

The Christian's Dual Citizenship

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Christians are citizens of two kingdoms, one a spiritual kingdom, and the other a political kingdom. This dual citizenship involves dual obligations and loyalties.

A Christian's greatest responsibility is his citizenship in the kingdom of God. Although he was born as an alien and foreigner to God's kingdom, he has become a fellow citizen of the saints through faith in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:19-22). Because he has received citizenship in the kingdom of God, he has now become an alien and stranger on the earth who is eager to reach his true homeland in heaven. (Php 3:20, Heb 11:13-16). As citizens of God's holy nation, as his own special people, we will abstain from the lusts of the world that are now foreign to us and devote ourselves to the honor and glory of our King (1 Pe 1:9-11). We will serve our King in faithful worship, stewardship, and evangelism. We will eagerly await and pray for the return of our King in all his glory.

But, in the meantime, we find that we are still living in the midst of the world as citizens of the community of people. Although we are citizens of heaven, we still need the necessities of worldly life such as food and clothing. (Mt 6:32-33). We still are in regular contact with the people of the world (1 Co 5:10-11). But, in spite of our continued contact with the things and people of the world, we are not attached to them nor do we desire to cling to them (1 Co 7:29-31, Ro 12:2, 1 Jn 2:15-17). Indeed, in their estimation, we are hated strangers, who are despised for the contrast between their values and ours (1 Jn 3:11-13).

But, in spite of the world enmity against the citizens of God's kingdom, we are not to withdraw from the world. Our King has sent us into this world as his ambassadors upon a mission from him. We are to carry his message to the world, but as we work in the world we are to remain loyal to him (Jn 17:14-19). By the way in which we live in the world, we are to bring glory to our heavenly King. We are to be lights to a world filled with darkness. We are to be salt to a world rotten with corruption. (Mt 5:13-16).

It is in light of this mission that we must consider our citizenship in the community of men. A Christian's activities and participation in earthly citizenship are not ends in themselves. They are not a separate arena of action from his activities as a citizen of God's kingdom. These activities are a part of (his Christian responsibility to serve his neighbor in love. Being a faithful Christian also means being a responsible citizen, because responsible citizenship is one way in which we fulfill the second table of the Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is therefore obvious that all of our actions as citizens of the community of men must be governed by the same Law of God that governs us as citizens of the kingdom of God.

This then brings us to the basic question to be answered by this paper. **HOW DOES OUR CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AFFECT OUR ACTIVITIES AS CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITY OF MEN?**

The Christian View of Government

When we think of citizenship in the community of men, we probably think first of all of a person's attitude toward the government. We will, therefore, briefly review the Biblical view of government, especially as it is found in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:11-17. God has established government so that men may live together peaceably in the world. Governmental authority is an ordinance of God regardless of what particular form of government may be in force in a particular area. The government's responsibility is to preserve the greatest possible peace and order in the world by punishing evil doers and by protecting the rights of the law abiding. To do this, the government may make laws based on reason and enforce them upon the disobedient

even to the extent of imposing the death penalty when necessary. The government may wage war for the protection of its citizens should it become necessary.

Government is a good gift of God, but like every gift of God it can become an idol or a tool of Satan when man abuses it. At Babel sinful man made human government and empire his god and sought to defy the plans of God (Ge 11). Satan uses government as a tool in his vain attempts to destroy the kingdom of God (Mt 2, Herod; Mt 26 and 27, Pilate and the Sanhedrin; Rev 13, the world empires). History books are full of examples of man's perverse use of this good gift of God for his own selfish purposes.

As we proceed with our study of a Christian's activity in earthly government, we shall have to keep in mind both of these facets of the Biblical view of government. Government is a good institution of God, but it has been perverted by sin. If we remember this, we will avoid both sinful extremes, that of making government our god which we trust and obey without question and that of making government a devil that we hate and despise.

The Christian's Responsibility to Government

The Christian's first responsibility toward government is to OBEY. In Peter's first epistle God tells Christians, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." (1 Pe 2:13). Paul says, "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.... Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Ro 13:1, 2, 5). The Christian obeys the law, not because he is afraid of punishment, but because the Lord tells him that it is the right thing to do. The Christian is to obey his government even if it is unfair and not to his liking. The Christian is free from the obligation to obedience only when the demands of the government are in direct conflict with God's Word. Then he applies the principle "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Ac 5:29).

Today, when there is so much disrespect for law, it is especially important that Christians set a good example for others by respecting and obeying the law. Parents especially should be concerned to set the proper example for their children. Obeying "every ordinance of man" is not confined to avoiding homicide and grand larceny. It includes setting an example by respecting "lesser" laws such as speed limits, laws concerning taxes, illegal gambling, fireworks, and so on. If our example is to be effective, we cannot be selective in our obedience to law.

The Christian also has an obligation to SUPPORT his government. God tells us "Render to all what is due to them, tax to whom tax is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Ro 13:7). Jesus too recognized the government's control in taxation and economic matters when he commanded, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Mt 22:21). The Christian is to support his government with the taxes and services legally required of him.

We also are to support our rulers with the proper honor and respect. We are not to despise them, nor provoke them to anger, but honor serve and obey them and hold them in love and esteem. Our talk about our government and rulers is not exempt from the Eighth Commandment. We may not "deceitfully belie, betray slander nor defame" our rulers, but must "defend them, speak well of them, and put the best construction of everything. "

Finally, the Christian has an obligation to PRAY for his government. "I urge that entreaties and prayers and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Ti 2:1-4). We are to pray for the welfare of government and to thank God for the blessings that we receive through it. We receive earthly blessings through the activities of the government, but our most important concern for government is that it will promote peaceful conditions in which the Gospel can be freely preached, so that all men have the opportunity to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Christian's Participation in Government

In the preceding section we have discussed a Christian's submission to the government. If a Christian lives under a totalitarian government, his responsibility may be largely submission. The question of a Christian's responsibility to participate actively in government is especially important to Christians living in a participatory democracy.

Throughout the history of the Church there have been certain groups like the Anabaptists of the 16th century and the Children of God in today's Jesus movement who have insisted that Christians should avoid all participation in government and politics. But is this a Christian attitude? Should a Christian participate in Government?

I do not believe the New Testament answers the question directly, since there was no real participatory democracy, as we know it today in the Mediterranean world at that time. The New Testament does not directly elaborate on the responsibilities of Christian citizenship, but I believe that there are clear Scriptural principles which justify the statement, "Being a faithful Christian also means being a responsible patriotic citizen."

Paul's instructions to Titus concerning his care of the congregations entrusted to him includes the admonition, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration to all men." If we are ready for every good deed and have consideration for all men, we will try to promote their interests by every avenue open to us, including participation in government. Participation in government is part of our responsibility to love our neighbor by "helping and befriending him in every bodily need" and "by helping him to improve and protect his property and business."

We find additional support for an interest in good government from a consideration of the Old Testament civil law and the admonitions of the prophets. God was not only interested in government, but he desired good government and held rulers responsible for injustice. The Old Testament law plainly calls for justice in government and for fair consideration of the needy and the oppressed. Reading Exodus 22 and 23 and Leviticus 19 should provide sufficient evidence of God's interest in good, fair government.

Our Lutheran Confessions, especially in Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, set forth the right and the responsibility of Christians to participate in civil affairs on the basis of our duty to promote the welfare of our neighbors.

A Christian does not participate in civil affairs just to serve his own interests. His purposes are to glorify God by his works, to promote conditions in which the Gospel may be preached freely, and to serve the best interests of his neighbors by seeking justice for all, by protecting the rights of individuals, and by hindering evil.

The Christian's Responsibility to Hinder Evil

We have little difficulty or question about the Christian's duty to do good. More difficult questions arise when we consider the Christian's responsibility to oppose and combat injustice. What steps may a Christian legitimately take to oppose unjust laws or governmental actions?

In the New Testament it is plain that a Christian's basic reaction to injustice which he suffers is patient endurance. "If when you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps" (1 Pe 2:20). The patient response of Christ to the legal injustice that he suffered at the hands of Pilate, Herod, and the Jews is our example.

Violent attacks on those who treat us unjustly are plainly ruled out by the example of David toward Saul, by Christ's rebuke to Peter in the garden, and by the examples of the apostles during the persecution. Among the many Scripture passages which forbid personal vengeance are: Romans 12:17, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone," and Proverbs 20:22, "say not, I will recompense evil, but wait upon the Lord."

However, the fact that a Christian must suffer injustice patiently does not always mean that he has to be quiet about it. Injustice must be borne, but a Christian may still war against it by prayer, by warning and admonition, and *within limits*, by passive disobedience and suffering, by political action, and by legal action.

When faced with evil, a Christian can and should pray as David did in the psalms or as Christ did in the Lord's Prayer that God will "break and hinder every evil will and counsel which would not let us hallow the name of God nor let his kingdom come."

A Christian should warn against sin and injustice no matter who is doing it. The Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus denounced the sins of the mighty and of the lowly alike. They showed no partiality. Although they commanded patience to the oppressed, they made it equally clear that God hates tyrants and oppressors, and that they will answer to him for their deeds. Psalms and Proverbs especially tell us that God has no pleasure in wickedness. He hates the workers of iniquity. He will destroy the proud, the liar, those who shed innocent blood, and those who plot evil against their neighbors. (cf. Ps 5:4-6, Pr 6:16-19, Zec 8:17).

Isaiah denounced oppressors regardless of whether they were Israelites or heathen. (cf. Isa 8:8-23 and Isa 13:1-16) The protests and warning of the prophets are echoed in the New Testament particularly in Matthew 23 and in Revelation. When Jesus and the apostles and prophets commanded non-violence and patient endurance, they never gave the impression that they condoned or served oppression or injustice as the visible church has done on occasion. When we preach the Law against the sins of the lowly, we should speak just as emphatically against the sins of the mighty.

A Christian will also oppose injustice by refusing to obey laws that require him to sin. Here the strong warning is in place that he must be sure that the law he is disobeying does indeed require an act contrary to God's law and that he is not simply following his own whims. If he disobeys a law for conscience sake, he will then have to suffer the legal consequences without taking violent steps to defend himself.

What political and legal actions may a Christian take to fight injustice and wrong? This is a difficult question in practice because differing circumstances may make the best course of action in a particular case difficult to determine. There may be many cases in which different Christians reach different conclusions. However, there are some clear Scriptural principles which guide us in making a decision.

Since those who silently ignore evil are guilty of indirectly aiding it, we should use any peaceful and lawful means of making known our opposition to laws or actions that we believe are unjust. This may include voting, lobbying, or campaigns to influence government or public opinion. We must beware of motivation however, for every pressure group tends to be self-centered and concerned about advancing its own interests without equal concern for the needs of others. "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor" (1 Co 10:24).

May a Christian go beyond expressing his opinion and seek to compel corrections of injustice through legal action? 1 Corinthians 6 makes it clear that it would be better for a Christian to endure injustice than to fight against another Christian in a civil court of law. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ makes it clear that we are not to jealously insist on fighting for our rights or to retaliate for injustice. "Do not resist him who is evil, but whoever slaps you, turn to him the other cheek. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt let him have your cloak also. And whosoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two" (Mt 5:39-41). On the other hand, Christ himself challenged the high priest's servant who illegally struck him without cause and contrary to Jewish law. In Acts Paul took advantage of the legal rights he had as a Roman citizen. He compelled the magistrate at Philippi to apologize for his illegal actions. He took the initiative of appealing his case to Rome.

There is no contradiction between these passages if we remember that we really have no rights to our own dignity, our own time, or our own property. We belong completely to the Lord, and the question that governs our actions is "How can we best serve him?" If we can show our faith in God best by enduring the unjust loss of our property or by suffering unjust servitude and thus showing that we are not attached to the things of the world, we should do that. If we can serve God best by forcing the ungodly to stop interfering with our time and possessions so that we can use them to serve the Lord, we should do that. If we can serve best by suffering persecution, we should do it gladly. If we believe God's kingdom will be served best by forcing the ungodly to stop interfering with the preaching of the Gospel, that's what we should do.

We live in a time when people are very conscious of their "rights" and very demanding about obtaining them. We need to be reminded that we should gladly give up our rights if insisting on them would hinder our Christian testimony. We may use the legal protection to which we are entitled, but we must beware of false motives. We are not to resort to law for vengeance or personal gain. Our motives should be protection of the freedom of the Gospel and protection of society from lawlessness.

Many times, of course, it may be difficult for us to decide which course of action to follow. Because of our sinful nature, it is impossible for us to keep our motives completely pure. We can only pray that the Lord will cleanse our hearts of selfishness and hypocrisy so that we truly try to serve him as best we can. When we fail and fall short, we can come before him confident of the forgiveness we have through Christ.

Moral Law and Civil Law

Another problem that shows that it is sometimes difficult to determine absolutely the proper Christian response to a given situation is the matter of a Christian's efforts to influence civil law.

It is certain that all of a Christian's actions must be guided by God's moral law, regardless of what the civil law of his state says. But the question remains "How hard should a Christian fight to bring the civil laws of his state into agreement with God's moral law?" This is a question of great importance today as we consider changes in laws concerning abortion, divorce and marriage, sexual conduct, pornography, capital punishment and other matters.

Here again, there are two different and, in some respects, opposing factors that we must consider. The first is that God holds all nations responsible for their violations of his moral law and punishes them for them. The Canaanites were exterminated because of their flagrant disregard for God's law (cf. Ge 15:16 and Leviticus 18:24-25). The Sodomites were punished for their abominable conduct. A nation is not excused for its sinful practices merely because it is not a theocracy or a truly Christian nation. God's wrath justly falls on those who sin against the natural knowledge of God that they have in nature, the inscribed law and conscience. God begins the punishment of such people already here on earth by giving them over to uncleanness, vile affections, and a reprobate mind, so that they receive the fitting recompense for their error. (Romans 1,2). Although God spares the world temporarily from the general judgment which it deserves (Ge 8:21, Acts 17:30). He nevertheless sends judgments against all nations who trample on his moral law. The principle holds for all that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pr 14:34).

On the other hand, it is also true that man's hardness of heart sometimes makes it impossible for civil law to correspond to the ideal set forth in God's moral law. For example, in the Old Testament civil law divorce was permitted even though it was contrary to the will of God revealed when marriage was established. The purpose of the civil law was to maintain as much peace and order as is possible in a sinful world. If a woman was forced to remain with a husband who was embittered against her, great harm and disorder could have followed. The permitting of divorce by the husband was actually a protection for the rights of the wife. A wife was actually better off being sent away by a hardened, embittered husband than she was if she had to live under his continued abuse. The civil law accepted the evil of divorce to minimize the evil of bitter domestic warfare that would have been even more disruptive to the peace of society.

The aim of civil law is to produce the greatest peace and order. Every law is an attempt to legislate outward peace and order. Every law is an attempt to legislate outward morality. That is, every law is an attempt to prevent citizens from violating the moral standards accepted by that society by threatening violators with punishment. No civil law will be successful in gaining even a degree of outward obedience unless it is supported by the majority of a society and backed up with enough force to check disobedience.

No anti-abortion law will be effective, if most people believe that abortion is no different than a tonsillectomy. No law restricting pornography will work, if the majority of the people think that it is harmless or enjoy it. Capital punishment is of little value if public opinion is so against it that no judge or jury will use it. We cannot expect a country to have laws which uphold sound moral standards, as long as its people are being led away even from such standards as are supported by reason and the conscience of the natural man.

As Christians, we should help bring society back to its senses by supporting and promoting sound moral standards. We will only have decent laws when a majority of the citizens and public officials recognize such basic moral standards as respect for life, high regard for marriage and the family, and the principle that every individual should be held accountable for his actions. In doing this, we are not trying to force Christianity upon people by law. Reason, the inscribed law, and the conscience of the natural man all testify to these moral standards. When we fight for laws controlling abortion, we are not trying to create hearts obedient to the fifth commandment. We are simply trying to protect the lives (and the time of grace) of thousands of our neighbors who cannot protect themselves. If we support control of pornography we are not trying to legislate chaste and decent hearts, we are simply trying to maintain the standards which are necessary if our neighbors are to have even a decent earthly life.

We should note that even if we are agreed on the moral standards desirable in society, we may have a difference of opinion about the best way to achieve them under given circumstances. We may agree that unrestricted pornography is evil. One of us may feel that a certain restrictive law is a partial solution. Another may oppose it, because he feels that that law would pose too great a threat to all freedom of the press. Even when we agree on identifying evils, we must be careful in prescribing specific remedies because social problems are enormously complicated in their nature and their response to treatment. Christians should apply Christian principles to public policy as best they can, but with a proper degree of humility concerning the specific remedies that they suggest.

Although we should seek good and decent laws, we realize that civil laws will never attain the standards which God's moral law sets for Christians. Even when civil law is lax, Christians must always guide their conduct by God's law. Even when the standards of society crumble, Christians have a firm foundation to build on. Today, many are raising the despairing question addressed to David, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" It is important that we remember his clear answer, "The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold. His eyelids test the sons of men. The upright shall behold his face" (Ps 11). No matter how much man's decisions and decrees undermine moral foundations, this truth remains "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Ti 2:19).

The Christian and Economics

An additional area of sharp controversy for the Christian citizen today is the question of economic systems and economic policies. Some Christians usually those of a more liberal theological view, are strongly pushing socialism as the most Christian form of economic system. Others, usually more conservative in their theology, are just as vehement in defending a capitalistic or free market system. Does the Bible give the Christian citizen any definite guidelines in the matter of economics?

The Bible does not specifically advocate any economic system. It does not advocate unrestricted free enterprise, nor does it specifically condemn socialism or government controls, or even ownership, of the means of production. There are, however, several clear guidelines in Scripture. The right of an individual to hold property is definitely set forth and protected by the seventh commandment. Every form of greed and selfishness is condemned. The duty of the government to restrain still applies also to economic matters. For example, the Old Testament Law protected the property rights of individuals, but it also protected the weak from exploitation by the strong.

As long as man is sinful, no ideal or perfect economic system is possible. Any system needs regulations to restrain selfishness. A man may be a greedy materialist whether he is a socialist or capitalist, whether he is rich or poor. God's law condemns the evils committed under every system.

Promotion of socialism is often based on selfishness and a desire to deprive one's neighbors of their property so that a person can gain part of it for himself. It often promotes class hatred and envy and stirs up discontent with the status one has in life. Pure socialism depends on a non-existent goodness in man to motivate him to "give according to his ability" so that everyone can "have according to his need". It tempts the laziness

and selfishness in man's nature to let someone else carry his burden for him. I do not believe, however, that we can conclude from this that all government control of economics or government ownership of the means of production is wrong. Such government control and ownership was common in ancient times. Even Joseph helped bring the entire economy of Egypt under Pharaoh's control.

Government intervention and control of economics is necessary to some extent, because a completely free system leaves the door open to man's greed. Pure free enterprise depends on a non-existent goodness in man to restrain him from taking advantage of his neighbor. When most people talk about free enterprise, they usually mean freedom for ME to get everything I can for MYSELF. A system which is based on everyone fighting for his own self-interest is probably the most practical, workable system possible because everyone has enough self-interest, but that does not make it holy. The profit motive is no where listed among the Christian virtues. Working to serve others is.

The Old Testament Law recognized the need of economic laws to restrict the activities of the powerful. Luther too recognized the need for such laws in his writings. He advocated anti-trust laws against monopolies and government controls of prices. He felt the law of supply and demand was unchristian because it is wrong to take advantage of people by charging more just when a commodity was scarce and needed most.

In Summary, I believe the Bible points us toward a balanced view in economic matters. A Christian does not have Biblical grounds to vehemently defend a particular economic system, but rather to condemn the sins of greed and materialism by the advocates of any system. Although a concern for a fair economic system that protects property rights is one of the ways we can keep the seventh commandment. I do not believe that it is good stewardship for a Christian to become too absorbed in defending some economic system in a world that is passing away. The most important economic question for a Christian is "How can I do the most to serve God and my neighbor with the means which God has given me within the system and government under which he has placed me?"

The Christian and Social Concern

A Christian's responsibility as a citizen does not stop when he has fulfilled his responsibilities toward government. Indeed, it has barely begun. A Christian can probably do more good and have more impact with individual acts of love and concern than with a lot of political involvement. We should get involved with our time and money just as the Good Samaritan did. If we pass by a neighbor in need, we are guilty of, sin (1 Jn 3:18, Jas 4:17). If we set out, motivated by faith-born love, we will not be discouraged by fear that we will be left empty by the Lord, nor will we be discouraged by the ingratitude one often finds in those who have been helped. We will gladly do all we can, knowing that our smallest acts of love are a service of the Lord.

If we need any ideas for service, we can find plenty in a study of these passages.

James	Matthew 25-41
1:19 patient in listening	giving food and drink
1:27 helping widows and orphans	helping the stranger
2:1 avoiding favoritism and prejudice	clothing the need
2:15 food and clothing to the needy	visiting the sick
4:1f seeking peace, not strife	visiting the prisoner
5:13 comforting the afflicted	
5:14 and the sick	
5:19 admonishing the sinner	

We can do many of these things as individuals or through nonreligious charities, but the errors of the social Gospel should not frighten us away from doing this work together as Christians through our church. Relief collections for the needy Christians of Judea are prominent in Acts and Paul's epistles. A look at the budget of our synod's committee for relief makes a person wonder if we are not neglecting this aspect of Christian living. If each communicant would give only \$1.00 per year, we would be doing 10 times as much of

this work as we are doing today. Even though conditions in the church are drastically different today than they were in Luther's day, the following remark is still food for thought.

It would be satisfactory if we gave a smaller proportion to churches, altars, and vigils and the like and let the main stream flow toward God's commandments so that among Christians charitable deeds done to the poor would shine more brightly than churches of wood and stone. God will not ask you at the Last Day how much you left in your will, whether you have given so and so much to churches—though I do not condemn this—but will say to you, “I was naked and you did not clothe me. I was hungry and you gave me no food.” Take these words to heart, my dear man, The important thing is whether you have given to your neighbor and treated him well. Beware of show and glitter and color that draw you away from this.

It is a sad commentary on the church if "Samaritans" make the best neighbors.

The Attitude of the Christian Citizen

We can summarize the basic principles of Christian citizenship which we have been considering by saying that the key to a Christian view of citizenship is moderation and balance between the extremes of placing too much trust and energy into human efforts to change the world and the opposite error of sitting back and doing nothing because we feel the situation is hopeless.

The Christian should not have an overly optimistic view of human efforts to improve the world. Human affairs are so corrupt that they can never be corrected by human effort. Injustice is always present in the world and it will remain till judgment day. No amount of utopian dreaming, no amount of human effort is going to remove it. Man's most reasonable, sensible efforts to improve the world often flop miserably, at the same time as fools succeed in spite of their folly. (cf. Ecc 3:15; 5:18; 8:14; 9:11) As we see in Revelation the horseman of war, economic disparity, and death repeatedly smash all of man's attempts to establish "heaven on earth". Man's dreams of an earthly utopia based on human effort are doomed to failure. As long as we are in the world, we will have to live with evil.

Luther says, "If you are thrust into the obligation of having to help make things better, do what is permissible, and God will do what he wills. But if you want to go beyond this and mingle with the world, straighten every curve, cure every evil, and throw Satan out of the world, you will cause yourself nothing but sorrow and labor. You will accomplish nothing more than if you forbid the Elbe to flow. Human affairs refuse to be and cannot be governed by the will of man, but he who created all things also rules them by his will."

However, even though the Christian sees the basic futility of human efforts to improve the world, he does not have the pessimistic outlook of the dropout. Things may look bad, but God is still firmly in control of the situation. We have no excuse for harboring gloomy pessimism or carrying around a dark cloud of despair in our hearts. If we do, we are seeing things only with worldly eyes that judge by outward appearance, rather than with the eyes of faith, which see the God of history standing behind the scenes.

Although we are to speak against sin, our role is not fulfilled by standing on the sidelines of life, bemoaning the evil condition of the world and longing for the return of the "good old days." There never have been any "good old days" except in Eden. We are not here to long for the past or agonize over the future, but to use the gifts God has given us to the best of our ability in the present. God tells us not to trust in human effort. He tells us not to worry about the future. But he also tells us just as emphatically to get to work to serve the best interest of his kingdom and of our neighbors. The following quotation from Edward Everett Hale is not Scripture, but it is good practical advice for the Christian citizen. "I am only one man, but I am one man. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do. And what I ought to do, by the grace of God, I will do."

Active participation in government will present us with temptations to sin, but what area of life does not? Christians like Joseph, Daniel, and Naaman actively served their governments without compromising their

principles. In this area, too, we must not be paralyzed into inaction by fear of failure, but trust God's guidance and forgiveness.

Who can serve the government better than a Christian? Only a Christian can have truly unselfish motivation, for he realizes that true happiness is not a life cluttered with possessions and accomplishments, but a life filled by Christ. A Christian citizen does not have to grasp and claw for his own advantage. He can risk himself and his own interests. He can let go of self-interest because he knows that Christ is his solid possession. Because he has a sober, realistic view of earthly life, he can serve without desperation and fanaticism. As Christians we can work hard to help create an atmosphere where the Gospel may have free course and man can live at peace with justice, yet we will trust all of our hope for the future to God.

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