

The Christian's Duty To Government
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“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... Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.”
Romans 13: 1, 3.

Every careful reader of the New Testament will observe that two distinct kingdoms are recognized – the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ. Through transgression, man's heart became hardened, consequently the necessity arose for government and for rulers with authority to subdue evil and protect the good, so that order might be maintained in the world. All such rulers are armed with the sword and with power to use it as necessity may require. The law delivered to Moses formed the first code of civil laws given to mankind and the principles of justice embodied therein are still the basis for the laws of civilized lands. These kingdoms with their rulers are called by the apostles, “the powers that be.”

The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom composed of persons who have repented of their sins, and have been renewed in heart through the acceptance of Christ as their Savior, and who through love strive to obey His teachings. To the citizens of the spiritual kingdom the apostle Paul addressed the words of our text, reminding them of the duty they owe to those in authority, which admonition reaches to believers in all ages.

When Christ was upon earth He left the worldly governments then in existence just where they were. He gave no instructions to them, but taught His disciples how they should deport themselves toward them. The doctrines He taught cannot be practiced by the subjects of a kingdom ruled by the sword, neither is it intended that they should be. His commands are given only to His followers, who constitute a separate and distinct kingdom ruled by love.

Historians refer to the purity of the Christian religion of the first century and to the simple and upright lives of those who embraced it. In *Historians' History of the World, Vol. 6*, page 313, reference is made to the virtues of this new sect as they were then called. And great surprise is also expressed that the rulers did not “protect an order of men who yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and of government.” This plainly indicates that Christians were not a part of the government, that they were persecuted on account of their faith, and that they did not resist the powers but submitted to them. This fully agrees with Christ's declaration, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

In the New Testament many instructions are given the Christians, teaching them how they should walk in love toward one another and to all men, and how they should deport themselves toward the government under which they live, but no where are they taught how to make laws or to enforce them in the worldly kingdom. Therefore when Paul directs that every soul be subject to the higher powers, he evidently means that Christ's followers shall submit to them and in no case resist them.

The duty of the Christian toward the government is submission, the same today, as in the first century. Christ is his head, his example and his refuge. If Christians never resist the powers, but always submit to them, they will be at the mercy of the government. In every century there

were those who were conscientiously opposed to war, and who would rather have forfeited their lives than to take up arms and fight. When this attitude is taken by Christians of today it can not be said that they do not submit to the powers that be. It is the privilege of every government to call upon its subjects to defend it, but should there be citizens of another country dwelling among them they would not be subject to such a call. Such persons might own property and enjoy the protection of the government, but they would have no voice in selecting rulers or dictating to them as long as they remain citizens of another country. This is the position the follower of Christ holds in this world. No matter where he lives, he has become a citizen of Christ's kingdom which is not of this world, but is a peaceable kingdom ruled by love. Therefore he cannot consistently vote men into office or hold any office in a kingdom that is established and defended by the sword.

Nevertheless, he owes a duty to government under which he lives and this duty is one of continual submission. If the property or money he has accumulated is demanded by the government, he gives it without resistance. If he is called upon to be a soldier, he will acknowledge that the Head of the kingdom to which he belongs forbids him to resist evil, and requires him to love his enemies. When called upon to register in time of war he will obey, but when asked to take up arms and destroy life he will plead conscientious and submit to whatever punishment may be inflicted upon him. He will be willing for forfeit his possessions, and to be banished from the country, rather than to contend with the government, or to violate the command of Christ his head. A Christian or a body of Christians will never wilfully criticize or interfere with the government under which they live. They will be honest and industrious and as long as any of them are blessed with means they will not knowingly permit any of their brethren to depend upon public charity.

History informs us that in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and in many other countries in centuries gone by there were found a defenseless, law abiding people who, owing to their frugality and honesty, stood in high esteem with the government under which they lived, but who refused to be magistrates or soldiers.

Those who uphold the true non-resistant doctrine today have great reason to thank God for the kind and beneficent government under which they live. They should esteem it a privilege to submit to any demand made upon them, especially since they enjoy liberty of conscience. All persons enjoying such a blessed privilege should be impressed that it is a solemn duty to report at full value all taxable property, and should make no effort to evade payment of any tax, or to use their influence to have what may seem burdensome taxes or laws repealed.

They will also pray for those who rule in the kingdom of this world, recognizing them as "God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing." They willingly "render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honor to whom honor." For "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." Romans 13.

Our brethren, both in Canada and in the United States, owe gratitude to their rulers and should greatly appreciate the religious liberty which they enjoy. May we be consistent non-resistants and by the help of God prove ourselves worthy to live under such Powers that we may have praise of the same.