gospel to these people, we are giving them the basis for experiencing a different way of life.

¹¹Woodrow Wyatt, 'Again the Issue of Capital Punishment', *New York Times Magazine*, January 8, 1956, p. 44.

¹²Koestler, *Hanging*, p. 106

¹³John H. Yoder, 'Capital Punishment and the Bible', *Christianity Today*, February 1, 1960, p. 348.

UNDERLINE THE CORRECT WORD.

According to the author of this study guide, the spirit of Jesus' teachings are inclined to be (*for, against*) capital punishment.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

LIST TWO ARGUMENTS FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

1. _____
2. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The author's conclusion is that punishment for homicide should be serious but r_____ and without v_____.

(*redemptive, vengeance*)

Conclusion

The Christian is a citizen of two worlds, the present and the future, and he cannot evade his responsibilities towards either of them. According to Barnette, the Christian should fulfil the following six duties in relation to his civic responsibilities:

1. He will be intelligent and understand the nature and processes of government.
2. He will participate in the selection of public officials and the formation of public policy.
3. He will work for the extension of justice, freedom, and equality of all citizens, regardless of race, color, or creed.
4. He will serve in places of political leadership for which he is qualified, regardless of the cost and criticism which may be forthcoming.
5. He will challenge and criticize any force in society which tends to deny basic human rights or to run counter to the claims of God.
6. He will align himself with a church and other constructive forces which seek to strengthen the spiritual and moral fiber of the individual and the nation.¹⁴

If the Christian is faithful in fulfilling these six responsibilities, he will be a good citizen. If he is faithful to God and His call to be committed to the advancement of His Kingdom, then he will be blessed in the world that is to come.

¹⁴Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), pp. 172-3.

BRIEFLY LIST THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN IN RELATION TO CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES AS SUGGESTED BY BARNETTE.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic assignment (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Do the following exercise.

1. What is taught in Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:17-22?

2. Name two systems of government mentioned in this study guide. Which system gives the most religious freedom?

3. List three possible types of relationship between Church and State.

4. Name two modern examples of the identification relationship of Church and State.

5. What are two possibilities in the domination relationship of Church and State?

6. What is the basis for the idea of the domination of the State by the Church in Roman Catholic countries?

7. Describe the situation where the Church and State are separated.

8. What has history taught Baptists in America about receiving funds from government?

9. Why is it important for Christians to vote in elections in their country?

10. Why should a Christian pay taxes?

11. Why should Christians seek election to public offices?

12. List the biblical illustrations the author uses to stress the biblical ideal of peace.

13. What causes war?

14. What reasons have some countries given for abolishing capital punishment?

15. According to the author, why should the teachings of Jesus incline us against capital punishment?

16. What is the author's conclusion concerning capital punishment?

Supplementary assignment (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 161-74 in *Introducing Christian Ethics*, and do the following exercise.

1. Name and explain three theories about the State.
2. Explain the statement 'The Christian is a citizen of two worlds'.
3. What are the duties of a Christian in a democratic society?
4. What can the Church do to contribute to peace?

Advanced assignment (*Level 3*). Do the following additional exercise based on the above reading assignment.

1. Contrast the teachings of Revelation 13 with those of Romans 13.
2. Contrast the Roman Catholic and Protestant ideas of the State.
3. Name and discuss the forms of State in our time.
4. What is the primary duty of the Church to the State?

Seminar Discussion

1. What civic responsibilities does a Christian have to his society and culture? What should be the role of the Church concerning civic responsibilities?
2. Should a Christian participate in war? Why or why not?
3. Would the principle of the separation of Church and State benefit or hinder Christianity in your country? What dangers can you see in the present form of relation of Church and State?
4. Should a Christian support capital punishment? Why or why not?