

# "VENGEANCE IS MINE; ...SAITH THE LORD"

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT... NON-RESISTANCE, PASSIVISM, NON-PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, & SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

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### INTRODUCTION

Years ago I determined to pursue truth as an end in itself, not as a means to defend denominational biases. It is impossible to find truth, when you go to the Bible to prove your case. You are bound to wrest the Scripture to your own fancy, if you are not neutral when you come to the Word of God. You must come to the Word of God to *learn*, not to *prove*.

In all honesty, you are more in love with your *ism*, *heritage*, or *denomination* than you are with Jesus Christ if you would rather defend your "camp", than defend the pure truth of God's Word. The Pharisees started at the wrong end when they determined their doctrine: They decided where they wanted to arrive, and then they geared their doctrine to make sure it would arrive at the predetermined destination. This is error, rebellion, and pride. You must get on the Bible train, and let it take you wherever it will. You must be seeking God's conclusions, not enlisting God to defend your conclusions,

With this in mind, get on your knees and promise God that you will read this book with only one motive: to learn and defend *truth* for Jesus' sake.

### DEFINING THE TERMS

1. Non—resistance: (will be defined below)
2. Passivism: The unbiblical extreme of Non—resistance. This teaches that non—resistant Christians cannot hold office in the sword bearing state.
3. Pacifism: The unbiblical attempt to take the sword from the state and make it passive also.

In this pamphlet I am going to separate passivism from non-resistance. I believe most people who claim to believe non-resistance, actually are unbiblical passivists. I believe passivism is taking non-resistance to an unbiblical extreme. This difference will become evident as we go. The difference between “separation of church and state”, and “nonparticipation in government” is the same difference. “Non-participation” is the unbiblical extreme.

The doctrine of non-resistance, which is taken from Jesus’ words, “resist not evil...” is the Christian grace of unselfish love in action. We are working for the eternal salvation of sinful blind men. In doing so, we are going to suffer persecution.

When we are insulted, and our carnal nature wants to retaliate, we instead walk in the Spirit of Love and seek to be peace-makers. We leave our injuries in God’s just hands, and seek to win our enemies souls, knowing they are blind, and headed for Hell. We know we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against evil spirits who energize and motivate these blind sinners. Jesus knew this and prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” Stephen prayed for his murderers in the same manner, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”.

Selfish men seek self-preservation at the expense of others; but Spiritual men seek the salvation of men at their own expense. This is the basis and the teaching of non-resistance. This is sound doctrine and a very important aspect of the Christians’ testimony.

The law of Love, when engrafted into the believer’s life by the Holy Spirit will keep them from self-glory, self-exaltation, competition, vengeance, hate, slander, attack, rejoicing when their enemy falls, and any other fleshly pursuit that has it’s roots in “self-preservation at other’s expense”.

It is amazing to see in churches that claim to be non-resistant, men competing against their brethren, exalting themselves at the expense of their brothers, and lacking love and compassion for the lost men around them. They may claim the doctrine of non-resistance, but they are sorely ignorant of the principles upon which it is based.

## ***WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ABOUT NON-RESISTANCE (OR NON-VENGEANCE)***

*“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.” Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31.*

*“But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” Lev. 19:34; Duet. 10:19.*

*“If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.” Ex. 23:4, 5*

*Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.” Proverbs 24:17, 18*

*“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.” Proverbs, 25:21, 22*

*“Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: light against them that fight against me...for without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul...False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not...Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions...Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me- For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land...This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me...” Ps. 35*

*“Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul...I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.” Ps. 69:1-4*

I have quoted a few Old Testament verses in order to show that the teaching of unselfish Love, peace-making and Non-vengeance is rooted in the Old Testament. Paul even quotes the Old Testament as his Scriptural authority when teaching Non-resistance in Romans 12. The nation of Israel is different from the New Testament Church in that: Israel was a nation with civil government, and included people who loved God and those who just went with the program for personal gain. There was, at all times, only a remnant who truly had faith in God. The Church is not a nation, but the “remnant” element called out into separate assemblies among all nations. The Church IS the remnant, and is commanded to excommunicate all who don’t exercise an obedient faith in Christ.

The Law of Moses was given to organize a nation and teach civil leaders how to justly deal out justice. The authorities were commanded to judge justly and deal out an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; which was a just and fair reward to the offender. However, carnal men used this to *demand* an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth - thus they were seeking to avenge

themselves through legal channels. Hard hearted people always use righteous principles to their own advantage, and not as they were originally intended.

Men's hard hearts were only outwardly controlled by the laws laid down; but Jesus came to regenerate men. He called them to repent of being hard hearted and to practice the true righteousness of the Law, not use the Law for their own designs. Thus we see Jesus correcting their misconceptions and abuses of the Law, and preaching the true spirit and righteousness of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). Moses' Law was given to organize society; but Jesus' teaching was to prepare men to preach the gospel to all nations where they could not expect a fair redress of grievances. They would have to go out as sheep among wolves and couldn't expect justice. Jesus taught them to do right without expecting right in return - it was spiritual warfare, not the organization of a society. You can't expect justice on the battle field. The non-resistance taught in the OT was in harmony with the sword bearing of the OT authorities, and what Jesus taught is also in harmony with God's ordained governments bearing the sword as ministers of God to thee for good - Romans 13.

We will now see in the New Testament that Jesus upheld and fine tuned this spirit of non-vengeance when he taught and expounded the spiritual intent of God's Law. The spiritually dull people in the Old Testament who did not yet fully comprehend all that Jesus would teach when he came; had misunderstood and misconstrued much of the "original intent" of God's Law. Jesus is calling the remnant to come out and follow true righteousness.

*"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth...Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy...Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matt. 5:5-12*

*"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt- 5:21 -24*

*"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also- And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said,*

*Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy- But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matt. 5:38—48*

*“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matt. 6:14—15*

*“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits, Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:14—21*

*“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.” I Thess. 5:15*

*“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but, if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:” I Peter 2:18-21*

*“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; ...but and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;...For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing-” I Peter 3:9-17*

There are many other passages and related doctrines that come into play when dealing with this subject, but I would like to share one more before we go on in our study. In Revelation 12 Satan is represented as the great persecutor, deceiver, and accuser, Verse 11 reveals the believer's response to all three of these attacks:

*“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”*

The believer's response to persecution is not vengeance, hate, or war, but "loving not their lives unto the death". They overcome deception by the "word of their testimony"; and they overcome accusation by claiming the "blood of the Lamb".

You will notice that when the apostles were arrested, attacked, etc. for the preaching of the Gospel, they didn't gather the believers together for battle or "hole up in the barn with a shotgun" or ambush the opposition with weapons. Non-resistance is an attitude of humility and willingness to suffer for doing what is right. It is an unwillingness to lower ourselves sinfully to become no better than the hateful sinners who persecute us.

There are five God ordained authorities that we are accountable for in our life: 1. God himself, 2. Parents, 3. Husband, 4. Civil authority, 5. Bishop. We are told to obey all of them; but what if they disagree? Who do we obey? Well, ultimately we must obey God. We obey God ordained authority until it would require us to disobey God, then we must obey God and not man.

However, in doing this, we must be willing to suffer at the hands of the human authority with a meek and humble spirit as a testimony for God. If we are haughty and rebellious in this, we will not be thought to be truly seeking obedience to God, but only rebellion to man.

## *SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE*

In the Old Testament nation of Israel there wasn't much distinction between "church" and "state". When they had a theocracy, and men like Moses & Samuel acted as spiritual and civil leaders, there was no distinction. However, after they set up Saul as king, there was a distinction. The kings were not to serve in the Temple, nor were the priests and levites to reign as kings. The priests didn't declare war, execute criminals, or enforce the law. However, they did have a "state church" and the civil authorities enforced obedience to the "church".

Israel was a "nation" and "the congregation of the Lord" or "church", not an assembly of believers within and among all nations. Because of this, you could not be a part of the "state" without being a part of the "church". When there is a marriage of "church" and "state", as there was in Israel, excommunication (church discipline) is done by execution or banishment (state discipline). Tithes and offerings are upheld by law and become a "tax". Membership and citizenship are joined into one, and so initiation (circumcision in the OT, and baptism in the NT) is applied to infants - because as soon as they are citizens of the state, they must be members of the church. In this setting there is little distinction between who actually wages war or executes criminals - the church or the state?

## NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH & STATE

When Jesus set up the New Testament Church, it was not to rival any earthly king or government, but be part of Christ's heavenly kingdom on earth (John 18:33—37). This was a spiritual kingdom among all other kingdoms. This was a spiritual nation among all nations.

The New Testament Churches were called out assemblies of believers among the nations who were still subject to their respective state governments (Romans 13:1—8; 1 Peter 2:11—19). This required a separation between church government and state government. The church was not to run the state, and the state was not to run the church; but each had a separate and unique mission under separate administrations. They were both subject to fulfill God given mandates, and should dwell together in harmony.

The church government disciplines by excommunication, but the state government by execution, imprisonment, etc. The church government initiates members by baptism when they intelligently embrace the faith of Jesus Christ, but the state government counts its citizens from infancy. The church is supported by freewill tithes and offerings, but the state by mandatory tax. The qualification of church leaders is spiritual, but the state leaders are not always moral. So the government of the churches must be separate from the government of the states in which they dwell.

The church is not commissioned to wage physical war with physical weapons, but rather to wage spiritual war with spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 1.0:4). The state is commissioned to execute wrath on evil doers and protect it's citizens by means of force (Romans 13).

## ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The formation of the Roman Catholic Church was largely due to a marriage of church and state contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. In doing this they copied the Old Testament and assumed they were not only a holy church, but also a holy state or empire. They reverted back to much Old Testament theology and even idolatry. They exchanged evangelism as the Biblical means of growing the church for the state method of growing the state - conquering. They dealt with heretics the way the state deals with criminals - execution. Tithe became tax, and baptism was now for infants; because they became citizens and members at the same time. Doctrine was now established by state legislature, not by preaching and exhortation based on Scripture with the example of godly living.

They developed a church hierarchy much like the Old Testament with priests, temples, altars, and the communion became their sacrifice. Ultimately, they denied the priesthood of every believer and the one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, when they made it illegal to give the Scriptures to the common people and taught confession of sins to the priest for forgiveness.

These gross errors were produced by power hungry men in church positions, who became worldly and apostate; but didn't want their positions challenged or their powers lost. This error was promoted by denominational bias and pride that wanted the state's help in eliminating the opposition. Thus we have 1200 plus years of terrible persecution and what is called "The Dark Ages". The reign of the Anti-Christ system showed its true colors, and justified its slaughter of over 50 million non-conformist believers by saying they were just trying to "discipline erring sheep". This mother of harlots had a number of daughters (protestants) who followed the state-church union and persecuted any who didn't agree.

## THE ANA-BAPTISTS

During this time of Roman Catholic dominion, men who protested the marriage of church and state; who saw the horrible "crusades" of the Romish Church; and who were expected to participate in these church/state ventures; diligently taught the separation of church and state. They knew that men should not wage war in the name of the church or in the name of Christ. They suffered greatly for not participating in church initiated holy wars, and for protesting the corrupt state church doctrine and practice.

The descendants of these faithful believers are found in the reformation times (and earlier) as Anabaptists. They were called Anabaptists for maintaining the baptism of adult believers only, as opposed to that of children in the state-church system. Many whom they baptized had already been "baptized" as children by the state church; so they were scornfully called re-baptizers (ana—baptists).

These believers who held to the separation of church government and state government became divided on some important particulars about this separation of church and state. Does the separation of church government and state government mean the separation of church members and state? Can one be a member of the state and of the church? Can an officer of the state be also a member of the church? What about Christ's teaching of Non-vengeance and loving your enemies? Some began to teach non-participation in government all together (Passivists). Others wanted to make the state passive (Pacifists). This teaching can be found in varying degrees. Most of the passivists agreed that a member of the church could not hold office in the state. Those we are calling passivists did believe that the state was to bear the sword (Rom - 13).

This confusion arose from the ill feelings toward state-church governments that they suffered under. The tendency to be anti-government was natural and to be expected in such circumstances. But was it Biblical? To be an officer of the state/church seemed to be cooperating with the Anti-Christ system. Were they to participate in the Anti-Christ church's "evangelism with the sword"? When an apostate church is married to the state it really complicates matters. When your church is illegal according to this state, then how can you support the state? From these trying circumstances, there arose some unbiblical teaching about the separation of church and state as well as non-resistance.

We must remember that the Christians of the first century also were under state governments opposed to their church. Most governments were pagan, and those living in Israel were still under Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus Christ. These believers had to deal with pagan emperors, just as the Ana-Baptists had to deal with apostate religious rulers. How did they deal with it?

## DEMONSTRATION - NOT - INTERPRETATION

We are not going to *interpret* Scripture to start with, but we are going to *demonstrate* certain undeniable facts of Scripture, which will serve as foundation stones for interpretation. These undeniable facts greatly narrow our options of interpretation, therefore it is vital to sound interpretation that we first analyze these facts.

### *DID THE APOSTLES BELIEVE YOU COULD BE AN OFFICER OF THE STATE AND ALSO A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH?*

About 12 years after Pentecost God opened the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles. They could be baptized into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ without first being Jewish Proselytes. Of all the Gentiles in the world whom God could have used to open this door, who did he choose? He used an officer of the state! He chose not only an officer of the state, but an officer of the state military! Cornelius. Notice carefully the attitude of Scripture as it describes this man BEFORE he was even converted. (Acts 10)

*“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose name is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.”*

Cornelius, in God’s estimation was “devout” and “God fearing” as an officer over 100 soldiers in the Roman army. He also had a devout soldier, who was his servant, whom he sent with other servants to protect them from robbers while they went to get Peter. Why wasn’t Cornelius considered wicked and vile? Why wasn’t he convicted and repentant for being a soldier of the state? We will see.

After this our story takes us to Peter having a vision whereby God makes it clear to him that “what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” Then Peter goes with the servants and preaches the Gospel to Cornelius.

*“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word....Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”*

Peter barely had time to share who Jesus was, and what he offered. Why didn't God give him time to tell Cornelius to stop being a soldier of the state before he poured out the Holy Ghost on him? In Acts II we find from Peter's testimony that he had just “began to speak”. So he didn't have much time to spell out non—resistance.

More than this; Hear what Peter says about God sending an Angel to lead Cornelius to the Gospel: *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”*

Peter testified that, because Cornelius was God-fearing and was working righteousness (already), God had mercy on him and was leading him to salvation. Why no mention of him repenting of his state office? Why was this not made an issue at all anywhere? We shall see.

Now we will skip over to chapter 11 and hear Peter defending himself - not for baptizing a state officer and a military man - but for baptizing an uncircumcised Gentile. We will see that the fact of him being an officer of the state or a soldier was not a problem for them at all; but first lets get the full testimony of Peter on the subject.

*“And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them...And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the Word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”*

Again, nothing at all is said about his position as a soldier or state officer, but only that he was a Gentile.

Once again hear Peter in Acts 15:

*“And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them*

*witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”*

It would be nice if people today were as easy to convince as these Jews were. Peter did not “interpret”, but “demonstrated” by God’s very actions and choices what the obvious conclusion must be. God put no difference between this uncircumcised Gentile officer of the state military and the apostles when he believed on Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Peter's argument is that because God poured out the Holy Spirit while Cornelius was still uncircumcised, that it would be tempting God to force it on him now -- the same argument could be given for the fact that God poured the Spirit upon Cornelius while he was a Roman officer.

In this case we have God choosing for the first Gentile convert — a Roman centurion. There is absolutely no evidence of Cornelius stepping down from his position, or being instructed on passivism before his baptism--all the evidence is to the contrary. He was an officer of the state, and now a member of the body of Christ.

Notice that not one person raised concern about his being a soldier or an officer of the state. Why would they, when Jesus and John the baptist also accepted officers of the state? Publicans (Matt. 21:31-32) and centurions are officers of the state (Matt. 8:5-10). Consider what Jesus was saying about this Centurion in these verses:

*Matt. 8:10 "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Jesus is saying to those around that men like this Roman Centurion will be in heaven, while many Jews without his faith, will be cast out -- Can you accept this from Jesus' mouth?

Zaccheus was an officer of the state. It is obvious Jesus didn’t demand him to change occupations, but indorsed his continuance as an honest and fair tax collector.

John the Baptist, the one with the “baptism of repentance” to “prepare the way of the LORD”, is recorded in Luke 3 in a direct pre-baptism discussion with two different groups who were officers of the state:

*“Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”*

It is obvious to the humble seeker of truth that “do violence to no man” is similar to “neither accuse any falsely”. It does not mean they couldn’t continue as a soldier, because John also says, “be content with your wages”. John wouldn’t tell them to collect a check for being a soldier, and then not fulfill their duty, as this would be living a lie. “Do violence” is the abuse of power, not the use of power in the line of just duty as an officer of the state. There is no doubt that John’s concept of “do violence to no man” meant, “Don’t abuse your power”. When sent to arrest or guard, many soldiers would rough up their captive, extort money, and threaten contrary to the law, and outside of the realm of just and righteous duty. The soldier who was not content with his wages would try to extort money by violence. If this didn’t work, he would accuse them falsely.

Adam Clarke says “Do violence to no man” means, “...do not extort money or goods by force or violence from any. This is the import of the words *neminein concutite*, used here by the Vulgate, and points out a crime of which the Roman soldiers were notoriously guilty, their own writers being witnesses. *Concussio* has the above meaning in the Roman law.”

Adam Clarke, after commenting on the phrase, “neither accuse any falsely”, says, “Bishop Pearce observes that, when the *concussio* above referred to did not produce the desired effect they wished, they often *falsely accused* the persons, which is the reason why this advice is added.”

Yes, I know some will say John was still Old Testament; but he was come to “prepare the way of the LORD”, and the soldiers in Luke 3 were asking him what to do to “prepare for the Messiah’s coming” So, we find John the Baptist didn’t have a problem baptizing repentant publicans and soldiers; the apostles didn’t have a problem baptizing soldiers; and now we will see:

1. Paul’s first recorded convert on his first missionary journey was a governor (proconsul), Sergius Paulus (Acts 13). It is obvious that Paul did not tell the man to step down from his state office. There is absolutely no evidence that he did step down.
2. Paul’s second missionary journey is highlighted with the remarkable conversion story of the Philippian jailor (Acts 16). The Philippian jailor was baptized at midnight, and the next day we find him still the keeper of the prison - thus saith the Scripture. There is no doubt that he didn’t step down upon conversion. Not even a mention of his planning to.
3. Philip converted the Ethiopian eunuch, a Jewish proselyte. He was an eunuch of great authority, and the treasurer of Candace queen of the Ethiopians. It is obvious he didn’t step down from his state office. (Acts 8)
4. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city of Corinth was a church member and a beloved brother. (Romans 16:23, Acts 19:22, 2 Tim. 4:20). It is clear that when Paul wrote Romans, he had not stepped down from his office, though it seems he served with Paul later, possibly after his term was over. Maybe he retired. But, when he was converted, he was the chamberlain of the city.

Now, before you feel so sure that we are heretics, stop and ask yourself, “Would my church baptize these men who were baptized by the apostles?” Why not?

These few examples serve to *demonstrate* the truth, so when we *interpret*, we won’t be off track. You can’t argue with truth *demonstrated*.

I’ve read passivists who declare that during the first three centuries high public officials had to step down to be church members; but they gave no evidence for this. I’ve never seen evidence for this being the apostolic position; but we have given you much to the contrary — and there is more in extra-biblical sources. If you look at the persecutions that took place, you’ll find records of public officials and soldiers being persecuted also.

Now, how is it that one can be an officer of the state, and still obey Christ’s teachings of loving their enemies and not avenging themselves? We must either conclude that this *can be done*, or conclude that these converts *didn’t obey Christ* — *and the apostles didn’t say a word*. Only one conclusion is possible — they obeyed Christ and served in a state office, I’ll explain how.

## IN WHOSE NAME?

*“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: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.” Romans 13:1—6*

The key is that when an officer of the state executes righteously his duty, he is acting, not as an individual avenging himself, but as an officer of the state fulfilling the mandate of God.. What he does is not in his own name or person, but in the name of the state, AND AS A MINISTER OF GOD. The arrest, execution, etc. is in the name of the state, and not a matter of personal hate, envy, vengeance, etc.

Nowhere in the Bible is it implied that a state officer commits murder or breaks God’s Law when executing a duly convicted criminal. God, as the judge of all the universe, *is love!* He is still love when he destroys wicked men with a flood, or sends people to Hell. He is still love when he destroys Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. If God did not execute the penalty of the Law on transgressors he would not be just, holy, and would not love the innocent and obedient.

So, a man, who is commanded to love and forgive even his personal enemies, when serving as an officer of the state, cannot violate the civil law and pardon a criminal because of feelings of pity. He has no right to become personally involved, except to fairly execute the law in the fear of God. He is acting as an officer of the state under the commission of God -- he has no right to act in his own person, as he is not the state. See Deut. 19:13 concerning the execution of a murderer:

*“Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.”*

When a government is just in its dealings, even when it uses the sword under the mandate of a loving God, it is an act of love. The God of love knows that if sinful and wicked men are left in anarchy without accountability and punishment, it will be the innocent and peace loving people who will suffer. Out of love for the innocent and weak, God ordains government to put down evil and protect good. God also is concerned about putting away evil influences. God wants the young to “see and fear” the consequences of going down the road of crime and lawlessness. See Deut. 19:20 concerning the effects of justice:

*“And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.”*

To serve as an officer of God ordained government is a service of love. When a government gives unjust and wicked orders, which are outside the mandate of God’s laws, then Christian state officers must conscientiously object, and obey God rather than men. Most of the time, however, as Paul states in Romans 13, government rewards the good, and punishes the evil.

The individual who obeys Romans 12:14—21 can also be an officer of the state as in Romans 13:1-6. Romans 12 covers his PERSONAL life and attitude, while Romans 13 deals with his DUTY AS A MINISTER OF GOD for the state. He still has the same heart and attitude, He is still walking in the fear of God, which is the very thing that makes his duty just and fair. He is the best magistrate to have! He is much like Jesus will be when he returns to Judge the world in righteousness. If you think love and justice are mutually exclusive or opposing forces, then you don’t understand God’s love or His judgment. God’s love and judgment are not like the Chinese “Yin—Yang”; God’s love is the basis of his judgment. Very different than passivism.

If I am a sheriff, and have personal enemies or insults, I am to obey Christ and not seek vengeance or render evil for evil. In my personal attitude and affairs, I am to be “devout” and “God fearing” just like Cornelius. If I am devout in my personal attitude, then I will be devout in my execution of duty before God..

When I am in the line of duty for the state as a minister of God (Romans 13); then what I do is in the name of the state, it is not personal in nature. If I must execute a criminal, it is not a personal vendetta, but an act of righteous duty to protect the innocent victims and obey God.

The state is not called to overlook criminals, but to deal justice to them. They are called to execute God's wrath and vengeance upon the evil doers. When one is an officer of the state, he is to do his duty before God in an honest and just way.

Go ask a police officer if he is allowed to become personally involved with the insults he receives in the line of duty and lash back in personal vengeance, or if he must ignore what he hears and stay in the line of duty within the law. If a prison guard develops a personal vendetta against a prisoner, and beats him, he will be disciplined for his action. King David, in the Old Testament, even understood that he was not to avenge himself with his own hand — Read I Sam. 25:26—33, He also knew that as a king or soldier he was to protect the innocent.

Now, if I am a Sheriff, and am ordered to commit some injustice or evil work outside the realms of Godly government, I will conscientiously object and suffer as a Christian - just like the servant spoken of in I Peter.

Balthasar Hubmaier, an Anabaptist minister and martyr for the faith, in commenting on Romans 12:19, says concerning good government, "...government has no enemy, hates no one, envies no one, it also then does not desire to wreak vengeance on anyone. Rather, what it does it must do by the mandate of God, who intends through it as his instrument to punish wicked and harmful people. It does this not out of anger, but with a sad heart. Vengeance, however, follows from wrath, but if one wants to avenge oneself out of one's own wrath it is forbidden here, for the vengeance is God's, Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30. He wants to repay evil, Prov. 25:21 - 22. Therefore after the twelfth chapter Paul shows the reason in the thirteenth chapter why we should not avenge ourselves, for God has ordained the government as his servant to bring vengeance. It is the government's duty to protect, punish, and avenge."

As a Christian, it is not appropriate that I should selfishly desire to have the rule and power of government. Jesus rebuked the disciples for seeking to lord over each other. However, to humbly serve your fellow man and meet a need that is pressed upon you is a different situation. To be converted while in office does not require one to step down. A Christian who is in government doesn't "lord over" anyone, but serves in the fear of God. Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple with force because it was his Father's house - that means he was given jurisdiction over this area, and it was his responsibility to maintain "law and order". He wasn't violating nonresistance any more than a parent who spanks, a master who punishes a servant, or a police who keeps the peace. Jesus wasn't very passive that day in the temple.

Recently I've read a passivist's book arguing that Jesus only used the scourge on the animals, not the men. Isn't this silly? Does this man spank his children? Does he also think THAT is Old Testament? After all, it is in the book of Proverbs, ya know. Read the facts and judge for yourself:

*John 2:14 "And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:*

*15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;*

*16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*

Jesus drove the MEN **and** the sheep and oxen out of the temple. After it says He drove "them all" out of the temple, it adds, "and the sheep...". Only proud men try to twist the Scripture for their own purposes.

## DUTY OF LOVE

*"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not lie that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"*  
Prov. 24:11,12

In the Law of Moses (Deut 22) it says that if a damsel is attacked in the city and she doesn't cry out for help, she is considered guilty of the fornication and stoned. If she cries out for help, she is considered innocent. Now, pray tell me what I, as a God fearing man, am to do if I hear the damsel cry out for help? Should I pray for her? Maybe I should tell her that I can't get involved because I don't believe in violence? NO. If I have God's love abiding in me, I will do my best to deliver her from her attacker. This is not just for an officer of the state, but for any person who is able to help this victim.

The girl is supposed to fight back, or she is considered immoral, and the man who hears her is to lay down his life to save her. Has this changed? NOT AT ALL! Would not a woman who yields to the rapist without crying for help still have her innocence questioned? She is still to cry out, flee, and resist. And a person who hears her cry is still supposed to try and deliver her.

This is not contrary to God's love or Jesus' teachings. Common sense tells us that if Jesus or his disciples saw someone trying to molest Martha or Mary, they wouldn't just stand by and weep. There is a duty involved in protecting the weak if it is in our power to do so. This is love. We don't hate anyone, and to stop a criminal from committing a crime is also love. Love has priorities. Jesus didn't say, Love your enemies more than your neighbor or wife. He didn't say, "If a man take your daughter, give him your wife also" -- We must keep his words in the context in which he spoke them. Jesus was clearing the Law of misconceptions, not changing God's Word or correcting it. All He said was in perfect harmony with the verse quoted above - Prov. 24:11,12

Balthasar Hubmaier says that if you forbear to deliver or protect the weak when it is in your power to do so, then you share in the guilt of their death. If my neighbors' wife calls crying and tells me that a drunk man is breaking into her house; I am not going to tell her, "I'm sorry, but I don't believe in violence, so I can't get involved, but I will pray for you." Instead, I would tell my

wife to call the police while I go try to detain the man until they arrive. If the only way I can stop him is by force, then I will use force to protect the innocent. When Paul knew that men sought his life, he reported it to the authorities (Acts 23:17) and endorsed the use of 200+ soldiers to protect him. He carried his defense to the supreme court, and appealed to Caesar to protect him.

Now, there is a difference between me, the head of my house, *protecting my family from a drug or alcohol soaked criminal until the authorities can arrive AND rebelling or warring against God ordained authority, or hatefully responding to people which may be persecuting me for my faith* - This difference I think is quite evident to the open mind. Jesus said you couldn't spoil the house until you bound the strong man -- this was an understood principle of society, and still is. You are responsible to protect from evil those under your jurisdiction.

The Christian's option's when persecuted for the faith are given in Scripture:

1. FLEE: This would apply to all persecution, even from Government. Matthew 10:23 says, "...when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another..."

Paul did this once when the city of Damascus was kept with a garrison. The brethren let him down over the wall in a basket with ropes and he escaped. God broke Peter and others out of jail. To flee from one city to another, or one government to another is the first and best mode of response. Even Jesus used this on a number of occasions.

2. APPEAL TO AUTHORITY: This is what Paul did in Acts 25:11. He appealed to the Roman supreme court for protection against his persecutors. Many passivists won't even appeal to the authorities for protection, because they feel it is wrong.

This includes calling the police, alerting proper authorities, etc. The Christian is not allowed to avenge himself by means of a lawsuit, but, just as Paul, he is allowed to defend himself through legal channels. Paul made use of his Roman citizenship to avoid persecution on a number of occasions. Paul's appealing to Caesar; his Romans citizenship; and reporting the Jews evil plans to the authorities for protection — all this was Paul authorizing the soldiers and magistrates to act on his behalf. If he thought it evil for them to bear swords and act as they did, he was a hypocrite for demanding they do their duty on his behalf.

3. SUFFER: This is what we have already given sufficient Scripture for. We must commit our case to God and cry out for deliverance. We are not allowed to deny Christ or his doctrine in the face of death or torture. If we are faithful unto death, we will receive the crown of eternal life. In every instance love — not hate; Spirit not flesh; and God's will — not our own will must be the motivating factor. The man who has been habitually studying and following the principles of Scripture will receive the Spiritual guidance he needs at the crucial time.

## COMMON QUESTIONS

1. Doesn't the Bible say, Thou shalt not kill?

Yes, and the same God who said that commanded the government officers to kill many people, and judged them sorely when they disobeyed. That command is to individuals to not murder.

2. Do early Christian writings tell of soldiers in the Roman army?

Yes, they certainly do. They also tell of times when these soldiers lost their lives because a pagan emperor ordered all his soldiers to put an oblation on the pagan altar, and they refused.

Once 40 soldiers were marched onto a frozen lake to die because they wouldn't deny Christ when the pagan emperor decided to persecute Christians. Tertullian gives the idea that, if you were converted while a soldier, you were allowed to fulfill your term; but a Christian wasn't supposed to seek military life as a career. This was largely due to all the problems they would face in deciding "when to obey orders" and "when not to" for conscience sake under a pagan government. And the Christian should seek to be free to build the kingdom of God, not serve in the kingdom of men.

3. Did all the Anabaptists believe in non—participation in government and passivism?

No. Balthasar Hubmaier and many others with him believed as I do on this issue. I have this man's writings on the subject.

If you read the writings of Menno Simons, you will find he doesn't believe in this modern Mennonite position, though he probably didn't completely agree with Balthasar Hubmaier. He believed Magistrates could be Christians and saved without stepping down or becoming a passivist. He was much against the Church government acting as a civil government as the state churches were doing; but he was much for having Christian magistrates who used the sword in a just and righteous way, according to Romans 13.

*"Therefore, dear sirs, take heed; this is the task to which you are called: namely, to chastise and punish, in the true fear of God with fairness and Christian discretion, manifest criminals, such as thieves, murderers, Sodomites, adulterers, seducers, sorcerers, the violent, highwaymen, robbers, etc. Your task is to do justice between a man and his neighbor, to deliver the oppressed out of the hand of the oppressor... Such rulers were Moses, Joshua, David,..., O highly renowned, noble lords, believe Christ's Word, fear God's wrath, love righteousness, do justice to widows and orphans....bow to the scepter of him who called you to this high service. Then shall your throne stand firm forever." Pg. 193*

*'Do not boast that you are mighty ones upon the earth, and have great power, but boast in this rather if so be you rule your land in the true fear of God with virtuous wisdom and Christian*

*righteousness to the praise of the Lord...For if you are such kings, then you are not only kings according to the flesh, but also according to the spirit;" Pg. 206*

*"Be pleased, in godly fear, to ponder what it is that God requires of your Highnesses. It is that without any respect of persons you judge between a man and his neighbor, protect the wronged from him who does him wrong, even as the Lord declares, Execute judgment and justice, Assist, against the violent, him that is robbed, Abuse not the stranger, the widow, the orphan, Do violence to no man, and shed no innocent blood, so that your despised servants and unhappy subjects, having escaped the mouth of the lion, may in your domain. ...serve the Lord in quietness and peace..." Pg. 526*

*"Dear sirs, seek God; fear God; serve God with all your might; do justice to widows, orphans, strangers, the sad, and the oppressed; wash your hands of blood; rule your lands with wisdom and peace. Train yourselves in thought, word, and deed upon the crucified Christ Jesus, follow his steps, and then, though your sins be red as blood they shall be white as snow, though they be red as crimson they shall be as wool!" Pg. 529*

*"Paul says, Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil...But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil...you may understand from these Scriptures that you are called of God and ordained to your offices to punish the transgressors and protect the good..." Pg. 550—551*

*"He that saith he abideth in Christ, he, whether he be emperor or king, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. I John 2:6. Beloved lords, this is God's Word. This is the prize and standard after which we should strive...We teach and direct you in the right way which you should walk if you wish to be saved...God is my witness that I desire nothing but that you all may actually be what you are acclaimed to be — noble lords and Christian magistrates..." Pg. 553—554*

It is obvious from the Scriptures and thoughts Menno employs that he didn't believe what modern passivists believe. Menno, who was chosen as head bishop over the Anabaptist movement should be a good representation of what they believed. Is there such thing as a Christian magistrate who follows Jesus? Menno thinks so.

Did you notice that Menno's understanding of "Do violence to no man" is simply "don't shed innocent blood or abuse your office" (Pg. 526). How is it that Mennonites today have veered so far from the common sense and Scriptural understanding that their forefathers had. Menno believed that when a magistrate rightly and fairly executed his office to protect the innocent and punish the wicked that he was "following Jesus"! He uses Old Testament examples to teach what New Testament state officers were to be like! He teaches that emperors and kings can walk as Jesus walked, even in their positions! How different from modern day Mennonites.

## 5. Didn't Jesus tell Peter to put away his sword?

Yes, Jesus told Peter to sheath his sword; but the most amazing thing about this whole passage in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and John 18:10 is that Peter was wearing a sword! PETER, who had been trained by Jesus for 3½ years; PETER, who was one of the inner circle of disciples; PETER, who personally heard the sermon on the mount from the mouth of Jesus and could ask any questions he wanted; PETER, who was with Jesus through his entire ministry - was wearing a sword and intended to use it for self-defense. Isn't that amazing? Not only did he have a sword, but Jesus knew he had a sword. If Jesus had a problem with Peter having and wearing a sword, he would have rebuked him for that long ago. Peter had this sword while he went out preaching and baptizing isn't that amazing! Actually, Jesus had told the disciples proverbially to sell their shirt and buy a sword due to upcoming troubles.

Now, don't get me wrong, I know Jesus didn't really mean for the disciples to start wielding the sword in battle, because history shows none of them did when persecuted. I also know that Peter and the other apostles didn't yet understand everything about Jesus' teachings; but had Jesus been the passivist that many are making him out to be today; he would have gotten rid of Peter's sword a long time ago! It is possible that the show of force, and the fact that they had swords kept the mob from pursuing the disciples, but only taking Jesus - this may have been part of Jesus' purpose.

Jesus told Peter to sheath his sword, not throw it away. John 18:11 has Jesus giving Peter the reason he was not to defend him, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jesus knew his time had come. He also told Peter to do this, because "all those who draw the sword upon their own authority, and against the governing authority, will fall under the judgment of the state sword". Jesus was arrested by the authority of the chief priests and Jewish elders. Had his disciples fought and killed someone, then they would have been accused of criminal action or insurrection. These were not just criminals, but had authority to arrest Jesus.

Jesus never allowed the courts to have any legitimate accusation against him, and He wasn't going to start now. Not only that, but Jesus had told the disciples already that his time was come, and he did not want them to get in the way. He had already rebuked Peter for this once. Now, he could even use their lack of fighting as evidence before Pilate that his Kingdom was not a rival of earthly governments.

Now, let me candidly say, since most passivists who will shout, "all they that take the sword, shall PERISH with the sword" (and interpret *perish* to mean "go to hell"); also hold to the espousal theory about the divorce and remarriage issue -- Let me say to them that since Matthew was only written to the Jews (according to them), then this passage about perishing with the sword must only be for the Jews also. If the "exception clause" only being in Matthew makes it for Jews only, then be consistent and say that "perishing with the sword" is also only for the Jews; because *it is left out of the other 3 gospels!* Be consistent.

## 6. What about the draft?

There is an important principle that determines whether or not a Christian should help the government officers when asked to do so..

IS IT A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE? Is the endeavor that the government is asking help with a just and righteous cause? Is it within the bounds of God ordained government action? Or, are they acting in unholy aggression? Are they seeking wealth at another's expense? If you are uncertain whether you should participate, then be a conscientious objector. Don't violate your conscience before God to spare your life. Your eternal salvation depends on you maintaining a clear conscience before God. "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not in faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). This principle applies to anything that could defile your conscience before God.

If the local Sheriff comes to my ranch and tells me there is a group of criminals that plan to shoot up our little country town, and he needs a posse to protect the town. What do I do? Do I tell him that I am a Christian, and therefore I cannot help him? He is the minister of God for this purpose; but I cannot help him; because helping this minister of God do his God given duty and lay down his life to save innocent lives is sinful, Is this good sense?

Now, on a larger scale, when the United States Government (who has kicked God out of its' education system, accepts sodomites in the military, and promotes much ungodliness) tells you it needs your help to fight a foreign country — How can you know who is being the bad guy? Maybe the USA is being a global bully to maintain its' money and oil supply. Who knows? Well, if you are unsure about the political maneuvering behind the scenes, then you should conscientiously object. It becomes a matter of personal faith and conscience before God, and Christians ought to forbear those who disagree with them on this subject. We will all answer to Christ for maintaining a pure conscience and doing only those things that we can do in faith that it pleases God.

Balthasar Hubmaier, an Anabaptist minister and martyr for the faith, writes concerning Romans 13:1-7:

*"...everyone should be subject to the government. Believing or unbelieving, we should be obedient and subject to it. He points out the reason. For there is no government which does not come from God. Therefore obedience consists in all that which is not against God, for God has not ordered the government against himself. Now if the government wants to punish the evil ones—as it should for the sake the their soul's salvation—and is yet not strong enough to deal with the evil ones, then it is now to command its subjects through bells and various alarm signals, letters, or through other summons. Subjects are obligated for the sake of the salvation of their souls to sustain and help their superiors so that the evil ones are annihilated and rooted out according to the will of God. Nevertheless, subjects should first test well the spirit of their governments, as to whether they are not moved and compelled more out of arrogance, rather than out of love of the common good and*

*territorial peace. For that would not be to use the sword according to the order of God. However, if you recognize that the government punishes the evil only so that the righteous remain at rest and unharmed, then help, counsel, and sustain it, as often and as much as you are commanded. Thereby, you fulfill the order of God and do his work and not a human work. However, if a government is childish or foolish, yea, perchance it is not competent at all to reign, then you may escape from it legitimately and accept another, if it is good. For on account of an evil government God has often punished an entire land. If the seeking of another cannot be done lawfully and peacefully, and not also without great damage and rebellion, then one must endure it, as the one which God has given us in his wrath, and as if he desires to chastise us on account of our sins, as those who deserve no better.*

*Whoever now does not want to help the government save widows, orphans, and other oppressed ones, as well as to punish vandals and tyrants, resists the order of God and will receive a judgment from him, for he acts against the mandate and order of God, who wants the righteous to be protected and the evil punished. However, if you are obedient you should truly know that you are obedient not to the government or to people but to God himself, and you have become a special servant of God just as the government itself also is nothing other than a servant of God.*

*However, Paul testifies openly that the government has the power and authority to kill the evil when he says: "The authority does not bear the sword in vain." If now the government did not have the authority to kill, why should the sword then hang at its side? It would then bear it in vain, which Paul cannot bear. He also explicitly adds that the authority is the servant of God. Where are now those who say a Christian cannot use the sword? For if a Christian could not be a servant of God, could not fulfill the mandate of God without sinning, then God would not be good. He would have made an order which a Christian could not fulfill without sin. That is blasphemy.*

*Accordingly I counsel you faithfully, dear brothers, return and repent. You have stumbled badly and produced much trash everywhere against God and against brotherly love under the appearance of spirituality and the pretense of humility. God knows whom I mean." Balthasar Hubmaier, pgs. 520,521.*

Here, Balthazar is writing to correct passivist Anabaptists. He also says that if the judge is righteous to condemn the criminal to death, then the executioner is no less righteous to fulfill the order of the judge. He points out faithful men like Benaiah, in the Old Testament, who fulfilled the orders of King Solomon. Then he adds, "Therefore the judges, governments, and executors of justice are called servants of God in the Scripture and not murderers, Rom. 13:4. God judges, sentences, and kills through them, and not they themselves. From this it follows that those who do not want to kill the evildoer but let them live, are acting and sinning against the commandment: "You should not kill." For whoever does not protect the righteous kills him and is guilty of his death as much as the one who does not feed the hungry."

It is interesting that passivists will pay the executioner, the judge, the police, etc. to arrest and execute a criminal — with their taxes; and then think they have no part in it. When God commanded you to pay governors to do their jobs, God made you a part of it. God called them his ministers, and told you to pay them, honor them, and pray for them.

Yet, some have foolishly said that those in government are a special class that cannot believe because “the world needs governors, and Christians cannot be governors”. I’d like to see someone find this in the Bible!

7. Didn’t Jesus say, “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” implying that his servants would never fight?

No, Actually Jesus said, “. . . if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered unto the Jews;”. This is what Jesus said. I would like to know why in every passivist tract I have read that they only quote part of the statement in order to give a false impression of Jesus’ statement! I think they realize that to quote the whole sentence gives their case away.

It is obvious what Jesus meant when you read the whole sentence. It is proof that he was not rivaling any earthly kingdom, because his disciples did not fight to deliver him. This is why Jesus told Peter to put away his sword — He did not want to give a wrong impression and opportunity for his enemies to accuse him.

As a friend pointed out after reading the manuscript, “Jesus said, ‘now’ is my kingdom not from hence. His kingdom will indeed replace those of this world, in flaming fire and vengeance, at his second coming. But we are still in the ‘now’, and his servants do not advance his kingdom by fighting”.

8. Doesn’t non-resistance go beyond the prohibition of personal vengeance to the point of forgoing legitimate means of redress (I Cor.6:7)?

I don’t believe “non—resistance” goes to the point of foregoing all legitimate means of redress.

*2Cor. 6:1-8, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame, Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.”*

2Cor. 6:1—8 actually establishes a legitimate means of redress between *brethren*. This passage has to do with quarrels between brethren. To appeal to Caesar when attacked by evil, men is not outside the realms of non—resistance, or Paul would. have been condemned for doing it. He appealed to the Law concerning his Roman citizenship many times to keep from being beaten and imprisoned. He appeared before a number of kings and finally Caesar to appeal for just protection.

9. Hasn't the church come to greater light over the course of 2000 years?

I believe that the apostles were the only ones who could claim to have “all truth” as given by the Holy Spirit. I don't believe the “church” is growing to greater light and revelation as some believe. Individuals are gaining greater understanding of “the faith once delivered unto the saints”; but God is not adding to that “faith” any new revelations. Therefore we are commanded to hold fast the truth handed to us by the apostles, and be followers of them; not assuming we can improve upon their teaching (Acts 20:26—31).

10. Is government office a fitting and honorable pursuit for Christians?

Government office, in general, is not a wise pursuit for believers, as we have mentioned already. I think we would agree that there is a difference between Christians pursuing politics or military life, and Christians remaining in a position where grace found them. “Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather” (I Cor. 7:21). We are simply establishing the fact that *faith* and *government involvement* are not mutually exclusive. If there were a situation where a community was predominantly Christian, obviously God still wants officers for the state, and Christians would need to fill the spot. I believe it is a falsehood to think God has ordained something to be done by man that believers cannot righteously do; and even do much better than lost men. I don't believe that only lost men can fill the office of Government. That would really cause a problem in a community if, due to the conversion of the sheriff and judge, the only lost men were the murders in the jail. Nor do I believe that we are to change society by government. We, as the salt of the earth, are to change society through the preaching of the gospel.

11. Did the apostles accept men in government the way they accepted men in polygamous and mixed faith marriages?

No; the church accepted those in mixed faith marriages and polygamy; but these were not offices that *had* to be filled. They were not God ordained positions. Those in these positions were not called “ministers of God” for a God ordained work.

12. You seem to say that what one does as an officer of the state, he is not personally responsible for. Are you saying that when there is a conflict between two authorities, the authority you are under at the time has priority? Where will this lead? The same logic allows a clerk to say, “I am not responsible for selling liquor to this customer. I am merely acting as an

employee of the owner of the store, and it is he who is accountable, not I.” How much of the church’s salting influence in the world is lost because, “I don’t personally approve of this or believe this way, but (my boss, our church, the law, etc.) says it (must/mustn’t) be done?” How much of the world’s wickedness is done by people who don’t like what they are doing, but circumstance or authority seems to require it? Is this good doctrine?

ANSWER:

When two authorities are in conflict, we made it clear that one cannot violate his conscience. We must educate our conscience, but not violate it.

It is indeed good doctrine that a person can be a godly Christian and still be in government service. Just because he is not personally hating or avenging when administering vengeance is not what makes him righteous; but that in *both* positions he is working righteousness - it is righteous not to personally avenge or hate; but it is also righteous for “ministers of God” to punish evil doers and protect the innocent. He doesn’t have to say, “I’m doing it, but I don’t believe in it”. He should believe in it! He should get up in the morning and pray for God to help him be a good sheriff. The liquor salesman cannot do this. An employee or a servant is commanded to be willing to suffer for righteousness sake (1 Peter 2:11—22).

The godly executioner will probably visit the cells of those who are to be executed and try to bring them to Christ. He will feel sad and regret the wreckage that sin brings; but just as all godly men in the OT, and just as Peter with Ananias and Sapphira; he will do his duty before God, and for God. God has given the civil authorities a charge to keep - even Jesus didn’t stop the process of government for the thief on the cross. He deserved to die; he repented and believed; but he still died. There is no divided loyalty when a government is acting in justice, according to its God ordained purpose. Duties do not conflict. Think how it would be if your son became part of a rebel gang and killed someone; and you were the judge -- you would have a broken heart, but you would still have to sentence your son impartially for his crime. The same would be true if you were the sheriff, and your son became leader of a criminal gang. You would still love your son, but may have to be the one to shoot him, if it came down to a showdown -- Your heart would be broken, but you would still have to do your duty. Is this how God felt when He sent the flood? The Bible says it grieved Him at His heart.

When Government becomes crooked, steps outside its boundary, and begins to punish the good and protect the evil; a believer must conscientiously object to *that* — not to the office of government. When a government demands an unbiblical oath, allegiance or to place an oblation on a pagan altar, the believer must object to *that* — not to the office of government.

The principles are eternal and unchanging. Circumstance may cause *other* principles to come into play, but doesn’t change the original principles.

13. How do we know what God is doing? How do we determine “just cause”? Protecting one’s homeland against foreign invaders, saving our innocent wives and children, would surely seem an easy call. That is why Jeremiah had such a hard time telling them to surrender without a

fight to the pagan Babylonians who made not even a pretense of worshipping God. They thought he should be executed for treason, Christian's have not had a good track record of discerning on which side God wants them to fight. Or is it possible that sometimes God expects his followers to shoot at each other?

ANSWER:

Jeremiah wasn't telling the soldiers, governors and kings that *in this circumstance* their office and duty was unholy; but that they would lose and die unless they surrendered to the Chaldeans. They weren't sinning by defending their citizens; but by not listening to God's instructions for this particular circumstance, they were causing themselves more harm. An Israelite should object to fighting *with* the Chaldeans against his own people; and an Israelite should also object to fighting when the prophet of God warns them against it. God was telling them that *if they surrendered* it would be better for them; not that he considered *government office* as sinful.

If Christians would simply live by *principle* and not *feeling*, they wouldn't be shooting at each other, nor making poor judgments. For a general, king, or governor to surrender or seek terms of peace rather than lose a battle is not against the principles of government. The problem is that many don't want to suffer for standing for what is right, so they continue to go with the flow, even though they know it is not right. The man who is obeying the principles and seeking the leading of the Spirit of God will be led into the right path.

14. Isn't it true that when Christians hold government office they are distracted from their main objective of building Christ's Kingdom?

ANSWER:

As far as God's children being distracted from their main objective: I am just as distracted from that main objective when I am up re-roofing a house as the sheriff is when he punches the time clock. I think a sheriff actually can do more productive ministering at his job than I might, because he is continually dealing with people in need. The Ethiopian Eunuch still went up to Jerusalem to worship. John the baptist didn't expect the publican or soldiers to give up their occupation. There is definitely a principle to consider in Christ calling Matthew to leave his occupation to be a preacher; but not Zaccheus. Separation of church and state is a separation of church government and state government. Not all church members are bishops or evangelists; but many are common laborers, servants, masters, magistrates, tax collectors, etc.

15. Since the faithful Christian is an enlisted soldier in a war being fought not with carnal (physical) weapons but with spiritual, doesn't taking up physical weapons seem like entangling himself with the affairs of this life, to the displeasure of his Commander? Can a man do both without sacrificing one or the other?

ANSWER:

Only those who don't see that "Christians can do all that God ordains for man to do", will think you can't combine spiritual warfare and civil service in the same individual. Using spiritual

weapons to advance the church and physical weapons to keep peace and justice are not in conflict, but in cooperation. The same God ordained both for his glory. Jesus will someday wear both hats as He rules with a rod of iron, and calls forth his enemies to be slain before him (Luke 19:27). It is certainly easier for me to raise my children for God where there is freedom to do so, and not Islamic rule, or communism, etc.

Today God takes vengeance through men in God ordained government. Jesus avenged the apostles and prophets on Jerusalem through the Roman Government in AD 70 (Luke 21:20—22). Jesus never avenged himself of personal attacks, but did so in his governmental position as King of Kings (Luke 11:49-51; Rev. 6:9,10)

Just as God has ordained for men to “work or not eat”, He has ordained that some men’s work consist of Government duty. God has never ordered an office for men to fill that HIS men cannot fill better than others. God did not ordain an office to minister for him that could ONLY be filled by the ungodly -- If you believe this, you have deep rooted problems in your theology about the origin of evil, the goodness of God, etc.

16. I revere George Washington as a great man of Christian faith. Where does the state find such men, if not from the church? I assume it is a result of the church’s influence beyond its members, since such cannot hold state office and be a member of the church. Or, maybe God uses those who have misunderstood his instructions to be the magistrates, etc’.

ANSWER:

Was George Washington a great man of Christian faith? Then he is also a good church member. If he cannot be a church member, then he is not a great man of Christian faith at all. I have read Mennonite confessions that say, “We must pray that the Lord would recompense them (our rulers), here and in eternity, for all the benefits, liberties, and favors which we enjoy under their laudable administration.” Now, if they think these people, who cannot be a member of their church, will be in Heaven; then, they have a conflict of principle. Anyone who can go to Heaven, can also be a member of the church of Jesus Christ, and ought to be -- otherwise excommunication has lost all meaning.

How is it that they think God is going to recompense these men in eternity? If they cannot be a member of the body of Christ, then they are headed for Hell. There may be those who go to Heaven who, though walking in all the light they have, have held to a practice that keeps them away from my particular fellowship; but that practice cannot be a God-ordained one or my church administration is wrong.

To say that God can only use those who “misunderstand” his instructions to fulfill a God ordained office is not good doctrine in my opinion. Many times God uses people who have misunderstood his instructions, but that it *must be so* is a false principle.

17. David Bercot’s book, *The Kingdom That Turned The World Upside Down*, teaches passivism; and reveals some of the warped ideology common among them. He never speaks of “God

honoring civil magistracy keeping the peace, protecting the innocent, and punishing evil doers” but only speaks of “WAR, AGGRESSION, etc.” when dealing with government action and avoiding participation in Government. His attitude toward government’s actions is far different than Paul’s. Let me illustrate with two questions that he poses and answers:

QUESTION #1. But doesn’t Jesus’ words apply merely to private retribution - not to state—sponsored actions?

His answer: “Some Christians maintain that if we pay back evil for evil as *individuals*, it’s wrong. However, if we do it under *state* authority, it doesn’t violate Jesus’ teaching.” From here, Bercot argues that if something is wrong for an individual, then it is wrong for the state. He points out that Jesus’ teaching about not rendering an “eye for an eye” was for the state also.

This is so shortsighted. This would. only apply to two *states* or governments in dealing with one another; but what about punishing evil doers? I am not allowed to catch the robber who robbed me and execute him — that would be vengeance and taking the law into my own hands; But for the state to catch and execute that same robber is God ordained justice and righteous government action. Paul tells us the government officers who did this are ministers of God for the very purpose of executing God’s wrath against the evil ones. We are even told to pay them to do it with our taxes! Jesus’ words about not seeking an “eye for eye” vengeance against someone does not mean it is wrong for the government to catch and execute criminals or defend its’ borders against invading criminals. God’s Law commanded governments to deal out justice - eye for eye, but it didn’t give this power to individual civilians.

Bercot compares a Christian who serves in a Government office and helps bring justice and order in the community by arresting criminals, acting as a judge, etc. -- He compares these people’s actions in government service to that of a Christian being commanded by an evil government to offer sacrifice to an idol, abort a baby, etc. Now, he doesn’t do this directly, but indirectly as he tries to keep his readers focused on WAR; but in his logic he is including the police officer who risks his life to bring peace and order to the community. This is deception and folly.

QUESTION #2 But can’t we wear two hats? When I’m in an army uniform and am part of the U.S. Army, it isn’t *me*, the individual, doing the killing. It’s the United States government. And the United States government has been entrusted with the sword by God, according to Romans 13.

His answer: “Actually, a real—life situation similar to my illustration recently happened. A few years ago, the United States conducted a war against the Taliban regime of Afghanistan. In the course of the war, the U. S. Army captured an American citizen named John Walker Lindh, who had joined the Taliban fighters. Now, let’s suppose that Mr. Lindh had made the following defense at his trial: ‘I, John Walker Lindh, as an individual. American citizen, would never do anything to harm another American. Yes, it’s true that I joined the Taliban army. But at the time I joined, they were not at war with the United States. Whatever actions I took after that were

not mine - they were the Taliban government's actions. I did not fight against the United States as an individual. I only fought as a unit of the Taliban government. Therefore, I am innocent.' Do you think an American jury would have accepted that? I think not"

OK, David Bercot, let's analyze your illustration which tries to show that there is no difference between me killing as a part of government, or me killing in my own name and authority.

First, we aren't going to always run to WAR and aggression between two governments; but, like Paul, we are going to look at the normal activities of God ordained government in the use of the sword -- punishing evil and protecting the innocent. We all agree that aggression due to pride, greed, hate, etc. is wrong for government as well as individuals; but you are not just attacking that. You are indirectly and cautiously attacking the police, sheriff, judge, jailor, etc. Governments ARE supposed to seek peace with other governments (almost like individuals are); but governments ARE NOT supposed to seek peace with criminals — or they are disobeying God!

Second, you are indirectly saying that the Sheriff, when he kills a criminal in the line of duty is like John Lindh fighting against the U.S.. You are saying that Jesus sees that Sheriff as fighting against His Heavenly Kingdom; and will see him just like any other murderer who kills for hate, greed, etc. This is foolish and shortsighted at best. *Would the United States government hold John Lindh innocent if he hadn't fought, but paid and **supported** the Taliban Army with his money? No, they would consider him just as much of an enemy of their government. But Jesus commands his people to pay and support the sheriff to shoot the criminal!*

What difference does it really make whether you are the sheriff who catches the criminal, the judge who sentences him, the jailor who holds him until his execution, the man who flips the switch, *or the taxpayer who pays them to do it!*? God doesn't see you or them as fighting against His Kingdom. They are actually called ministers of God! Would the U.S. call John Lindh. a "minister of the United States President"? Paul baptized the Philippian jailor at midnight, but he was still the Philippian jailor the next day!

All the non—resistance articles I have read from passivists include this same shortsighted logic and anti—government attitude. Instead of forming your idea's from the "early church fathers", you need to meditate on the Scripture until you gain the Scriptural view of God's Kingdom.

## CONCLUSION

Dear friends, be humble and willing to follow the whole counsel of God! Don't abuse what we have said and be warmongers; macho men; sports- competition-violence fans, hateful, proud, vengeful, etc. Nor should you abuse what we have said to be anti- government, passivist, pacifist, effeminate, etc. We uphold all the righteous virtues and characteristics of self-denying love, mercy, patience, meekness, kindness, compassion, and non-vengeance.

We also uphold the righteous execution of God ordained government. God put the sword at their side, not to chastise only, but to execute. Capital punishment is God's order at the mouth of two or three witnesses for those who have committed crimes worthy of death. May you stand against the tide of evil and proclaim truth without partiality!

## SHOULD WE VOTE?

This question naturally follows the subjects we have been discussing. More than any of the other subjects, this subject is a matter of personal conviction and conscience. Because of this I will share my personal opinion.

I believe that when a government cares enough to get the consensus of society (or has to by law), then society has an obligation to respond. The ungodly will always be quick to push for their way; and if the godly doesn't stem the tide; they can't complain much about the situation. This primarily has to do with voting on ISSUES, not CANDIDATES. *Issues* are right or wrong, *candidates* may be deceitful or uncertain. *Issues* are usually black and white. *Candidates* may be right on one issue, but dreadfully wrong on others. The best you can usually hope for in voting for candidates is to find the "lesser of two evils" -- and that can be debatable. By voting for a candidate you share some responsibility for what he does -- not only the good, but also the bad.

So, in order to be the salt of the earth in our local setting, I say YES, we should vote on ISSUES. Voting for candidates is very uncertain, and I will leave that to the individual's conscience before God.

BUT SHOULD I BE A REGISTERED VOTER AT ALL? This complicates the matter, and will depend on the individual circumstances, the strings attached, etc.. If there is a reason why you cannot conscientiously be a registered voter, then obviously you can't vote.

The Bible speaks very clearly on one certain way you can influence your government. *"I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,"* I Tim. 2:1—4

The hour you spend driving to the place to vote, standing in line, voting, and driving home — if spent in prayer for God's hand to lead would be more productive than your vote. You vote every day of your life, by the way you live, what kind of society you want. Every time you buck the church standard and want a more worldly lifestyle, you vote for the destruction of the morals of society at large. Every time you pursue carnal appetites, you vote for a carnal society. Every time you are selfish, you vote for a selfish society. Every time you *don't* witness for Jesus,

you vote for a godless society. Every time you *don't* rebuke evil, you vote for an evil society. Every time you dress fashionable, wear makeup, jewelry, dress immodest, watch TV, etc.; you vote for a licentious society. DON'T THINK A GOOD PRESIDENT CAN CHANGE ALL THIS! The Christian Church is the salt of the earth that will change society, not the government! If there is a part of being salt that requires you to vote, and you have a conscience from God that demands you vote, then vote - but make sure you put more weight on your testimony and prayer life, than on your voting.

## GOVERNMENT AID? SINFUL OR NOT?

Many people consider it sinful and wicked to accept any form of government aid. Is it sinful? Where does the Bible say this? If it is sinful, then it is also wrong for the government to offer it. If it is sinful, then we must not allow church members to do it. If it is sinful, then we need to preach against it like we do against other sins.

Others will maintain that the reason it is wrong is because the church is supposed to take care of its own. This means that it is only wrong for Christians. What if a believer stands for truth and is put out of the "church" for this. What if he and some others leave the established or state church and meet on their own in order to be faithful to truth. What if they do not have the means financially to help their brethren in a crisis? Then is it sinful to accept charity from another source? What about a government source?

Because many are anti—government in their thinking, they think it is evil for needy people to accept any type of charity from a government program. There are many things to be considered on a subject like this one: Is the government setting a trap or helping its people? Is the recipient truly needy or just a hobo who abuses the system? how will this affect later generations? Do the Scriptures forbid the poor and needy from receiving help? What strings are attached to the receiving of government aid?

## HAS GOD ORDAINED GOVERNMENT AID?

*Ex. 23:10, 11 "And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy olive yard."*

*Lev. 19:9—10, "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy*

*vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God. ~*

*Duet. 24:19—22, “When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and has forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.”*

In Daniel 4 we have Daniel interpreting a dream for Nebuchadnezzar. The purpose of the dream was to show all living that God is ultimately in charge of “who was king” (see vs. 17,32,&37). Daniel’s advice to the king was this: “*Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.*” (vs. 27).

Daniel basically told him that God sets up who he wishes, and God cares for the poor--so if you want God to keep you in power, help the poor with the power you have in government. Now, if Nebuchadnezzar did this, would it be wrong for the poor to receive it?

I think we can see that God set up a “welfare” system in the Old Testament whereby the poor could “eat the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table” like Lazarus. It was a part of the Law, and therefore was a government program. It seems rather obvious that it was right for the rich to obey this law, and also it was not evil for the poor to gratefully partake. Being a “sluggard” or “leech” (see Proverbs) was evil. To abuse a good system when you are not in a legitimate state of need. is sinful; but to be poor, or to accept charity is not sinful — even if it is from a government program. This is the Old Testament teaching on the subject; but what about the New?

## WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

*Matt. 12:1, “At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. “ (Mk 2:23; Luke 6:1)*

Here we find Jesus in a state of poverty with hungry disciples making use of the “welfare” program that was set up by God in the Law. See Duet. 23:24,25:  
*“When thou comest into thy neighbor’s vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor’s standing corn.”*

## WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION?

We are not ready to make any conclusions yet. First let us look at some warnings:

1. *Prov. 23: 1—8, “When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat. Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee, The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words,”*

The warning: Don’t be dazzled with the hospitality of a ruler who has an evil eye (double motive). He may be trying to lead you on for his own evil purposes. Be careful not to be lured into “signing on the dotted line” without knowing what is really going on. Beware of government “deals”. In the same note: beware of “get rich quick” schemes in the same way.

2. *II Thess. 3:10—12, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”*

The warning: Don’t fall into the trap of thinking the brethren, church, government, society, etc. owes you anything! If you are needy, it doesn’t mean somebody owes you lunch! If you partake of charity, because you are in an emergency situation and cannot pay your own way, be humble and grateful; but don’t let up on your own striving to pay your own way. Don’t let up on prayer, thriftiness, careful planning, sweat, and tears — just because you know there is something to fall back on in an emergency.

So many people take unnecessary risks because they have insurance, church help, or government programs to fall back on. *This is what is sinful.*

## THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

1. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that in order to lengthen his tranquillity as a ruler he should leave off his sins, and help the poor. Was it right for the poor to accept this help? Of course it was.

2. Consider all, the times in history when kings and rulers have opened their coasts and allowed persecuted Christians to settle in their realm. This was government aid. Every land grant given, to Christian settlers was government aid.

3. Many people strongly criticize someone in America if they accept government help in a time of emergency; but these same people have relatives and sister churches in Canada who partake of socialized medicine and don't criticize them. What is wicked in one country is accepted in another. This is not consistent.

4. In America we have a strange system. We have hospitals and doctors whose prices are not set for consumer incomes, but for the insurance companies. If Hospitals and doctors had to set their rates according to what consumers could afford, we would all, gladly pay; but that is not the case. The insurance companies in America have caused all the medical pricing to rise much higher than the average person can pay on his own.

Now, what if you can't pay, and you don't have medical insurance (because you can't afford it either)? Can you just keep your sick child home and pray? If he dies can you just suffer the Loss and go on? No! The government demands you get medical attention for a sick child. If you don't, they will prosecute you for negligence and take away your other children.

What if you tell them you can't afford the outrageous prices, and you can't afford insurance? They will tell you that they have a program to help people in your condition. So, you can either use their program or be prosecuted and lose all your children. Get the picture! The government is not evil for helping people who need help this is exactly what a good government should do! It is only right for them to help pay for something that they demand you to do which you cannot afford. It is right that they protect children against abuse (though they often do it wrong), and it is right that they put their money where their mouth is.

Is it right for a Christian nation to help the poor in other countries? Is it right for other countries to accept this help? I believe so; and I also believe it is right for that same government to help its own people who are needy. Just because some abuse the system, it doesn't mean every person who uses it is evil.

If the government demands that I use their expensive system with all its expensive regulations, then it is only fair and right that they are willing to help pay for it. What would you do if you were the king, and wanted to help the poor in your land?

Don't think I am one who quickly accepts help. I have broken my hand and my wrist at different times and didn't even have them looked at by a doctor, because I didn't have the money to pay for it, and didn't want to get help from a program. However, as willing as I am to suffer and pray through a trial with my own health; I am not going to watch my child die, just because I am too proud to accept help when it is available. At the present time I do not have to deny Jesus Christ or my faith in him, just because I accept help from the rich. If the time comes that I do have to deny Christ for help, then I will just watch my child die in God's will.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus: Lazarus was sick and couldn't provide for himself, so he ate the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table — was this denying

Christ? Jesus obviously didn't think so. Jesus didn't say Lazarus should have just trusted God to provide any more than himself and his disciples when they ate out of the fields. If God set up the system, then *that is how God provides!*

In our government, we are not told to leave the corners of our fields, etc. as in the Old Testament, We are not all farmers as they were. Our government tells them to "glean their fields" and give that part to the government, and then the government does the distribution. This is similar to what Joseph set up in Egypt. God made it to where everyone lived on welfare after a while - and, Yes, the government ended up owning them, and their land but they survived. Our government collects according to income and makes distribution to the poor through special programs. This is not much different than the Old Testament plan in *principle*.

*IF THE CHURCH CAN TAKE CARE OF ITS OWN, THEN DO IT. BUT DON'T BE TOO PROUD TO ACCEPT HELP IN A CRISIS.*

5. PROBLEMS IN A CHURCH SETTING: Even in a church, setting where people believe 'in the church taking care of the needs, *and they have the means to accomplish this*, there may be some problems.

The church must monitor and regulate the incomes and spending of its members in order to have a fair and productive program. Why? Because one brother may live very thrifty and save money back for a time of need. Another brother may invest all his profit back into assets. Another brother may just be a little lazy and loose with his spending. Another may get in debt over his head and need bailed out to protect the testimony of the church. When a crisis comes up — who has the cash to pay for it? The most righteous one of the bunch—who has lived carefully, sacrificed, and saved—is the only one with CASH. The one who is trying to get rich, has all his money tied up in assets, which may not be easy to liquidate. The lazy one has no money.

This can work nicely if you have enough people, enough cooperation and strong leadership to maintain fairness among brethren. This was a challenge even for the apostles in Jerusalem.

The question we are asking is: Is it *sinful* to accept government help if you haven't this type of help, and you can't pay for it yourself? No, it is not sinful or shameful.

Yes, the brethren should all try to save and pay their own way. Yes, the brethren should. all try to help each other, but this may not always work. There may not always be the means or enough brethren. *To compromise on truth just so you can stay in a group to maintain "church insurance" is much more shameful than having to accept government help in a crisis BECAUSE YOU STOOD FOR TRUTH AND STOOD ALONE. This is exactly what happened to Jesus and his disciples!* This also happened to many Anabaptist brethren and other persecuted Christians.

## CONCLUSION

DON'T BE SO QUICK TO JUDGE, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE BIBLICAL GROUNDS FOR IT! Live your convictions, and don't violate your conscience; but don't shame someone who has not done something shameful.

## IT IS NOT SINFUL

to accept help from government programs,

## BUT IT MAY BE DANGEROUS.

(It is dangerous in the same way to accept help from a church, if it causes you to compromise on truth for that church. It is dangerous in the same way to receive a paycheck, if it causes you to compromise truth to keep getting that paycheck.)

-Mark Bullen