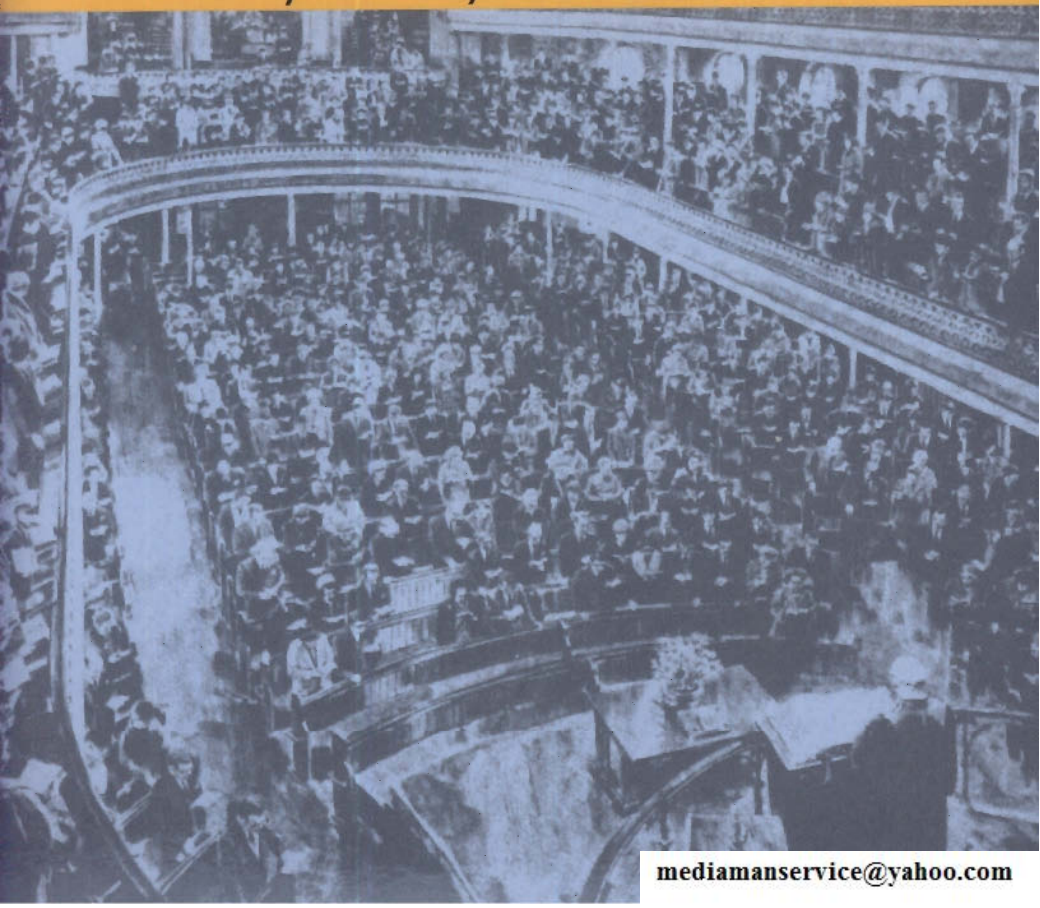


Exposition of Chapter 13
Life in Two Kingdoms

ROMANS

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones



Romans

An Exposition of Chapter 13
Life in Two Kingdoms

D. M. Lloyd-Jones

THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

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Contents

<i>One</i>	I
A new subsection in the Epistle – connection with what comes before and after – the function of the state – analysis of the chapter.	
<i>Two</i>	16
Theology based on accurate exposition – what is meant by ‘the higher powers’ – reasons for being subject – fearing God and honouring the king.	
<i>Three</i>	31
Christianity does not cancel the natural order – the world not abandoned by God – government ordained by God – Pridham on Romans – negative and positive roles of government.	
<i>Four</i>	48
The Christian’s relationship to the state – two extreme views – limits on liberty – the citizen’s rights – no form of government to be idolized – capital punishment.	
<i>Five</i>	63
The sword – pacifism – war and revolution – just wars – conscientious objectors – rebellions must be justified.	
<i>Six</i>	75
Church and state – ecumenism – church and state under Christ’s authority – Constantine – Roman Catholic teaching – Wycliffe – the Reformation – Erastianism – Luther – the Church of England – religious toleration.	

Life in Two Kingdoms

Seven

88

Church and state essentially different – common grace – the differences explained – value of history – Luther, Zwingli, Calvin – Belgic Confession on magistrates – Puritans – Presbyterians – Westminster Confession on magistrates – Melville – two kings, two kingdoms.

Eight

102

Pilgrim Fathers and American colonists – Separatists – Cromwell – the 'Free Church idea' – Roger Williams – the Commonwealth – democracy – the Ejection of 1662 – established churches.

Nine

117

Church-state relations unknown in New Testament – Old Testament appealed to – Israel's position unique – Christ's kingdom not of this world – confusing the world and the church.

Ten

132

Summary of teaching – lesson of history – traditionalism – the state cannot Christianize society – parable of the leaven misunderstood – no gradual advance, except in the church.

Eleven

148

The lordship of Christ – tension between the two kingdoms – the church should lay down principles – freedom, education, the arts, science, law, morality – individual Christians may influence society.

Twelve

163

Christian view of duties – the Apostle's method – inspiration not mechanical – borrowing and lending – 'I am debtor' – the law of God and love.

Thirteen

177

The law misunderstood by Pharisees and moralists – loving our neighbour – how the modern understanding of this fails – meanings of 'love' – wrong views of self – wrong views of law – the law reveals sin.

Contents

<i>Fourteen</i>	191
The meaning of loving our neighbour especially important today – modern view denies the gospel – how love fulfils the law – who is our neighbour? – the Christian and the law – mysticism and rigorism – danger of legalism.	
<i>Fifteen</i>	206
A new subsection – conversion of Augustine – knowing the time – doctrine and practice – antinomianism, believism, mysticism – preoccupation with gifts – avoiding wrong emphases.	
<i>Sixteen</i>	220
Argument from the last things – Christianity not just a moral system – Christian view of time and history – secular views – redemption history – the end in view.	
<i>Seventeen</i>	232
Christian view of life in the world – night, darkness – ignorance of God, man, life and death – moral darkness – despair – salvation, past, present and future.	
<i>Eighteen</i>	245
The day – apocalyptic element in New Testament – Christ's coming – its purpose – new heavens and new earth – judgment – motives to holy living – rewards – glorification.	
<i>Nineteen</i>	258
Christians have undergone a great change – the new birth – how Christians are 'of the day' – the 'already' and the 'not yet' – 'glory begun below'.	
<i>Twenty</i>	271
Sanctification always presented doctrinally – realizing what we are – inconsistency of living in the old way – the life of the day – how to overcome sin – avoiding presumption – warnings and encouragements.	
<i>Twenty-one</i>	284
Did the Apostles believe the end was imminent? – evidence from the epistles – the critics' view disproved – examples of prophetic foreshortening – the heavenly perspective – being ready.	

Life in Two Kingdoms

Twenty-two

297

Application of the doctrine – the need for watchfulness – general discipline – self-examination – awareness of the times – reading Scripture – value of biographies – the works of darkness and the armour of light.

Twenty-three

310

Conduct befitting the day – negative exhortations – their relevance to Christians today – sins of the body and the mind – putting on the Lord Jesus Christ – living on Him – hiding in Him – putting self out.

One

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:1-14

In our study of this great Epistle to the Romans, we come now to the thirteenth chapter. This is a new section, or perhaps I

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should rather say, a new subsection. It is a part, of course, of the second great portion of this Epistle, a portion which the Apostle began at the beginning of chapter 12; so this section still comes under the general heading of the application of the doctrine that the Apostle has been laying down in the first eleven, and particularly in the first eight, chapters. But it is a new subsection of this great theme that he is here working out with us. The gospel is not only to be believed, it is to be practised, and if we fail to carry it out, then there is no point in any amount of intellectual understanding.

Now we come here to a most interesting portion. It is all interesting, of course, and yet there is no inconsistency in what I say. If I constantly say that this is the most interesting section we have come to, then that is simply one way of paying tribute to the Scripture. I generally find that what I am studying at the moment seems to be the most interesting portion I have ever studied, but as that is true of every portion of Scripture, it shows how wonderful the whole of Scripture is. Yet, for many reasons, this chapter has particular interest, as I shall try to show you.

First, the chapter is very interesting merely from the standpoint of a study and exposition of the Scriptures. It is interesting to notice the precise connection of this portion with what has gone before and with what follows – a question that has greatly concerned the minds of the expositors. What, they wonder, is the exact relationship of this section to its immediate context?

Then Romans 13 is also interesting because of the principles which are taught here. As we shall see, we shall be face to face with problems that are in the minds of Christian people at the present time, some of which are of vital importance. In this twentieth century, the whole relationship of the Christian to the state has arisen in a very acute form. It arose in Italy, it arose still more in Germany in the time of Hitler, and it is arising in many countries today. God knows, we ourselves may have to face something similar. And there are Christian people who are in great trouble as to the exact interpretation of these verses in Romans. As we draw closer and closer to the conditions and position described in certain chapters of the Book of Revelation, particularly chapter 13, then it becomes

more and more important for us to understand the teaching of this section of Scripture.

So let us address ourselves to some of these problems. The first is the connection of the verses we will be looking at here – particularly the first seven verses – with what the Apostle has been saying in chapter 12, and with what he will go on to say from verse 8 of chapter 13. The commentators get really excited about this, and they hold many different views.

Many say that this section has no connection whatsoever either with what has gone before or with what follows. There are interesting modern commentators, some of them evangelical men and great scholars, who take that view. One talks about the Apostle ‘abruptly launching’ on the teaching here. He goes on to say, ‘There is nothing in the letter to indicate why Paul feels it necessary, so positively and quickly, to change from one subject to another without explanation.’ Now that is as plain as anything could be, is it not? He says that there is no connection between what the Apostle says in these first seven verses and what he says before and after – none at all. This teaching is just an abrupt intrusion into the midst of what he is saying.

Other commentators, while not going as far as to say that these verses are a sheer intrusion, do say that they seriously interrupt the continuity of thought between the end of chapter 12 and chapter 13, verse 8. Verses 1 to 7 interrupt, they say, the Apostle’s argument, which he puts in the negative in chapter 12, verse 17: ‘Recompense to no man evil for evil’, and again in the negative in chapter 13, verse 8: ‘Owe no man any thing.’ They point out that in both instances these negatives are followed by a positive exhortation to love: ‘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’ [*Rom. 12:17-18*]; and, ‘Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law’ [*Rom. 13:8*]. There, they say, is the obvious continuity, and the statements in the first seven verses are nothing but an interruption of this theme of loving one’s neighbour.

Some go further and say that the statements in these first seven verses are quite incongruous with what the Apostle is saying in the whole section, that they are not only an inter-

ruption, but are, in a sense, out of keeping, that they do not fit in and do not belong to the whole climate and realm of the Apostle's thought at this point. This passage, they say, is much more like the old rabbi Paul; it is more Jewish than Christian. Others say it is more Greek than Christian. It is a sort of admixture of Greek and Jewish teaching, very different from the Christian teaching that the Apostle gives us in the surrounding sections.

Others say that it is very odd that the Apostle should tell us, 'Be subject unto . . . the powers that be', to the state, and so on. It is out of keeping, they feel, with what he has told us in the second verse of the twelfth chapter, where he says, 'Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' He seems to have forgotten that, they say.

Furthermore, Paul finishes this thirteenth chapter by saying that we are living on the verge of the end of time: 'Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent . . .' But in these first seven verses, he seems to be departing entirely from this eschatological notion, and is telling us how to live in this world, as if time were going to be almost endless. So they criticize this passage very severely, feeling that it is some sort of intrusion.

Others say that this passage is quite incongruous here and out of character because in these seven verses the name of our Lord is not mentioned at all. The Apostle is arguing in terms of God the Creator and this, they say, is a kind of departure from Christian teaching. Paul seems to have reverted to the old Pharisaical position, writing as a Jew of God the Creator, and from the Old Testament perspective of man and his life in the world, rather than of the Christian man; they feel it is a kind of lapse. And then they add that this whole idea of the state using force, and using the sword, is remote from the Christian teaching of love, the kind of teaching that the Apostle has already given us so excellently in chapter 12, where he says, 'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good . . . avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath', and so on.

Now those are the kinds of arguments which we must meet. These men study the Scriptures, that is their calling and their business, and they find themselves in very real difficulty with regard to these seven verses. So what do we have to say about this? We must meet the arguments because, if we are to have a true understanding of this teaching – and, as I have suggested, it is important that we should because of the great questions that are involved – then we must be able to show why the Apostle wrote these verses, and give their relationship to all that he says in the immediate context.

Now I suggest that all the difficulties and objections to this section of chapter 13 are entirely due to the critics themselves, and not to the Apostle Paul. I suggest that the Apostle is still continuing the teaching which we have been considering in chapter 12. The great emphasis in that chapter, from verse 14 onwards, as I have shown¹, is the importance of living peaceably with other people. That is the principle. That is why Paul writes, 'Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not'; that is why we are to, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep'; that is why we are told, 'Be of the same mind one toward another'; why we must, 'Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate'; and, 'Recompense to no man evil for evil', but if possible, 'Live peaceably with all men.'

That is the great theme of that last section of chapter 12, and, surely, Paul is going on with that theme here. It is one of the great functions of the state, the 'powers that be', the Government, to enable us to live peaceably with one another, to maintain order, to avoid disorder. So there is nothing incongruous about this passage: it is an extension of what Paul has already been saying, and is very germane to the whole matter of living peaceably with one another.

But further – and this shows still more clearly the close connection between this and what has gone before – towards the very end of chapter 12, the Apostle was dealing with the question of taking vengeance: 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written,

¹ See *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 12: Christian Conduct*, Banner of Truth, 2000.

Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' And we ended our consideration of that last chapter by dealing with vengeance and the punishment of wrongdoing. So, need I point out that the logical follow-on of that is the whole question of the state, because God punishes wrongdoing partly through the state and its laws?

Now some of the verses which we shall be considering tell us this very plainly. Paul says in verses 3 and 4: '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 the minister of God to thee for good', and so on. This is a direct continuation of the whole idea of taking vengeance. Do not take vengeance yourself; God will take vengeance. And he does this partly through the state. 'The way of transgressors is hard' [*Prov. 13:15*], even in this world. They put themselves against the law and part of their suffering will be from the law. So these verses do not interrupt what the Apostle has been saying.

Not only that; surely, as Christians in this world, our relationship to the state is a part of our general relationship to other people. Go back again to chapter 12. From verse 3 to the end of verse 8 – indeed, right on to the end of verse 13 – the Apostle is dealing mainly with our relationship to other people in the Christian church. Then, having done that, he deals with our relationship to people who are outside the church. Here are men and women who have become Christians; they are not living in a glass case or in a vacuum, but among people and these people are doing things to them and they are reacting. The Apostle takes up all these points – he is anxious to help us. How am I to react to people in the church? How am I to react to people outside the church? And then, the extension of that: How do I react to people in the aggregate, in the realm of the state? So you see, Paul would not have completed his help to us in this matter of human relationships if he had not considered the Christian's relationship to the state. And that is precisely what he does here.

But there are further reasons for Paul's introduction of this theme at this point, and I think that these are also tremendously important. He is writing to the members of the church at Rome, and it is quite clear, from what we have seen many

times already, that these Christians were not all Gentiles: there were Jews among them. That is why the Apostle dealt with the whole problem of the Jews [chapters 9, 10 and 11]. It was causing trouble and the Apostle is out to help the members of the church to work out this great salvation in all its aspects.

So there were Jews in the church at Rome, as there were, of course, in so many of the other churches. And there was always a problem in the minds of Jewish people, a problem which was carried over when they became Christians, and this was the great problem of nationality. Jews had the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the result of that teaching was that they were notoriously bad citizens. They gave the Roman Empire very great trouble indeed. Was that because they were a difficult people? Not really. There was a very good reason.

The explanation lay in the teaching of the Jews' own Scriptures. Deuteronomy 17:15 says, 'Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee' – then comes the negative; here is the important fact – 'thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.' Now that is a specific commandment. The ruler of the Jews was always to be a Jew, and the Jews must never acknowledge as ruler over them one who was not 'thy brother'. This was deeply ingrained into Jewish thinking, so when they were conquered by any foreign power, and here, in particular, by the Romans, the Jews were in great trouble. They felt that they were sinning against God in acknowledging any foreign ruler – it did not matter who. They felt that they were contravening a commandment that had been laid down plainly in Deuteronomy.

There is a wonderful illustration of this very point in the Gospels. One day a deputation of Herodians and Pharisees put this question to our Lord: 'Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?' [Matt. 22:17]. Now I know that they were trying to trap our Lord but there was more to this question than that. There were those who quite sincerely and honestly felt that it was wrong to obey a non-Jewish ruler. The great story of the revolt led by the Maccabees sprang from the same general attitude.

So when some of these Jews became Christians, this idea was still at the back of their minds. Add to that something else. The Jewish conception of the Messiah was of a political and military leader. That was their mistake, of course, and it was largely because of that that they crucified their Messiah, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They could not understand Him. They kept on telling Him, 'If you are what you claim to be, why don't you go to Jerusalem and set yourself up as King? Why don't you get crowned? What's the point of spending your time among poor people up in Galilee? If you are King, why don't you declare yourself?' His own brothers said that to him. It was a constant difficulty. And this then became a great problem in the early church. Here were these Jews who were now Christians: they believed that Jesus was the Messiah. So how could they be subject to any other earthly authority or power? The Messiah was the power even in a political, temporal and earthly sense.

Now that was the background. And as the Jewish Christians knew the Old Testament Scriptures in a way that none of the Gentiles did, they were often leaders in instructing others, and the Gentiles quite naturally and increasingly were ready to be influenced by them and to accept this sort of teaching.

But then, on top of all this, there is something further. It seems to be the case with most of us as Christians that we almost instinctively misunderstand the Christian teaching with regard to our natural relationships. This is an interesting point. I suppose that most of us have passed through this phase at some time or other, some may still be in it. We have a curious notion that Christianity dissolves and does away with natural human relationships.

I mean something like this: the Apostle says to the Philipians, 'Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven' [*Phil.* 3:20], and we draw the conclusion that if our citizenship is in heaven, we do not recognize Britain or any other country or their rulers: we do not belong to them. Our citizenship is in heaven, so we are no longer earthly citizens. That kind of teaching appeals to us and seems quite inevitable. We feel that we are now spiritual beings and that this takes us altogether out of the natural realm.

It is interesting to notice the prominent part played by that

idea at different times in the history of the church. There is a book on the Anabaptists, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*, by Leonard Verduin, which shows the extremes to which some of them went, entirely because of this idea. Many others have behaved in similar ways, even in this twentieth century. I myself have known Christian people who think like this. I have even known people who have been on the verge of refusing to pay income tax, and who have believed that a Christian should most certainly never take part in politics, whether local or national. They regard this as all wrong because the Christian is now a citizen of heaven.

A tendency to think like this has shown itself in many different ways. Some Christians seem to think that Christianity has virtually abolished the difference between male and female. Here is one of these practical problems that must be faced. Should there, for example, be women preachers? 'Of course,' they say, 'under the Jewish law there was a difference, but Christ has changed all that. Doesn't Paul say, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female" [Gal. 3:28]? All that has gone. As those nationalities have been abolished, so the distinction between male and female has gone once and for ever. You must not perpetuate such distinctions.' There have been excellent Christian people – I have known many – who have become feminists for that reason and have argued for an absolute equality in all respects between male and female, between husbands and wives.

Then there are others who ask: What is the relationship between parents and children? There are those who argue that there is no distinction. The moment you become Christians, you are all one. All these natural distinctions and divisions no longer apply. Some work this idea out in terms of masters and servants. This was an acute problem in the early church. Many early Christians thought, 'Now if my master is a Christian and I am also, we are equal. The master-servant relationship is abolished.' And they were coming to the same conclusions in terms of the Christian and the state.

Now that seems to be a kind of instinctive reaction on the part of Christian people: they jump to such conclusions because of specific statements. But in the early days of the

church particularly, there was something else that tended to make Christians think in this way. It is something that the Apostle talks about at the end of this chapter: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand.' Christians said, 'We're on the verge of this coming age, the apocalyptic age, so you must not pay any attention to what is happening in the world, to states, and so on. They are quite irrelevant, they have all been done away with. We should be looking for the coming of the kingdom.' Indeed, there is a hint in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians that there were some people in Thessalonica who had even stopped working. They said that there was no longer any point in working. The end was at hand and they were just looking for the coming of our Lord.

All these things conspired together to land these early Christians in considerable confusion. I am not criticizing them because, as I am trying to show you, there are people who fall into exactly the same errors at the present time. We shall have to work these things out in detail.

Because of all this, the Apostle Paul has to take up this question of the Christian's relationship to the state, and he has to take up all these other questions. Look, for instance, at Ephesians chapter 5, where the Apostle deals with the relationship between husbands and wives. This is a part of Christian teaching, but it is often ignored: 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it' [Eph. 5:25]. And the Apostle puts the other side of that equally clearly: 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body' [verses 22-23]. Why do you think Paul ever wrote that? Was it to amuse himself or the members of the church at Ephesus? Not at all! It was for the reasons I have just been giving you. There was confusion on this point and it was having a devastating effect upon the life of the churches, so the Apostle had to deal with it in particular.

Then in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, we read: 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord' [verse 1]. The fact that you have become a Christian does not mean that you no longer obey your parents; you must do so. These natural orders have not been abolished. 'Honour thy father and mother; which is the

first commandment with promise' [Eph. 6:2]. Paul writes that to a Gentile church! He quotes the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments: they are still there and they are still true; Christianity has not abolished them.

Then Paul goes on: 'Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath'; and then: 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.' But on the other hand, he also has a word to say to masters: 'Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven' [verse 9].

So you see why the Apostle has to deal with this subject in this thirteenth chapter of Romans. He says exactly the same thing in the Epistle to Titus, at the beginning of the third chapter: 'Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.' Again, he says this because of the confusion in the minds of the early Christians and because of the damage that it was doing to the whole of the Christian cause.

But lest anybody think that this is just a rabbi speaking, the ex-Pharisee, with a sort of hangover of his old Jewish teaching, let me show you that Peter teaches exactly the same thing. He writes: 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward' [1 Pet. 2:13-18].

This teaching is found throughout the New Testament. And in all cases it is given not merely to correct false thinking, but, still more importantly, in the interests of the gospel. Unbelievers were always watching, and if they saw Christian workmen no longer ready to work or to take orders from their masters – those who paid them – it would bring the whole of the gospel into disrepute; and it did. Among the many charges

that were brought against them, Christians were often accused of being anarchists. So for this great reason this subject had to be dealt with, and as the Apostle was dealing with the whole matter of human relationships, he was bound to consider it here.

So I am arguing that Paul's words here are a continuation of the theme of living peaceably with others and of not taking vengeance yourself, but allowing God to do so, either directly or else through the medium of the state, a medium He so often uses. Then, having worked it all out in detail in this way, in verse 8, Paul takes up again his general theme of love to all men.

So I think I have demonstrated to you that what we have here is not an intrusion of some extraneous matter. Paul is not suddenly plunging into something that has no connection at all with what he has been saying. No, it is a part of the same great theme, and, thank God, Paul takes the trouble to work it out in detail for us in order that we may have answers to these various questions that both arise in our own minds and are suggested to us by others.

Let me now, therefore, give you an analysis of the contents of this chapter:

Section 1, verses 1 to 7: The Apostle deals with the attitude of Christians to the state in which they live and to the demands of the state.

Section 2, verses 8 to 10: The Christian rule of love to one's neighbour is again repeated and reasserted.

Section 3, verses 11 to 14: All this is enforced by an appeal to us to realize that, as Christians, we are but strangers and pilgrims in this world. We really belong to the realm that is to come, and our conduct and behaviour while we are left in this world is always to be in the light of that which awaits us.

Now as we have seen, in the first section in particular, some urgent, practical and immediate problems are raised for us. The first is the Christian's life in this world while he is still left in it. What is my relationship to this world? We are all in human relationships: we cannot contract out of them, we do not become monks and hermits. That was the fatal mistake of the Roman Catholics who started that whole notion. No, we still live our lives in the world, so how do we do it?

Secondly: What is the duty of Christian people towards the state? There are subsidiary questions here: What is the extent, the limit, of their subjection to the state? What is their response to a possible rebellion or revolution in the state to which they belong? Christians have often had to face this question, and many are having to face it at this present time.

Thirdly: What should be the Christian's view on the question of capital punishment? Very urgent, is it not? We should have an opinion on this. And what is the position of Christian men and women with regard to fighting for their state? In other words, the whole question of pacifism comes up acutely in the teaching here about 'the sword'.

Fourthly: As Christians we belong to the church, but we also belong to the state, so what is the Christian's view of the state – I am not thinking now so much of the individual Christian as of the church and the state – and what is the relationship between the church and the state? How do you define the relationship between these two? There are Christian people who still believe in a direct, immediate and close association between the church and state. This was a question that demanded urgent consideration at the time of the Protestant Reformation and it is a question that you and I also have to consider. Here, in this passage, we are given light and instruction on this, and at the same time are told very plainly that we should know exactly what we believe.

And then the last great question, it seems to me, is this: What is the function of governments and states? It is very wrong for us, as Christian people, to live in a country and be members of a state without having any idea whatsoever about this. Have we ever thought about it? Can we explain our point of view? Can we defend it in terms of the Scriptures?

Those are some of the great questions that are inevitably raised by this first section, so let me finish now by just giving you, in broad outline, the argument of verses 1 to 7 as the Apostle deploys it before us.

Paul starts by saying, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.' That is the injunction. The rest of the section gives us reasons for being subject to them. [I will tell you what he means by 'higher powers' in our next study; for now, I am just giving you a broad outline of the essence of his argument.]

Life in Two Kingdoms

First, in the second part of verse 1, Paul gives us a positive reason for being subject to these powers: it is because they are 'of God'. 'For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.' There is your positive answer.

Then, in verse 2, the Apostle gives us a negative answer, which is in two parts. If you resist the power, you are not resisting the power so much as resisting God and the ordinance of God; and resistance to the will of God will bring punishment upon you.

The third reason for obeying this injunction is given in verse 3: there is no need to be afraid of these powers or to regard them as inimical to us as Christians because if we really understand them, and if we give obedience to them, they are not against us.

Verse 4 gives a fourth argument. The state and the powers of the state are ministers of God both negatively and positively, and far from being against us, they are really for us and for our good.

In verse 5, Paul tells us that our subjection to these earthly powers must therefore not only be because of a fear of punishment, but also, and still more, because we realize that they are playing a part and have a function in God's great eternal purpose. You notice how he puts it: 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.' Do not obey them simply because you are afraid of the punishment, but obey them because you have a positive view and see the part they are meant to play in the whole economy and government of God.

Verse 6 gives the whole basis of government and tells us the reason why we should always be subject to it. The argument is this: the reason why you pay tribute [taxes] is because the higher powers 'are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing'. It is your understanding, though you are not always conscious of it, of this function of the state that has ever led you or anybody else to pay rates and taxes and so on.

And then, in the seventh verse, the Apostle gives the seventh argument. It is a summing up of all that he has been saying and a repetition of the appeal to us to be subject to the higher powers. 'Render therefore' – in the light of all these subsidiary arguments – 'to all their dues: tribute to whom

tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.'

We shall go on to examine the meaning of Paul's words in a full exposition and then, in the light of that, we shall be able to consider the great problems I have outlined to you, and the principles that are raised by this teaching and that are of such urgent and practical importance. For our own sake, and for the sake of our brethren who are struggling with these issues, perhaps even at the risk of losing their very lives, it behoves us to have clear ideas as to the teaching of the great Apostle.

Two

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

This passage, as we have seen, is a kind of *locus classicus* for several urgent and relevant questions concerning the Christian's relationship to government and the state. But before we can deal with them, it is absolutely essential that we should be quite clear in our minds as to what the Apostle is actually teaching.

Now here I would digress for just a second to say something about the whole question of theology. Theology must always be based upon an accurate interpretation of the teaching of the Scriptures. For some people, there is sometimes a danger that they may derive their knowledge more from philosophy than from a careful study of the Scriptures. They tend to extract just a certain number of great principles from the Bible and from

there on they more or less forget the Bible and work the application out for themselves. I suggest that that is a very wrong procedure. True theology should always be based upon a careful and accurate exegesis and exposition and understanding of the Scriptures.

But, at the same time, we must be careful of one thing in particular – I leave it at that for now – and that is that we do not derive any theological principle from one scriptural statement only. We must be careful to compare scripture with scripture. We must also be careful that our exposition of any particular statements in the Scripture does not contradict the plain tenor of scriptural teaching in general. What I mean is this: you are familiar with the fact that there are certain well known views, particularly, perhaps, with regard to prophecy, that are based entirely upon one scripture. That is always very dangerous. There is a correspondence, a balance, in Scripture, and if our interpretation of one portion of Scripture is not in accord with the teaching of the Scriptures elsewhere, then we must go back and examine our interpretation.

So we must bear these two principles in mind: theology must be the outcome of a true exposition of the Word, and we must not base a doctrine entirely on one statement.

Now here, in the first section, as we have seen, we must handle a number of very important subjects. There are Christian people in some parts of the world who are having to face these matters very acutely. What is their relationship to the state? What is their relationship to certain forms of government? How do they work it out? How would we work it out if we were in their position? God alone knows what may be awaiting us in the future. We ought to be clear about all these questions and be able to give reasons for our attitude and practice.

So we must therefore be labourers in the sense of getting down to the hard work of digging out the truth. It is sometimes more difficult to do that than it is to deal with general principles, but we must do it. If we cannot establish our doctrine in terms of what the Apostle is actually saying, then our doctrine will probably be wrong. So we must 'gird up the loins of our mind', roll up our spiritual sleeves, and be prepared to work. I therefore propose to run through what the Apostle is

actually saying in these seven verses. That will then put us in a position to be clear about our doctrine.

We start with an injunction: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.' This is what we are commanded to do. Now let us see exactly what Paul tells us about that. Notice that these words are addressed, not just to some Christians, but to everyone. In the original, the words 'every soul' are put in the emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence, showing that the Apostle regards this as very important. And in our last study, I gave you many reasons for that. The Scriptures often deal with this issue. The Apostles had to deal with it in the early church because people fell into foolish misinterpretations of the Christian teaching and thought that once you became a Christian, you had finished with this world and could contract out of the state – the fallacy of that. So here it is: 'every soul' is to be subject to 'the higher powers'.

What, then, does the Apostle mean by 'the higher powers'? The Greek word translated here as 'powers' means 'authorities'. These powers are authorities which have placed themselves over us, as it were. That is the literal meaning. Paul is referring to those who are invested with certain powers of government.

But what does Paul mean by the 'higher' powers? There has been a lot of argument amongst the commentators over this, and you see it in certain translations. The New English Bible, as it is called, says we should obey the 'supreme' powers. But I suggest that that translation is quite wrong. Paul is not drawing distinctions between those who are supreme and those who are a little bit lower and those who are lower still, but is talking of a category comprising 'the higher powers'. It includes anyone in dignity and authority who is set above us, anyone who excels over us, who is in a position that is above ours. So the Authorized (King James) Version is right here: the 'higher' powers is a good translation.

At the same time, the Apostle is not telling us, as some have interpreted this, that we are only to obey the good powers and not the bad ones. That is not at all what he is saying. He is simply saying that we are to be subject to those powers that are over us, whether they be good or bad.

In this connection, there is one other matter that we are

compelled to look at, as anybody who is familiar with this word 'powers' in the New Testament epistles will know. You will find that in almost every instance, apart from Titus 3:1, the word 'powers' in the plural – the form it generally takes in the New Testament – refers to angelic rather than to earthly powers. Let me give you an illustration or two to show you what I mean. Take 1 Corinthians 15:24: 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and *power*' [plural in the Greek].

And there are other instances, which are still clearer. Take the well-known statement towards the end of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Referring to our Lord, Paul writes, '... when he [God] raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and *power* [plural], and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come' [verses 20-21]. You find the same idea exactly in Ephesians 3:10, where Paul says, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and *powers* in heavenly places might be known by the church' – through the church – 'the manifold wisdom of God'; in the well-known statement in Ephesians 6:12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against *powers*, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly] places'; and again in Colossians 1:16; 2:10 and 15; and in 1 Peter 3:22.

Now that is the way in which this word 'powers' is generally used in the plural in the New Testament. Many people have therefore thought that the Apostle uses the word with that meaning here in Romans, or, at any rate, they think he is saying that earthly human powers are under the control of angelic powers, so that ultimately we are to be subject to these angelic powers that are over and above us.

Now what do we feel about this? Is there here a double reference, as it were, partly to earthly powers and governments, but also to unseen angelic, spiritual powers that dwell in the heavenly places and exert their influence upon this world? Undoubtedly that teaching was current in the first century. The Apostle says in Ephesians 2:1-2, 'You hath he

quicken, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' But is he actually referring to that in Romans 13?

Of course, we cannot prove this absolutely, but it does seem to me that here the Apostle is almost certainly thinking only in terms of human powers. Why do I say that? Well, my main argument would be that this is a very practical section of Romans. Paul is concerned all along, as we have seen in chapter 12, with our relationships with human beings as we come into contact with them in various ways. So for that reason I would suggest that here his mind is concerned exclusively with the earthly powers. That does not mean to say that I do not believe that these earthly powers are influenced by the unseen spiritual powers. I believe that very definitely. I have often said from this pulpit that it is the only way in which I can explain a man like Hitler, and many other powers in the history of humanity. They cannot be explained merely as human beings; there was undoubtedly a demonic power behind and in and working through Hitler and others of the same type. But here Paul is dealing with earthly governments and authorities.

So the Apostle's injunction is that we are to be subject to the higher powers. And here again there is a most interesting phrase: 'be subject unto'. According to the learned authorities, the word that the Apostle uses here is, in its root meaning, a military word denoting soldiers arranged in order under their general and subject to his commands. There they are, lined up on the parade ground, awaiting their orders. That is the original meaning of the word.

But the question that has been raised is this: Is Paul bringing out the idea of obeying these powers? Is he saying, 'Let every soul obey the higher powers'? There are many who have taken that view, but it does seem to me that that is taking it a bit too far. I shall return to this point when we come to elaborate our doctrine of the relationship of the Christian to the state.

There are many reasons why I hesitate to say that the words 'be subject unto' mean 'to obey'. First, there are three other Greek words that mean 'to obey' and they are generally used in

the New Testament when the writers want to convey the notion of obedience. But the Apostle does not use any one of them here, and instead uses this particular word. It is a word that is used thirty times in the New Testament and sometimes, in its usage, there is a suggestion of the notion of obedience. We have had it already in Romans 8:7, where we read, 'Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not *subject to* the law of God, neither indeed can be.' There is a suspicion of an idea of obedience there, and yet I do not find it too powerful, even there. I think it suggests something else, as we shall see. In all these thirty instances it is not the idea of obedience that predominates in the use of this word.

What is it, then? Well, let us look at some of the verses in which this word is used. Take, for instance, 1 Corinthians 16:16. Paul says in verse 15, 'I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)' – and then, in verse 16 – 'that ye *submit yourselves unto* such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.' The words 'submit yourselves unto' are a translation of the same Greek word. The meaning is not so much that they are to obey these people as that they are to submit themselves to them.

But there is a much more interesting example in Ephesians 5:21: '*Submitting* yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' It is the same word. Now surely it is very difficult to understand that as meaning 'obey one another' in the sense of obeying these higher powers.

Then in Ephesians 5:22 and in the parallel passages in Colossians 3:18 and 1 Peter 3:1 and 5, wives are told, '*Submit yourselves unto* your own husbands as unto the Lord.' Now again, examine that and see whether you are quite happy about interpreting it in terms of some almost mechanical obedience. That is not the idea that is uppermost there. Wives are to be subject to their husbands, but already the Apostle has told them all, husbands and wives, to be subject one to another. There would be chaos if the notion of obedience were pressed too hard. How can wives obey their husbands if the husbands are also to obey their wives?

In Titus 3:1, Paul writes of being subject to the civil author-

ities, and there, in a very interesting way, we see the two ideas coming out: 'Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.' Peter has this same idea: '*Submit yourselves* to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well' [1 Pet. 2:13-14]. James, too, has a particularly useful use of this word: '*Submit yourselves* [be subject] therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' [James 4:7].

So, in the light of these examples, I think I agree with those who tell us that the Apostle has given us the key to the understanding of this word in Romans 12:10 – you remember that we have dealt with that verse¹ – 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.' This is a part of the Christian's character. Christians do not assert themselves, but make room for others; they prefer, they give priority, as it were, to other people. You find the same teaching in Philippians 2:3: 'Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.'

And there, I suggest to you, is the real connotation of this expression 'be subject unto'. It means that we recognize other Christians as Christ's representatives and allow that they have greater claims on us than we have on ourselves. And in Romans 13 Paul tells us that we are to regard these higher powers in that way. We are not to look at them in and of themselves, but are to realize what they are and what has given them their being and their position. As Christian people, we are to honour them, respect them, put ourselves under them, as it were, and submit ourselves unto them. The Apostle is not thinking of a blind obedience: we must get rid of that notion altogether. Nor is he talking about some uncritical obedience whereby we automatically do everything we are told to do.

When we come to the doctrine, you will see how important it is that we should interpret this expression 'be subject unto'

¹ See *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 12: Christian Conduct*, Banner of Truth, 2000.

in the right way, bearing in mind Ephesians 5:21, where, you remember, Paul writes, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Paul is describing an attitude of mind where we recognize certain things as being in position, and act and behave in accordance with that recognition.

So that is the great overall injunction: 'Let every soul' – every person – 'be subject unto the higher powers', and, as we have seen, Paul goes on to give us reasons for doing this. First of all, he gives us a positive reason, and he gives it in two statements. First, in answer to the question: 'Why should I be subject to the higher powers?', he says, 'There is no power but of God.' Then he repeats that by saying, 'The powers that be are ordained of God.' Now by 'the powers that be' Paul means 'those powers that are in existence', and at that time, of course, he was thinking particularly of the imperial government of Rome, headed up in the emperor. He means the powers that are governing and maintaining law and order. In his first statement Paul is saying that there is no power in and of itself, but all these powers come from God. Then in his second statement he puts it more specifically still and says that God appointed these powers, gave them their existence and assigned them their place; they have been constituted by Him and it is He who maintains them in their position. They remain what they are because God has determined that this should be the case.

This is a very important statement, but let us notice in passing that Paul is not saying that every particular occupier of an exalted position has necessarily been ordained of God. It may include that but he is not actually saying it. All he is saying is that government and law and authorities are ordained by God. Whether God ordained that Nero, in particular, should occupy the imperial position, Paul does not actually tell us, but what he does say is that Nero's *office* had certainly been ordained by God.

Of course, this teaching was not new. The whole idea of 'the powers that be' being ordained by God is taught in the Old Testament and all Jews were more than familiar with it. That is why we should always denounce any teaching which puts a wedge between the Old Testament and the New; still more, a teaching that says that a Christian does not need the Old

Testament. Romans 13:1 is one of the statements that shows the continuity of the two – that it is the same God working out His great purpose in the Old as in the New, that there was no change in the orders of creation, the natural orders, as a result of the coming of Christianity.

The first real statement of this, it seems to me, is in Genesis 9:5-6, where we read, 'And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.' We shall, of course, have to return to that when we come to deal with the whole question of capital punishment.

But other statements of this same doctrine are also to be found in the Old Testament. For instance, in 2 Samuel 12:7, we read, 'And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah . . .' – and so on.

You find the same teaching in Jeremiah 27: 'I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant' – notice, 'my servant' – 'and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him' [verses 5-7]. There are also passages in Daniel that put this point very clearly indeed. In chapter 2, we are told that it is God who raises up and puts down kings [verse 21]. The same teaching is found in verses 17, 25 and 32 of the fourth chapter, and in chapter 5, verse 21.

So the first, the positive reason, for subjecting oneself to these powers, is that they are ordained by God and there is no power apart from Him. But then in the second verse of this thirteenth chapter, Paul goes on to give us a two-fold negative reason. First: 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.' Now the Greek word translated

'resist' means 'set oneself against', 'arrange a battle against', and Paul is saying that as the powers that be are ordained by God, to resist them is to resist God. It is interesting to note that Paul changes his tense here. Those who resist the higher powers are putting themselves into the position – the permanent position – of antagonism to God, and that is something, of course, that you should not do.

The second part of this negative reason is that people who resist God in this way 'shall receive to themselves damnation', which means judgment; a sentence will be passed upon them. Here again is an interesting question that has agitated the minds of the commentators. They ask: Who will judge these people? Who will pronounce this sentence upon them? There are those who say that this is a reference to God only. They say that as Paul has taken the trouble to say that there is no power except of God, that the powers that be are ordained by Him, and that if you resist the powers you are resisting Him, then these words obviously mean that it is God who will do the punishing.

But in the light of the following verses, in which the Apostle goes on to explain that God uses the earthly powers to carry out His sentences, I cannot accept that it is God alone who executes the judgment. I would prefer to say that this verse means that those who resist shall receive judgment and punishment from God through the civil powers that He has ordained for that purpose. Of course, they will, in addition, get the judgment of God directly, but not in this world; they may, even in this world, but ultimately it will be at the final judgment. That, then, is the second reason for subjecting ourselves to the powers that be.

And that leads into a third reason for being subject to the higher powers. Now by nature people are afraid of the rulers and of the powers, and Paul tries to help us by saying that there is no need for this. So he takes up his argument: 'For rulers . . .' He is not just following on. The 'For' does not merely connect with the end of the second verse, but is a part of his general argument in this entire section. He refers to his general subject and says, in effect, 'Rulers and the powers are not against us if we subject ourselves to them. If we are good we have nothing to fear, they are really only against evil.' 'Rulers are not a terror

to good works, but to the evil.' You see his argument? Do not be afraid of them, they are not against you if you do not put yourself against them.

And then Paul puts a question: 'Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?', which really means: Do you wish, then, is it your will or your desire, not to be afraid of the powers? If so, 'Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.' I do not intend to go into that now; I am keeping it back for the doctrine which will explain our relationship to these powers, what they do for us, and so on. But far from being punished by the powers, you will be praised by them, they will help you, and it will all be to your advantage in your Christian life.

In the fourth verse, Paul gives us the fourth reason, which is that the state, these higher powers, are actually the servants of God whose function it is to minister to our positive good and also to punish us if we are wrong. 'He' – this higher power – 'is the 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 them that do evil.' Notice the two things that are said – the positive and the negative – 'He is the minister of God to thee for good': so you only need to be afraid if you do evil because then you must remember that, '... he beareth not the sword in vain ...'.

We should notice two words here. First, the word 'minister', which appears twice: 'He is the minister of God to thee for good'; 'the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath'. The word the Apostle uses means 'a servant, as seen in his activity'. A servant is a servant when he is doing nothing, but the idea here is that of a servant carrying out his task.

Secondly, the word 'sword' – and there is no difficulty about this. It has been the custom from time immemorial to make a sword the symbol of the authority of magistrates. It seems that it was the custom of Roman emperors, when they appointed a provincial governor, to give him a dagger as he started upon his function. There is a story that on one occasion the emperor Trajan gave a dagger to a man whom he had appointed as governor of a part of his great territory. And as he gave it, he said, 'For me; if I deserve it, in me' – in this way demonstrating the great principle of justice. He said: I am giving you this

dagger to use for me, but if you find that I am the transgressor, then 'in me'. And it is the custom still, I believe, on certain occasions when a chief magistrate is appointed and goes to a civic service, for somebody to carry the sword in front of him. This sword represents the authority and power given by God to such people, even to the extent, if necessary, of taking life as punishment for misdeeds; but it is all, remember, on behalf of God. This is what matters: 'He is the minister of God to thee for good.' Yes, but if you do wrong, 'he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.' So do not forget that.

Then we come to the fifth verse, and from here on the argument is quite simple. In the light of all this, the Apostle says, you have two reasons for subjecting yourselves to these higher powers. The first is that you must be subject because of wrath, because you will have punishment if you do not, so be subject to them for the sake of avoiding this wrath.

But over and above that, Paul says: Be subject to the higher powers 'also for conscience sake'. Now Paul does not just mean because your own conscience is speaking, but because you, as a Christian, now have an understanding of the nature of the powers that be; you are no longer ignorant. Paul says: This teaching is in the Old Testament, and I, too, am telling you that there is no power apart from God, that the powers that be are ordained by Him. So if you go against it you will be going against what you know, and not only what you know, but what your fellow-Christians also know with you. You will be going against the common knowledge of Christian people who understand the teaching of God's Word on this vital subject.

Then in verse 6 Paul uses a very powerful argument. He says: You should not be in any trouble about this because you are already obeying this injunction - 'For for this cause ye pay tribute also', which means, 'you pay the taxes'. Why do you pay taxes? Because you recognize the authority and power of the state, because you believe it is a right thing to do.

Now comes a most interesting statement: 'for they' - the people to whom you pay the taxes - 'are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.' Now we have had the word 'minister' before - it comes twice in the fourth verse. But, interestingly, in verse 6 we find that the Apostle does not

use the same Greek word. In verse 4, you remember, the word carries the notion of a servant as seen in his activity; here the word denotes a public minister. The emphasis now is not upon a man doing the work, but upon the office as such, the solemnity and dignity of the office.

The same word is used of the priests working in the temple. Indeed, it is a word that is used in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a *minister* of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man' [verses 1-2]. A 'minister'! The very word that is used here to describe the powers that be. So the Apostle is saying here that these powers have a divinely ordained office that, in certain respects, is comparable to the position of the priests in the temple.

Now I trust that you are all already looking ahead, and beginning to see the importance of all this in connection with the relationship of church and state, let alone the relationship of the individual Christian to the state and to the powers that be. Paul says that they are 'ministers' of God, 'attending continually upon this very thing'. What 'thing' is this? Some people say it refers just to the receiving of the taxes. Not at all! It refers to the exercise of the functions about which the Apostle has been talking in this entire section. So his argument is that we pay taxes to keep the state and its functions in being, to keep them going, because we recognize that they are appointed of God.

So that brings us to the seventh verse, where the Apostle sums up his argument by means of a final exhortation: 'Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' 'Render'! Here is another interesting word. It really means to give back or to pay back something which we owe as a debt. That is our relationship to these powers. When you pay taxes, you are giving back something, you are paying back a debt which you owe. And the word 'dues' carries the same notion. It is something which is owed, a debt, a moral obligation. This is how we are to view this whole question of paying taxes.

Then the word translated 'tribute' here means a direct tax. This was the kind of tax referred to by the Sadducees and Herodians when they asked our Lord, 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?' [Mark 12:14]. 'Custom', on the other hand, means an indirect tax. We know the difference between direct taxation and indirect taxation, do we not - at least, we should do! It applies to every one of us; we pay both direct and indirect taxes.

Now the only real difficulty in verse 7 is with the word 'fear': 'Render . . . fear to whom fear.' This is a real problem. Is Paul asking us to fear the powers that be? It looks as if he is. But there are various reasons which bring us, I think, to the conclusion that he is not thinking of them at this point. I agree with the commentators who suggest that this is a reference to God. There is an obvious parallel here with Mark 12:13-17. When our Lord was asked about paying taxes to Caesar, the answer He gave was, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' He put them together. And I believe that Paul is doing something similar here.

Usually in the New Testament, when this word 'fear' appears, it does refer to God. The New Testament never gives us a general exhortation to fear the civil authorities. It tells us to honour them, to be subject unto them, but not to fear them. Peter says much the same thing in 1 Peter 2:17: 'Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king', and it is interesting to find this parallel. These words are so similar that we really cannot ignore them. In 1 Peter: 'Fear God. Honour the king'; in Romans 13: 'Fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' That seems to me to be decisive in our interpretation of this point, and again it will be most important when we come to the doctrine.

We are not told to fear man or powers; indeed, we are told very frequently not to fear them, to let them do what they like, as it were. Think of the great statements that we have already studied in Romans 8, finishing with the triumphant words: 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' [verse 37], even though we may be led as sheep to the slaughter all day. 'I am persuaded,' says Paul, 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' That is to be our attitude.

But this argument is finally clinched for me by our Lord's words at the beginning of Luke chapter 12: 'I say unto you my friends, Be *not* afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him' [verses 4-5].

So for these reasons I would say that when the Apostle tells us, 'Render . . . fear to whom fear', he is telling us to fear God, and when he writes, 'honour to whom honour', he is referring to the king, the emperor, the parliament, the magistrate, the civic authorities, or whoever holds power.

So then, having done what we may call the spadework, having examined the statements in detail, we should now be in a position to face these great challenging questions, principles and doctrines concerning our relationship to the state.

Three

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

We have now completed a detailed exegesis of the first seven verses of Romans 13, and it was important to undertake this spadework. You cannot arrive at a knowledge of doctrine or teaching unless you are clear in your mind as to what exactly the Apostle is saying. So now we move on to consider the teaching which the Apostle gives us here. This teaching is most important because the Apostle is dealing with the whole question of the relationship of Christian men and women to the state and to the laws of the country in which they happen to live.

This is a subject that is not dealt with frequently in the Scriptures and that is what makes this passage a kind of *locus classicus* with regard to this matter. And that is why, from

time to time in the long history of the church, these verses have received such special attention.

As you read the history of the church, you will find that God's people, when they have been truly spiritual in their thinking and outlook, have often had to consider very carefully the teaching of this section because of difficulties with regard to the states in which they have lived. Clearly this was true of the early Christians, and in this twentieth century it is once more becoming a vital subject, both in the developed countries and in many of the young, emerging countries. Christian people have consequently been forced to consider this passage more frequently than they have for several centuries. Fascism, Nazism and other teachings have gained ascendancy in the minds of rulers and governors of different countries and it seems to me that, if the world continues upon its present course, the relationship of the Christian to the state will become an increasingly important subject.

We have had people worshipping in this church who already have had to face this very teaching because of situations that have arisen in their own countries. They have been in places where there has been rebellion and revolution and where everything has changed, so that they, as Christians, have had to decide what their relationship to all this is and what they are to do about it. And who knows but that we all, in various ways, may have to face these very issues in the years that lie ahead.

The first principle that must engage our attention is the relationship in general of Christians to the world in which they find themselves. There is a tendency, as I have pointed out, for some people to think that because they have become Christians, they are no longer involved in the life of this world and can somehow or other contract out. Now this matter is very important because we are still in this world and are a part of its life. We are not of the world in a spiritual sense, but we are of it in practically every other sense – and that is where the difficulty has so often arisen.

Let me put it like this: the fact that we have become Christians does not mean that what we may call 'the orders of nature' have been cancelled or abrogated. And here I am thinking not only of our relationship to the state, but of issues

like marriage and our being male and female. Take Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2. The Apostle there reminds Timothy to teach others that, though it is true to say that from the standpoint of salvation there is no longer male and female, there is still a distinction, even in the church. The fact that we become Christians does not do away with the difference in the relative positions of men and women. 'I suffer not a woman to teach', says Paul. Why does he say that?

Now people have often tried to explain away Paul's words here by saying that Paul was limited by the circumstances and culture of his time, especially among pagan people. But that will not do. The Apostle is stating a principle that has been true ever since the Fall. In 1 Timothy 2:14, Paul points out that it was the woman who first fell, and because of that, he says, she bears certain consequences. And you can read what they were in Genesis.

That is what I mean by the orders of nature. There are fundamental relationships in life and these are laid down in the Scriptures; and the fact that we become Christians does not make any difference to them. So marriage and the relationship of husband and wife, man and woman, the relationship of parents and children, and work, and so on, have not been changed simply because we become Christians. But why is this?

The answer is: because this is God's world. God created it, He made man and woman, He made everything; and the fact that it fell did not stop it being God's world. God still sustains it. He still 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust' [Matt. 5:45]. In other words, we must be very careful that we never say that God has abandoned the world because of sin. Indeed, we must be positive: it is God's purpose to restore the world, not only to its original condition, but to something which will be even more glorious.

We must never forget that God's plan of redemption applies to the whole universe. By that, of course, I do not mean that everybody will be saved. What I am saying is that He will redeem the whole cosmos. This is stated clearly in Ephesians 1:10: 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in

heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.' That is God's purpose. The world will not be abandoned to the devil. No, no; the whole cosmos will be restored to a state of perfection. And that is why we, as Christians, must not contract out of the world.

Or let me put it like this. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the personal Saviour of all who believe in Him, He is the Lord of the universe. We must never forget this. There is a grave danger that we may view our salvation in such subjective, personal terms that we exclude much of the greatness and the glory of the teaching of the New Testament, and reduce God's purpose to something that makes us happy while we are here and saves us from hell. Thank God, it does do that, but that is not all there is to it. Peter told the Sanhedrin, 'Him hath God exalted . . . to be a Prince and a Saviour' [Acts 5:31]. He is the Lord of history.

Read again in chapter 5 of Revelation about the book that was sealed and how there was nobody anywhere who was worthy to break the seals and to open this book of history. There was only one who could: 'The Lion of the tribe of Juda' [Rev. 5:5]. Let us never forget that our Lord said, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth' [Matt. 28:18]. He is sitting at the right hand of God, waiting until His enemies shall be made his footstool [Heb. 10:12-13]. The world does not know it, but He is already reigning. All things are in His hands and in His power. He is already controlling the world in a most amazing manner.

So in the light of all this, Christians are not merely to cultivate their own souls. That is the first, the most important thing that they do, but they do not stop there. They must not think of themselves as people who are not interested in the world; they must not say, 'Nothing matters but my own soul and its cultivation.'

There, then, is the background, it seems to me, to all this teaching. Of course, actually, no one does contract out of life. That is where people who fall into this fallacy are inconsistent. They still eat and drink like everybody else; they still have to do some work; they still have to work with other people. But we must not contract out of life even in thought. That is the point that I am trying to establish.

But now we come to one of the particular applications of that general principle, and that is the Christian's view of the state. Here I want to emphasize that I am dealing with the Christian's *view*; not his relationship to the state, but his understanding of it. If our understanding is not right, then obviously our practical relationship will be wrong. So we must be clear, first of all, in our view of the state and the government, all that is called here, 'the powers that be'. There is much confusion about this subject and a great deal of unbiblical, sentimental thinking, and that is why this passage is so crucial.

What, then, are we taught here? Well, first and foremost, as Christians, we believe that the powers that be are ordained of God: 'For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.' That is a fundamental statement. The state and government, magistrates, and so on, are not a human invention, they are not a human desire or device. In spite of the views of so-called 'leading authorities', we assert from the Scripture that men and women have not evolved from animals. And neither have their culture and government. Not at all! These things are the result of God's action and activity. It is God who has ordained the state. The evolutionary view will tell you that humanity has gradually thought these things out, that they have evolved as a result of trial and error. That is quite wrong. You find all the principles laid down in the Old Testament.

Let us be clear about this. The Apostle is saying that government, law and order are God's idea. He is not saying that every particular rule or every bad ruler are of necessity ordained by God; he is concerned about the whole conception of government and of law and order. That is our first proposition.

The second is that the Apostle does not tell us that any one particular *form* of government is the one that has been ordained by God. What he says is that the concept of government is ordained by God. In other words, he does not, for example, say that monarchy and an aristocracy have been ordained by God. He does not say that the ruler should only be an emperor, or that a democracy is the only right form of government, or that an oligarchy alone is right. He does not mention these at all. All he is saying is that God has ordained

that there should be governments, that there should be law and that there should be order.

Now I emphasize this point because it really is very important. James I of England used to teach 'the divine right of kings', but there is no scriptural warrant for that. Indeed, some of the people who would argue for it in terms of the Old Testament may not realize that Israel was a theocracy, in a very special place and position, and they even forget that the Old Testament states very clearly and specifically that a woman should never be the ruler! Kings are not ordained in contradistinction to other rulers. There is nothing in the Scriptures to say that a republic is wrong – nothing whatsoever. All the Apostle says is that there must be government, a constituted authority, and you can have government under a republic as well as you can under a king, or an emperor, or whatever form the government may happen to take in different countries and at different times.

I come now to the third point. Given that Christians recognize the state and government, and recognize that there must be some constituted authority, whatever form it may take, to keep law and order, should they then seek to be actively involved in the government of their country, and should they take any part in the conduct of a war? Again, this is a source of much confusion and people find themselves in contradictory positions. Let me give you one instance of what I mean. I remember that at the outbreak of the last war¹, I happened to be in a conference, and the whole question of the relationship of the Christian to the state was on the agenda because many Christian people were in a quandary as to what they should do.

We started by discussing the part the Christian should take in the government and ordering of the life of a country. Now there was one man there who was violently opposed to this. 'Politics?' he said. 'It's a dirty game!' He insisted that Christians should have nothing at all to do with either local or national politics. And yet that man held an honoured rank in the British army. He was very proud of his army record and said he would urge all young men to join the army immediately. So I simply had to point out to him that while he

¹ The Second World War

regarded politics, which should prevent wars, as a dirty game, apparently to him fighting and killing people was not.

That is the kind of sentimental, superficial thinking that sometimes takes place. It is evidence of a sheer failure to think things through, and especially of a failure to think in a scriptural manner. A text that is often quoted in defence of this position is, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate' [2 Cor. 6:17], on the grounds that it teaches that you must not have anything to do with politics and government since that involves mixing with people who are not Christians. But there is an immediate and obvious answer to this. I point out that those who are vociferous in saying things like that are very often working, day by day, with people who are not Christians. They have to do so in order to earn their livelihood and are seemingly unaware that they are doing the very thing they say should never be done.

Let me give you an illustration of this point. A little book was published in 1862: Arthur Pridham on Romans. Now Pridham is a very good expositor, but when he comes to this section he really does say some quite remarkable things. He writes:

The believer, if he would adorn the doctrine of God, must exercise himself so as to have a conscience void of offence.

All right.

He is to endeavour to walk blameless under the eye of the Master whom he serves.

Again, quite all right!

With the decision of political questions he has, properly, nothing to do; *he has to submit himself*

and Pridham italicizes this

to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.

God comes before him in the ordinances of men. And he has an interesting footnote here:

1 Peter 2:13-15: The Scripture does not contemplate the Christian, I believe, anywhere as a ruler. The reason for this is not only the fact that at that time none such had embraced the faith, but rather, as it seems to me, the incompatibility of pure Christian principle as a realized thing with those maxims on which alone the world will consent to be governed. Flesh will not acknowledge spirit, nor will the world obey Christ. A government conducted in the energy of the Holy Ghost and according to the truth of God would be none other than the church itself.

That is a perfectly clear statement, is it not? Pridham is saying that the Christian should have nothing to do with this question of government. He says that, in his opinion, a Christian can never be a ruler – a king, or a queen, or an emperor, a prime minister, or anything else, or even a magistrate.

But let me show you what a complete muddle that is. Pridham is writing in the context of this thirteenth chapter of Romans, and how sadly he misses the very principles that are laid down here. It is also interesting that he makes these statements instead of giving us an exegesis of the particular verses.

Pridham says there were no Christian rulers at that time and of course that is actually the truth. But what has that got to do with it? In 1 Timothy 2, the Apostle teaches that we should pray for kings and all that are in authority. What should we pray for them? Well, Paul goes on to say that we should pray for their salvation: '[God] will have all men to be saved' [verse 4], which means kings and those in authority, as well as others. You see, some of the early Christians did not pray for them; these governors, they felt, were outside the pale.

'No, no,' says Paul, in effect. 'Pray for the salvation of every kind of man. Pray for kings that they may be saved, as well as for the most ordinary person.'

But how ridiculous if, immediately upon his conversion, the king had to abdicate from his high position!

There is no reason whatsoever for saying, on the basis of Scripture, that a Christian can never be a ruler. It is quite the contrary, because if 'the powers that be are ordained of God' then surely we should be concerned to have the best people conceivable in these positions of power. That is why we are told to pray for them in that way.

But there is a further fallacy in Pridham's argument. He drops into the mistaken idea that the Christian should have no interest in things that are not specifically and directly Christian. That is the real fallacy. It is based on the obvious difference between flesh and spirit – he says, 'Flesh will not acknowledge spirit.' The world is the flesh and it will not listen to the Spirit, and the Christian is in the Spirit. From this Pridham concludes that the Christian must have no interest in the flesh.

But that is a very dangerous heresy because Christians still have to function in the flesh, they still have to live in this world. All the orders of nature are still there; they still continue. Moreover, we are told that it is the duty of Christians to recognize and submit to the governing powers and obey them as best they can. There are certain qualifications, which I will deal with later, but as a principle, that is what we are told. So we are concerned with things in life that are not specifically Christian.

Let me go a step further: like everybody else, Christians are involved in matters that are not specifically moral or spiritual, but are neutral. Let me give you an example or two. What is government concerned about? It is concerned about preventing robbery and theft, keeping order, regulating the traffic, ensuring proper drainage, preserving public health. Now those are not moral or spiritual matters – I would call them neutral. From the standpoint of public health, law and order, driving on the correct side of the road, observing the road signs and the Highway Code, there is no difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. Christians are involved in all of them, and they should therefore be interested in all of them.

Or take economic issues. Speaking generally, I hold the position that questions about the economy are also not spiritual

or moral but neutral. Yet they are very important. When they are handled properly, they benefit all of us. If they are handled badly, we all suffer, Christians and non-Christians alike. So as Christians, it is our duty to take an interest in these things. We should be concerned to ensure that the best minds are applied to them. We do not contract out. We realize that local and national government are essential to the ordering of life, to making civilized life possible for the community of men and women. And we not only recognize this, we submit ourselves to it.

So there is Pridham's essential fallacy. He seems to think that the Christian should only be interested in spiritual matters. But you cannot live like that; you are of necessity involved in neutral matters, and the things that are dealt with by governments mainly fall into this category. I shall make this, I trust, still more clear when I come to deal with the relationship between the church and the state, but at this point I leave it as a general principle.

Then my last point under this particular heading is that Pridham makes another false assumption. His argument, you remember, is that a Christian cannot and should not take part in the government of a country because of the difference between spirit and flesh: the world would not take the Christian's view because the world is flesh and the Christian is spirit. Pridham thinks that there is only one Christian view on all the matters with which the Government is concerned. But surely that is a tremendous fallacy. Is there only one view among Christians with regard to economics or any of these questions? The answer, quite plainly, is no. That is why I have always opposed the idea that there should be a Christian political party in this country. In some countries you will find such parties, but that, to me, is based on a complete misunderstanding of this teaching.

You cannot have a Christian political party because Christians hold different views on the economy and other issues. You can have equally good Christians in the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party. What is it that divides them? Not their Christianity, not their spiritual point of view, but their opinions with regard to specific problems in the realm of economics, or drainage even, or any

one of these other questions that law and government have to consider.

Now I am not saying that the fact that people are Christians does not make any difference at all to their views on these matters. What I am saying is that you cannot say that there is 'the Christian view' with regard to most of these questions that have to be considered by the powers that be. And historically it has, of course, always been the case that Christian people have differed from one another on many of these questions without there being any reflection whatsoever upon their Christianity.

The upshot of all this is that it may well be that some Christians are called to high and exalted positions: you can have a Christian king, a Christian queen, a Christian prime minister, Christian magistrates, and so on. The idea that Christians should not hold these offices, and would virtually be sinning if they did, is a complete fallacy. Christians who think like that are turning in upon themselves, only interested in the culture and cultivation of their own souls, and that, it seems to me, is a total denial of the teaching of these seven verses.

The fourth principle that comes up under this general heading of the Christian's view of the state is in connection with the question: What is the Christian's view of the function of the state? What is the object and purpose of the state? What is it supposed to do?

Now there is no difficulty about the answer: the Apostle gives it here in these very verses that we are considering, and he also gives it in 1 Timothy 2, where he writes, 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men' – all kinds of men – 'for kings, and for all that are in authority' – why? – 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty' [verses 1-2]. That is really the function of the government: to order a quiet and a peaceable life.

The state does this in two ways. Negatively, it restrains evil and its manifestations. Government has become necessary because of the fall. Because men and women have fallen, they have become lawless and selfish, they have become cruel and vile, and they must be kept in order. The reason for that,

ultimately, is, let me repeat, that this is God's world and God has put a limit to the effects of evil. If He had not put these restraints, it is almost impossible to contemplate what would have happened. The world would undoubtedly have destroyed itself centuries ago. But God has ordained this limit and He has called in the powers that be to restrain the consequences of evil. But how does the state do this? The Apostle gives a clear explanation in these verses: 'Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil . . . 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.' So, negatively, the state restrains evil in two ways: by its warnings, and by its punishment of evildoers.

Secondly, and positively, it is the function of the state to promote the well-being of all. Its work is not one-sided. It is appointed for the praise of them that do well: '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 the minister of God to thee for good.' What does Paul mean by this second aspect of the work of the state? In what way does the state praise us if we live a good and a lawful and an honourable life? How is the state 'the minister of God' to the Christian?

The answer is given in Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2. When the state is functioning as it should, we are able to live a quiet and an orderly life. That is a great advantage to the Christian. The state encourages us to be law-abiding citizens, and to the extent that we and others are, it is good for us. We are able to pray more, we are able to give more time to the reading of the Scriptures, we are able to come safely to the house of God, to worship together and to praise the name of God. It is good for Christian people that the state should fulfil its true function of keeping order and peace. And as Christians do this themselves, as they keep the laws and encourage others to do the same, the state praises them and is well-pleased with them.

Let me give you just one illustration. I shall never forget what I was told soon after the end of the last war by that man of God, Professor Kish of Hungary, the great anatomist, who had come over to Britain. When I met him, he told me a most interesting thing that had happened in Russia during the war. I remembered reading in the newspapers that Stalin had said

that Christians were not to be persecuted and molested as they had been, that there was to be some relaxation of the laws against them, and I asked Professor Kish about this. He, with his knowledge of Russia and of Russian soldiers [Hungary, of course, is near to Russia], was able to give me the full explanation.

It was this. At that time Russia was in a desperate position, urgently needing the hard work of every man and woman, and reports kept reaching Stalin – these were observations from the commissars – that the best and the most reliable workers in the factories were these odd people who called themselves Christians. The Christians were doing what the state commanded them to do, and doing it better than anybody else. And what happened? Well, they received Stalin's praise, exactly as Paul says: 'Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.' The laws against them were relaxed – which is a form of giving praise. So they had that encouragement simply because they were being obedient to the laws.

We shall consider further aspects of the state's task of keeping down evil and rewarding the good when we come to deal with 'the sword' and the question of capital punishment, which is a subject on its own.

We come now to the fifth point. There is one final question, and it is this: Should Christians ever seek to change the character of the state? They recognize that the state is ordained of God, and they understand its function. They realize that they are to be concerned and interested in it, that they are to be subject to it, that they are not to contract out of it. So that leaves the question: Should Christians ever take part in attempts to change the nature of the state? In other words, should Christians ever be involved in a rebellion or a revolution?

It is my privilege to know Christian friends who visit Westminster Chapel from different countries in South America. Now in some of those countries there are quite frequent rebellions and revolutions. What should be the Christian's attitude? This question has also had to be faced in Africa, and in other countries. It arose in this country in the seventeenth century – that was the great question confronting the Puritans – and in America in the eighteenth century. Think of those

Life in Two Kingdoms

Christians, the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers and others who had gone over from this country, fine Christian people: what was their position in the American War of Independence? Was it right for them to take part?

This question that has so often arisen in the past, and is with us in the present, is likely to arise again in the future.

Now there are some people who think there is no difficulty about this – Pridham obviously held that view. They quote Paul's statement in 1 Peter 2 where we are told, '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 shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God' [verses 18–20]. That, they think, settles it. Christians are always to obey the state, however much the suffering; they are never to do anything at all about changing the form of government. But is that right?

Pridham is quite specific about this. Let me give you his actual words. He says:

The recognition of divine mercy in a tranquil and well-ordered polity where personal liberty and a large variety of desirable immunities are very generally enjoyed, is a daily obligation on the heart of every thoughtful Christian.

We have this kind of government and he says we should thank God for it.

But for men in Christ to be contending for such things as their rights, still more that Christians, as is often the case in the present day, should be endeavouring to compel the ruling powers to their will, too surely indicates the loss of that separate standing of heavenly stranger-ship, which pertains to the believer as united to the risen Christ.

In other words, Pridham says that it is never right for a

Christian to try to change the government. Once more, he has a footnote:

One of the most common and mischievous fallacies of the day is the assumed distinction in principle between moral compulsion and physical force. In either case it is man's will attaining its end by subduing the opposing force. God's Word commands subjection to Himself in the person of the ruler. Revolutionary movement of any kind has its rise in the dissatisfaction of the governed party; a grievance is no sooner felt than it is sought to be removed. If refusal be given to a request, dictation by the moral force of expressed opinion is resorted to.

And he disapproves of this very much indeed. 'Is this according to the mind of God?' he asks, thereby condemning Oliver Cromwell and all the Puritans of the seventeenth century who fought for the change in government that took place then. He also condemns all the Christians who took part in the American War of Independence in which they obtained freedom from this country.

But is this just a matter of personal opinion? No - I would answer that there are, surely, objective, biblical principles. God has ordained law. Very well. If the law itself allows us the possibility of changing the system, then surely we are entitled to take advantage of it to do so. In other words, the law allows us to have a general election, and in this way to change the Government, and it is right for Christians to do that.

But you can carry it beyond that. I think the whole question of a Christian belonging to a trade union comes under this heading. If the system by which men and women work today is that of co-operation between employers and trade unions and government, if that is what the powers that be have decreed and have put down as law, then I say that Christians should be involved; they do not contract out. It is not sinful for a Christian to be a member of a trade union. Trade unions are part of the running of society, of the ordering of our affairs at the present time.

But wait a minute! What about taking part in a strike? Well, the question I would ask is this: Is a strike legal? And the

answer is that it is. The law of this land permits strikes, and, as long as they are lawful, if Christians are satisfied that strikes will produce better conditions, they are entitled to take part in them.

Remember, however, that contracts must always be honoured. That is an absolute principle. But if the law allows you to reconsider the contract, and to try to get a better one, you are fully entitled to do so. There is nothing unchristian in that, either. Again, it is one of the neutral issues to which we have been referring. Honour your contract but always try to improve it if you can. A strike is the last measure and it should only be indulged in because it is allowed by the law. It is the last resort, but there is nothing inherently wrong in it.

But what about rebellion? Surely, as Christians, we are entitled to argue that if a state, a king, an emperor, a governor, a dictator or anybody else becomes tyrannical, then this state is violating the law of its own being and constitution as laid down in Romans 13:2. It is the business of the state and the Government to repress evil and to reward good; its function is to maintain a quiet, a peaceable and orderly life. That is what it is called by God to do. So the state, having been instituted for the benefit of humanity, is to be the servant and not the master. The moment, therefore, that the state turns itself into a master and into a tyrant, it is disobeying the law of God that brought it into being and it must itself be punished; and the form the punishment takes is that the Government is thrown out and replaced by one that is prepared to abide by the teaching of Romans 13:1-7.

Now I shall not, at this point, go into the question of whether you should fight to bring that about. That will come when we consider the question of the sword in terms of pacifism.

So I leave it at that now. May I at this point express my sense of astonishment at the way in which you have listened to all this in spite of the fact that there is no heat whatsoever in this building tonight! I am only telling you that now. If I had told you before I began, you would have been shivering. But I deliberately did not tell you, and, you see, it has not made so much difference – at least, I hope it has not! I have been speaking and I have been keeping myself warm, of course, in doing so.

So far we have only looked at one aspect of this subject – the Christian's general relationship to life, the Christian's view of the state. Do not jump to too many conclusions! I am simply laying down general principles; God willing, we shall go on to consider them further in detail.

Four

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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. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [judgment, punishment]. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

Having expounded those words in detail, I have indicated that we are now in a position to consider some of the great problems and principles that are raised and dealt with in this chapter. Romans 13 is a unique section of Scripture, as you who are familiar with your Bibles will realize. It deals more extensively with some of the practical problems faced by Christians in their relationship to the state than any other portion of Scripture, and therefore it is of very great importance.

Now we have already considered the Christian's relationship to the world in general, and we have also dealt with the Christian's view of the state and its functions. We come

now to the attitude of Christian men and women towards the state and their relationship to it. This seems to me to be the logical order. We must have a right view of the state first of all. You cannot determine what your relationship to it should be, nor what your attitude should be to its enactments and laws, until you are clear as to what the Scriptures teach us concerning the nature and the function of the state.

Now I think you will find that there have been two extreme views which people have been in danger of falling into with regard to their relationship to the state. The first is what I may call the traditional view. Throughout the centuries, many Christians have believed that they should always be concerned to maintain the status quo, and that the Christian faith is always on the side of privilege.

This view dates back to around 325 AD, when the emperor of Rome, Constantine, decided to take the Roman Empire into the Christian church. Ever since then, the church has been the friend of kings and emperors and princes and dukes and earls and nobles. There has been the tendency, therefore, for some to interpret biblical teaching as being strongly in support of what we may call in general the aristocracy, and the aristocratic view of government. This is a view that is still put forward by many people today. They say that Christian teaching is entirely in support of a hierarchical structure in society and government and they therefore urge people to be content with their lot. Indeed, not only that, they maintain that it is the duty of all people to continue as they are and not seek to change their position in life.

The most extreme form of this particular attitude that I have perhaps every encountered was the attitude to black people that, to my amazement, I came across among certain friends across the Atlantic. These were Christian people, good evangelical Christian people, and they strongly held the view that black people were meant to be servants, that they were meant to be in a position of subservience. Now this, I was told, was because they were descended from Ham, whose descendants were surely always intended to be hewers of wood and drawers of water [Deut. 29:11]. It was therefore wrong ever to consider even the idea of giving liberty to such people, still less to envisage desegregation or to regard them in any way as being equal.

Life in Two Kingdoms

I simply mention this to illustrate my point – but we need not go to the United States to find examples. The well-known hymn-writer, Mrs C. F. Alexander, whose hymns we often sing, wrote in the nineteenth century:

*The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate;
God made them high or lowly
And ordered their estate.*

Like many evangelical people at that time, Mrs Alexander believed that this structure had been ordained and ordered by God. This was a popular and common teaching. That is why it is so important for us to be careful in our reading of this portion of Scripture, and in our interpretation of the Scriptures in general. And that was why I went out of my way in our last study to point out that what God has ordained is *government*, 'the powers that be' that maintain law and order, and that He has not ordained or prescribed any particular form of government, neither has He ordained any particular holder of an office. To believe otherwise is to repeat Mrs Alexander's error.

Of course, if you do believe that God has ordained 'the rich man in his castle, and the poor man at his gate', then you must accept the logical conclusion that they should continue in that position, and that it would be wrong to mitigate the sufferings of the poor man at the gate, or to ameliorate his condition, or perhaps to take a little from the rich man in his castle.

At the other extreme, of course, is anarchy, or the idea of democracy run wild; and there have been many who have dropped into that view. I could again give you illustrations from throughout the centuries. In Britain, this type of thinking surfaced particularly towards the middle of the seventeenth century. After the Civil War, or at least, after the first part of it, when Cromwell and the army got into power, there were people called 'Fifth Monarchy Men', and others. These men, having got a certain amount of liberty, were advocating a kind of anarchy – no law and order whatsoever and everything turned upside-down.

Those, then, are the two extremes, and both are surely quite wrong. The teaching of the Apostle in these seven verses does

not support either view. No, I suggest that this passage teaches something along the following lines. It is clear that we are to be subject to the state, to the governing powers that be. This is something we will all agree about. The Christian is always to be a good and peaceable citizen. We can go so far as to say that Christians should always be the best citizens in the country. Their faith does not give them greater brain power, but, for example, they do not harm their minds by drinking too much or by eating too much, and so on. They should be better men and women than anybody else and therefore should be better citizens.

Now this, let me repeat, is simply because they are Christians. As the Apostle puts it in verse 5: 'Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath . . .' This is one of the great differences between a Christian and a non-Christian. As far as non-Christians are concerned, the main motive for observing the law is the threat of punishment, so they will go as near the line as they can, just short of being caught. Wrath! In the main, they are governed by the fear of wrath. There are, I know, exceptions, but speaking generally, this is true. Nothing but fear makes people conform to the law.

But that is not to be the case with the Christian. 'Ye must needs be subject,' says Paul, 'not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake', which means, as we have seen, that as a Christian you have an understanding of this matter. It is only Christians who see the real need for the state. It is Christians alone who really believe in sin, who know what sin is, and the power it has in each person's life. They realize as nobody else can, the extent to which sin can lead us, both individually and collectively. They also see more clearly than anyone else the necessity for controlling sin and its manifestations and results. That is why Christians should always be on the side of law and order. Humanists do not believe in sin at all, so they do not see the same need for legislation, and you will therefore find that, as a general rule, they are opposed to various laws. I shall return to this a little later.

But not only do Christians see the need for law, control and order, they know that God Himself has made this provision for the maintenance of life. Try to think what life in the world would be like if you suddenly banished all the laws; if you

banished the police force and everything that is designed to preserve law and order.

Christians have an understanding of these things. This is what is meant by conscience. And, therefore, they know the need for discipline and punishment. For those reasons they must be subject to the state and to its enactments. But I must hasten to add that there is a qualification to that statement; there is a limit beyond which it is not true. It is quite clear in the Scriptures that if the state should ever come between me and my relationship to God, then I must not obey it.

Let me give you my evidence for this. You find it, for instance, in the Acts of the Apostles, in the fourth chapter. Peter and John had been arrested for preaching and for healing the man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple and had been dragged before the ruling powers. Then we read in verses 18 to 20: 'And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.'

This is repeated in the fifth chapter, after the Apostles had again been told to stop preaching. In verse 28, the authorities say to them, 'Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' And Peter and the other Apostles reply, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'

Now at first you might think that this contradicts verse 1 of Romans chapter 13 where the Apostle Paul says, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.' But there is a qualification: the powers that be are designed to carry out God's will, and if they thwart or try to thwart it, and seek to prevent people from observing it and carrying it out, then those people are entitled to say to them, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' That is quite clear in the Acts of the Apostles, and that was the principle on which the early Christians acted.

Later on, of course, many Christians were in this position. The state, the Roman state, not only looked to the emperor as a governor and a leader, but deified and worshipped him; they said, 'Caesar is Lord.' When the Christians were told that they,

too, must say that, they replied: 'We know that Jesus is Lord, and we cannot worship any man.' So they were confronted with the choice – either they said, 'Caesar is Lord', or else they were put to death. And they were very ready indeed to die rather than make that statement. At that point they rightly refused to be subject to the powers that be. They disobeyed them and were ready to suffer the consequences of their disobedience.

So we are to be subject to the higher powers until they in any way come between us and our loyalty to God Himself and His commandments to us.

There is a second limit that is important, and may become even more important for all of us, as it is at the present time for many of our fellow-Christians in other countries. One may say that the first qualification that I have been laying down is liberty of conscience. The state must never tyrannize over my conscience, and when my conscience tells me that I am being asked to do something that contravenes my relationship to God, I listen to my conscience.

This is a great principle, on which Christian people have often stood. If the state tries to prevent you from preaching the gospel, you do not listen to it. The Apostles Peter and John were thrown into prison for preaching; then they were liberated in a miraculous manner, and what did they do? They immediately went out and preached again. They were deliberately disobeying a legal injunction 'not to speak at all nor to teach in the name of Jesus' [Acts 4:18].

'But,' they said, 'we must.'

And, of course, this has happened many times since. During the Reformation and at the time of the Puritans, similar prohibitions were repeated frequently, but believers went on preaching the truth, feeling that this must be done, whatever the state might say. Liberty of conscience!

But I also want to qualify that, and again this is very important. There is a limit, even to our claim to liberty of conscience. I would once more illustrate this by referring – because it is a convenient illustration – to some of those groups of people who flourished in London in the late 1640s and the early 1650s. There had been a rebellion and a revolution, the king had been put to death. Freedom! Liberty! But

some of these people lost their heads – I mean in a metaphorical sense! – and they felt that this now entitled every man and woman to say, ‘I’m going to do what *I* think is right.’ But this is anarchy. When a man says that he is going to obey his conscience, always, without any exception, he is not so much a believer in liberty as in licence. There you see the difference between an ordered society and lawlessness.

So while in general it is right and true to say that people should always obey their conscience, they must not do that at all points, regardless of the enactments of the state. Men and women must, after all, live in society. ‘For none of us liveth to himself,’ says Paul [*Rom.* 14:7]. The fact that we have the powers that be, the fact that God has ordained states, indicates that we are all meant to live in community. You cannot live as an isolated being and you should not even desire to do so because this is clearly against the will of God. But communal life is quite impossible unless we all know the limits to our assertion of liberty of conscience. If everybody says, ‘I’m only going to do what *I* think is right’, then you can see that life would become impossible.

At certain points we all have to recognize that if the state has enacted according to the wisdom of the majority of the people in the country, though we may not quite see it as they do, we must abide by that decision – but remember that I am excluding our relationship to God, and the necessity for liberty of worship. There was a notorious case recently about somebody who made a great fight – even to the extent of going to prison – over the question of a drain going through a part of her garden, or something. That is the kind of situation I mean. To stand out on things that really are debatable or questionable, to be rigid and to say, ‘I will only do what I think is right’, putting your opinion over and against the general opinion of your fellow-citizens, is to abuse the whole notion of liberty of conscience.

But that is what many of those Fifth Monarchy Men did. Indeed, they went so far as to say that they did not believe in government or law and order at all, but believed that every man should act according to his own conscience. Some of the very early Anabaptists on the continent acted in exactly the same way, and they brought the Protestant Reformation into

considerable disrepute. That was why Martin Luther and John Calvin tended to react so violently to them – I think too violently – but there was a great deal to be said for Luther's and Calvin's point of view. These people were taking the whole notion of the liberty of the Christian, liberty of conscience, to a ridiculous extreme.

Of course, the moment we stop to think of it, we all know how, in daily practice, we constantly give up our own freedoms. There are many things we dislike in the laws of our country, and we do them with a grudge, as it were, yet we do conform to them because we know it is right for us to do so. We must not take the law into our own hands in these matters. You will sometimes find, for example, that people refuse to send their children to school, and they always do it in terms of 'liberty of conscience'. I think it is very difficult to make out a case for such people. There are exceptional cases, no doubt, but, speaking generally, people who do that kind of thing are cranks who misunderstand this great principle of liberty of conscience.

So there is our first big principle – that we must be subject to the state, to the powers that be, whoever and whatever they may be, but with the qualifications I have given.

The second principle is that it is right for us as Christians to claim the protection of the state and its laws. There are some people who think that it is the hallmark of spirituality not to do that; they have nothing to do with the state at all and they would not dream of claiming its protection. Now all I would say to them is that they are not being as spiritual as they think; in fact, they are very definitely being unscriptural.

Look at Acts chapter 16, verses 19 to 40, and notice how the great Apostle stood on his rights as a Roman citizen. He had been treated most unjustly and he did not allow these magistrates just to send down an order telling the jailor to set the prisoners at liberty. 'Not at all,' said Paul; 'they must come down themselves.' And they came very quickly when they realized that he was a Roman citizen! By taking the action that he did, Paul reprimanded the magistrates at Philippi, showing them that they were appointed to carry out the law and that they must do so.

Roman citizenship was not a trivial matter to the great

Apostle, and Acts goes on to record further occasions when Paul asserted his rights. On one occasion, when he was on trial and was not satisfied, he said, 'I appeal unto Caesar' [Acts 25:11]. He wanted to go to the highest court and, as a Roman citizen, he had a right to do so.

Furthermore, Whitefield and Wesley, in the eighteenth century, did not hesitate to act upon the same principle. At times, when they were preaching in the open air and evangelizing the people, a local magistrate and a local vicar would come together to try to stop them, or would gather a mob to break up the meeting and cause trouble. In doing this, they were breaking the law, and Whitefield and Wesley were ever ready to invoke the law. Indeed, Whitefield often used to report these actions to the Countess of Huntingdon, who had influence in government circles, and he would ask her to use that influence to put an end to these wrongs.

We are citizens. We have a biblical view of government and the state, and law and order, that teaches us that it is right to use them. We are not always to suffer grievous injustices. We are entitled to invoke the law and to insist that it be carried out.

But, thirdly, Christians must not glory in the state or in any particular form of it. This, again, is important. Much damage has been done to the Christian faith and to the church because people have once more fallen into one of two extremes. At one extreme, the church has far too often given the impression that she is entirely on the side of the higher powers. Sometimes Christians have been the greatest royalists in the country; they have boasted of this and have been ready to fight and to die for their views. But I would suggest to you that they are putting themselves into an unscriptural position. The Christian is not to glory in any particular form of the state.

But what, you may ask, has this got to do with us today? A good deal. Some of the most fervent royalists I have ever met have been evangelical Christians. Their support for the monarchy has been almost more prominent in their lives and in their whole demeanour than anything else about them. But I would question this attitude. There is a kind of mystique about royalty, and one can understand its attraction to the man of the world, but never in the case of a Christian.

Rumours go around periodically that such-and-such a member of the royal family has been converted, and it is all very hush-hush. And Christian people are not only ready to believe it, but they exult in it, as if it were something unusually wonderful. Now I am not dealing here with credulity, which is bad enough in and of itself, but with the glorification of any aspect of the state: this seems to me to be quite unscriptural.

But let us take the other extreme. The Christian is not to glory in democracy either. Now to most of us, this, perhaps, comes a little nearer home. I believe that the present condition of Nonconformity, or of the Free Churches, in Britain is mainly due to the fact that towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century Nonconformists, both preachers and people, began to glory in democracy. Nonconformity became political, and all the energy and enthusiasm of Christian Nonconformists was put into politics rather than into understanding the gospel. And there is no question at all but that we are suffering as a result. It is as wrong and unscriptural to be a mad democrat as it is to be a mad royalist!

This brings me on to the fourth principle, which explains the point I have just made. The Christian is never to expect too much from the state. This is always a difficulty. People always expect too much from it. Let me emphasize that by saying that Christians should never get excited about the state. They should never get excited about politics. They are to be interested; they are to vote; they must be intelligent and informed; but they should never get excited about one political party or the other. But Christians often do, and to the extent that they do, they come under the condemnation of the Scriptures.

That was the whole fallacy, surely, behind the French Revolution of 1789. People went mad. Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! The Revolution was going to solve all problems; it was going to put the world right. Well, political revolution has not put the world right, and it never will.

Then towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century – I am old enough to remember a good deal of this – Christian people really believed that by Acts of Parliament you could make a new world. They were confident of this. The enthusiasm was something that younger people nowadays cannot even imagine. The great days in all religious

assemblies were the days when the statesmen came and addressed the gatherings. But since then biographies have made it very plain and clear to us that if anyone needed to be preached to, and to listen to Christian preaching, it was those very statesmen. But that was just a part of this wild excitement. We were going to legislate in the Sermon on the Mount; we were going to legislate in the kingdom of God! It is all wrong. The state cannot do that.

We must not expect too much from the state because the business of the state is mainly negative. Its main function is to control and to limit evil and the manifestations of evil. The state, whether it be a monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, or any other form that you may choose, can do very little positive good, and people have got into trouble when they think it can.

So my last principle under this whole question of the Christian's attitude towards the state is this: whatever your view of the state, you must never allow it to affect your relationship with other Christians. If your interest in the state, or your view of it, or your reaction to it, comes between you and other Christians, you are in a wrong and a false position.

So often, and to their great shame, Christian people have quarrelled over politics. That is quite unforgivable. Ultimately the disagreement is caused by a false view of what the state can achieve, otherwise no one would get so heated. I have known churches to divide on political issues. I have known Christian people who do not even speak to one another because of their different political views. It is almost unthinkable, but it has often happened, and it is all due to a failure to understand the teaching of this great and important section of Romans 13. It is quite all right to have differences of opinion, as I have already indicated. There are equally good Christians in all the political parties. But Christians must never let their political views harm their fellowship with other Christians.

Let me sum it all up by putting it like this. We are to remember that as Christians our relationship to the state is, at its very best, only temporary. This is our position: 'Our conversation' – citizenship – 'is in heaven' [*Phil.* 3:20]. Now I have warned you not to misinterpret that and say, 'Therefore I've nothing to do with the state.' That is wrong. Nevertheless,

it is our fundamental position that the place we belong to is heaven. That is our capital city. We are strangers here. We are men and women away from home. We are 'colonists', as somebody translates it, and we must never lose sight of that.

So we realize that we are only here as strangers and pilgrims, travellers and sojourners. That, again, is one of the great differences between the Christian and the non-Christian. Non-Christians live for this life and this world alone, so they get excited about the state and about their political parties. They believe the state can work wonders and they are consequently full of a false optimism. That should never be true of the Christian.

The Christian says: 'Thank God, I've been delivered. I belong to that kingdom that will come visibly on earth. That is where I really belong right now, but I still have to live in this world. It is God's will that I should live here, and He has appointed the powers that be. So I, of all people, must recognize them. I must live in these strange conditions while I'm on this earth. I must therefore do my utmost to keep the world and its life within bounds, because this is the will of God.'

I repeat that Christians do not set their affection on this world. They do not believe that the world will be reformed and will be made wonderful and perfect. Of course not; they know it cannot happen. They have their eye on the second coming of Christ and the ushering in of the kingdom of God in a visible manner. So their relationship to the state is, in a sense, detached. They are in it, they are subject to it, they observe its rules and its laws, they are the best of citizens. Yet the whole time there is a detachment; they are not lost in it, involved in it, thrilled by it, excited by it, ready to quarrel with people over it. They cannot, because ultimately their citizenship is in heaven.

So those are the conclusions to which I think you are inevitably bound to come as you study this passage, as you collate it with incidents in the Acts of the Apostles and compare it with other teachings in the New Testament.

But there is another matter that I must just touch on at this point, and that is, of course, the question of capital punishment. Here it is: '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.' The 'sword'! Here again is a very vexed question. What is the teaching? Well, from the reference to the use of the sword, and bearing in mind the fact that the sword is the ultimate emblem of the authority of the state – the governing power – it is clear that the state has power to take life, and that this power is granted to it by God.

Now there are objections to this view. Indeed, objections have recently been raised in Britain and as a result capital punishment has been abolished. So what should be the attitude of Christians towards this teaching?

Now I must first say that I am speaking only of capital punishment as the penalty for murder. There was a time in Britain when people were put to death for all sorts of reasons, for stealing sheep, and so on. But those laws were reformed, and the death penalty was only given for murder. So I confine my remarks to that.

But what about the objections that are generally put forward, even in cases of murder? There are those who say that killing in any shape or form is always wrong. There is only one answer to give to that: the Old Testament makes it perfectly plain and clear that that is not the case. God commanded the children of Israel to kill certain people, and, indeed, even to exterminate certain nations. And, of course, throughout the centuries the saints have acted on this principle. There have been some very saintly men in the armies and navies of countries, outstanding Christians some of them, and there have been great Christians such as Oliver Cromwell and others in Britain, who clearly give an answer to that statement that killing is always wrong.

'But then,' says somebody, 'doesn't the commandment say, "Thou shalt not kill"? And what about "turning the other cheek"?''

These are the stock arguments. And the answer is that all those commandments are given to the individual. The individual is not to kill; the individual is to turn the other cheek. We dealt with that towards the end of our study of the twelfth chapter of Romans. We are now, however, dealing with the power of the state to take life in the form of capital punishment. So it is no use quoting one of the Ten Commandments, or the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount.

And, thirdly, there is a fierce argument about the deterrent effect of capital punishment. But I do not deal with that because it is not relevant to our scriptural and spiritual discussion. It is a debatable point for lawyers, and does not concern us at all.

What, then, is the scriptural answer? Romans chapter 13 teaches that it is the positive duty of the state to use the sword: 'He beareth not the sword in vain.' How does the state come to bear it at all? It is because the state is the representative of God. The state is 'the minister of God': 'For he is the minister of God . . . a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.' So the power of the sword that the state has is a power that has been delegated by God Himself. It is not that the state has taken it but it has been given by God.

Why has God done this? Surely the answer of the whole of the Old Testament is that God is the author of life. Life is the greatest gift that He gives to men and women. And as God is the author, and the sole author, of life, He alone has a right to take life. It is at that point that you see the enormity of murder. That is why murder is a very special and unique crime. It is one thing to take a man's good or his money. It is different again to take his life. A man's life is the most precious of his possessions. It is God who has given it; only God has a right to take it away.

In other words, it seems to me that, based on the teaching here, the argument for the death penalty can be put like this: capital punishment is designed to maintain and to emphasize and to establish the sanctity of life. It has no vindictive quality in it at all. If the vindictive element comes in, it is wrong. The purpose of capital punishment is not to say, 'You have taken someone's life, I am going to take yours.' It is not that at all. The purpose of capital punishment is to vindicate God's lordship over life, and to tell man that if he passes beyond that border, he must forfeit his own life. There is nothing that should so teach us the sacredness and the sanctity of life as the carrying out of capital punishment.

It is very interesting to observe the people who are opposed to capital punishment; generally you will find that they are the humanists, the atheists. And generally it is the same people who have been agitating for what they call this 'new morality'

Life in Two Kingdoms

and who have succeeded in passing a law to allow homosexual practices between adult males. They are acting on the same consistent principle; they do not recognize God and their view of men and women is that they are only animals. They know nothing about the sacredness, the sanctity of life. They do not know that God alone is the author of life. They are ignorant of all this, being blinded by the 'god of this world'. As humanists, they start and end with man and have no other considerations whatsoever.

But here, in Romans 13, there is the specific statement that the state 'beareth not the sword in vain'. Furthermore, this is in accord with the Old Testament teaching, including God's commands to the children of Israel to enforce this principle, in a judicial manner, with other nations. So we must assert the principle that underlies capital punishment. In the next study we will go on to consider pacifism and the relationship between the state and the church.

Five

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

At the end of our last study, we were trying to show that the Scriptures indicate quite clearly that the magistrate, the state, has the power to take life. In the matter of capital punishment, the magistrate 'beareth not the sword in vain'. Yet he does not use the sword as an individual but as the minister of God. And that brings us to our next problem, which is very closely related to that of capital punishment and arises in the same way. We are dealing now with the question of pacifism.

Now Christians have to face this problem when the state to which they belong is involved in two types of conflict. The first is when there is war with another country. We have seen that, as a citizen, it is the Christian's duty not only to recognize the state, but to obey it. 'Let every soul', says the Apostle

in Romans 13:1, 'be subject unto the higher powers.' And he has given us reasons for that. You do not contract out of the state because you have become a Christian. You should be the best citizen in the state, and be involved in its life, in its politics, its economics and so on. You cannot separate yourself. To start with, that is impossible, but you should not even try. It is our duty, all of us, to do our utmost to carry out the will and the ordinance of God in this whole matter of law and of government. So the moment the state to which we belong goes to war, we are all implicated, and we must be clear about our duty.

The second way in which the question of pacifism arises is when there is a rebellion or a revolution within the state. That occurred in Britain in the seventeenth century, and it has happened in many other countries; there are still rebellions at the present time. In the previous study, we considered the question of rebellion in and of itself, and our conclusion was that it is justifiable in extreme cases but that we must be very sure of our ground. But the issue now is this: if the state is involved in a revolution, what is the Christian's position with regard to taking part in the fighting?

Those, then, are the two main ways in which the problem of pacifism arises. But what is the teaching? Now there are those who say that the taking of life is always wrong. I had to mention that in dealing with the question of capital punishment, and there I was able to establish that that is not the teaching of Scripture where the death penalty is concerned. But now we are approaching this subject from the point of view of pacifism.

Now pacifists are people who say that no state should ever go to war. They are constantly trying to persuade the different countries to which they belong that war is always wrong. We must bear in mind that we must also consider the position of the individual. The pacifist would say without any hesitation that, as it is wrong for the state ever to go to war, it is clearly equally wrong, if not more so, for any individual ever to take part in war. That is the generalization made by pacifists.

What is our attitude to be? Well, it seems to me quite clear that pacifism must be rejected out of hand. I say this because in the Old Testament we find God constantly commanding the

children of Israel to go to war and to put certain people to death. In some cases they are even commanded to exterminate an entire people. And there are examples in the Old Testament of men who are punished by God for disobeying this instruction – King Saul, the first king of Israel, for example, is punished for not obeying God's command to kill every single one of the enemy. That is the plain teaching of the Old Testament. God not only commands the children of Israel to go to war, He blesses their efforts. At times, He even gives them instructions on how to fight their battles, where to set up ambushes and so on.

But immediately, of course, the pacifist argues that this is only the Old Testament teaching. And our answer is this: he is now no longer discussing the question of fighting and killing, but has raised the whole issue of his view of the Scriptures.

It is very important that we should be able to reason this through. The pacifist who objects and says, 'That's only the Old Testament teaching, it doesn't apply to the Christian', has moved his ground and has raised the whole question of the Christian's attitude to the Bible. The question we are discussing is now this: 'Do you regard the Scriptures, both Old Testament and New, as equally the infallible and inspired Word of God?'

If he answers, 'Yes, I do', then he must withdraw his objection.

Furthermore, the moment anyone casts doubt on the inspiration of the Old Testament, we are involved in a discussion about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say you believe He is the Son of God? Very well; but He accepted the whole of the Old Testament. There is no indication that He had any reservations with regard to it; in fact, quite the opposite. Our Lord quoted from many books of the Old Testament and particularly those books that deal with this very matter. So was He wrong in His view of the Old Testament? Was He merely a child of His age? Was he just suffering from the misfortune that He was not alive in the twentieth century when we have become more enlightened about these things? These are the questions that are raised when pacifists put forward their arguments.

But then I can go even beyond that. When the various

officers in the army of the day came to our Lord, He never told them to leave their occupation. Take the centurions who went to Him, He would bless them without ever indicating that any of them should give up their work as soldiers because they had become believers in Him. There is no word from Him that in any way prohibits a man who becomes a Christian from being a soldier.

All this is important evidence. But then someone says, 'All right, I'll accept that that is true in general, but do we not have certain specific statements by the Lord which really make this question of fighting and killing quite impossible?' And, of course, the examples that are immediately produced are our Lord's statements in Matthew 5 about turning the other cheek and not only loving your neighbour but loving your enemies as well. 'There it is,' we are told. 'Plain and specific teaching given by our Lord Himself.'

What of this? Well, when we were dealing with the end of the twelfth chapter of Romans, we just touched on that. And we indicated that the whole principle here is that the Sermon on the Mount, like the Ten Commandments, refers to individuals and not to the state. People say, 'Doesn't one of the Ten Commandments say, "Thou shalt not kill"?' Yes, it does, but that obviously cannot be a reference to the state because, as we have seen, God commanded the children of Israel to exterminate people, and He does not contradict Himself.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord is talking about what we are to do when we ourselves have been harmed. We saw it in Romans 12: 'Recompense to no man evil for evil' [verse 17]; 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves' [verse 19]. Paul is not addressing the Christians in Rome as a state, but is dealing with individual Christians in their relationships with other individuals. And, as we saw in dealing with capital punishment, the individual is never entitled to take life, whatever may have happened to him personally. That is the principle.

But I want to go further on this matter also. It always seems to be assumed that if a man is fighting for his country, then he must of necessity hate his enemy. But that, surely is a false assumption. It is wrong to assume that every British soldier who fought in the last war hated every soldier in the German, Italian and Japanese armies. It is just not true. No, this is

where the confusion tends to come in. There is a difference between hating what your enemy at the moment stands for and hating the men themselves. It is even possible for a man fighting for a principle to be sorry for the people against whom he is fighting, pitying them in their blindness, ignorance or sinfulness. I will be making all this still more clear when I indicate the only grounds on which Christians are entitled to fight for their country.

Indeed, I can go even further. I am very sorry to have to say this, but it is the simple truth; some of the most bitter men that I have ever known were strong pacifists. Their attitude towards those who disagreed with them was most militant; in fact, it was murderous. There was more bitterness and hatred in their hearts and spirits towards those who disagreed with them than in the hearts of most of those fighting during the last two world wars. This is the kind of way in which people become muddled in their thinking in these matters. The moment you begin to talk about this question of hatred, you come to see that it is not just a matter of physical actions but of the spirit and heart.

But finally we come to what pacifists would regard as their supreme argument, and that is the death of our Lord on the cross on Calvary's hill. I always remember, many years ago, a young minister of my acquaintance calling upon me because this whole question had arisen in his pastoral work. He began putting the pacifist position to me, and I expressed amazement because was an Evangelical.

'But,' he said, 'surely you cannot consider the death of our Lord without immediately assuming the pacifist position?'

And it became quite clear that he regarded our Lord's death as the death of a pacifist. He saw nothing in it but passive resistance. So I had to point out to him that what we were really discussing was not the question of fighting and of killing, but the death of our Lord.

If pacifists use the death of our Lord as an argument for their position, they are simply displaying their ignorance about the reasons for His death. That was a unique death; our Lord came into this world in order to die. Those who use this argument are revealing quite clearly that they are either unaware of, or reject, the doctrine of our Lord's substitutionary death for our

sins. What happens to any of us must never be compared with the death of our Lord. That was God making Him to be sin for us; that was God laying upon Him the iniquity of us all, striking Him with the stripes that we deserve. It must never be brought into this argument.

Now because I have been dealing with the pacifist point of view, my argument so far has been negative, but let me now come to the positive approach. First of all, I suggest that the decision to declare war must, in certain circumstances, be regarded as an extension of the function of the magistrate and part of the duty of the state.

We have seen that the business of the magistrate is to maintain and observe law and order. That is why God has appointed him. He is a minister for good to those who obey the law, but he is able to punish those who do wrong. And, as we have seen, in certain circumstances the magistrate, the state, is entitled to go to the point of putting certain recalcitrant people to death. Capital punishment! Bearing the sword!

Now I suggest that as the magistrate has to maintain law and order *within* the state, he is also called by God to do the same in the external relationships of the state. This is, I repeat, just an extension of his functions; this is what God appointed him for: 'for the good' – the good people – and for the restraining and punishment of evil people. Consequently, if another state from the outside attempts to harm or destroy the life of the state, then it is the duty of the state to protect the interests of its citizens.

Secondly, again I point out, as I did when I was talking about capital punishment, that war must always be the last resort; every other effort must have failed and every other possibility must have been exhausted. The state should only declare war when all its endeavours to prevent conflict and to right the wrongs have completely failed.

That leads me to the third point, which is that when the state does go to war, it must be able to show that it is in a just cause. Now throughout the centuries there has been great discussion in the church on this matter of 'the just war', 'the righteous war'. But I think there can be no question about this. Once you see that taking a country into a war is an extension of the duty of the magistrate – the governing power within the

state – it follows by a logical necessity that the cause must always be just. As I had to point out when dealing with our relationship to the state, if you happen to be under a tyrant or a dictator, under someone who abuses his office and, instead of maintaining law and order, is himself a supreme law-breaker, then you are entitled to take part in a rebellion to change your government. The same principle exactly works here. If the state to which you belong has not declared war in a just cause, then the whole position is different.

In other words, the Scriptures seem to me quite clearly to condemn, without any qualification whatsoever, jingoism, any form of imperialism, or any selfish war that is designed for the benefit of your own country at the expense of some other country or some other people. All that must be wrong. If individual rulers act selfishly, they are violating God's calling to them, and the same is true of the state as a whole. Both are equally wrong.

It was on those grounds, of course, that we rightly condemned Hitler and Mussolini, but I would tend to say that exactly the same thing could be said about the leaders of Britain in the Boer War. Their conduct then was quite indefensible, and has been in many another war in which this country has been engaged. Those were not good causes and therefore war was unjustifiable. No, a country should go to war only for the purpose of restraining evil, and on no other grounds whatsoever.

But we must be careful to keep the balance in this matter. Just as we say that the jingoist is always wrong, and anyone who glories in war is wrong, so we must at the same time maintain that it is equally wrong to say that the pacifist alone is right, and always right. I would give the same condemnation to both: both have misunderstood the real function of the state. There have been, and are, Christians at both extremes. Anyone who says that any Christian who ever takes part in a war is of necessity wrong, is muddled; but so is the Christian on the other side. Sometimes Christian people have fallen into the grievous error of regarding any man who fights in a war as almost a saint. They have been guilty of idealizing fighters and military leaders. There were men in the First World War – I remember them – who did not hesitate to say from Christian

pulpits that any man who died in that war fighting for his country would certainly and inevitably go to heaven. But there is no scriptural warrant for that. These attitudes are quite inconsistent not only with the spirit of the Scriptures but with the Bible's plain and specific teaching.

Christians have often abused a great text like, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' [*John* 15:13]. That text has nothing to do with fighting in a war. No man joining an army is deliberately laying down his life; he hopes he is not going to be killed. People on both sides misuse texts for sentimental reasons and so miss what I would regard as the true position.

What does it come to, then? Well, here is a country going to war, what do Christians do? They are duty bound to examine what their country is saying and doing. If they are satisfied that the war is for an entirely wrong cause, they are perfectly justified in refusing to have anything to do with it. It is unjust, and their rulers are asking them to do something that contradicts the teaching of these verses.

But if Christian people are satisfied that the war is in a just cause, then their difficulty is, in a sense, greater. As I have just indicated, they are entitled to think that there is nothing inherently wrong in their taking part in this war. But what if they still feel that they cannot take part? Then I would not hesitate to say that they are entitled to refuse to fight. They will have to bear the consequences; they may be punished; they may be put in jail, as men were during the two world wars, especially the First World War. It is for them to decide. They are left with their own consciences, and this is something that the state must respect. That is why, in the enactments in the two world wars, the position of the conscientious objector was always recognized. The state must not violate the conscience of the individual.

It very often comes down to the particular temperament of the person involved. Let me tell you a story to illustrate my point, an experience I had in the early days of the last war. A young man whom I had known for a number of years had been called up to join the army. Feeling that he could not take part in a war, he had appealed and had lost his appeal. Now he was taking his case to a tribunal that met in the City of West-

minster, and he had come to me to ask if I would give evidence on his behalf.

For a moment I was in a difficulty, but I saw, after reflection, the position that I could take quite conscientiously and scripturally. He was arguing that as a Christian he could not fight, and that had been the grounds of his appeal. So I said to him that I disagreed with him and his arguments but added that I would still support his case, though not on the grounds he had given. 'The grounds I will take', I said, 'are these: that knowing you as I do, and knowing your temperament, I think it is virtually impossible for you to take part in fighting.' He was a delicate man in health, in physique and in every other respect. It was unthinkable that such a man should ever be in an army.

When we appeared before the appeal tribunal, I told the three assessors quite plainly and openly that I entirely disagreed with my friend's theology and said that I was sure that he was misunderstanding the Scriptures. 'But', I said, 'though he misunderstands the Bible, he is really giving expression to what he is by nature and by temperament.' And on those grounds I asked them to look at him and consider whether they could imagine any more than I could his taking part in fighting. The three members of this tribunal entirely accepted my argument, with the result that the man was excused from all military service and was sent to do agricultural work.

Now I am simply telling you that story to show you that sometimes, in the last analysis, it comes down to that; a man just feels the whole thing is abhorrent. He is not arguing scripturally but temperamentally; this is how he is made. And I think that is a valid argument because this is one of the factors that influences the conscience, so that, for this young man, war was conscientiously wrong. A man can thus be a conscientious pacifist – I am talking about a Christian – and, all right, I respect him, but he must never say that all Christians must refuse to fight.

And on the other hand, the Christian who does fight in a war must not despise the pacifist: that, too, is wrong. We must look at all this in scriptural terms in the way that I have tried to put before you.

Then what should the Christian do when there is a rebel-

lion? Well, the argument is exactly the same. If you are satisfied that the rebellion is justified, then there is nothing inherently wrong in your taking part in it. Once more, you must work out these same arguments along the lines that we have considered under the heading of pacifism.

This is such an important subject, and has caused so much heart-searching and unhappiness, that I felt I must give you a list of the errors implicit in the pacifist argument as it is generally presented to us.

But first, the history of this question is interesting in and of itself. Generally speaking, the Christian church has adopted the teaching and the attitude that I have been trying to put to you, but we must say that there have been odd sects that have arisen in the church, almost from the very beginning, that have adopted the pacifist position; they have always been small in number and have always been exceptions.

One of the most notable examples in all the history of the church is the case of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. I referred to them earlier when I pointed out that they did not believe in any relationship whatsoever with the state, even to the extent of not paying taxes – many of them preferred to die, and did die, rather than do that. The idea of a Christian taking part in any way in the government of a state was to them a denial of Christianity. But that, as we saw, is sheer heresy, and their pacifist views were a part of the same heresy.

But apart from these odd manifestations at various times, pacifism as a Christian movement is a modern phenomenon. In recent times it has had prominent and powerful advocates who have generally been given great publicity, but the simple truth is that it has arisen as a direct consequence and sequel of what we normally call modernism, or the liberal attitude towards the Scriptures. Now that is most interesting. Whenever you confront pacifists, whether or not they are prominent people, always observe their general views and you will find almost invariably – notice I say *almost* – that in their whole attitude to these matters they are liberals or modernists.

Turning to the error itself, it is a fallacy to say that it is always wrong for a state to go to war. Pacifists expect people who are not Christians to act on what they regard as Christian principles, but that is the well-known error of Pelagianism. To

expect men and women who are not Christians to behave in a Christian way is heresy; it has been condemned many times, and rightly so. I will deal with that more thoroughly when we come to the question of the relationship between the church and the state.

But in addition to that, this pacifist view, as I have shown you, is based almost invariably upon a wrong view of the Scripture, and particularly of the Old Testament. It is also based on a wrong view of the purpose and teaching of the gospel. Never argue about pacifism alone. If a pacifist says, 'You must be a pacifist if you are a Christian', give the reply, 'Now the question between us really is: "What is a Christian?"'

If someone says, 'The teaching of Christianity is utterly opposed to war', answer, 'Let's have a discussion about the teaching of Christianity.'

You will then find that the pacifist's whole idea of the Christian message is that it is just a message of love, purely a question of loving one another, of trying to get into our lives the quality of love that was evident in the life of Jesus. It is not an accident that our Lord is generally referred to as just 'Jesus'. Most pacifists regard Him only as a man and rarely talk about 'the Lord Jesus Christ'.

No, pacifism is one part of a whole position that is wrong, and in particular, as I have been showing you, it generally results from a complete misunderstanding of the doctrine of the cross. The real tragedy of this position is that our Lord and His death upon the cross are placed in a series with the actions of men. Pacifists have never seen, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, that He 'was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death', that He came in order to die, and 'to taste death for every man' [*Heb. 2:9*]. They regard His death as an accident, a tragedy, a horrible mistake. They have never seen its meaning; they have never seen its glory

On top of that, pacifists invariably have a wrong view of man in sin – if you cannot see that, you must be blind. The greatest influence upon the Home Office in Britain at the present time is the influence of – to put it at its highest – a liberal, modernistic view of the Scriptures and the Christian faith. Indeed, I could put it still more bluntly and plainly by saying

that this is a Freudian attitude – the thinking is in terms of Freudian psychology, which is, of course, atheistical. Those influenced by this teaching do not believe in sin; they do not see what sin does to people; they have never realized what a terrible power it is. In spite of the evidence that is before their eyes almost every single day, they think that by being nice and pleasant and kind to people you can improve them. That is one of the tragedies of the days through which we are passing, that is what makes all this so tremendously relevant and important. If you realize what sin is, and what man in sin is, it will affect the whole of your thinking about government and the subjects we are discussing.

Here are people who quite sincerely believe that if you only show men and women a better way, they will immediately rise to it. This view has been propagated for centuries, yet people still cannot see that it is a fallacy. 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil' [*John* 3:19]. You cannot separate your theology from your whole view of the order and government of a state. So the rulers of a country who have an inadequate or a wrong view of man in sin, will be wrong in the laws they pass and the decisions they make.

So far we have been discussing the individual Christian and the state. We are now ready to move on to the tremendous question of the relationship between church and state, a most interesting and fascinating subject, and one we must all face if we wish to take our church membership seriously.

Six

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

In our consideration of the teaching here in Romans 13 on the attitude of Christians to the state, and their view of it, we have been dealing in particular with the questions of capital punishment and pacifism. These are very contemporary and urgent problems and we should be grateful to God that we have a passage of Scripture such as this that gives us light and instruction on how to deal with them.

We come now to another issue and this again is very modern and relevant. So far we have been considering individual Christians in their relationship to the state, and of course the individual is still involved, but we are now going to consider the vexed question of the relationship of the state and the church. Any of you who have any interest in history will know

that this question has played a major part in the history of the Christian church. It was prominent, as we shall see, at the time of the Reformation, and still more so in the seventeenth century during the Civil War and the Commonwealth, and even in the Restoration period. Since then, it has often been a significant issue, and many of our forefathers have not only fought over this matter, but some have even died because of it.

So, apart from anything else, an interest in history should, in and of itself, be sufficient to make us consider this matter. But beyond that, it is our duty to be interested in the relationship of church and state because we shall all of us, sooner or later – and sooner rather than later, it seems to me – have to be taking decisions that will involve our view of this whole question. I am referring now to what is called the ecumenical movement, which is developing so rapidly and has certain ideas with regard to the nature of the church and her relationship with the state.

Then there is also talk about a realignment with the Church of Rome or an ‘absorption’ by Rome, once again raising this whole question in a very acute manner. If we, as Christian people and as members of Christian churches, are to take an informed interest in these matters, and, above all, are to vote intelligently when the time comes for decisions to be made, then it is imperative that we study this question to discover what exactly the teaching is with regard to it.

Now the moment this question of church and state is raised, you will find that verses 1 to 7 of Romans chapter 13 are invariably quoted, as well as the passage in 1 Peter 2, to which we have referred. And the reason is that they are the only passages that come anywhere near to dealing with this question. It is therefore all-important that we should consider these verses that are before us.

But how does this question of the relationship between the church and the state arise at all? There are, as we have already seen, some Christians who do not seem to recognize that this is a subject that should concern them, and we have looked at the fallacy of their position. But for the majority, the question arises quite inevitably in this way: the church is obviously ordained by God, but here we are told that ‘the powers that be’ are also ordained of God. They are both ordained of God, they

have that in common, so we feel there must a connection, there must be some sort of relationship between them.

And not only that; Christian people belong to both church and state. As Christian people we belong to the church, and as individual people we are citizens of various earthly states and kingdoms. We cannot dissociate ourselves from the states in which we live. As we have seen, we must pay taxes and conform to laws and so on. We must therefore be clear in our minds as to the relationship between the two.

But not only that; the church and the state are, at certain points, concerned with the same questions, and it is therefore important that we should be aware of the grounds on which they are both interested in these issues.

And, finally, the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Head of the church, but is also, at the same time, the Lord of history and the Head of all things in the whole cosmos. This is indicated in Revelation chapter 5 and in many other places in the Bible. Just before the ascension, He said, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth' [*Matt.* 28:18]. And at the end of Ephesians chapter 1, we are told that God has raised Him from the dead 'and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet' [verses 20-22]. All these are under Him and under His power.

Those are the reasons for saying that there is obviously, therefore, some relationship between the church and the state. But the moment you make that general principle, you must face the particular question: What, then, is the relationship between the two? This is an extremely difficult and involved question. The history of the centuries proves quite plainly and clearly that it is not an easy matter to handle. I have tried to simplify it as best I can and, speaking generally, would say that there are two main views. The first view holds that the church and the state are one, and the second holds that they are essentially different. It really can be boiled down to that. There are some particular theories which are very difficult to place, but that is a useful classification.

First, then, the view that the church and the state are one.

One way in which we could approach this question would be to begin with an exposition of our verses and then proceed to give a historical survey. But since most people today start with the position as it is, I shall do the same and try to show how the present position ever came into being. To start with the historical development is a profitable way of approaching this subject because we can then assess what has been happening though the centuries by the test of the scriptural teaching.

The view that the church and the state are one is very old, going back to the fourth century. In the first three centuries of the Christian church, nobody taught that church and state were one. There was a very good reason for that. The controlling power in those years was, of course, the great Roman Empire, and it was a pagan empire, so nobody could possibly claim that the church and the state were one. Look at the church in the New Testament; it was just a little body, handfuls of people here and there in a great pagan society, with the state, and everyone else, against it and persecuting it.

But then an event took place that changed the entire course of history, namely, the so-called conversion of Emperor Constantine the Great, who announced that he had become a Christian somewhere around 325 AD. Now I must not weary you with the details as to why Constantine ever claimed to be a Christian. There is no doubt in my mind that his main reasons were political, but the fact is that he did announce his conversion, and he made the Christian faith the official religion of the Roman Empire. In other words, he took the Roman Empire with him into the Christian church; emperors can do that sort of thing. Of course, there were individuals who objected, but officially the Roman Empire became Christian, and it is from that moment that the whole teaching came into being that the church and the state are one. Constantine merged the two and he claimed that the power that he exercised as emperor now took in the church. That was the position for some time.

After Constantine, two main views developed with regard to the unity between church and state. With the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church began to teach that the state was subservient to the church – that the church

and the state were one and the church had the controlling power.

Now this, I repeat, is a teaching that developed after the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. While the emperors were powerful, the state was powerful, and the state dictated to the church. It was the Emperor Constantine who called the various ecumenical councils of the church and was responsible, for example, for the Nicene Creed. He called the church into conference and more or less dictated what it should do. But after the fall of the Roman Empire, the church arrogated unto herself the powers that had previously been exercised by the state. So the popes, who came into being just about the same time, asserted that they had supremacy over the state.

In the West, it developed in this way. The church functioned in quite a number of provinces of the Roman Empire and after that in many different nations and states. But the church was one and she claimed that she had supreme authority and power over the rulers of all these states. There is a typical statement of this Roman Catholic attitude in the fourth Lateran Council [1215]. It says:

Let the secular powers, whatever offices they may hold, be induced and admonished, and, if need be, compelled by ecclesiastical censure that, as they desire to be accounted faithful, they should, for the defence of the Faith, publicly set forth an oath that to the utmost of their power they will strive to exterminate from the lands under their jurisdiction all heretics who shall be denounced by the Church, but if any temporal lord being required and admonished by the Church shall neglect to cleanse his hands of this heretical filth, let him be bound with the chain of excommunication by the metropolitan and other co-provincial bishops; and if he shall scorn to make satisfaction within a year, let this be signified to the supreme pontiff the Pope, that henceforth he may declare his vassals absolved from their allegiance to him and may expose his land to be occupied by the Catholics who, having exterminated the heretics, may without contradiction possess it and preserve it in the purity of faith.

Some have tried to argue that that has been put on one side but Bellarmine, a Roman Catholic writer in the seventeenth century, put it like this: 'The Pope has, in order to spiritual good, supreme power to dispose of the temporal affairs of all Christians.'

Now that was really the Roman Catholic position. The Roman Catholic Church held that it had control over the state, that it could dictate to the state what it should and should not do, that the Pope was supreme over all kings and emperors and rulers, and that if a ruler did not submit to the Church, it could excommunicate him and, indeed, if necessary, possess his land by the sword.

That was the great Roman Catholic claim. The Roman Catholic Church claimed that she had complete control and power over all the activities of men. She not only controlled their politics, she controlled their thinking, their attempts at scientific development and investigation, and everything they did. And the Church did control and attempt to oppose scientific development.

The Church even went as far as to claim that the clergy – the bishops and all others – were exempt from the general laws of the country in which they lived, so that, even if a priest broke the law of the land, he should be immune from that law.

But there were those who were very restive under all this. From about the eleventh century onwards a fight began against the claim of the Roman Church to have supreme power over every aspect of life and over every state. One of the first to engage in that fight was King Henry II of England. King Henry's arguments with Thomas Becket were partly over this matter. These kings and rulers of states objected to the overlordship of the Roman Catholic Church and said that the laws and customs of their lands should be supreme and that the clergy should be subject to them, like everybody else. Henry II put up a tremendous fight in this respect; he very nearly succeeded, but not quite.

The next great figure, as far as Britain is concerned, to fight this particular battle was the redoubtable John Wycliffe, who was a kind of forerunner of the Protestant Reformers. It was amazing what that man did. One of the issues on which he fought was freedom from this domination by the Pope. And, of

course, the man who finally brought about this freedom in England was King Henry VIII.

Here again, I do not want to go into the details, but the only change which Henry VIII really made in his time in connection with the Reformation was that he substituted himself for the Pope. He never changed his beliefs; he was only interested in political change, not merely in the matter of obtaining a divorce, but in his whole view of himself and his dynasty. There is no question but that, when he died, in doctrine he was a Roman Catholic. But Henry certainly got rid of the domination of the pope, arrogating to himself all the papal powers.

Now after Henry VIII, the same thing happened in many other countries and it is almost amusing to notice the way in which the Roman Catholic Church played a kind of delaying action, making agreements with different states in an attempt to hold on to her power.

The Pope, of course, still claims to be the head of a state: the Vatican is a state, with the Pope as its head. It was on those grounds that he addressed the United Nations Assembly. But though the Vatican still regards itself as a state, it has, of course, been shorn of its power. Yet it is still trying to hold on to some remnant of power, and is undoubtedly waiting for an opportunity to regain its former position, if that is at all possible. But by today even Italy is no longer under the authority of the Pope; he has been confined to that small area of the Vatican and does not dominate the political life of Italy in the way he once did.

There, then, is the view that the church should control and dominate the life of the state in every respect. But now we move to the opposite extreme, though, remember, we are still dealing with the first view, the view that identifies the church and the state. The name that is generally given to this second teaching is Erastianism, because the man who first stated it clearly – though others had held the view – was a man called Erastus. Erastianism teaches that the church is subservient to the state, that it is a branch of the state, a servant or an aspect of the state, under the control and the power of the state.

Erastus is quite interesting in many ways. He lived from 1524 to 1583 and was a follower of the Swiss Reformer, Zwingli. First and foremost, he was a professor of medicine,

having studied at Heidelberg in Germany and also at Basle in Switzerland. It is interesting to notice the number of medical men who have played a part in the history of the church; I am sorry to have to say that it is not a very creditable record! Erastus was also very interested in the question of the relationship between the church and the state. But though he was a very good doctor, I cannot say he was a good theologian.

There were certain people who tried to introduce the Presbyterian system into Heidelberg when Erastus was living there, and in reply he published his famous book, *Theses Touching Excommunication*. This book raises the whole question of who has the power to excommunicate, and the essence of its teaching is that the church has no power to make laws or decrees or to inflict penalties of any kind. In other words, Erastus takes all the power away from the church. Here is a good statement of his position:

The general government of the visible Church is part of the one function of dominion entrusted to the State; the office-bearers in the Christian society as such are merely instructors or preachers of the Word, without any power or right to rule except what they derive from the civil magistrate, and ecclesiastical censure, and more especially excommunication, is a civil punishment which the magistrate may employ the officers of the Church to inflict, but which owes its force to civil authority alone.

That is the teaching of Erastus. Now you may say, 'What has that got to do with us?'

Well, in many ways it is the teaching of the Church of England. Erastus' book had not been translated into English by the time of the formation of the Establishment in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but his ideas had gained currency and there were many who had already accepted them.

When I began the subject of the church and the state, I said that there were difficulties at certain points, and one of these concerns the position of the Lutheran Church. Martin Luther began by holding what I am hoping to show you are scriptural views on this question. He believed in the complete independence of the church; indeed, his essential view of the church

was more or less the view of some of the Puritans, who said that the church was just the gathering of the saints together. But he was a man of his age and unfortunately he was surrounded by terrible difficulties. I am not criticizing Luther. He was called of God to do one big thing, and it is very wrong of us to expect him to do everything; it is amazing that he was enabled to do what he did.

Luther lived in an age when the relationship between the state and the church had, under Roman Catholicism, always been most intimate. This was how it had been for centuries and anything else was unthinkable. But what really deflected Luther from his true view was the so-called 'Peasants' Revolt' and the people who became known as Anabaptists. Now I have already referred to Anabaptists in describing the Christian's view of the state. As a group, they washed their hands of the state. Some went to the extreme of dictating to people every detail of their lives, claiming *they* were the state, and that they were introducing a kind of theocracy.

These two movements frightened Martin Luther, and he became quite convinced that if this sort of thing went on it would alienate all the rulers – the electors in the different parts of the land we now call Germany, and still more, the emperor – and he could see that the whole work of the Reformation would be lost. There must be some authority somewhere. Where was he to find it? He came to the conclusion that the only way to get authority was to turn to the civil ruler. And so he did, and to that extent he became an Erastian, giving to the princes, the electors, the rulers, the heads of state, power over the life of the church in this matter of punishment.

Now let me say this for Luther – and incidentally, this is the year to say it, because it is 450 years since he nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the church door – he did not believe in putting people to death for heretical views. But as the result of his teaching, and increasingly as the years have passed, the Lutheran Church, generally speaking, has become Erastian. It is the state church in Denmark and Norway, Sweden and Finland and its position is very closely akin to that of the Anglican Church in this country.

This brings me to the Church of England. Henry VIII, as I have reminded you, claimed to be the supreme head and

governor over the church as well as over the state. His son, Edward VI, claimed the same thing, as did his daughter Mary and his other daughter, Elizabeth I.

Now I want to try to be fair to Elizabeth. The difficulty in the sixteenth century was that church and state were so intimately bound together, and politics played such a large part, that it was extremely difficult to separate them. Elizabeth, for example, because of her ecclesiastical views, was constantly in danger of being attacked by Spain, which was then such a powerful country. I am not excusing her, I do not think she can be excused, nor can her bishops, but it is our duty to be fair to them and to try to understand them as far as we can. And Elizabeth was certainly afraid of what would happen to the country if she relaxed her hold upon the church.

So we come to the Thirty-Nine Articles. There are many Evangelicals who say that they will stay in the Church of England as long as the Thirty-Nine Articles are not repudiated or revoked. But the Thirty-Seventh Article reads like this:

The Queen's Majesty is the chief power in this realm of England and her other dominions, unto whom the chief government of all estates of this realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, in all causes doth appertain. They [the princes] should rule all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers.

And, of course, it is a fact of history that Queen Elizabeth interfered very actively. There was a great old archbishop of Canterbury called Grindal who queried all this and had Puritan tendencies, but Elizabeth had him removed, as she had the power to do. And in many other respects and on many other occasions she asserted her authority as the head of the church, the supreme head of ecclesiastical matters as well as other matters, and she compelled the church to do what she wanted.

Now there was a man who came into great prominence towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, a man regarded as the authority in these matters, called Richard Hooker. He wrote a famous book, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which was pub-

lished in 1594 and ran to several volumes. Hooker, who taught the typical Erastian view, wrote, *'The Church and the State are one and the same society only contemplated from two different aspects, and that the State therefore has a perfect right to legislate for the Church.'*

Now we should be able to follow that. In the early part of the twentieth century, when people were so interested in politics, it used to be said that the Church of England was the Conservative Party on its knees, and likewise that Nonconformity was the Liberal Party saying its prayers. In other words, church and state are one and the same society only looked at from two different aspects.

Again, I want to be fair to Richard Hooker. He made it plain that this teaching only applied, it was only true, as long as the head of state was a Christian. Now this is a most fascinating subject. We cannot go into it, it would take too long. But people taught the idea of what they called 'the godly prince'. Queen Elizabeth was a godly prince, according to their view, because she was a Christian and was interested in these matters. But unfortunately Hooker does not tell us very clearly what you do when you do not have a godly prince, and since the days of Queen Elizabeth, there have been many godless princes. Unfortunately the rules of ecclesiastical polity which Hooker laid down have continued to be in operation whatever the moral character of the prince might chance to be.

Another point is that Hooker, while giving this supremacy to the sovereign, to the 'godly prince' and to the state, would not allow the sovereign or the state to decide matters of doctrine, which he said it was the province of the church to initiate and define. But this doctrine was, of course, submitted to the state for approval or rejection.

Further, Hooker taught that bishops were not 'made' by princes but simply 'placed' by them. By this he meant that the state, the sovereign, had the power to appoint bishops but not to consecrate them. Only the church had the power to consecrate bishops. And that, of course, is still more or less the rule in the Church of England.

Now Hooker and the others were good men; they were honest men who were trying to do what they thought was the best, and they were obviously unhappy. When you have had a

church that for fifteen centuries has been dominated by the papacy, and you suddenly do away with that papal authority, there is a sort of void, and these men – this is the fascinating thing about the sixteenth century – were all searching for a principle of authority. They felt you must have authority, and this was the way that the Erastians in England tried to solve the problem. And so, while they gave the authority, they tried to qualify it. They realized that the church was, after all, a spiritual society, so they drew the distinction that the sovereign, the state, had the power to place bishops but not to make them; to appoint bishops, yes, but not to consecrate them.

Now as I said, this is still the position. In 1928, the Church of England produced a prayer book that was turned down by Parliament and has never been legally and officially in use since then¹. The state has the authority to do that. It did not initiate this prayer book, but it had the power to legalize it or to stop it.

Bishops, too, are still appointed by the crown. You read constantly in the papers about opposition to this system, opposition even from within the Church of England. There are those who say that the church should be disestablished and that it is a scandal that a prime minister who is a Jew, as in the case of Disraeli, or a Nonconformist, or an infidel [I do not mention any names] should have the legal right and authority to appoint bishops and other dignitaries in the Christian church.

One further point needs to be added to complete this bit of history. The Church of England, being established in that way, claimed its right to dictate to people how they should worship. There was a fight against this, of course, under Charles I, and during the period of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell this was set aside, though not completely, as we shall see in the next study. Oliver Cromwell, whatever his faults, did more than anybody else for religious tolerance and liberty in this country. Never forget that. He was the first man to give asylum to the Jews, and in this matter of religious tolerance he was a man well ahead of his time.

But the Commonwealth proved to be only a very brief

¹ This lecture was given in January 1967.

period. Charles II came back and then came the Act of Uniformity, the turning out of two thousand clergymen in 1662, the oppression and the various Conventicle Acts and all that followed. This went on until 1688 when, with the coming of William and Mary, the Act of Toleration was passed, granting full liberty of worship to all Nonconformists but not to Roman Catholics and Unitarians. In other words, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists were free to worship as they wished. At the end of the eighteenth century, Roman Catholics were also given liberty of worship, though they were not granted full emancipation until 1829, and the Unitarians, if I remember rightly, in 1813.

There, then, is just a general survey of this first view of the relationship between the church and the state, a view which would have us believe that church and state are one. On the one side, Roman Catholics teach the authority of the church over the state, and on the other side, Erastians that of the state over the church. Both views have been modified in the passing of the years, and there is no doubt at all but that during this century yet further changes will take place.

Well, we will leave it at that for now. In our next study, I hope to go on to consider the view that says that the church and the state are essentially different.

Seven

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

We have seen that there are two main ideas with regard to the relationship between church and state. The first, which we looked at in our last study, regards them as one. The second, which we must now consider, holds that they are essentially different and distinct. Four main reasons are given for holding that view.

To start with, the church and the state are essentially different in their origin, in the way in which they have come into being. The state comes, of course, from God as the universal sovereign ruler of the universe. We believe that the world was created by God, that it belongs to Him, and that He is the governor of the whole universe. And in that capacity, God brought the state into being, as we are reminded here in

Romans 13: 'the powers that be are ordained of God'. The state has nothing to do with salvation directly, but is something broader, something wider. The church, on the other hand, as we see so clearly in the New Testament, came into being as the direct result of the mediatorial or the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That has been the traditional way of looking at this matter. Indeed, you will often find that people put it like this: the state belongs to the order of nature, it is a part of God's dealing with the universe from that standpoint, whereas in the case of the church, we are in the realm of grace.

Now this has occasioned some dispute among Reformed and Protestant teachers. There are those who say that you should not make that distinction between nature and grace, that that is not a truly accurate way of looking at this matter, and they would substitute two divisions of grace – saving grace, which is special and particular grace; and general grace, or what they call 'common grace'. So you do not say that the church belongs to the realm of grace and the state to the realm of nature, but that the church belongs to the realm of 'special grace' and the state to 'common grace'.

This is a teaching that we need to be familiar with because it has many important emphases. It really says that God deals with everybody through grace in Jesus Christ – not only with the believer, but also with the unbeliever – and He does it by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, of course, deals with believers directly and immediately, and in a very special manner: He convicts them of sin, gives them the gift of faith, produces regeneration and baptizes them into the body of Christ. All this we are familiar with, it concerns our redemption and salvation. But the teaching is that the Spirit also deals with others by operating upon them in a more general manner, giving them gifts and abilities.

In other words, this teaching is concerned to say that there is nothing that is 'natural', in the sense of arising out of nature apart from God. God made man in His own image; he was perfect and the whole universe was perfect. But man sinned and now there is a new relationship between God and man. Here comes the division – those who are brought to salvation, and those who are not. But the second group are not entirely abandoned; God deals with them through common grace.

God did not abandon the world and the totality of humanity when man sinned. We have seen already that God, for instance, brought into being the powers that be to restrain evil, to put a check upon sin and its manifestations. This, it is said, is a part of common grace; it is God acting in a gracious manner with regard to His ultimate purpose. These people are not saved, but they are restrained and are under the influence of the Spirit.

Now I think that this is a better way of putting it: it is better not to talk about a contrast between grace and nature but to talk rather about special grace and common grace, the point being that God is concerned even about the unregenerate. He has dealings with them, not in a saving sense, but from the standpoint of law and order, peace and government, and matters of that kind. You may think that this is an academic point but I think that the more you contemplate it, the more you will see that it is important that we should remind the world, especially as it is today, that there is nothing outside God's government. Though men and women may deny it, they are nevertheless under the influence of the Spirit of God. The humanistic world, so-called, does not realize that most of what it stands for and does is really the result of the operation of the Spirit of God upon it. In spite of itself, this is what is happening.

So the first point, then, is that the church and the state differ in their origin. There is special grace and there is common grace.

Secondly, we see an obvious difference between the church and the state when we consider them from the standpoint of the primary object for which they were instituted. The church was brought into being for spiritual purposes. She has been instituted in order to preach the Word to the unsaved, in order to evangelize. But not only that; she has been instituted for the welfare of believers, for God's children. The purpose of the church is to provide fellowship for God's people, to give instruction in righteousness, to expound the Scriptures, to offer help and aid and to administer the sacraments.

The primary function of the state, on the other hand, is wider, as we have seen from these seven verses that we are considering. The state is concerned with preserving peace and external good order. It is not concerned with a spiritual object.

Then the third difference between the two – and it is important in view of what we are told here – is that they are different and distinct in the power that has been committed to them by God. Take the church first: the power given to her is the power of grace; she has no coercive power. Of course, the church has not always said that. I have shown you that the Roman Catholic Church teaches and believes the exact opposite. And other sections of the church have been guilty of the same error. But I would suggest to you that any reading of the New Testament should make it plain and clear to us that the power of the church is the power of persuasion, the power of grace.

Perhaps I can best put that to you in a quotation from Martin Luther, who seems to me to have had great clarity of understanding with regard to this matter. Referring to the Roman Church, he says, 'With a death sentence they solve all argumentation.' He admitted that there might be cases where, in the interests of tranquillity, troublesome persons might have to be banished from the country, but he opposed physical punishment for heresy. These are his words:

Heresy can never be restrained with force, it must be grasped in another way. This is not the sort of battle that can be settled with the sword. The weapon here to be used is God's Word. If that does not decide, the decision will not be affected by worldly force, though it should drench the whole world with blood. Heresy is a thing of the soul; no steel can put it out, no waters can drown it. God's Word alone can destroy it.

Now that is a very clear statement of the fact that the church's power is that of grace. But we have been reminded by these verses in Romans 13 that the power that is committed to the state is essentially coercive – 'for he beareth not the sword in vain'. The ultimate limit, as we have seen, is capital punishment, but all along the line it is a coercive power. So there again we see an obvious distinction between the state and the church.

And lastly, in the fourth place, there is a very distinct difference between the ways in which the functions of the

two are carried out. In the case of the church, lists are given in various places in the New Testament: 'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers' [Eph. 4:11]; 'And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers . . .' [1 Cor. 12:28]. Those are the officers of the church.

But when you come to the state you find something entirely different. Here you have the magistrate – the chief magistrate, the king or the queen or the emperor, or whoever it may happen to be. It is an entirely different order, with various dignitaries and functionaries working under one supreme authority, and this order, too, is made perfectly plain in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New.

There, then, are four very real reasons for saying that the church and the state are not one, but are different in their very essence. This was the truth that was rediscovered, recaptured, at the time of the Protestant Reformation. It had become lost, as we saw, at the time of Constantine, and it was given to the Protestant Reformers to realize and, in a measure, to restore this vital and essential distinction.

Here, once more, I shall deal with a little of the history of this matter. Now it has occurred to me that some of you, perhaps, may wonder why I spend so much time with this historical survey. At times I have met people who regard themselves as being ultra-spiritual and who think that they demonstrate that ultra-spirituality by saying, 'You shouldn't be bothered about history. Why don't you come straight to the Scriptures and expound them? I don't care what people have said in the past.' These people think that a Christian minister who reminds you of past history is really not being very spiritual and is, indeed, becoming almost secular.

Well, my only reply to that kind of criticism is that it is sheer arrogance to hold that view. What right have we to assume that only our interpretation of Scripture is right? It is arrogant for this reason: throughout the centuries there have been notable, spiritually-minded men and women in the church who have been raised up by God. Are we to ignore all that they have thought and said and done?

No, when we are confronted by momentous questions like these, and know that those who have gone before us have been

confronted by the same questions, and that in the past these problems have often led to bloodshed, to terrible persecutions and to war, then, surely, humility alone should make us anxious to study what happened in order to avail ourselves of any help we can lay our hands on.

The same arrogant attitude is to be seen in people who do not believe in using commentaries. They say, 'I've got the Holy Spirit in me, and there's the Word, I can do it all.' I have known people who have even gone to extremes beyond that. I remember a poor man once who was saying things which were rather foolish, but when it was pointed out to him that he was contradicting the teaching of the Apostle Paul, his reply was that he didn't care what Paul said, the Spirit in him told him what to say.

You see the folly of such arguments? We should thank God for all the help and aid we can get. This matter which we are now considering is of particular importance at the present time owing to certain tendencies that are evident in the world. I am not only thinking of the state of affairs in China at this moment but of the position of Christian people in other countries too, in Africa, for example. It is our duty to be thinking of these people, helping them as we can, and praying for them. Some of them come over to this land at times, and they take the trouble to ask some of us questions with regard to these grievous matters.

But on top of all this, there is a trend back to Rome, and it is our certain knowledge that that Church, when she does have authority and power, invariably exercises it. It may well be that some people may have to face positions such as the Protestant Reformers had to face in their day and generation, and then the Puritans and Covenanters, and others after them. So whether you like it or not, you may be involved in this issue, and we must therefore consider it.

Further, we surely ought to learn something from history; if we cannot, we are doomed to make the same mistakes. We know that those men and women, in their generation, tried, as we do today, to face these matters honestly and biblically. Yet we can venture to say, in the light of the teaching of the Scripture, that many of them were defective at certain points. We have the advantage of being able to look back and see the

rival views and the interplay between them, and it behoves us to make full use of this opportunity. So you are now going to have a bit more history. That is not an apology, it is an *apologia*, or defence!

As we consider the view which emphasizes the essential difference between church and state, we will take the men we are concerned with – or at least, the movements we are particularly concerned with – in chronological order. Luther came first, then came Ulrich Zwingli, one of the leaders in this matter, and third, Calvin. Zwingli died in 1531, whereas Calvin did not publish his *Institutes* and become known until 1536, and Zwingli had considerable influence upon Calvin's thinking. So we must just say a little about Zwingli and Calvin, then look at the Puritans in this country, and then the Presbyterians, who became a section of the Puritans. Finally, we come to the Separatists, who first gave a lead in the direction of the idea of the Free Church: not only Nonconformists but Free Church, breaking the state connection. These are our main groups.

Again, we can divide them into two. All except the Separatists believed in a close association, indeed, in an alliance between church and state. We must be clear about this: they drew a distinction between the church and the state, as against the view held by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, but though they drew this distinction, they did believe in an alliance between the two. The Separatists, however, said that these institutions were not only distinct, but should be separate, hence their name.

So let us consider the first group. First and foremost, there was Zwingli, a remarkable man. I do not want to stay with him, except to say that his idea was that of a theocracy – that is, the rule of God right through the whole of life, the state included. Zwingli put his emphasis primarily upon the teaching of God. He believed that the church and the state belonged together as naturally as the body and the soul in man. What a soul is to man and his body, so, he said, the church is to the state.

So in that Zwingli recognized that church and state were distinct, he parted company with, and denounced, the Roman Catholic view. Yet while he emphasized the distinction, he did

advocate a union between the two. On the one hand, he said that the secular power, the state, should supervise the discipline of the church, and, on the other hand, he maintained that the Bible was to be the code of law of the government, of the state, so, in a sense, the church told the state what acts to pass. He taught that the validity of civil law depended upon its conformity to the Scriptures, and he went so far as to say that if the government of a country ceased to be truly Christian, or fell short of that, then there should be a revolution, and it should be overthrown. He believed in fighting for these matters and, in 1531, he actually died in battle himself with his sword in his hand – a great tragedy.

Zwingli was a pioneer of this teaching but the Anabaptists had similar ideas and for a while he co-operated with them. The Anabaptists, however, became more and more extreme. When they said they would not recognize the state at all, and wanted to impose a theocracy, Zwingli parted with them, and became very bitter against them.

As I said, Zwingli's teachings had much influence upon the thinking of the next man, in many ways the towering genius of them all, John Calvin. Now it is very interesting to notice that Calvin, while he has a good deal to tell us about church and state, never actually defined a systematic doctrine of the state. He makes references to it, but he does not work out in detail his views on the nature of the state, and the relationship, therefore, between the church and the state. Now that is not a criticism of him. When you consider that man's life, when you consider all that he did, all his expositions of the books of the Scripture, and the advice he was constantly being called upon to give, not only by the city-state of Geneva to which he belonged, but by so many in other lands, Britain included, who depended upon him, when you consider all this, the astonishing thing is that he was able to do all that he did.

As I have said, all honour to these men! They were called upon to do one big work and they did not have the time to work everything out in detail. And so it has come to pass that Calvin has not given us a clear, unmistakable teaching with regard to this whole question of the relationship between the church and the state.

Calvin believed that the church and the state were distinct

and that both were quite definitely ordained of God, arguing that their spheres were essentially different but that they must nevertheless work together. In other words, though he said they were distinct and different, for practical purposes he regarded them as one. Let me explain: Geneva, though a city, was also a state. There were state-cities in Switzerland at that time. Zurich, where Zwingli lived, was one, Berne was another, and so on. Now in order to be made a citizen of Geneva, it was absolutely necessary to make a profession of faith in Christ. You could not be a citizen if you did not. Of course, the result was that, though there were some who rebelled now and again, practically everybody in Geneva made a profession of faith. So Geneva was a church, as it were, to which all the citizens belonged.

In Geneva the relationship between the church and the state was thus somewhat confused. Indeed, for most of his life Calvin had to fight over this matter. At one point he was actually turned out of Geneva by the state, but then they called him back again. At times he would submit to the state – in fact he taught that it was the duty of every man to submit absolutely to the sovereignty of the state, though he made certain exceptions to that.

I must not go into all this, tempting though it is. The whole question of infant baptism, as Calvin saw it, is involved. But I just give it as a proof of the fact that though Calvin drew a distinction between church and state, in practice he tended to identify them.

But more than that, Calvin said that the state, in addition to its duty of safeguarding peace and order, must see to it that the right kind of doctrine and worship be maintained. He also said that sins against the first table of the Mosaic law [the first four of the Ten Commandments] should be punished by the state. You can check this for yourselves in Book Four of Calvin's *Institutes* where it is dealt with quite plainly and clearly. Calvin added that the state, in turn, must conform its laws to the divine law, and said that the church was to be the judge in state affairs involving religion and morals.

Calvin held that the church could dictate to the state in matters of religion and morals and could require that the state should help to make the world Christian, using force where

necessary, a principle that had also been expressed by Zwingli. Commenting on this, one historian has very rightly said, 'Thus the overthrown Roman Catholic practice of using the state for realizing the ideals of the church again came back into Protestantism by the back door.'

We have seen that it is Roman Catholic teaching that the church is to use the state to propagate her teaching and to realize her ideals. Now Calvin really got back to that position. So, having protested against Rome, having established and emphasized the difference between the church and the state, in practice he went back to the old Roman Catholic position, arguing that the church could use the state in order to bring its own purposes to pass. And that happened in the case of Servetus, who was put to death by the state for his erroneous teaching.

That, then, in its essence, is the teaching of John Calvin on this matter, and it is most important for us to bear it in mind because he had such influence, not only upon England but still more upon Scotland, upon the Low Countries, Holland in particular, and eventually upon Presbyterianism throughout the entire world.

Let me show you what I mean. The famous Confession that is followed by the Dutch Reformed Church and the various divisions from it in Holland today and in the United States, is based upon the Belgic Confession of 1561, a very great and wonderful confession of faith.

But this is what Article Thirty-Six says about magistrates:

We believe that our gracious God because of the depravity of mankind hath appointed kings, princes, and magistrates, willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies, to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose he hath invested the magistracy with the sword for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well, and their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship that the kingdom of

Antichrist may thus be destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honoured and worshipped by everyone as He commands in His Word.

Moreover it is the bounden duty of everyone of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates, to pay tribute, to show honour and respect to them and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God, to supplicate for them in their prayers that God may rule and guide them in all their ways and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Wherefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice, introduce a community of goods and confound that decency and good order which God hath established among them.

Belgic Confession, Article 36

The Belgic Confession is an outworking of the teaching of John Calvin.

With regard to the early Puritans in Britain, they were all, you must remember, within the Church of England. They were clergymen but they were also Puritans and they objected to the incomplete reformation of the Church of England with regard to the matter of wearing the surplice and various vestments, and with regard to the sacraments, and so on. But with regard to the relationship of church and state, in general, they simply carried over the teaching which was in vogue in the Church of England. And therefore their views come under the heading we considered in our last study.

But then, about 1570, there was a division in the ranks of the Puritans. A man called Thomas Cartwright, who was the Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, began to teach Presbyterian ideas and this separated one group of Puritans from the others who adhered to the Anglican, Erastian, view.

Now the view of Presbyterians with regard to this whole question is not a matter of dispute because it is laid down quite

plainly in the Westminster Confession of Faith. In Chapter 23 the heading is: 'Of the Civil Magistrate' and it is very similar to the Belgic Confession:

God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers.

The second section says:

It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasion.

But it is the third division that is of interest to us at this point:

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

Westminster Confession, Chapter 23

That is what the Presbyterians believed, and what those who adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith should still believe. This was drawn up between 1643 and 1647, and you

Life in Two Kingdoms

see the power that is given there to the magistrate: he can call synods and attend them, even where he does not happen to be a Christian himself. The Confession says (23.4):

Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted; much less hath the Pope any power of jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people.

Again, I want to be quite fair to the Presbyterian position. They laid that down in 1643-7 and, of course, it was an extension of the teaching of John Calvin and the teaching that John Knox, who had spent years in Geneva, had imbibed from him and introduced into Scotland.

But John Knox was followed by a very great man called Andrew Melville, and while, in general, Melville held to these ideas, I must read to you a most wonderful statement that he made. He was constantly in trouble with James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England, and they met together on one occasion to discuss these matters. Melville was pointing out that the king was arrogating too much power to himself and interfering too much in the church, and this is how he addressed His Majesty King James VI of Scotland:

Sir, we will always humbly reverence your Majesty in public; but since we have this occasion to be with your Majesty in private, and since you are brought to extreme danger both of your life and crown, and, along with you, the country and the church of God are like to go to wreck, for not telling you the truth and giving you faithful counsel, we must discharge our duty, or else be traitors both to Christ and you. Therefore, Sir, as divers times before I have told you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland; there is King James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the church, whose subject King James VI is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member.

Sir, those whom Christ has called and commanded to watch over His church have power and authority from Him to govern His spiritual kingdom both jointly and severally; the which no Christian king or prince should control and discharge, but fortify and assist; otherwise they are not faithful subjects of Christ and members of His church . . . Sir, when you were in your swaddling-clothes, Christ Jesus reigned freely in this land in spite of all His enemies: His officers and ministers convened and assembled for the ruling and welfare of His church, which was ever for your welfare, defence and preservation, when these same enemies were seeking your destruction and cutting off.

And that element was always present. Again, the difficulty with all these men was the difficulty I indicated to you in our last study – it was this whole question of authority. That, it seems to me, is the point at which Christian people have always gone astray. In their search for some tangible authority, the tendency always has been to give too much power to the state, clearly shown in the Belgic Confession and in the Westminster Confession of Faith. But you have, at the same time, the amazing insight and protest of a man like Andrew Melville. Of course, this tended to vary from individual to individual, but all honour to Andrew Melville who could address King James VI of Scotland in that amazing manner. And John Knox did something very similar many times with the mother of that king, Mary Queen of Scots.

But perhaps it might be good to finish this study with that heroic statement by Andrew Melville. We must go on to consider how the American colonists, the Pilgrim Fathers and their descendants, handled this matter; and I want to tell you also how the Free Churches really came into existence. I can do that in a brief compass, I trust, and can then show you how there have been modifications of this view and how we arrive at the present position. Then, in the light of all this, we can come back to consider the teaching of the Scripture.

Eight

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

We must now continue with our historical survey because, as I have been trying to show, these historical events and ideas are relevant to us today. Whether we like it or not, as Christian people we are involved in this. It has been, I think, one of the greatest sins, especially of evangelical people, to say, 'I'm not interested in all this, I can't be bothered with it. As long as we in our local church can go on evangelizing and having fellowship together, what does all this matter?'

And the answer to that is that if you feel it does not matter, you will soon find yourself in the Church of Rome, and then you will begin to wonder how you ever got there. The answer will be that it was due to your ignorance, because you said you did not mind about these things. But there are others who do

mind, who are very active at the present time, and who are taking decisions on behalf of the Churches. So it does behove us to be very clear about all these questions.

Not only that, I want to suggest another very practical reason for studying this matter. I think that the confusion between church and state has been, and still is, one of the greatest obstacles to true evangelism, as I hope to show you. You will find historically in Britain, for instance, that it is this state-church idea that has generally resisted true revival, and the efforts of the most notable evangelists that God has produced in the Christian church. So it is very important that we should go on with this history.

I come next, therefore, in this historical survey – and, as far as I can, I am trying to take it in a chronological order – to the case of the Pilgrim Fathers and the American colonists. From the very beginning of the Protestant Reformation, as we have seen, there were people in the Church of England who were not satisfied with what had been accomplished. They felt that the Reformation had stopped short, that while matters of doctrine, and the doctrine of salvation in particular, had been dealt with and put right, there had been a failure to carry through the principles of the Reformation into matters of ceremonies, ritual, the government of the church, and so on. These men became known as Puritans because they felt that the church must be purified through and through. Then as time went on, they divided up into various groups.¹

The Puritans in England became more and more disturbed and dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement and the Anglican Church, but when they spoke out they were persecuted, and imprisoned; many were put to death. Others escaped temporarily to Holland where they were welcomed and granted asylum and where they formed churches. It was as the outcome of this persecution that the Pilgrim Fathers crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower* in the year 1620.

Here, you see, was this great new continent that had been discovered in the 1490s by Columbus. Here was a great opportunity and these Puritans felt that if only they could go to

¹ For further information on this subject, see, 'Henry Jacobs and the First Congregational Church' by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors*, Banner of Truth, 1987.

America they could start a new life and be free to worship in the way they believed to be right and biblical. That was the kind of spirit that animated the Pilgrim Fathers. They left Europe to go to that new country not merely to found a new state but primarily to be delivered from the ecclesiastical tyranny under which they had suffered in England. That was the main motive that led them to expose themselves, their wives and their children to the rigours of the Atlantic crossing and to untold hardships. And yet – this is something that is almost incredible – having arrived and having started a new life in that colony, they in turn proceeded to bring about same situation from which they had been escaping: they themselves became religious and ecclesiastical tyrants. The story is, of course, fascinating and most important. There is a very good book, called *Pilgrims and Strangers*, which will give you an account of all this, as will the biographies of the different men.

Now this is the kind of legislation that the Pilgrim Fathers enacted. In Massachusetts, the place where the first settlement occurred, the franchise, that is, the right to vote and to take part in government, was confined to church members. Moreover, like Calvin and Knox, they expected the state to enforce church discipline. In other words, they were utterly intolerant.

There were great figures among the first settlers. One was a man called John Cotton who had been an Anglican vicar in Boston in Lincolnshire – it was he who gave the name to Boston in Massachusetts. It was a book by him that changed the great Dr John Owen, perhaps the finest intellect amongst all the Puritans, into an Independent. But if you read John Cotton's life story, you will find that it was a most painful process for him to cease to be an Anglican in his view of ecclesiastical discipline and to become a true Independent.

These men were no longer Anglicans, they were independent of Anglicanism, and yet they imposed their system upon all their people. In other words, you can describe them as semi-Separatists. They had separated from the idea of a state church, but only up to a point. They still believed that it was the duty and the business of the state, the magistrates and the governing powers, to exercise discipline on behalf of the church.

There were similar people in England. The man from whose

church the Pilgrim Fathers went to America, the famous John Robinson, delivered a great farewell sermon that has become well known. John Robinson, who had intended to go to America himself, but never made it, was a semi-Separatist who believed in having churches separate from the established Church of England yet was equally convinced that the state should be used to carry out church discipline. He did not believe in separating completely from the established church, and would occasionally conform.

Another semi-Separatist was a man called Henry Jacob. He was the first minister of the first true continuing Congregational church in Britain, a church that was founded in 1616 in Southwark in south London. Though not as extreme as John Cotton, Jacob did believe in using the state in the administration of discipline.

So, to summarize, we have considered the teaching of Calvin and the practice in Geneva, and that of Zwingli before him; we have looked at the Presbyterian attitude, which was, of course, adopted in Scotland and also in the Reformed Churches on the Continent; and now we have seen the position of the American colonists. The latter are particularly interesting because they had an opportunity, more or less, of doing anything they liked – of course, they were still subject to the Government of England, they were nothing but a colony and the land had been granted them by the English Government and the King – but they did have that opportunity. Yet they continued to be semi-Separatists, and in general they conformed to the teaching of the Belgic and Westminster Confessions of Faith on this whole matter.

But now let us turn to the other group, which I would put under the heading of 'the Free Church idea'. That is a very good heading because we are dealing with the question of the association between the church and the state and the very term 'Free Church' tells you the essential position. It is a Church that is altogether free from the state.

The history of the Free Church began with the people known as 'Separatists', who first appeared in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the 1580s. We have seen how the Presbyterians branched off from the Puritans round about 1570, through the teaching and the preaching of a professor of theology at Cam-

bridge called Thomas Cartwright [see Chapter 7]. But here was a new group who also objected to the Presbyterian attitude. Because they maintained that there should be no connection at all between the state and the church, these people are called Separatists.

There are many names here and I will briefly look at some of the important ones. The first was a man called Robert Browne. For a long time in England Independents, or Congregationalists, were known as 'Brownists' because they were followers of, or at least had derived many of their ideas from, the teaching of Robert Browne. He was a strange man, who issued a book to which he gave the title, *A Treatise of Reformation Without Tarrying For Any*, by which he meant that you should not waste your time waiting until the result of your teaching had turned the magistrates into godly people who were prepared to take a scriptural view of these matters. But then, having written that, he eventually went back on it all and spent many years of his life as a very quiet, obscure, unknown Anglican vicar, and he died as such in 1633. But he had sown a seed.

Robert Browne's work was taken up by three amazing men – Henry Barrow, John Greenwood and John Penry. There is nothing more heroic, I think, in all ecclesiastical history, and, in many ways, in secular history, too, than the story of these three men. They were hounded and imprisoned and eventually, in 1593, were put to death and they died gladly. John Penry's last letter to his wife, written just before his execution, is one of the most moving documents I think I have ever read.

Now these Separatists said that the state must do nothing in connection with the church nor the church with the state. They maintained that the two were quite separate and that you do not call the magistrate to administer discipline or anything else on behalf of the church. They were bitterly opposed, of course, not only by the Anglicans, but equally by the Puritans, who, you remember, were mainly people who believed in staying in the Church of England but reforming it. The Separatists were also bitterly opposed by the Presbyterians. Everybody was against them and denounced them with great violence.

However, that was their testimony; they claimed complete

freedom of worship, complete religious freedom, and the separation of the church entirely from the state. At first they were Independents or Congregationalists, but in the early years of the seventeenth century some of them began to adopt what we now call Baptist views, by which was meant chiefly that you should not baptize infants but only adults on confession of faith. Their leaders were two men, one of whom was called John Smyth and the other Thomas Helwys. They were really the founders of the Baptist causes in this country and they issued a great Declaration in 1611.

Now this has nothing to do with my direct theme but I may not have an opportunity of saying things like this while expounding the Scriptures. Both these men believed in baptism, not by immersion, but by sprinkling, and they sprinkled one another. Most people do not realize these things, but Baptists from about 1610 to 1640 did not immerse at all, but believed in sprinkling, in affusion – a very interesting point.

So up to about 1640 and the beginning of the Civil War there were two bodies of Separatists – the Independents and the Baptists. They were small in number and were growing very slowly, but, of course, as we shall see, they were greatly helped by the Civil War and by the period of the Commonwealth. They suffered very much but they adhered to their principles.

Then this brings me to say just a word about the great Oliver Cromwell, surely in many ways the greatest Englishman who has ever lived, even his ancestry is interesting. Cromwell was an Independent, and a very convinced one, but in spite of that, he was not clear on this issue of the church-state relationship. As I have been saying about others, I must above all say about Cromwell, we must be careful not to judge these men; their position was almost impossible, particularly that of Oliver Cromwell. A king had been beheaded, which was such an unknown and strange event, and the Church of England, the episcopal church, had, in one sense, been abolished. What was to be done?

Well, Cromwell was, after all, the Lord Protector; it was his business to govern and he felt that something must be done. So he did order church affairs. He believed that the state had to do this, so he appointed 'triers' to examine preachers, and he appointed preachers, and so on. In a sense, he continued with

exactly the same system that Elizabeth and the Stuarts had supported, only, of course, he had different reasons; he was not an Episcopalian, he was a true Independent. Nevertheless, he believed in the state church, as the others had done before him.

But this is where we must pay tribute to Cromwell. In practice, he felt that he had to act as he did, otherwise there would have been nothing but chaos. Furthermore, he always had the argument that not only were the majority of the Anglican clergy illiterate, but many were also immoral and neglectful of their congregations. So there were no preachers; they had to be found, then trained, and, finally, imposed, as it were, upon the people. Those were Cromwell's arguments. But in spite of all this and in spite of certain blots, perhaps, upon his great record, here was a man who had very clear ideas about religious tolerance and freedom of worship. He was, for instance, the first man to give freedom of worship to the Jews.

So whereas the Brownists and Barrow, Greenwood and Penry had sown a seed, this seed really only came to true fruition, or at least developed most fully, during the time of Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth.

And that brings me to the people who are most responsible for the Free Church idea. The others are the antecedents, they show us the historical background, but it all came to a kind of focus in this way. First, let me deal with the United States of America. Now here I must mention a most remarkable man, whose name was Roger Williams. He had an important role in the history of religion, especially of religious tolerance, but he was also pivotal in the whole history of the United States of America. In many ways, he was more responsible than any other man for the outlook of the United States of America upon these matters, and it is interesting that he has been greatly honoured by American historians in the twentieth century.

Now Roger Williams has in the past not only been neglected but has also been maligned and misunderstood. That, of course, has been the fate of most reformers and great people. They are often vilified in their own day and generation and are only appreciated, perhaps, centuries afterwards. That happened, of course, to Oliver Cromwell. After his death, and the restoration of Charles II, Cromwell's name was execrated and

his body was even disinterred and exposed to public ridicule and scorn. Everything that could be done to besmirch his name was done. It was not until Thomas Carlyle started to write in the 1830s that Britain began to realize again what a great man Oliver Cromwell was.

Now something similar has happened to Roger Williams. I am not putting him into the same category exactly as Oliver Cromwell because he was a clergyman and not a statesman, but as a thinker I would certainly bracket him with Cromwell, and, indeed, perhaps put him ahead. So what are the facts about this man? He was born in Britain in 1600 – there is some dispute as to whether he was born in Wales or in Cornwall, but it does not make much difference, they are both Celtic! He was trained, as most of these people were in those times, at Cambridge, and was ordained as an Anglican minister, but from the beginning he was unhappy in this position. The result was that in 1631 he crossed the Atlantic and went to Boston where he thought he would find freedom and the congenial atmosphere for which he longed.

Williams was given a great reception when he reached Boston. He was a very able man and the people saw his qualities and wanted to appoint him as a teacher of the churches. But he was still most unhappy. He found that even there these matters were not understood. The settlers had formed separate churches, but they had not renounced the errors of the Church of England. This is what he wrote: 'Being unanimously chosen teacher at Boston, I conscientiously refused because I durst not officiate to an unseparated people as, upon examination and conference, I found them to be.'

Williams said that separation had not gone far enough. He wanted the settlers to make a public declaration of their repentance for having had communion with the churches of England while they lived there. They had never done that; they either said nothing about the Church of England or argued that it was, after all, a true Church but they proposed to do something different. He also taught that the magistrate had no right to punish a breach of the Sabbath or any other offence because it was a breach of the first table of the Ten Commandments.

As a result of these disagreements, Williams did not settle in

Boston, but moved off further north to Salem, a famous and most interesting place in the history of these matters. I had the pleasure of paying a visit there in 1963 and of telling the people who lived there something about all this; they had never heard it before!

Now in Salem Williams was again appointed as a pastor, but he soon found himself in difficulties because the people in Boston had jurisdiction over the whole area. Moving from Salem, he went to a place called Plymouth for two years or so and then returned to Salem. But, because of his views, in 1636 orders were issued for him to be deported. This was the edict of the court: 'If any person or persons within this jurisdiction shall deny the magistrate's lawful right or authority to punish the outward breaches of the first table of the law, every such person or persons should be sentenced to banishment.'

The officers of the law were sent to arrest Williams and put him on board a ship bound for England, but he was warned and escaped just in time. He went further south, and established a town that became known as Providence. He was also the founder of the Rhode Island State.

Roger Williams did all this because of his religious ideas. He believed in complete freedom of worship, and held that the state had no right to dictate religious beliefs. Under the government of Massachusetts you had to believe the prevailing view, otherwise, as we have seen, you could not even be a citizen. He objected to all that primarily on grounds of religion, but he also developed certain political ideas and is, in many ways, the father of American democracy.

In 1639 Williams adopted Baptist views. Until then, he had been an Independent, a Separatist. But he was not happy even with the Baptists.

Again, I want to be fair to all sides. Williams was undoubtedly a genius, but as is sometimes true of geniuses, he tended at times to be difficult – difficult, at least, to live with. He was a personal friend of Oliver Cromwell and of John Milton, the poet, and of other leaders in England. He came over to England several times in connection with the business of Rhode Island, and was greatly respected. Even the governors of Massachusetts, who tried to banish him, paid the greatest possible tribute not only to his character and his godliness,

but also to his ability as a preacher and teacher. He was, however, a man who tended to press his logic a little bit too far, so that in the end he found it difficult to agree with anybody. Nevertheless, the complete separation between church and state in America is mainly due to the influence and teaching of Roger Williams.

That, then, is one branch of the Separatists. In England, in Cromwell's army, his New Model Army, there was a great gathering of godly men who believed that in fighting Charles I and the Royalists, they were fighting the battles of the Lord. Some of these men, who became known as Sectaries, developed extreme separatist views. There were many groups among them, including people called 'Diggers'. Another group were given the name 'Levellers' because they asserted the equality of all men and freedom of religion.

The greatest leader among the Levellers was a man called John Lilburne. Again, it is extraordinary to see how these people have been neglected. I took the trouble to turn up the Schaff-Herzog *Dictionary of Religious Knowledge* to see what they had to say about the Levellers and John Lilburne and I found that they had nothing to say about either – not a word, which is extraordinary.

A book was published on the Levellers and John Lilburne by H. N. Brailsford, but the tragic thing is that Brailsford was an atheist and a so-called free thinker. He was not interested in the religion of these men but was tremendously interested in their political ideas. They were undoubtedly pioneers, not only in religion and freedom of worship, but also in government, developing ideas that have proved to be the seed thoughts of the democratic system of government that we enjoy at the present time. Most of the enactments and reforms carried out in the twentieth century by Liberal and Labour Governments had been anticipated by these Levellers. It took three hundred years for the majority of the people in this country to see the things that were seen by these men.

Let me quote a modern writer to you: 'Anglo-Saxon democracy was born in June 1647 when at Newmarket and Tipplow Heath the Puritan army covenanted not to disband until its rights and liberties were assured.' That was the real beginning of democracy in this country as we know it now.

Life in Two Kingdoms

Now I am saying this for this reason: you may have read in the papers that the so-called humanists are becoming very active in Britain. They intend to hold conferences and to claim time on the BBC. They also intend to petition Parliament in an attempt to see to it that all teachers in schools should have training in the ideas of humanism. This is becoming an active and an aggressive force. It is not only anti-Christian, but is anti-religious, believing only in man and the power of man. Probably the great fight that we will have to wage for many years to come will be the fight against an aggressive, scientific and classical humanism.

Humanism is an atheistic philosophy that is concerned to do away with religion altogether. It talks a lot about freedom – freedom for man, political freedom, and so on – but what its adherents do not know, and it is very important that we should tell them, is that they would not be able to do what they are doing, and what they want to do, were it not for these religious men in the seventeenth century. Those humanists and writers like Brailsford who are interested in these people are interested solely from the political standpoint, not realizing that their political ideas were based upon their religious ideas. It was their understanding of the truth concerning man as taught in the Bible and the biblical teaching on government, that led to their political ideas.

Now as I said, other people take notice of the Levellers and those like them, whereas Christian people have forgotten them. We have not searched out the facts. We have been so concerned with cultivating our souls that we have ignored our own history. We are ready to sell so many of our liberties just because we are ignorant; we do not realize the price that has been paid for them by our forefathers, even the price of blood. It is because we are ignorant of the Protestant martyrs that we are smiling upon Rome, and are ready to be smiled upon by Rome.

So let us be aware of these things, let us familiarize ourselves with them, and let us tell these humanist thinkers that all the benefits that they are enjoying and talk so much about – pitting them against the Christian faith – have come out of the Christian faith. I have often said from this pulpit that hospitals were started by Christian people and so were our educational

systems, the Poor Laws, and so on. And now I add that even the idea of political democracy has come from people like Roger Williams, John Lilburne, and the Levellers.

This, then, brings us up to 1660 and 1662. Charles II was brought back in 1660, and that is the greatest blot on the escutcheon of Presbyterianism, because Presbyterians really were responsible for the Restoration. I know they were misled; Charles II, like his father, was a liar. He lied to them, and then went back on his promises. But they should never have trusted him. However, they did, in order, as they thought, to achieve their own ends. They thought that the Church of England would be turned into a Presbyterian Church. But that hope was sheer folly, and in 1662 Charles II and his advisers showed their hand and ejected about two thousand men from their livings in the Church of England.

After that, the Nonconformists, the people who had been called Puritans, all came to see these things quite clearly. So it is true to say that from about 1662 the Congregationalists or Independents, whichever you prefer to call them, and the Baptists, became true Separatists. From then on all their ideas about complete separation became clear and that has been the position right down until the present time.

So what is the position at the present time with regard to this whole question?¹ It is roughly this. The Roman Catholic Church, which would like to dominate all states everywhere, is, of course, no longer able to do that, not even in Italy. The best she can do now is form what she calls 'concordats' with statesmen. The then pope made a concordat with Mussolini; another made a concordat with Hitler; this is the only thing they can do. But though they have been shorn of their powers, they have not renounced the theory, and, as I reminded you in our last study, the Vatican still regards itself as a state and is regarded as such by other states. That is why statesmen and heads of states pay their calls upon the Pope. They do not visit him as a religious leader so much as the head of a state and as a man who still has a lot of influence upon states throughout the world because so many of the rulers and governors and people in authority are Roman Catholics. But actually the Roman

¹ This sermon was given in 1967.

Catholic Church is no longer in a position to exercise the power and authority she wielded from the time of Constantine right through to the Protestant Reformation and even afterwards.

I have already described to you the position in the United States where there is a complete separation between church and state. Americans believe in religious freedom but there is no such thing as a state church and no direct association between the church and the state.

What about the British Isles? First, Scotland. There we see what may be described as a modified establishment. Church and state are quite distinct and the state cannot interfere in the spiritual affairs of the church. Yet Christians in Scotland hold on to the idea of establishment. That is why, when the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland meets, it is always attended by the Lord High Commissioner who is appointed by the Queen to represent her in the proceedings of the Assembly. This modified establishment is mainly something on paper and is not really of any practical significance.

In the case of Ireland, the Church of England was once established there, but the Irish Church was disestablished in the nineteenth century.

In Wales, the Anglican Church was the established Church until the twentieth century. The Welsh Disestablishment Bill, passed in 1914, was suspended until the end of the First World War, and then was put into operation in 1920. So there is no establishment in Wales or in Ireland, and only a modified establishment in Scotland.

Then, of course, in England there is still an established Church, and there is one very interesting thing about it – I mention this so that we can then leave this historical consideration altogether. There has been considerable talk about disestablishing the Church of England, but, interestingly, this has generally come from the Anglo-Catholics. The greatest opponents of disestablishment in England have always been the Evangelicals, and that is still true at the present time.

Now you would expect the situation to be different, would you not? But this is what happens when you begin to indulge in ecclesiastical politics and to work from human wisdom. The Anglo-Catholics want disestablishment in order that their

party, which is at present mainly in control in the Church of England, may do anything it likes. At the present time it cannot. As I said earlier, in 1928 the Anglo-Catholics produced a new prayer book, but when it was presented to Parliament, it was turned down. The Anglo-Catholics, of course, were furious, and maintained that there must be liberty in spiritual matters; that it was wrong that they should be curbed like that by the power of the state.

So the Anglo-Catholics, including the present Archbishop of Canterbury¹, are believers in disestablishment, but for that reason. They still want to go on with endowment, which means that they get paid with money produced by the state, but they do not want to be controlled by Parliament. They still want the prerogatives of establishment, but they want what they call 'spiritual freedom', and they have made many moves in that direction.

So you may ask me, 'Why do the Evangelicals, then, the people whom you would expect to be in favour of the spiritual freedom of the church, oppose this?'

For exactly the same reason – but in reverse. The Evangelicals know that if you disestablish the Church of England, the power would be put into the hands of the bishops, and, as most of the bishops are at present Anglo-Catholics in their doctrine, it would be very bad indeed for Evangelicals. So they oppose it chiefly for the pragmatic reason that it would put them into a worse position. As things are, you see, they have every hope and expectation that when the Anglo-Catholics and others attempt to produce their innovations, they will be turned down by Parliament. So at the moment it suits the Evangelicals to resist efforts to disestablish the Church of England.

The evangelical position is an argument from expediency, and the question for us is whether we can allow that. I hope, God willing, to be able to go on, therefore, to consider this question of the relationship of the church and the state that we have now traced in the course of history – and what a voluminous history it is! I have only been giving you very brief summaries – and evaluate it in the light of Scripture. We

¹ Archbishop Michael Ramsey

Life in Two Kingdoms

will ask the question: How has all this become possible in view of the teaching of the Bible?

You may say to me, 'What has that got to do with us?' And the answer is that all this is the sort of thing that Christian people find themselves doing when they are governed by tradition rather than by the teaching of Scripture. So there is a great lesson for us in our own day and generation.

Nine

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

We have now finished with our historical review, and I trust we all have been able to see that the relationship between the church and the state has indeed occupied a very prominent place, not only in the history of the Christian church, but also in the story of various countries, particularly the British Isles.

So the questions that obviously must arise in everybody's mind at this point are these: Where has all this come from? On what is it based? And as Christian people we must ask: What relationship has all that history with the teaching of the Scriptures? We believe in testing everything by the Scriptures and it is right that we should. This is the great Protestant principle, and it is surely a principle that is taught in the Bible itself. So having looked at this great history – great in the sense

of being voluminous and in the prominence it has been given, not great in the other sense of the term – we ask this question: In view of the teaching of the Bible, how has all this ever come to pass?

So we turn to the Scriptures, and when we do, we find that there is nothing of all that in the New Testament – nothing at all. There is nothing about the unity of church and state, neither of the church dominating the state [as in the case of Roman Catholicism], nor of the state dominating the church [Erastianism]. If you read these verses in Romans 13, or take 1 Timothy 2, or 1 Peter 2, you will not find this teaching at all.

Verses 1 to 7 of Romans 13 are simply an exhortation to the members of the church at Rome, and therefore to individual Christians, members of any church anywhere, to be subject to the higher powers and to obey them for the reasons that the Apostle gives, and there is nothing whatsoever beyond that. It is the same with the other two passages that are always quoted when this subject is being dealt with. All three passages deal only with the attitude of the individual believer to the state.

Now that teaching was quite inevitable at the time because all the people reading Paul's letters lived in lands that were under the power of Rome. Christians were people who, having been born again, met together in little groups in different parts of the great Roman Empire. Now Rome was a pagan power, not only believing in many religions, but even introducing the whole notion of emperor worship, so that people were being called upon to say, 'Caesar is Lord.' It was therefore quite unthinkable that there should be any suggestion whatsoever of any unity between church and state, or even of any alliance or association between church and state.

Not only is there no direct evidence of any link, there is nothing here that even opens the door to that idea – nothing at all. In other areas, it sometimes happens that though there is no direct teaching, a principle is dealt with, and one can see how a doctrine was later developed; but there is nothing here that in any way prepares the mind for what we have been seeing in the case of the Roman Catholic Church or Protestantism.

Now that, I think, is something that no one can dispute; that is what we find in the New Testament. And as I told you at the

beginning of that historical review, the position remained like that until Constantine brought the Roman Empire into the church in the early part of the fourth century.

So how has all this ever come to pass? And, of course, as we have seen, the answer is that historically it all began with Constantine. But, clearly, Christian people sought a biblical justification for what they were doing. The men we have been quoting, particularly the great Protestants – for example, the people I referred to in our last study – were biblical men who would never content themselves with doing anything unless they believed that they had some biblical warrant for it. What, then, was their argument? And the answer is that they claimed that the justification for their view of the relationship between the state and the church was based on the teaching of the Old Testament.

This is a very important point; let me demonstrate what I am saying. You may recall that I quoted chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession of Faith where it deals with the question of the civil magistrate. It is most interesting to notice, at the foot of the page, the biblical references that are given. This is a characteristic of the Westminster Confession. The men who drew it up were not merely making statements, but were giving biblical references to show that what they said was deduced from the teaching of the Bible.

The chapter deals first of all with the duty of Christians to be obedient to the higher powers, and when you come to examine the references, you find that they start, of course, with Romans 13:1-7, and that 1 Peter 2:13-14 is also cited.

In the third section, the writers come to deal with the duty of the magistrate to interfere in the life of the church. Let me remind you of what it says:

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire

– this is all the duty of the magistrate, remember –

that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed.

Here, too, we are referred to the Scriptures, and what is really interesting is the list of verses that are quoted. They are: Isaiah 49:23; Psalm 122:9; Ezra 7:23, 25-28; Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 13:5-6, 12; 2 Kings 18:4; 1 Chronicles 13:1-9; 2 Kings 23:1-26; 2 Chronicles 34:33; 25:12-13; 19:8-11. And, finally, one – and only one – New Testament reference to justify this teaching about the duty of magistrates in the preservation of doctrine and the purity of the Word, and so on.

That one New Testament reference is Matthew 2:4-5, which is the account of what happened just after the birth of our Lord. In verse 2 we are told of the visit of the wise men to Herod, and verse 3 says, 'When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.' Then in verses 4 and 5 we read, 'And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet.'

That was all the writers of the Westminster Confession could find, and if you can argue from that, as they satisfied themselves that they could, that magistrates and the state are allowed to interfere in the working of the Christian church, then I am afraid we must agree to differ. I cannot imagine anything so weak. In other words, the Westminster Confession of Faith itself makes clear that there is no basis for this teaching in the New Testament, and you have to go right back to the Old.

And then you remember also the passage in the Belgic Confession. Well, here again, all the references are from Old Testament passages. Now I notice that a book has been published recently that gathers together all the Reformed Confessions of the sixteenth century [*Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*, edited by Arthur Cochrane, SCM Press, 1966]. And at the relevant section of the Belgic Confession, which is Section 36, this book has a footnote that says, 'This section, like the corresponding sections in other Reformed

Confessions, is framed on the theory of a union of church and state.' And that, of course, is the simple truth. They all approach this problem with the assumption that there is such a union, and those today who believe in a state church, or an association between state and church, are, of course, compelled to do exactly the same thing.

I remember reading an article on these matters by a man whom I know well and who is a fine evangelical Christian. In this article he actually uses these words: 'Of course, we would not expect the New Testament to deal with this subject.' What a statement! Here are Christian people in the twentieth century, facing this whole problem of the relationship between the church and the state, wondering what is the truth about it, and they are told, 'Of course, we would not expect the New Testament to deal with that.' He explains that the New Testament does not help us because of the Roman Empire, but then he adds, 'Once Constantine came in, the position again reverted to the Old Testament position.'

And there is one fairly well known writer on these matters, a layman and a member of the Church Assembly, who virtually says that he thanks God for the coming in of Constantine because now we can go back to the Old Testament relationship between the church and the state.

Such statements, of course, can only be made when their implications have not been thought through. What is really being said is that our Lord and the Apostles have nothing to say about this at all, they are no help to us, but, thank God, we are helped by Constantine and the Roman Empire.

Now our use of the Old Testament is an interesting and important subject, not only with regard to this question of church and state, but also with regard to the whole matter of infant baptism, a doctrine that is based mainly upon Old Testament teaching about the covenant, and with regard to the introduction of ceremonies and vestments into church services, as in the Roman Catholic Church and episcopal Churches. Of course, there is a great deal about that in the Old Testament, with its descriptions of the garments of priests and high priests, but that is the only justification for that kind of practice. There is nothing whatsoever about it in the New Testament. And, of course, exactly the same issue is raised

over the question of whether or not you should sing hymns or only psalms – an argument that is based entirely upon the Old Testament. So a principle is involved here that covers quite a variety of subjects.

So the only biblical argument that can be put forward with regard to the association between the church and the state is found in the Old Testament. It is said that the history of Israel demonstrates this association and that the kings and priests in Israel were in this relationship.

But the answer, it seems to me, is that in the case of the children of Israel, the people of God in the Old Testament, it is, of course, a fact that the church and the state consisted of the same people. The nation of Israel is referred to by Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:38 as 'the church in the wilderness'. This is something about which there is no difficulty whatsoever, everybody agrees, but we must notice that even in the case of Israel, there was a very definite distinction between the secular and the religious, between the officers of the church and the officers of the state. Though the people are the same, there are two spheres, and that is maintained right through the Old Testament. There are instances of kings who took upon themselves functions allowed only to priests and were punished in a terrible manner, showing that there was a distinction even there.

But of course, our real answer is that the case of Israel was unique. There God called out and made a people for Himself, starting with Abraham. They were His people; they were a nation as well as His worshipping people. But all that we see in the Old Testament was for the time being; it was preparatory. It surely is perfectly plain when we come to the New Testament that now we have come to the fulfilment in Christ, and that no longer obtains.

There is one verse that states this quite plainly and categorically. It is Matthew 21:43 where our Lord Himself says, 'Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.' There is His verdict upon that nation – that the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to a nation 'bringing forth the fruit thereof', and that, as the whole of the New Testament makes perfectly clear, is none other than the

Christian church. The physical nation of Israel was God's nation, but not any longer.

What does the Christian church consist of? Unlike the church under the old dispensation, it is no longer confined to one nation, no longer identified with a particular natural people, but comprises individual people called out of all nations and tongues and tribes and brought into this new body, this new nation. That is the essential New Testament picture. And since all these people have been gathered out of the various nations, and separated from them, it is clear that from this point onwards you cannot think of the church in any national terms. In all the nations there are these gatherings, these groups of people, who are churches.

So it is surely to do violence to the Scriptures to go back to the Old Testament and the unique civilisation of the nation of Israel, and then transfer that to the Christian churches in the New Testament, or, if you prefer it, in the New Testament dispensation. To do that is not only to cause confusion, it is surely to do violence to the Scripture itself. You simply cannot transfer the Old Testament to the New in that particular way. The old dispensation had its function, which was, ultimately, to produce the Messiah who would be 'made of the seed of David according to the flesh' [Rom. 1:3], but the moment He came, a new principle was at work leading to churches in all the various nations of the world.

I am establishing the point that, since the coming of our Lord, and His perfect work, the union between the church and the state that is seen in the Old Testament has ceased to be. This one can show in many ways in the New Testament teaching. You find our Lord teaching in this way: 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's' [Luke 20:25].

The people had come to Him and asked, 'Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or no?' – that was the question.

So he said, 'Shew me a penny.' When they produced the coin, He said, 'Whose image and superscription hath it?'

They answered, 'Caesar's.'

Very well, He said. 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's' [Luke 20:22-25].

That is what you do with the money; this is what you do with your soul: two different realms.

But our Lord is even more explicit than that. In John 18:36, He says to Pontius Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' Now that is quite plain. 'Are you a king?' is the question, and that is our Lord's reply.

Then in Matthew 20:25-28, we read, 'Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Indeed, all our Lord's teaching about His kingdom – the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God – establishes this essential difference; His kingdom could no longer be identified with the national state.

Now in Old Testament times one became a member of the church, of the nation of Israel, by natural birth; you were born an Israelite, and you were circumcised for that reason. But now we are in an entirely different realm. You enter into the kingdom of God not as the result of belonging to a particular nation, not as the result of natural birth, not even because your parents have been Christians, but by a rebirth. Our Lord puts this so plainly to Nicodemus: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' [*John* 3:3, 5]. It is something entirely spiritual. The whole of the kingdom has a spiritual character, and, as we have abundant teaching to show us, it is governed by its own officers.

Now if you read chapters 2 and 3 of Paul's First Epistle to Timothy, you will see that contrast. The Apostle starts in chapter 2 by telling us to pray 'for kings, and all that are in authority', and so on. That is the state. Then in the next chapter, he comes to deal with the officers in the church: it is altogether different; they have no relationship at all to the other. These matters are to be thought of and to be dealt with

in a spiritual manner. Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 6, the Apostle upbraids the Corinthians for taking their own personal disputes to the public courts. They should find somebody, he says, in the church, even, if necessary, the lowliest person in the church to deal with these things: '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 we 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' [1 Cor. 6:1-5].

So this is the argument. If we are not even to take private, personal matters of dispute between Christian people to the public courts, how much less are we to take matters like prayer books or matters of doctrine. The idea is entirely contrary to the whole teaching and spirit of the New Testament.

Let me give you further examples of Paul's teaching. He speaks of 'the god of this world' and writes, 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not' [2 Cor. 4:3-4]. Then at the beginning of Ephesians 2, he says, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.'

That is the life of the unregenerate in contradistinction to the life of those who are regenerate, who, when they become citizens of the kingdom of God, enter a realm that is entirely different from the realm of the state. And, of course, at the end of Philippians 3, there is a tremendous statement in verses 20 and 21: 'For our conversation' – which means 'our citizenship' – 'is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour . . .' Paul writes as a Roman citizen but he says that our real citizenship is in heaven. Now that is Paul writing in the realm of the church. Though he belongs to an earthly kingdom, the other is his most essential citizenship.

That, then, is the distinction that is drawn all the way

through the New Testament. You do not think of the church as being one with the state, you do not think of it as consisting of the same people and being coterminous, as it were. No, these are people who are gathered out, they are the 'called-out' ones. Paul says at the beginning of his Epistle to the Galatians, 'Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world' [*Gal.* 1:4].

That is the whole atmosphere of the New Testament, and, of course, in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, this is to be seen still more clearly. Take, for instance, chapters 13, 17 and 18, where you see this great contrast – the kingdom of God, the church, and over and against that, on the other side, the world's states. And in chapter 13, surely, there is a wonderful picture of this very confusion between church and state, where the words 'the beast' and 'the image to the beast', and so on, refer to a secular authority giving its power to the spiritual power, to the church, which then becomes 'the image of the beast', exercising the same sort of authority. That is surely a perfect description of what we have been seeing in the case of the Church of Rome and, at times of degeneracy, even in Protestantism. This great contrast is again painted for us in Revelation 17 and 18, where it all ends in a great clash.

Now my argument is that not only particular statements in the New Testament contradict completely the kind of teaching that is put forward among Roman Catholics, and was current for the first 150 to 160 years of Protestantism, but also that the whole spirit of the New Testament is entirely opposed to this idea. In the New Testament you always have a contrast between the natural and the spiritual, and throughout the New Testament regeneration is seen as absolutely vital. That is why, if you are guided by the New Testament, you can never have such a thing as a state church. The idea of taking church matters or church doctrine, such as the prayer book, to a secular parliament, where the majority are not Christians, and allowing them to make decisions about it, is something which, I repeat, is surely quite unthinkable if you are truly governed by the teaching of the New Testament. So as we have seen, the only way people can find to try to justify it is to quote various passages from the Old Testament.

No, no; unbelievers cannot understand spiritual things; they

are totally incompetent in this area. However learned, however great they may be, they cannot express an opinion on spiritual matters. You must be born again to understand these things. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned' [1 Cor. 2:14]. The princes of this world did not recognize our Lord when He was here; otherwise they would never have crucified Him [1 Cor. 2:8]. So there is no room whatsoever for a state church or a Christian nation.

'But,' you may say, 'what about this idea that some of the Protestants had about the Christian prince or the Christian ruler?'

Well, all right, let us grant that a ruler, a king, a prince, a president, or whatever you like, may happen to be a Christian. That is a possibility and it has often happened, thank God. But he is still only a Christian as an individual. He is not a Christian as the head of the state. That is an entirely different function. And if he uses his power and position and prerogative as the head of the state to influence his own position and that of others in the Christian church, he is violating that passage in Matthew 20:25-28 where our Lord says that everything in His kingdom is entirely different from what it is in the state. There the great man rules over the others, but here it is the servant who counts, and you become great by being a servant.

So if a king should demand a special position in the Christian church because he is a king, it is the duty of the church to tell him that he must take his place like everybody else. All divisions and distinctions that are recognized outside must not be recognized inside. That is why James, in the second chapter of his letter, tells us not to make a difference between the man who comes in with a gold ring on his hand and the man who comes in badly clothed. You are not to make such distinctions; you are in a different realm. All this shows how the whole notion of union between the church and the state, or even an alliance or an association between them, runs quite contrary to the plain teaching of the New Testament.

And I want to drive this argument home further by putting it to you like this: there is a very important practical argument that we can deduce from history to support this teaching

which is so plain in the New Testament. When I gave the brief historical survey, did you observe what happens when people cease to be governed by New Testament teaching? First of all, in the Middle Ages there was the terrible tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church. There has never been a greater tyranny than that – not even Communism – and it is still to be found wherever that Church can safely exercise power. If you adopt this teaching about the union of church and state and give such power to the church, that is the result.

But then take this argument further: I have reminded you that Henry VIII never became a true Protestant but died a Roman Catholic. The change he did make was to appoint himself supreme governor of the church as well as of the state, and his servants, even people like Cranmer and others, were ready to submit to this. They should never have done so, and I am prepared to believe that some of them were most unhappy about it. But they did, and it was all right, up to a point, in Henry's reign, although he persecuted some of the finest Protestants, men like Bishop John Hooper of Gloucester.

It was much better in the reign of Edward VI, and, of course, the Protestants who had adopted this principle thought it was wonderful and believed it would all work their way. But unfortunately for them, Edward VI died at a very early age, and in came Queen Mary I, who was a Roman Catholic. Mary was able to turn on the Protestants and say that it was they themselves who had given the monarch supreme authority in matters pertaining to the church. All Mary did was to take the powers that Henry VIII had arrogated to himself, with the connivance of these Protestant leaders. And, of course, they had to suffer the terrible consequences. But people like Cranmer and others had no argument whatsoever to bring against Queen Mary at that particular point. They came to see this, and yet the error was never quite dealt with because, even when Elizabeth I came to the throne, there was a fight over this issue, and all honour to the men who fought her. But they were defeated and some of them were guilty of terrible weakness.

Now I have already granted that there was a good deal to be said on the political side, and I am prepared to grant the great difficulties faced by these church leaders, but oh, that they had

kept to the biblical teaching, the New Testament distinction in these matters! But they did not. Elizabeth tyrannized over the church and many godly people endured much suffering as a result. James I went further, Charles even further than that, and it ended in the Civil War and in the beheading of Charles.

So that is what happens, in practice, once you depart from this scriptural teaching, and not only under Roman Catholicism, but under Protestantism in exactly the same way. So this helps one to understand the growth of the whole Free Church principle. But in addition to that, if you confuse the church and the state, it always results in harm being done to the gospel and its preaching. It always has the effect of detracting from the purity of the gospel.

Now let us be fair in these matters; Free Churchmen have fallen into this same mistake of confusing church and state. Why do you think the working people, the working classes, as they are called, are outside the churches at the present time? Well, I have no hesitation in answering that – and I could prove what I say – they are in that position because in the nineteenth century Nonconformists, Free Churchmen, fell into this same error and trap. They did so in a slightly different way, but the principle is exactly the same.

For example, the owner of the works – the local mill or factory – or the manager of the works, was generally the chief deacon in the chapel, and he carried over into the life of the chapel what he did the other six days of the week in his factory. And so the working classes began to identify Christianity with capitalism, with the status quo. They said, 'Churches are against us', and that was very often true, simply because the churches, instead of keeping themselves to the purity of the New Testament teaching allowed secular distinctions to come into the church.

It does not matter whether he is a king or a prince, a plutocrat, a millionaire or a manager, it does not matter who he is or what form his power may take, he must not be allowed to bring that outlook and position into the realm of the Christian church. The moment he does, the gospel preaching is compromised. And often it was compromised, and the church gave the impression that it was just there to support and to buttress and to substantiate the status quo, that it was

on the side of privilege as against the common people. I repeat, you cannot mix these things without compromising your gospel and the purity of the preaching of the gospel.

Not only that, to mix these two always produces hypocrites. When everybody in the parish is regarded as a Christian, you are bound to have hypocrites; when everybody in the nation is regarded as a Christian, hypocrisy is quite inevitable; and this has been the curse throughout the centuries. When the church is not concerned about purity but allows people to be admitted because they are children of particular parents or because of some worldly position, then you have nothing but hypocrisy.

This attitude has been rampant in Protestantism as in Roman Catholicism. People have been given positions of prominence in the church, or a man reads the Scriptures, not because he is a Christian, but because he is the local squire or a member of a profession, and he is regarded as a learned man who can read well. That is the sole reason why he steps forward to read the Scriptures. Is it surprising that there has been hypocrisy and that people have reacted against this and have dismissed the church and the whole of her message? That is the kind of consequence you get when you fail to maintain this distinction.

But at the present time and in the present position, as has been the case for many years now, the idea of a state church in this or any other country has just become ridiculous. Why? Because there is a multiplicity of denominations and Churches. The moment you have more than one Church, a state church automatically goes out. If all Christians belonged to one Church, then, though it is wrong, superficially you can see some justification for a state church. But the moment you have divisions into sects, denominations and groupings, a state church is not only wrong, it becomes an impertinence. Why should one particular denomination rather than any other be the state church? But that is the position in which we have landed ourselves as the result of the failure of our forefathers to be governed by the teaching of the New Testament in these matters, allowing themselves instead to carry on certain traditions which they inherited from their fathers.

Well, we must leave it here for the moment. May God open our eyes to these matters in this period of change and tran-

sition through which we are passing when all these things are again before us acutely. Let us learn the lessons of the past. Above all, let us learn this lesson of always keeping to the biblical teaching.

Ten

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

At this point, before we come to deal with any particular problems or questions that confront the individual Christian and the church at the present time, I think it would perhaps be helpful and convenient for me to try to sum up the points we have been considering together. So I would suggest the following conclusions.

First, that the church and the state in New Testament teaching are entirely distinct and there is no warrant whatsoever from the New Testament teaching for either to control the other. There is no warrant for the church to control the state, as the Roman Catholic Church has done and would always like to do. But equally there is no warrant for the state

to control the church as happens under Erastianism and every state church.

Secondly, we surely must have seen something of the danger of trying to put the 'new wine' of the gospel and the new dispensation into the old bottles of the Old Testament and Old Testament teaching. That error arises out of a failure to see the uniqueness of the position of the children of Israel. In the Old Testament dispensation state and church comprised the same people but that special situation no longer obtains.

Thirdly, I trust it has been clear that what happened at the time of Constantine was not only a departure from the New Testament teaching, but also a departure from the practice of the early church. That, I think, is a crucial point and it has been the failure to realize it that has accounted for so much of the history that we have been considering.

So my fourth general conclusion is that it is quite clear historically that the Roman Catholic Church perpetuated the church/state relationship that had begun in the time of Constantine. At first the state was the more powerful. But its power declined until ultimately the Roman Empire was conquered by the Barbarians. The Roman Church then succeeded in reversing the position and she began to dominate the life of the state. But as regards the principle of the unity of the two, that remained constant.

It is also clear, I trust, that the Protestant Reformers perpetuated this precise error. They really did not face it. They just took it over without examining it as they should have done. And this was true not only of the Protestant Reformers but also of their descendants, even including the Puritans in Britain, and it took what happened in 1662, at the time of the Great Ejection, to awaken people truly to this whole matter.

Let me recommend to you the book, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*, by Leonard Verduin¹, which is very helpful and illuminating on this subject. It shows very clearly how the Reformers went astray at this point by taking over the whole notion of the state-church association, a notion that was mainly apparent as they expressed their opposition to the

¹ Published in the USA in 1964 by Eerdmans, and in Britain in 1966 by Paternoster Press.

Anabaptists. The Anabaptists were guilty of many excesses – no one would defend them for that – but on this particular principle they stood for something that it took well over a century for people in this country to see with any kind of clarity.

There, then, are the general conclusions, but what I am really concerned about is their relevance to us. Somebody may say to me at this point, 'What has all this got to do with us?' And I am trying to show that it has everything to do with us because we are once more put into a position where all these issues are of the most urgent importance. Whether we like it or not, whether we even want it or not, we are in that situation. We happen to be living in an age that is one of the great turning-points of history, not only in the world in general, but also in the history of the Christian church. Great decisions have been taken, are being taken, and, in the next few years, will be taken with increasing rapidity. And we are all involved in this; these things will happen. If you do nothing, the decisions will be taken for you and you will find yourself facing a *fait accompli*. And that is something we should all denounce.

The Apostle Paul writes, 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular' [1 Cor. 12:27]. We are given a position in the body of Christ and it behoves us all to acquaint ourselves, not only with the scriptural teaching, but also with the facts of what is happening round and about us, so that as we are called upon to take our decisions, we shall know what we are doing. There are certain lessons that come to us very plainly from the history of the church in this matter of the church and the state, especially when it is looked at in the light of the teaching of the Scripture itself.

The first lesson is the terrible danger of traditionalism. Now you notice I am not saying the danger of tradition, but of traditionalism. What is the difference between the two? It is this: tradition, in and of itself, is something that is good. Anyone who dismisses the whole of the past is behaving in a very foolish manner. I know there are many people who are doing that today; indeed, perhaps one of the most foolish aspects of modern life is the tendency to assume that all that has happened in the past is quite irrelevant and unimportant

and that nobody knew anything until this present generation came. But those who dismiss the past are – to put it plainly – just displaying a lack of intelligence. Those who think at all and who have any experience of life soon begin to realize that life is something very big and very difficult and they are grateful for any light or help or information and instruction that they can receive from those who have gone before us.

Of course, as Christians we start with the basic assumption that the world does not change. The world thinks it does, but part of our very belief as Christians is the acknowledgment that ever since the fall of man the world has not changed. It changes, of course, on the surface, in its dress, its appearance and in some of its customs and habits, but basically men and women in sin do not change at all: in all generations they commit the same sins, they fall into the same errors, they repeat the same heresies.

What can be more important, therefore, than to learn from the past? We do this by considering the traditions that we have inherited and we should thank God for every tradition and make full use of it; we should familiarize ourselves with it and learn lessons from it. I have often had to say that to me one of the most extraordinary things is the way in which Evangelicals are ignorant of the great evangelical story of the centuries. Many seem to think that Evangelicalism began in this country with the arrival of D. L. Moody in 1873. But that is sheer ignorance, and many of our troubles and our failures in the realm of the church have arisen directly from that ignorance. So let us acquaint ourselves with the past, as we have been trying to do, and let us learn everything we can from it. That is the right use of tradition.

But traditionalism is something very different, something very dangerous, something that is condemned in the Bible itself. Traditionalism, as is true of most 'isms', is the tendency to exalt a teaching into something absolute that becomes a legalism and eventually paralyses our thinking. I can illustrate the difference between tradition and traditionalism by pointing out a parallel difference between a legitimate pride of nation on the one hand, and nationalism on the other. To take pride in one's nation is not only legitimate, it is good. But the moment it turns into an 'ism' – nationalism – it becomes a

source of error and trouble. So many of the problems and tragedies we have had to face in the twentieth century have been entirely due to nationalism and it may very well prove to be the greatest source of trouble in the future.

But let me show the difference between tradition and traditionalism in the form in which we find it in the Scriptures. Take our Lord's denunciation of the traditionalism of the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 15. Our Lord's charge is, 'Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition' [verse 6]. This is a most important matter. Remember, the Pharisees were religious people; they were the religious teachers and they were very serious people: this was their life. They, of all men, believed that they were honouring God and living to His glory. As Paul says of them, 'They have a zeal of God' [Rom. 10:2].

Now it is a very great mistake to think of the Pharisee as a dishonest man. I know the literary writers have tended to give us that impression, but it is quite wrong. The trouble with the poor Pharisee was not that he deliberately set out to fool others but that he fooled himself. He did not realize what he was doing. That was his tragedy.

This deception is a very insidious and subtle process. What happened was this: these men studied their Scriptures and made comments on them, and so a body of doctrine and of teaching came into being. Now they had no intention whatsoever of going wrong. Their intention was absolutely right and good; they were there to explain and to expound the Scriptures. But as they did that, and as they accumulated this teaching, a tradition developed; and our Lord said that they had reached a point when they were spending the whole of the time with their tradition and the teaching of the Word of God was being entirely obscured. That was the charge that He brought against them. He said, in effect, 'You claim to be teachers, but you are not teachers of the Word; you are hiding the Word; you are standing between it and the people with your traditions, the traditions of the elders. You are always saying, "It has been said", and you are for ever quoting your authorities.'

As a result, the people were not brought face to face with the law of God and the teaching of the Scriptures. Instead, here

were these clever, expert men comparing this view and that, putting up the rival schools amongst the Pharisees, and spending the whole of their time in abstruse arguments. So the common people were not being instructed. That was why, when our Lord came and taught them plainly and directly, we are told, 'The common people heard him gladly' [Mark 12:37]. Of course! They could not follow these others, it was all intellectualism, and the Word of God was being concealed; but our Lord was revealing it and bringing it out.

So that was our Lord's way of dealing with this very matter. The tradition had become traditionalism and was concealing the truth. This is a most terrible danger. We are all subject to it and are, I trust, all prepared to learn this lesson. If we do not, we shall not only miss a great opportunity, which I believe is, at the present time, being presented to us as Christian people – I mean evangelical people in particular – but we shall also make grievous mistakes and hinder the propagation of the gospel.

What always happens with traditionalism is that the body of teaching that has come into being in the way I have described to you becomes fixed; it becomes set and hardened, ossified, if you like. And the people who are influenced and dominated by it are generally people who refuse to consider anything else at all. Their minds are shut. Now that was exactly why the Pharisees would not listen to our Lord. He did not fit into their scheme of things, into their teaching or outlook, and therefore into their tradition. So they objected to Him, denounced Him and eventually brought about His downfall.

Now there is no question in my mind but that in many cases traditionalists act as they do entirely out of a spirit of fear. They have a set, fixed system, a 'square', as it were, of doctrine, and they are terrified that if they open that at all, they may lose everything. So, because they are afraid, they say, 'I must defend it all', and they will not listen to anything else.

I recall a man, long since gone to glory, who used to attend Westminster Chapel very regularly. And I well remember that when I was giving some lectures on biblical doctrines and dealing with the doctrine of the last things, he came and listened. But it was quite obvious that, as he listened to the exposition and to the arguments, he was beginning to see that

the position he had occupied for fifty years was not as infallible as he had thought. But he told me, rather jocularly, 'You know, I'm too old to change now.' He felt that having had a system, and having taught it even, for so many years, though the other point of view might be right and true, he could not change.

Thank God our salvation does not depend on our understanding! But you see the pathetic position we can get into because of some such spirit of fear. I have even known people to stay away from meetings at which a point of view was being put forward that did not tally with what they had always believed and been brought up in. They were just afraid to listen to it.

Now cannot you see how reprehensible this is? It is very easy for us to denounce Roman Catholicism. We say, 'Those people are just traditionalists. Instead of going to the Scriptures, they say, "What does the Church teach?" They put the teaching and tradition of the Church before the teaching of Scripture.' That is the Protestant charge against Roman Catholics, that the poor Roman Catholics are not given the truth, that they are given all this Church teaching about Mary and the saints and works of supererogation, and all the things that they have accumulated by way of tradition throughout the centuries, and that there are many innocent, ignorant Roman Catholic people who know much more about particular saints than they know about the Scriptures. How easy it is for us to denounce that and to see the error of that. But how difficult it is for us to see that we are often guilty of doing exactly the same thing, that we have the same shut and closed minds.

This is always typical of traditionalism. It is surely quite as wrong for us to adopt the position, 'My denomination right or wrong', as it is to say, 'My country right or wrong.' We do not think much of a man who says, 'My country can never make a mistake.' We know that that is what breeds war, that wars come about when people are foolish enough to say that. But the world is full of people who are saying the same thing in the religious realm. 'The denomination I have been brought up in – I will fight for it to my last breath!' Why? Well, because it is *my* denomination. That is exactly the same spirit; there is no difference whatsoever.

Traditionalism shows itself in another way, too. There is

always the danger of regarding the church Fathers as divinely inspired and infallible. As Protestants we object to the doctrine of papal infallibility, nor do we believe in an infallible church. We are very strong on these issues. But I have known many Protestant people who unconsciously and quite unintentionally have turned John Calvin into a pope. Their attitude is, 'You must not criticize John Calvin, not even on a detail. Calvin can never be wrong.' This comes out in reviews. I have read two reviews of the book I have just been recommending, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*. Neither reviewer gave any account of the contents of the book, but each took up the fact that there were criticisms of Calvin in that book, and fixed on this. But to turn Calvin into a pope in that way is to be guilty of traditionalism.

And that attitude applies not only to men but also to books and to documents. Now there are people – and there is no question about this, I am simply illustrating the point – who, again unconsciously, have regarded the notes in what is called the Scofield Bible as being as inspired and as infallible as the text of the Scripture. They have argued, 'This can't be wrong, it's in the Bible.' I have also known people who have regarded the Westminster Confession as being divinely inspired and infallible and have said that it must never be criticized. You see, on all sides, whatever view you may happen to take, there is always the danger of falling under the tyranny of traditionalism, of being entirely governed by the teaching of one man, or one book, or one system.

Now these are but some ways in which this spirit of traditionalism manifests itself, and you can see the importance and the relevance of all this to the present position. We are living at a time when supporters of the so-called ecumenical movement are calling upon people to merge into one great world church. They urge people not to hold rigidly to ideas they grew up with, but to think again. Now what have we to say about this?

Well, the tragedy is that so many people, facing that kind of position, instead of evaluating it all in the light of the Scripture, seeing the evangelical position and coming together to stand for that, are much more concerned to defend the position they are already in: 'I was brought up in it; fathers and grandfathers away back, all my family have always belonged to

this denomination.' So they are not open to the truth, their minds are shut, they are not prepared to change, they are not prepared to admit that perhaps their fathers were wrong and they themselves have been wrong.

All I am suggesting is that surely, in the light of our consideration of the history of the relationship between church and state, we should have arrived at the general principle that it is possible for any and all of us to go astray, to be in error at certain points, and we must not regard anything that the church has ever done as being infallible. Rather, we must examine all things in the light of the teaching of the Scripture, and, whatever the consequences, be ready to act upon what we find.

Now in making this exhortation, I am actually doing the very thing that the Reformers themselves did. This was the gigantic action taken by Martin Luther. Here was a man who, having seen the truth of the Scriptures, was prepared to stand up against fifteen centuries of tradition. But, of course, we know that since then Luther himself has been turned into a pope by many sections of the Lutheran Church. But Luther and Calvin and these other Reformers were not bound by everything that was decided in the early ecumenical councils of the church. They were critical of these councils and did not hesitate to say so.

And in the same way, the Reformers were ready to criticize the Fathers: this was one of the great bones of contention between them and the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church would quote the Fathers, but the Reformers said, 'What does Scripture say?' Even the early Fathers of the church not only could go astray, but patently did. We must therefore not slavishly accept everything that tradition brings down to us. We must say, 'It's helpful but let's examine it in the light of the Scripture and then decide what we must do.'

I trust that this has become clear to all of us. There is nothing more regrettable than that people should just defend the position they are in, that they should refuse to consider anything else and be afraid to keep their minds open. Christians should have an open mind in the sense that they are not bound by tradition. They are open to the Scripture and should evaluate all else in the light of their understanding of it.

As we have been examining this matter of the relationship between church and state, and as we have seen how our great forefathers unconsciously took over a tradition instead of evaluating it in the light of the Scriptures, I do trust that we will beware of that danger. If we do not realize this, and if we all adhere simply to the denomination in which we were brought up and hold on to that at all costs, then most of us will find that we end up, sooner than we think, in the Church of Rome, or else we shall be divided into such little fragments that we count neither inside the church nor among those who are outside.

I feel that this subject has a very great lesson for us to learn just at this present time. We are told that everything is in the melting-pot; well, let us take advantage of this. Let us learn from the Scriptures, let us learn from the past, and let us come to decisions in the light of the Scriptures and adhere to them resolutely, ready, if necessary, to suffer for them. And above all, let us be determined to put them into practice together.

Those, then, are the general lessons which I trust we are all prepared to consider seriously and prayerfully. But then I ask: What is our position with regard to this whole question of the relationship of church and state? And it seems to me that it all boils down to one fundamental question: *What is the function of the state?*

Now in a sense we have considered that already, but we must come back and look at it again in the light of the problems we have been thinking about. And as we consider the function of the state, we find ourselves faced with two subsidiary questions, and these help to throw light on that question. The first is this: Is the state to have any positive function at all, or is it entirely negative?

Now if you consult this passage in Romans 13, I think you will have to come to the conclusion that the purpose of the state is entirely negative. If you read 1 Timothy 2, you will find there the instruction that the Apostle gives Timothy in order that he in turn may teach others. Paul says, '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' [verses 1-2]. That is the

function of the state. And if you take the passage in 1 Peter 2, I think you will find exactly the same teaching. Peter says that the business of governors, kings, state, whatever the authority may be, is 'for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well' [verse 14].

Now the three New Testament passages that deal with this seem to leave it at that, but that raises the second subsidiary question. There are those who say, 'But surely, you haven't considered this whole doctrine of common grace.' Their argument is that all people are sinful because of the fall, and God deals with some by His special, His saving grace, but He has not ceased to have dealings with the others: He deals with them by means of what is called 'common grace'. The world is still God's world, He has not abandoned it, and through the Holy Spirit He is doing something even to the unregenerate world.

So these people ask: 'What about that? And not only that, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of the universe. He Himself said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." We are told, "All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" [Col. 1:16-17]; and that He is over all, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" [Eph. 1:21]. So what about the lordship of Christ over the whole of life?'

These people therefore maintain that the combined teaching about common grace and the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ means that God works even in the lives of unregenerate people. And since the powers that be are ordained of God, it is the task of the church to teach the state that it is its duty to bring into being the lordship of Christ over the whole of life. It is said that there is therefore a sense in which it is the business of the state to Christianize society, that the state must bring the Christian teaching to bear upon every aspect of life, upon all human affairs. They say that it is wrong for the church to withdraw from all this. And so these people talk about 'winning the world for Christ', and 'winning culture for Christ'. They add that this is to be a gradual process, that the Christian teaching is to act as leaven in society and that as it permeates

the life of the world, the different aspects of life will be captured from the devil. So the lordship of God and of His Christ will become more and more evident.

Now this was a teaching that was extremely popular, especially towards the end of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries. In Britain it was taught by an Anglican teacher, a great man called F. D. Maurice, also by Canon Scott Holland, who used to preach towards the end of the nineteenth century in St Paul's Cathedral, and by the famous Bishop Gore, and later by Archbishop William Temple. But it was not confined to these preachers, nor to Anglicans.

People in other countries have also taught much the same thing. In Holland there was a great man called Abraham Kuyper, who was famous for his lectures on Calvinism. Here was a man who, brought up in the Dutch Reformed Church, began to see that that state church had gone astray in certain respects and, with others, began a new denomination, as it were. He was an ordained minister but eventually gave that up and entered politics. His essential teaching was that you should bring the lordship of God and of Christ to bear upon the whole of life. He, and others also, started a political party to propagate these ideas and he actually became the prime minister of Holland. He believed in Christian schools and started a Christian university in Amsterdam, which is known as the Free University of Amsterdam.

So this is the question: Which of these two views do you take – the view that says that the function of the state is almost entirely negative, or the theory that makes the function of the state very positive and says that, indeed, you can even use such terms as the 'Christianizing' of life and of society? Now as we look at this, I would put certain considerations to you.

First: I would say that it is always wrong to talk about 'Christianizing' anything. No such thing is possible, and I would describe that view as heretical. You are either a Christian, or you are not a Christian. It is only the Christian who can live the Christian life; it is only the Christian who can understand the Christian teaching. So whatever you may do to unregenerate individuals, and though you may change society's mode of living – and I am entirely in agreement with that –

you must not use the term 'Christianize'. It is good to persuade people to live in a certain way, but you must not say they are living as Christians, because they cannot. To say that a man or woman can live the Christian life in any shape or form without being born again, without becoming a Christian, is the very essence of the Pelagian heresy.

Secondly, in the light of the teaching of the Scripture, it is surely quite wrong to talk of Christ's lordship and His kingdom as coming 'gradually'. Now this is a most important point. There are those who would use our Lord's parable of the leaven to teach that idea. You remember that our Lord says that the kingdom is like a woman who takes some leaven, that is, some yeast, and puts it into the flour, and it gradually works all through the dough [*Matt. 13:33*]. In the last hundred years or so that has been used as an argument to show that Christianity continues to work in society until eventually the whole becomes Christian.

But I am here to contend that this is a serious misunderstanding of the parable of the leaven because that interpretation actually makes the parable contradict other plain statements of our Lord Himself in other parts of the Scripture. Take, for instance, our Lord's words in Luke chapter 17: 'When he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained

fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed' [verses 20-30].

Now surely these things are perfectly plain and clear. Furthermore, our Lord asked a tremendous and a staggering question: 'When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' [Luke 18:8]. Our Lord's picture of the end time immediately before His reappearing is that things will be so bad, even in the church, that you can ask that question. And if it is to be like that with the church, what will the condition of the world be? Our Lord has told us that it will be similar to the time before the Flood, or before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, far from teaching that Christianity gradually permeated society and the life of the unregenerate world, our Lord taught the exact opposite. And, of course, when you read the Book of Revelation, you get exactly the same impression of terrible conditions, great suffering and the world giving itself to evil. Read again chapters 17 and 18 of that book, and you will find there a situation that is diametrically opposite to that of a society permeated by Christianity.

Now it is very interesting to notice again that this teaching was very popular towards the end of the nineteenth century when the country was peaceful and growing in prosperity. I think that is what misled these good men. There had been peace, more or less, since the Napoleonic War, though there had been the Crimean War, which was a kind of incident. But there had been that era of peace, with knowledge and education advancing, and science developing; they were all optimistic, the world really was progressing at last! They could see the activities of the missionary societies and they thought the whole world was going to be won for Christ. The men prominent in the Student Christian Movement, the pioneer movement among students, had a great slogan, 'Christianizing the world in our generation'. It looked as if it was going to happen but, of course, it only looked like that to people who were judging by appearances rather than being led by the teaching of Scripture.

The teaching of Scripture is that the end will come suddenly and unexpectedly; it will be crisis and judgment; it will be apocalypse. The two kingdoms – the kingdom of God and the

kingdom of the devil – are eternally different. There is a conflict between them and nothing will bring it to an end except the second coming and the glorious appearing of our great Lord and Saviour. That is the teaching of the Scripture.

But, finally, let me point out to you that this teaching of the Scripture is abundantly confirmed by history itself. What do you find in history? Has the Christian church, has the teaching of Christian people who have been active in politics and in society, have they been gradually acting as a leaven? Have these principles, has the lordship of Christ, been asserted more and more and become more and more evident in the life of the unregenerate world?

There is only one answer, historically, to that question and it is that far from there being a gradual improvement, there has been a kind of periodicity – a rise and a fall. Whenever you get a great revival, you always find that the whole area where the revival has been derives benefit from it. I have often pointed out that every time there has been a great religious awakening in Britain there have always been moral improvements, ethical improvements, and improvements in other respects. Education has been given a stimulus, so have hospitals and good deeds. The Victorian period is to be explained primarily in the light of the great Evangelical Awakening of the eighteenth century. The abolition of slavery came directly as a consequence of that Evangelical Awakening and so did the trade union movement. There is no question about these things.

Nevertheless, the unregenerate were not Christianized as a result of these times of revival. Their behaviour was modified, and that lasted for a while, but the change was never permanent – never! That is what I am anxious to impress upon you; the improvement was only temporary. Take, for instance, the Puritan period leading to the Commonwealth of Cromwell and those various acts of Parliament about the Sabbath, and so on, that are still on the statute book and about which there is much discussion at the present time – they all came about as the result of that spiritual awakening and quickening. But that was very soon followed by one of the most dissolute and evil periods in the whole of the history of this country, all the things that Charles II's restoration stands for.

But we need not go back into history – look at the condition of this country morally, socially, artistically, and in every other respect at the present time. It all looked so different earlier in the twentieth century when everything seemed to be going upwards, and people were optimistic. I wonder what they would say if they returned now! I wonder whether they would give us the same optimistic teaching. No, whatever the benefits that accrue to the world outside Christ, they are always temporary. The brighter, greater, better periods are followed by periods of degradation, degeneration, and often even vileness.

There is no greater fallacy than the fallacy of thinking that you can permeate the whole life of society by Christian teaching. That idea is not only negated by the teaching of our Lord Himself and by the Apostles, particularly the teaching of the Book of Revelation, but by the long history of humanity and of civilization.

And there we must leave it for the moment. In our next study we will continue with a few further general points and principles before applying all this to some specific issues that are agitating people at the present time.

Eleven

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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. 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 the 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. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:1-7

We have been considering the danger of traditionalism, of closed minds that fight for an established position and are unprepared to consider any criticism of it or any alternative to it. We can sum it up by saying that the lesson of history with regard to this subject is the terrible and often tragic danger of bigotry. A bigot is always an impossible person, who, because of his traditionalism, his blindness and his refusal to open his mind, denies the faith that he claims to believe. God preserve us all from becoming bigots!

So we have considered all that, and have gone on to say that the real question is our view of the state and its function. We have looked at the passages in 1 Peter 2 and 1 Timothy 2 that,

like Romans 13, deal with this matter, and have asked whether the state has anything beyond a negative function. Is its task merely and only to keep sin and its evil manifestations within bounds?

We have seen that the moment you ask that question, you are face to face with people who say, 'Yes, but what of the lordship of Christ? Doesn't the Scripture teach that He is the Lord over the whole of life? Did He Himself not say, after His resurrection and before His ascension, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"? Doesn't this teach the lordship of Christ over the whole world and not merely over the church? And what about the passage at the end of Ephesians 1, where Paul says that God has "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come"?'

What do we say about all that? Now in order to concentrate our thinking, let me give you a comparatively modern statement of this whole position. It puts it like this:

The Apostle Paul teaches us that God the Father has committed all power and authority upon earth to His Son through whom He now rules all things [1 Cor. 15:24 and following]. The risen and ascended Christ has been entrusted by God the Father with the great task of transforming not only individual lives

– notice this –

but all cultural, legal, political, scientific and economic life. As the Lord of history and of time and space Jesus Christ can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organization of human society as a whole, and it therefore becomes the bounden duty and privilege and glorious task of all Christians to struggle for a condition of modern society which will give the maximum opportunity for other people as well as for themselves to live a full, free, more abundant human life, and to make sure that Christians are never controlled by an apostate and rebellious

world, but that they control that world in the strength and power of Almighty God.

Now there, I think, is as good a statement as you can get of the point of view that stresses a positive function of the state as the instrument of God. As we have seen, the Apostle tells us in Romans 13 that the powers that be are ordained of God and that it is God's ordinance that they should function, and it is argued that this is a part of that function. And there are people, as I have reminded you, who even talk about winning the whole world and all culture for Christ, and of 'Christianizing' society and culture.

Now we have already started replying to this position, and the first proposition, which I laid down in my last study, is that we must never talk about Christianizing anything. Secondly, I suggested that we must never speak of our Lord's kingdom as coming gradually except in one sense only, and that one sense is in the church. The work of salvation is a gradual one. From age to age, generation to generation, people have been won from the world and transferred, 'translated . . . into the kingdom of his dear Son' [Col. 1:13]. In that sense only the kingdom is coming and growing gradually.

But we have seen that the whole tenor of New Testament teaching is that God's kingdom is going to arrive suddenly, in a great crisis, indeed, in the second coming of our Lord. You cannot 'transform' the world and society gradually. Moreover, I suggested that we are now living in a period when society is going down, going back, because of increasing godlessness and because of the decreasing power of the Christian church.

So we have now arrived at a point that I would summarize like this: the New Testament teaches very plainly – and, indeed, in a sense, it is still more patent in the Old – that there is always a tension between the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, dominated by the god of this world, who is the devil. And we are told plainly that our Lord, far from transforming society, is waiting 'till his enemies be made his footstool' [Heb. 10:13]. He is waiting. This is something to which we look forward. Nothing but the second coming of our Lord to judge the world and to set up His

eternal kingdom will make His kingdom visible on earth and functioning 'from shore to shore', as the hymn puts it:

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

Isaac Watts

— materially, culturally, and in every other respect. 'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' [*Hab. 2:14*]. But that is yet to come.

This is a contrast that runs through the whole of Scripture. It is seen in Romans 8, where the Apostle says, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us' [verse 18]. He goes on to say that 'the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God' [verse 19]. This is something that lies in the future and will follow the great second coming of our Lord.

So we must keep clear in our minds this essential teaching of the Scripture with regard to the relationship of the unsaved world — the state and all who belong only to the kingdoms of this world — to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are now in a position to ask: What, then, are the implications of this teaching? Does this mean that as Christians we therefore have nothing to do with the world, with its politics, its culture, and all these other things that have been mentioned? Does it mean that we have no interest in all that? Do we believe that, since we have now been translated into God's kingdom, we have no concern about the kingdoms of this world to which we belong? Is the Christian to take any interest in questions like Sabbath observance or the various moral issues that are crowding life at the present time, issues like the whole question of education?

This is, of course, a most important matter and we must be clear about it. We start with laying down the general teaching of the Scripture, but we must be careful that we do not limit it. There are two lines in a hymn by Isaac Watts that put this very well:

Life in Two Kingdoms

*The whole creation is Thy charge
But saints are Thy peculiar care*

That is the difference between common grace and special grace. As we have seen, there is special grace, which only God's people can know and experience, but that is not the only grace; there is also common grace. We must never forget that though we are Christians, we have no right to cease to be concerned about men and women who are not Christians, and about the world in which we find ourselves.

That, then, brings us back to the question: How are we to understand our relationship to the state and its activity, and to the non-Christian world? I suggest that we put it like this: while we are to be concerned about these things, it is vitally important that we should always maintain the distinction between what the church does as the church, and what individual members of the church do as Christian people living in society. This is the first great principle and, again, we must be quite clear about it. In our thinking we must always draw a sharp line here because if we do not preserve this distinction, we shall be re-introducing the old muddle, which, as I have shown you, has dominated the thinking of so many people over the centuries. Both church and state are ordained by God, they both have their functions to perform and we have seen how different they are in so many ways; there they both are and we must never confuse them.

The tendency to confuse the different functions of church and state is very evident at the present time. We see it in the phenomenon known as 'the preacher politician'. Perhaps it is not quite as common as it used to be, but it was very frequent indeed in the early years of the twentieth century. I think this was the point at which Nonconformity went astray in the nineteenth century. But let me say this for Nonconformity – it was only doing what the Anglicans had already done. As long as you have bishops in the House of Lords, I say that a Nonconformist preacher is entitled to dabble in politics. If you hold that lords spiritual may take part in political procedure in the Houses of Parliament, then you must not criticize those Free Church Nonconformist ministers who spend most of their time preaching and talking about politics;

in principle, there is no difference at all. But what I am suggesting is that both are wrong – that the preacher politician is wrong and that the lords spiritual are equally wrong – and that if we are to come back to the New Testament position, we should do away with both.

These are the ways in which the confusion comes in from the side of the preacher, the minister in the church. But it is very interesting to notice how it tends to come in equally from the side of members of the church who are not in a ministerial position. This is something that I have been observing for years, and I have tried to draw attention to it, with very little success, I am afraid. It is the situation in which Christian men and women in the various professions, in the Civil Service, in business or industry, or anywhere else, form societies, Christian Unions, among themselves. And it is almost invariably true to say that instead of doing what they should be doing, and are competent to do, which is to interpret Christian teaching in terms of and through the medium of the profession to which they belong, they spend the whole of their time in evangelizing and in preaching and in trying to convert the fellow-members of their profession.

Now do not misunderstand me. It is always the business of every Christian to be concerned about the lost, particularly friends, colleagues, relatives, and so on, and we must do all we can to bring them under the sound of the gospel. But when members of these Christian societies spend their time just in evangelism, they are causing the same confusion; they are now doing the work of the church, the ministers, instead of applying Christian teaching in the various walks of life to which they belong. And I think you will agree that there is a great deal of this confusion at the present time.

What, then, can we do to straighten this out? I will approach this question by giving you the headings that describe the real function of the church, and then we will look at the real functions of individual Christian believers.

What is the business of the church? Her prime task is to preach the gospel of salvation. The business of the church, if I may so put it, is to produce Christians. She is called to do that – we are heralds of the gospel; we are sent forth to preach: 'How shall they hear without a preacher?' [*Rom. 10:14*].

But not only that; the business of the church and the

preacher is to build up the Christians who have been converted. Christians need to be built up in their most holy faith [see *Jude* 20]. They are to be 'rooted and grounded' and established and instructed, so that, as Paul says, they 'may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge' [*Eph.* 3:17-19].

But in doing that, the church must expound and make known 'all the counsel of God' [*Acts* 20:27], and so often this is where she fails, and particularly, perhaps, where the evangelical section of the church fails. Our danger is to confine our attention solely to the matter of personal salvation and only to give a certain amount of edification to those who are saved. In other sections of the church, an evangelistic message is never preached at all, but the whole time is given over to application, to the social implications of the gospel, and so on.

The fact of the matter is that both are wrong. The church is to present and explain 'the whole counsel of God'. We have no right to omit anything that is in the Bible. We must face it all, every part of the teaching. We must not say, 'I'm not interested in that, I'm concerned about the state of my soul.' To say that is to limit the Scriptures, and to become a higher critic. We must submit ourselves to the whole of the Scripture, to the entirety of its teaching, taking trouble to understand the meaning of every passage, every statement that is in it. And as we read a passage like the one before us now, we are driven of necessity to do this.

So if you should say, 'Now look here, I'm not interested in all this. My soul is in trouble, and I want a little comfort and a little devotional help', my answer is that you need to be put right with regard to the teaching of Scripture. You have no right to contract out of life, to limit the teaching of the Scripture just to suit yourself. You are saved in order that you might function under God in the way that He wants you to function, and it is your business to discover what that is. There is the comforting devotional side of our faith, we have had it in abundance in this great Epistle, but when we come to a doctrine like this, we do not skip over it and say, 'I'm not interested now, I'm only interested in my personal feelings.' Chapter 13:1-7 is written to us in exactly the same way as the first eight or indeed eleven chapters of Romans.

But how is the church to expound the whole counsel of God? Over and above the preaching of the gospel of salvation, and the edification of the saints, what is the church to do? She is to be concerned with the whole of life, as Scripture tells her. But how is she to do it? Now here is the distinction. She must do it only in terms of laying down principles. This is where the confusion comes in. The church, as I shall show you, is not to enter into politics, but she is to lay down principles that should govern politics and everything else. She is to give the definitions and lay down the great general principles that are so plainly taught here in the Scriptures.

What are these principles and definitions? Well, as we have already seen, the church defines the function of the state. And in doing this she must emphasize that the state is ordained of God. Now we must say that because people do not believe it any longer. They think the state and government are human inventions. But they are not. It is God who ordained them, and it is the business of the church to say this. She must say this as against an oligarchy, or she may have to say it as against monarchy, as in the time of the Commonwealth. She may also have to say it in terms of democracy, or any form of tyranny that may arise. She must keep on making the assertion that 'the powers that be are ordained of God'.

Then in the political realm, the biblical teaching is that the state is to maintain order; it is to make sure that there is freedom for the citizens of the state – political freedom, freedom of religion. When you read history, you will see how the state has so often failed to do that, especially when it has been dominated by the Roman Church or when the state has dominated Anglicanism – at those times there has been tyranny and oppression. And, as I pointed out to you, even the Nonconformists dominated the state when they had the opportunity, as in Massachusetts. But this is wrong, there must be liberty, and the state is here to see to that. It abuses its calling when it tyrannizes over people and it is the business of the church in her preaching and teaching to make this clear.

But then we come to what we may call the cultural aspect of our lives. We are now looking at an issue like education. Here also, it is a part of the teaching of Scripture to guide us and enlighten us. Take popular education in Britain since 1870 –

state education. The state compels our children to be educated. Now what is our attitude to this? Now again it seems to me that there are certain biblical principles that are quite plain and clear. It is never the business of the state to compel people to have Christian teaching. But it has often done that. When the state was governed by Rome, and when it governed the Anglican Church, people were compelled to receive Christian teaching. But it is not in accord with the teaching of Scripture that any pressure, whether physical or monetary, or any other kind, should ever be brought upon anybody to make them Christians. It is one of our criticisms of Islam that it has spread at the point of the sword. People were compelled to become Muslims by the physical force of armies and of spears. We condemn that, but we must condemn it equally when Christian people have tried to do the same thing

But – and this is perhaps what we need to emphasize today – the state must also not try to force people to become atheists. Can it be said honestly that the present state education in Britain does not bring a certain amount of pressure on children to take an atheistical view of life? It seems to me that it is doing so in its teaching of evolution, for instance. Not to teach Christianity does not necessarily mean that you are in a kind of neutral position. It is not neutrality; there is an anti-God teaching, much of it influenced by Freudian psychology. It is not acknowledged, but that is the effect. Little children are given the impression that there is no God, that there has never been a creation, and this view is given with authority, the authority of a teacher who can bring pressure to bear on a young mind.

So as we say, on the one hand, that we have no right to force people to become Christians, so, on the other hand, we must assert that it is never the business of the state to try to prevent people from being Christians, or to force them into the strait-jacket of some atheistical teaching concerning life. It is a part of New Testament teaching to say that it is wrong for both church and state to try to bring such pressure to bear.

There is teaching in the Scriptures with regard to the whole of the cultural life of society. So, for example, the church has something to say about art. Now I am not talking about detailed criticism, I am not saying that the church must

comment on a particular picture. My point is that the church can show that while there is a type of art that ministers to the glory of God, there is a type of art that is blasphemous and contradicts the whole notion of the glory and the lordship of God. Artists today claim that they are philosophers and present a view of life. So the church has a right to ask them what view of life they are presenting. And she can show that through art you can glorify or deny God.

It is exactly the same with music. There is a type of music that is un-Christian, even anti-Christian, that, at times, is not merely pagan, but worse, is blasphemous. And the church can point this out. Let me emphasize again that the church should not enter too much into details. That is not her function: she is not always qualified technically. She can simply point out that there is music that suggests harmony, the harmony of creation, the harmony of God, and there is music that is a riot, or a rebellion, that deliberately breaks all rules and that is just noise, a cacophony. This is a part of the exposition of this whole teaching in Romans 13.

The same applies, of course, to science. Once science becomes philosophical, she is going out of her realm, and it is the business of the church to indicate this. In the realm of morals, the function of the church is still more plain and clear. This is, perhaps, one of the most urgent matters confronting the whole world at the present time. As things are, for instance, in Britain today, it is the voice of the majority that decides questions of morals. And this is very serious; it is serious in theory and it is still more serious in practice.

The controlling idea behind most legal teaching in this country today is that when drawing up legislation, Parliament must never propose something that is contrary to the will of the people. The will of the people is supreme. In other words, moral issues are decided in terms of counting heads, in terms of the majority, the general consensus of opinion. This has been at the root of the whole modern attitude towards these horrible sexual perversions, homosexuality, and so on; it is the reasoning behind the famous Wolfenden Report.¹

¹ A report, published in 1957, giving recommendations for laws dealing with sexual behaviour.

The argument goes like this: there was once a time when people were horrified by homosexual behaviour, so laws were passed that prohibited it and made it a crime, but public opinion has changed and now that people no longer think like that we are not entitled to enforce those laws. So moral standards change from century to century according to the whim of the people.

Now the church has a good deal to say about these matters. She teaches that majority opinion is a very false way of deciding what is right and wrong, that that is not good for humanity or for the world, that it is based on a failure to understand the true nature of man and the capacity of man. In other words, in the realm of morality, certain great questions must be raised, the first of which must be: Are you happy that the will of the majority of the people should decide these profound issues?

And the church is here to show that according to biblical teaching, the general consensus of opinion is not the basis on which you arrive at moral decisions, either with regard to homosexuality, or with regard to divorce, or abortion, or birth control, or any one of these questions. You do not just count heads and say that if the majority is in favour of something that must therefore be right. It cannot be right because you will find that the majority will change its opinion, even in the same generation, and almost certainly in the next. It has always done it in the past. What is so unreliable as public opinion? And yet that is the whole basis on which people are facing these profound questions at the present time and it is a most serious matter.

So the church should instruct along these lines. Of course, the church and the preacher must be careful to preserve a balance. I have already shown you the danger of becoming unbalanced in our preaching, the danger of being all evangelistic, or all social. Both are wrong. There is a balance in Scripture. We must give these things their right and due proportion. And, indeed, in evangelizing, the preacher can often – as I have tried to do, with what success I do not know – prepare the way for the gospel message with a general introduction that deals with these very issues. I once remember putting it in terms of some of these modern buildings that

are being erected. I was not speaking as an architect – I have no technical knowledge – but I can say that there is a type of architecture that is wrong in principle. But I repeat that we must not be one-sided.

So the church keeps to the realm of principles and not detailed programmes. She does not, as it were, enter into the arena either through preaching politics, or by sitting in the House of Lords, or anywhere else. She must not do that because it brings back the old confusion and, as we have seen, it also does harm to the preaching of the gospel and to the prospects of successful evangelism.

That, of course, leads to the second heading: If that is what the church has to do, what are individual Christians to do?

In the light of what I have been saying, the function of Christians, I think, becomes quite plain. It is the business of the individual members of the church to work out these principles, in detail, for every aspect of life. Christians must not confine their Christianity to their own personal lives and piety and their own acts of worship. Christianity takes up the whole person. If men and women really believe the gospel, it must govern the whole of their outlook and thinking. It is inevitable. They have new minds, and this will show itself in all realms of life. It is therefore very important that they should discover the principles which are to guide them. They go to church, and get help and guidance on doing this, but it is for them to work it out in detail and in practice. So their object should be, as far as they can, to try to influence the powers that be in the countries to which they belong, showing what they regard as the right direction. It is their duty to do this and they must not abdicate from their responsibility.

But how do they do this? Well, it is not for me to enter into this; it is really for Christian men and women to work it out for themselves. But they can do it in these ways. They can have associations of Christians in their different callings and professions, and they must now address their minds to this question: As Christian doctors, lawyers, architects, tradesmen, trade unionists, and so on, how do we apply our Christian understanding and view of life in this realm? They should meet together to do that. If they want their friends to be converted, let them take them to a church where the gospel is

preached. As I have said, it is not their business to evangelize or to hold evangelistic services. Their task is to work out the implications of being a Christian in their spheres of work. That may be the very means of attracting others to the faith. They see Christians behaving or thinking differently and they say, 'Why are you different?' Christians then tell them and that creates an interest in the gospel. That is one course of action.

Another way is this: it would be a good thing if all these various associations could get together at times and express a common opinion with regard to certain urgent questions of the moment. Or Christian people could go further – they could enter local or national politics. I am not talking about preachers and ministers, but about church members. The idea that a Christian should never enter politics is utterly unscriptural, and it is negated, of course, by the great and outstanding men who have done this in the past and have been benefactors to the entire human race. But – and this is what they must remember – it is always their business to express their Christian understanding of these various subjects in terms of practical politics.

I therefore think that over and above individual Christians going into Parliament or on to the local council, they should come together, whatever party they belong to, and express the Christian standpoint, the Christian point of view. There are some who would go even further and say that they should form a Christian political party, as in other European countries. I am never clear about that. It is something for you to work out for yourselves.

This also applies to the idea of having Christian schools and universities so that when your children go to school or college they will not be subjected to the atheistical scientism of today, but will be presented with a balanced view. The theory of evolution will be put forward but the answers will also be given. I am not committing myself on this, but am simply saying that these are possible ways and means whereby Christians may apply biblical principles to their daily lives.

But you must always be clear about your motives and know what your object is. You are not to force Christianity upon people, but you are to show the superiority of your views to

every other view. You are to try, through the ballot box and through public speech, writing, anything you like that is legitimate, to persuade the powers that be to see things in the way you see them. That, I suggest, is the function, not of the church, but of Christian lay people with regard to these questions.

This has been tried in the past in many ways. Religious societies were formed in the 1670s and went on right to the time of Whitefield and the Wesleys. They did a great deal of good, even in that degenerate period. Christian men said that something must be done about the declension in morals, so they formed these societies. Then there was the famous Clapham Sect at the turn of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, which included people like Wilberforce, Lord Shaftesbury and others, who took up the question of slavery, and so on. All honour to them.

Now these are but ways along which this work can be done, but let me repeat that you must never lose sight of the goal, you must never be too positive. You will never create a Christian state – it cannot be done. Many people have talked and written about this. I remember, during the last war, reading a book on this subject by the late Mr T. S. Eliot, the poet – both Roman Catholic and Protestant writers have often written in the same way. But the Christian society can never happen. The lordship of Christ is only realized when you recognize Him as the Lord. You cannot recognize the lordship of Christ in practice without recognizing it in theory also.

What Christian lay men and women can do is try to get people to see the excellence of their ideas and adopt them. But people will not adopt them because they believe in God or in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if they believed that, they would become Christians. So you must not talk about 'Christianizing' but do your utmost to get these principles recognized in practice by the state or the country in which you happen to live.

But I end as I began. Do what you will, the function of the state is mainly negative. It is here to keep order and to rule, to restrain the evil effects of sin. Try to make it as positive as you can, but always recognize that, ultimately, you will never get much beyond the negative. That is surely the main purpose of

Life in Two Kingdoms

common grace. It asserts the lordship of God and of Christ. It asserts that though the world does not believe in Him, it is not to be granted licence to do whatever it likes, it is not abandoned.

This is still His world, and when He comes again he will finally destroy all who have not recognized Him and believed in Him and subjected themselves to Him in the totality of their personalities. He will destroy them 'with the breath of his mouth', and He will set up His perfect, eternal kingdom in which He will reign supreme as the Lord in the whole range and realm of life; and everything that is opposed to Him shall be committed to everlasting destruction.

Twelve

★

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

In our previous study, we arrived at the end of our consideration of this important section, the first seven verses of Romans chapter 13. Of necessity I had to deal with it sketchily, but those seemed to me to be the principles that govern this matter of the biblical teaching on the functions of the church and the state.

And now here we come to a new subsection in this chapter. It is not only a new subsection in chapter 13, it is also a new subsection in the two chapters, 12 and 13. Let me remind you again that in this whole section of the Epistle, from the beginning of the twelfth chapter right to the end, the Apostle is working out the practical application of the doctrine and the teaching that he has been laying down in the previous chapters. And in chapters 12 and 13, he is particularly concerned about the Christian in his relationship to other people, first of all to other Christians and then to people in general. As we have been seeing, in the first seven verses he has taken this up in terms of the relationship of the Christian to the state,

and we have looked at the various ramifications and implications of that.

Now the Apostle is still continuing with that same general theme, and it is very important that we should remember this because my interpretation of verses 8 to 10 is that here the Apostle is rounding off, as it were, what he has been saying from the third verse of the twelfth chapter. Verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12, you remember¹, are a general introduction to the whole section to the end of the Epistle; and Paul takes up this theme of our relationship to others in the church and in the world in the third verse of the twelfth chapter. He has worked it out in detail, as we have seen, and now here, I would suggest, he is winding it all up. These three verses are thus not only a conclusion to the immediately preceding section – verses 1 to 7 – they are a conclusion and a summary of the teaching that he has been giving us right through from chapter 12.

So the Apostle is doing this: having worked out his teaching in detail, he is saying that it is very important that we should have it all in our minds in a right perspective. He therefore puts all these details into a setting, and shows us how Christians should regard the various duties to which he has been referring.

Again, I must turn aside here to point out how typical this is of the Apostle's method. He generally does things in the same way; he does not do things in different ways in different epistles or sections of epistles. This is a sign of a methodical thinker and teacher: it is true of everyone who thinks at all in an orderly manner. There is a style in one's method of thinking as there is in one's method of speaking or writing, and it is always fascinating to me to notice the characteristic style of the great Apostle.

Now it is characteristic of the Apostle that he never fails to gather together what he has been saying. This is something I have often illustrated by comparing him to a composer like Beethoven, who, in his music, has a kind of introduction before bringing in his themes. Then he takes the individual themes and works them out, but always, at the end, gathers

¹ See *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 12: Christian Conduct*, Banner of Truth, 2000.

them up again and shows the wholeness of the work. And the great Apostle is doing that here. These verses are of interest, however, not merely as an indication of the way in which the Apostle's mind works, but also, as I hope to show you, because their teaching is of great value and importance to all of us as we face the duties of the Christian life.

Now I hope that nobody feels that in my remarks about the Apostle's method, I was denying the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. I was not. That doctrine does not teach that the inspiration of the Scripture means a passive dictation. Inspiration is a very active process; it makes use of the different natural faculties and powers of the writers whom God has chosen. That is why you can detect the style of the Apostle Paul and see the obvious contrast with the style of the Apostle John and the way they both contrast with the Apostle Peter. God uses the man and the faculties with which he has already been endowed.

Inspiration means that God controls the man and his faculties in a way that ensures that the message He wants to give is communicated to others without any error. But that is compatible with variations in style – and that is what is so wonderful about the Scriptures. You know that the truth has all come from the Spirit and that He has guided all the writers infallibly, but there is variety because He does not negative the natural faculties but enhances and controls them. It is not a mechanical dictation. If it were, then there would be none of the differences in style that we observe. And here we cannot but express our admiration at the particular type of thinking that characterizes this great Apostle Paul.

Let us, then, watch the Apostle and see what he is doing. He starts off by saying, 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.' What makes him say this, do you think, at this point? Well, of course, he is taking up something that he has just said in the previous verse – that is generally how he passes from one subsection to another. At the end of the previous subsection he throws out a hint, as it were; then he takes that hint up and continues with it. Again, think of the analogy of the musician: this is quite typical of many of them. They will have been working out a theme, and then, just as they are coming to the end of it, they throw out a new idea that will be

the main theme or *leitmotiv* of the next section, picked up and worked out. And that is exactly what the Apostle does.

Let me show you this. In verse 7, we read this: 'Render therefore to all their dues.' So the Apostle takes up that phrase and puts it here: 'Owe no man any thing.' And in the Greek, the same word is used for 'dues' in verse 7 and for 'owe' in verse 8, a noun there and a verb here, but essentially the same word. It is as if he had said in verse 7, 'Render, therefore, unto all, all that is owing.' In other words, he says: I have been talking about what you owe to others and saying that you are to render this in every way. The principle is, whatever is owing to others, let them have it.

So now in verse 8 Paul takes that up and puts in a negative form what he has previously expressed positively: 'Do not owe any man anything.' In other words, he is saying: Discharge your obligations to everybody. But the question is: What does the Apostle mean by this? There are some who have argued that this is straightforward teaching to the effect that Christians should never borrow money, that they should never have a loan, and that therefore they should, for instance, never have a mortgage. A mortgage is a loan, and if you have one on your house, then you owe that money, and the same is true of hire purchase, or buying on credit.

Now there is no need to waste any time over this. It cannot mean that because we are instructed elsewhere in Scripture to give loans. In the Old Testament as well as in the New, the question of usury is taken up, and also the question of paying interest on borrowed money, and they are not prohibited. A legal loan, correctly arranged, is all right, as long as you observe the terms of the agreement.

But what Paul does mean is that we must never be careless in this matter of borrowing and lending. And the moment you stop to think of that, you see what an important injunction this is. So often so much harm has been done to individuals, and in the life of the Christian church, through negligence in this matter. It happens not only with regard to money but also with borrowing books and other possessions. You suddenly want something, so you go to a friend or relative and ask if you may borrow it, and they give it to you. Then, very often, instead of returning it as you should, you hold on to it, and

when they ask for it, you say, 'Oh, yes, I'll let you have it back.' But then you do not.

Now I need not keep you over this. It is almost a proverb, is it not, that it is very foolish to lend to members of your own family, let alone to anybody else; it is a great source of quarrelling and unhappiness. We must all have experienced this many times. It is a very grievous fault. It is wrong not to repay as soon as possible anything you have borrowed. It is wrong to be negligent and slack about returning borrowed items or money because you will soon work yourself into a state in which you wonder why this person is bothering you so much, and making such a fuss. But you have no right to think that; it is your business to return what does not belong to you.

And the problem was obviously also present in the early church. So the Apostle takes this up and says that we must never be guilty in that respect; we must be ultra-careful. The world is not scrupulous, but let us show that we are unlike the world. And if some of us are naturally absentminded or forgetful, then we must put it down in a notebook or diary. The Apostle is concerned about such things because they upset the Christian life, and they are a very bad witness to those who are watching from the outside.

But of course, Paul's words go beyond that; it does not stop there. That is the immediate, practical point but Paul enlarges on this and puts it into a bigger setting. He says, in effect, 'Not only in this particular matter, but in all your relationships pay your dues. Do not owe any man anything - be clear about this.' He goes beyond the advice of Polonius in *Hamlet*: 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be.' He says: You have an obligation to all men; discharge it to the full.

Now I always feel that the best commentary on this is something the Apostle has already written earlier in the Epistle. To my amazement and interest I cannot find a single commentator who has seen this and referred to it, so I call your attention to it. It is what he says away back in the very first chapter, in the fourteenth verse. He is talking in verse 13 about his longing to visit the Christians at Rome, and says that he had intended to go many times but 'was let' - hindered - 'hitherto'. Then in verse 14, he says, 'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the

unwise.' And the word translated 'debtor' there is this word that we have already seen in verse 7 and now, again, in verse 8. And I think that he means exactly the same thing here as he meant there. He is saying, in effect, 'I owe this to all people, whatever their culture may chance to be.'

But what does the Apostle mean by the words, 'I am debtor'? Well, I remember, years ago, in dealing with that fourteenth verse of the first chapter, I put it like this to you. There was a famous preacher – F. W. Robertson – who lived and flourished in Brighton in the nineteenth century and he has tended to control people's exposition of Romans 1:14. In a famous sermon on this verse, he said that what the Apostle means is this: 'I have gained a great deal from Greek culture and am very indebted to it. I have enjoyed reading the Greek poets' – for he obviously had and gave proof of that in his visit to Athens – 'and I have received a great deal from Greek philosophy, art and sculpture, from culture in general. I have received much from Rome and her legal system and her outlook, and, I must say, I have also received a great deal from the Barbarians. Not in the same way, of course, but I have received much help and kindness from them. And so, having received so much, I feel I must try to pay it back and to show my gratitude.'

Now I totally reject that interpretation. It entirely misses the mark and, indeed, detracts from the glory of what the Apostle is saying. He is not just saying that he wants to repay them for what they have given him; he is saying something much more wonderful. He is saying: Since I have become a Christian, I feel have something which other people need; and I think this so strongly that I feel as if I am in debt to them.

Paul is not actually in debt in the sense that Robertson and others have misinterpreted his words. Paul means that he has this wonderful possession himself, and its effect upon him is so powerful that when he sees the need of others he feels he has no right to withhold it from them. He feels they have a claim on him, as it were, and can make a demand of him. That is why he preached. Take the context in that first chapter: 'I long to see you' – in Rome – 'that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established' [verse 11]. And then comes this great statement: 'I am debtor.' Paul is saying: I

can impart spiritual gifts. I am an apostle, I have been endowed in this way, and I feel that you have a claim on me.

Let me sum it up by using an illustration that I think I have used before, but that to me puts it so well. In the early part of the twentieth century, a man discovered from a first-century document in Egypt – one of the old papyri – that the word translated as 'power' in Romans 1:16 was also used with the meaning 'prescription'. A prescription! 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the *prescription* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

Now that, I think, helps us to interpret what Paul means here by this word 'debtor'. He is saying something like this: This is how I feel as a Christian. I am like a man who once suffered from a very painful and crippling disease, like arthritis, for example, a disease of the joints. He suffered terrible pains and in the end he could scarcely move. Of course, he went to his doctor who did his best for him, but he was no better. He was then sent to many consultants who also did their best, but with the same result. Then he tried various spas and so on, but all in vain.

At last somebody told him of a wonderful physician somewhere on the Continent who had achieved wonderful results with this very complaint. So the sick man went to see him, and after taking a look, the consultant said, 'Oh yes, I know exactly what this is and I can put you right.' So he sat down at his desk and wrote out a prescription, and he said, 'Now you take that and you will get rid of your pain. After a while, your joints will become loose and supple again and you will be perfectly well.'

The sick man did this, and, indeed, as he had been told by the physician, the pain went and soon his joints began to loosen and he has been perfectly well ever since. But this is how he feels. He walks up and down the streets of life and one afternoon he sees a poor man on the other side of the road. He does not know the man, but at a glance he can tell that that man is suffering from his own old complaint. He can tell by the way he is holding himself, by the way he is shuffling along and by the pain in his face. He knows what the man is suffering from, but he also knows something more – that man has obviously never heard of this prescription. He actually has

it in his pocket; he has carried it about ever since he recovered. He possesses a certain cure, and that poor man knows nothing at all about it.

So what does he do? Well, there is no hesitation. There is only one thing to do. He must cross the road, accost that man and say to him, 'Excuse me, sir, you don't know me and I don't know you, but I do know what's the matter with you. Tell me, have you ever heard of this?' And he must produce the prescription.

Do you know, says Paul, if he did not do that he would be a cad. He has a certain cure, which he can hand over to that man. The man has a right to it. The sick man has a claim on him and he feels he is a debtor to that man. He does not know him, he has never received anything at all from him, but he has this cure and the man needs it, so he feels this pressure and he must tell him about it.

That, surely, is the exposition, the explanation of Romans 1:14. 'I am debtor.' I feel that everybody who is suffering from this terrible disease called sin has a claim upon me. I owe it to them to tell them and tell them I must. Over and above actual debts that we incur and must pay, beyond that, there is a sense of debt to all people.

Now that, I think, is essential as an exposition here in Romans 13 because it is the only exposition that leads on to the next statement: 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.' What Paul is saying is this: discharge all your debts to the utmost of your capacity and power, but there is one respect in which you will never be able to do that fully, and this is in your love for other people. That is a perpetual obligation, a perpetual debt. So I agree with those who would suggest that this should be translated, 'Owe no man anything except to love one another.'

So the Apostle is developing his theme of what is owed to other people. He is moved by the same feeling he had away back in the first chapter, and he is saying here, 'Remember that you are a debtor to all men always in this particular respect of loving them.' And the Apostle takes up this theme, and expands it and works it out, in the way that I suggested at the beginning. So let us follow him in his arguments and see how his mind works.

Paul has been giving a whole series of teachings about what must and must not be done. Now he says, in effect, 'Remember that all these matters are a part of God's law and of God's commandment; we must realize this in all our relationships.' The full statement is this: 'Owe no man any thing, except to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' To the Apostle and his way of thinking, all these belong together, and the law is the link, the way in which he moves from one to another.

Now in the case of the state, as we have been seeing at great length, the Apostle has made a great point of God's law. He says: Here is this question of your relationship to these higher powers. Why should a Christian be subject to them? Why should a Christian observe the laws of the country to which he belongs? There is only one answer: '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.' Now there Paul has put it quite explicitly. It is a part of God's holy law to us, to all people in fact, that we should be subject to the higher powers. And Paul is here reminding us that all these other injunctions are, in exactly the same way, God's law for us, God's law for life. This is how God would have us all live in our relationships with one another.

These issues and ways of behaving, therefore, are not matters of personal opinion but of God's holy law. We have seen this in dealing with the questions of the state and of Sabbath observance, and so on. The Apostle's argument is that God has expressed His will and His commandment with regard to all these questions. So we do not talk about our own personal opinions and predilections; that is not what matters. As God has made His will explicit in His laws, so we, in our conduct and behaviour, are to be governed by these rules.

But now – and here is the fascinating thing at this point – having laid it down that these matters are a part of God's law, the Apostle then points out the vital importance of understanding clearly the nature of this law. So he now makes a most important statement. Here it is in just one sentence: 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' Then in verse 9 he expounds this: 'For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear

false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' And then comes the final statement of this principle: 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.'

Now the Apostle is concerned to give us a true understanding of the nature of God's law. And in doing this he is simply summarizing what our blessed Lord and Saviour Himself did in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5:17 through to the end of the chapter. The Apostle does it by showing the relationship between law and love. We tend to put these up as opposites. It is one of the great troubles of life today that people do not like law and contrast it with love, and by love they mean lawlessness, licence, lust; that is the whole confusion in modern thinking. But here the Apostle shows us the intimate relationship between the two, and if people have not grasped this, they have completely misunderstood the whole nature and purpose of the law.

So negatively, we can put it like this: we are always to be concerned, not merely with the letter of the law, but with the spirit of the law. 'Owe no man any thing,' says Paul, with reference to the details, and then he continues, 'but to love one another.' But why does he talk about love? Well, he says, 'he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' This is a matter of law; yes, but the law has been fully carried out by those who love. So we must never think only of the letter of the law, there is something in it infinitely more important, and that is the spirit.

Paul was very found of saying this. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, he says, 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' Here is the great contrast. You will find it in the Epistle to the Galatians and in other places. He says, in effect, 'I have been giving you all these details, but God forbid that you should just stop at the letter of what I have been saying. It is the spirit that matters.' So he brings in the whole element of love.

Or we can put it like this: we must always remember that the law is not meant to be mechanical, but to be *living*. That is another most important distinction. We are not meant to keep the law mechanically – one, two, three, tick them off. That is to miss the whole point. It is a living matter, a life matter, not

a matter of mere rules and regulations. We are meant to keep the law intelligently.

We have already seen a reference to intelligence¹. In the first verse of chapter 12 Paul writes, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable service*' – that is, intelligent, spiritual, thoughtful, not mechanical. And here Paul is repeating that distinction.

Then, secondly, we must never think of the law as a mere collection of a number of separate details. We must always bear in mind the wholeness, the completeness, the personal element in it all. The law is not like a man just sitting down, as it were, and saying, 'Tell them not to do this or that.' It is not disparate, disconnected items bundled together. No, no; there is a wholeness and a completeness, and each individual injunction is a part, and an inevitable part, of the greater whole.

And, lastly, we must never conceive of the law and its function in a negative, but always in a positive manner. The law is not just something that tells us what not to do. It does tell us that, but its object in so doing is positive, it is to tell us what we should do. The negative always leads to a positive. We are not to be a mere collection of negations or vetoes or prohibitions or restraints, but we are to be positive.

These, then, are the negatives; so I put it positively like this: we are always to realize that all the particular details of the law, which Paul has been expounding in these two chapters, are but particular expressions of a general attitude to our neighbour, which is to be one of love. Let me show you the perfection of the Apostle's thinking. I remember taking a good deal of time, when we were studying chapter 12, in expounding to you verses 9 and 10: 'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.' I said that those are the controlling principles of all the details that follow. And here, having given us all the details, Paul comes back to these principles. So we must remember that these details are but

¹ See *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 12: Christian Conduct*, Banner of Truth.

expressions of the total attitude of love that, as Christians, we must always have towards all other people.

But people get into trouble even at this point. We are always ready to go off at tangents, are we not? And one of these is that people tend to say, 'Very well, then, as long as we love, we need not bother about these details. Paul says, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law . . . Love is the fulfilling of the law." So I don't see why you have been spending all this time on these details. As long as we love, all is well.' That is exactly what people are trying to say at the present time, is it not? They do not like the details of the law. 'We believe in love,' they say. 'We don't want all this instruction.' So they put up love against the detailed instruction of the law.

But that argument is proved wrong by the fact that the Apostle takes the trouble to give us all the details, as well as the general statement about love. He is not saying here that love has replaced the detailed injunctions of the law. No, he is saying that we must never imagine that to be mechanically right at certain points puts us right as a whole. He is arguing against the fatal tendency to say that as long as I do not do this and that, then I am perfect. Paul's whole point is that you can be negatively right and almost perfect, and yet be all wrong, because, finally, the law is completely positive.

To put it another way, take the argument of James about 'faith and works'. James sums it up like this: 'Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead' [*James* 2:17]. Some people, says James, say, 'Ah, but look at my faith: I have faith, I don't worry about these details.' Others go to the opposite extreme; they are always showing you their works, but have no faith. And James, like Paul, says that both are wrong. Faith and works are indissolubly linked together.

And it is equally true to say that about love and law. As faith without works is dead, so love that does not manifest itself in a detailed observation and carrying out of the law is nothing but sheer sentimentality and ceases to be true love. Love is orderly, love is lawful, love is the fulfilling of the law.

We need the detailed injunctions. They are a check and a help. It is a part of God's love to tell us in detail what to do. That is His way of teaching us and training us, as we do with our children. We have all of us discovered that it is not enough

to tell the little child, 'Now go and be a good boy!' If you just leave it at that, then you will provoke disaster. You must tell him in detail what he must not do; you must let him know what a good boy is. And that is exactly what God does with us in the law. It is not mechanical or legalistic; it is a manifestation of love. Love teaches the child; love gives us the details of the law. We must never divorce these things; the whole and the parts are one in an organic, not a mechanical, sense.

Now you see the importance of all this. It was just at this point that the Pharisees had gone so hopelessly astray. They were the people who were interested in law, they were the teachers of the law, they were always talking about it and they were proud of it. They gloried in the fact that they, as a people and as a nation, were the only ones who had received God's law. But they had completely misunderstood the whole point of the law. How often did our Lord have to tell them this. He said, 'Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith' [Matt. 23:23]. Their whole tragedy was that they had reduced God's holy law, which is a law of love, to a number of legalisms. They had categorized them and had given them numbers; they were arguing about them and were experts on details and minutiae, but they were missing the whole point. The whole purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was to remind them of that.

And in all our Lord's disputes with the Pharisees and scribes and doctors of the law, He continued to make exactly that one point, that they had never understood that the real function of the law was not to produce mere negative moralists, but to produce positive personalities, filled with the love of God, who would show this love in their daily lives. And it was because of the Pharisees' misunderstanding of the law that they finally put our Lord to death. They said He was a blasphemer entirely as a result of their failure to see this spiritual, loving element in the law.

But as it was true then, so it is true today, and this is the final condemnation that we as Christians should always bring against moralists, modern humanists and others. The final failure of moralists is that they are always negative; they are never positive; they do not do certain things. They may live

good lives, they may be paragons of all the virtues, but they are hard, cold and intellectual, not the sort of people you go to if you are in trouble. Moralists are self-contained; they cannot help anybody else; they are a mere collection of vetoes and restraints and prohibitions. The poor sinner never goes near them. The sinners never 'drew nigh unto' the Pharisees and scribes, but we read about our blessed Lord, 'Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him' [Luke 15:1]. The people who had fallen and failed in life, they felt drawn to Him. They felt He had something to give, that He, in this sense, was a 'debtor' to them.

And, of course, morality, by its very nature, is more concerned with actions than with persons, and that is why morality, in a sense, always insults us. It is an insult to the human personality because it is more interested in what I do than in what I am. Moral teaching never produces full, rounded, positive, loving personalities; it cannot do it. And that is why we should always be ready to counter mere moral teaching when it offers itself as a substitute for the Christian faith.

But the glory of the gospel is that it is interested in me as a person more than in my actions; and it is not content that I should be merely mechanically or morally and ethically correct. It wants to bring me to this place where I have a full personality, manifesting something of the love of God and of Christ in my personal life.

All this is contained in Paul's words, 'Owe no man any thing, except to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law' – this wonderful synthesis of everything that is true of God in all His ways and in all His dealings with us.

Thirteen

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Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

I have been showing you that though the Pharisees were teachers of the law and proud of themselves as experts on the law, their real trouble was that they had completely misunderstood the law. It had been the trouble with Paul himself, as he tells us in various autobiographical passages. So we must be clear of this error of the Pharisees, and not only of the Pharisees, but of all moralists, who, like the Pharisees, tend to be more interested in the letter than in the spirit and, indeed, fail to realize that without the spirit you cannot even carry out the letter. Letter and spirit are intimately bound together and must never be separated.

James says that 'faith without works is dead' [James 2:20], so we can say that love without the manifestation of love is equally dead. Love is not a mere sentiment. It is the most practical and most active thing in the world. And if love is not active, then it is not love; there is something wrong somewhere in our understanding of it. We have, however, seen that this does not mean that the Christian preacher has nothing to do but to talk about love. Like the Apostle Paul, we must

[177]

indicate the character of the commandments and show how love works itself out in detail. But having said that, we must now concentrate on the fact that the Apostle, in that last statement in the eighth verse, is telling us that when we truly love our neighbour, we are of necessity fulfilling the law and carrying out its real intent and object.

So we turn to the ninth verse, where the Apostle expounds and explains that statement in verse 8. Verse 9 says: 'For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

Now we need not stay with the mechanics, but you notice that the order in which the Apostle puts these commandments differs from that in Exodus. This is another instance of the Apostle's use of the Septuagint translation – a point of interest as far as it goes. It does not carry any doctrinal significance, of course, but, as we have seen in most of Paul's quotations, that is what he generally does. And when he says here, 'and if there be any other commandment', he does not mean that he has forgotten for the time being what the other ones are! He is saying: I am only giving you examples and illustrations. Every commandment comes under this general heading. All the commandments are briefly comprehended or summarized in this saying, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

The words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', are a direct quotation from Leviticus 19:18. Paul is not, of course, the first to quote these words. Our blessed Lord and Saviour did exactly the same thing when the rich young ruler came to Him. There are different accounts of this incident. In Matthew 19, we read, 'One came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' [verses 16–19].

On another occasion, when a clever young lawyer came to Him and asked, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' our Lord said to him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' That is found in Mark 12:28, 30-31, and in the corresponding passage in Luke 10:25-27.

Furthermore, this was a part of Paul's whole argumentation with the Jews; that is why I am troubling to give you all these details. He says it again in Galatians 5:14: 'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' And James gives exactly the same quotation in the second chapter of his letter: 'If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well' [*James 2:8*].

Here, then, is a most important matter. Of course, it must be important, in and of itself, because it is the summary of the law as given by our Lord. But it is also of exceptional importance because of the way in which the Apostle uses this quotation in this thirteenth chapter of Romans where it is so easily and so frequently misunderstood. People have always blundered over it, beginning with the Pharisees and with others in the early church, then throughout the centuries, and perhaps more than ever at the present time. We are living in an age when, because of the obsession with human relationships rather than with the relationship to God, these words are not only misunderstood, but the whole statement is reversed. This is the modern misunderstanding of the Christian faith and the Christian message.

Let me show you what I mean. There are some statements that are being made frequently at the present time – I came across one again only last week. You can scarcely read a religious journal nowadays but that you will find this kind of statement in it somewhere or other. I was reading of a church dignitary giving an address, and he put it like this: 'Of course, Martin Luther was engaged in the search for the gracious God.' That was the problem, he said, in the sixteenth century. Because of the wrong teaching of Roman Catholicism, and because Luther had come under the conviction of sin and the terror of law – this frightening word 'the righteousness of God'

– poor Luther's search was to find 'the gracious God'. And at last he found Him, and got his great experience and everything was changed.

'But', this man goes on to say, 'that is no longer the quest. The search now is the search for the gracious neighbour.'

I remember once reading of a religious congress that was being held in the city of Glasgow, and as is customary on such occasions in these degenerate days, they had invited the then Lord Provost of Glasgow to address the meeting – not because he was a Christian, but because of his civic position. And I remember very well what he said. He told the assembly that he was greatly honoured to be asked to address such an august gathering, and said that he himself was just a plain, simple, ordinary man of the world who did not understand theology and was not very interested in it. He said that just like the average man today, what he wanted to know was this: How can I love my neighbour?

You see the contrast that people make? 'I don't want your theology,' they say. 'I don't want your doctrine. Don't understand it. Not interested in it. I'm a practical man of affairs, and what I'm concerned about is: How can I love my neighbour?'

Now there is nothing new about this attitude. In the nineteenth century the poet Leigh Hunt expressed it in his famous poem, *Abou Ben Adhem*. This man, Abou Ben Adhem, has a dream one night in which he sees a vision of an angel writing something in a book. Then the poem goes on to say:

*And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?' – the vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of those that love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so.'
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'
The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.*

Leigh Hunt

This man asks for his name to be put down as 'one that loves his fellow men', and, though the angel has told him that his name is not among the names of those who love God, once he has said that he loves his fellow-men, he is at the top of the list. Now that is typical of this teaching; the one thing that matters is that you love your fellow-men. You start with that. That puts everything right.

I read of somebody having an interview with a famous American minister, Dr Fosdick, and he was saying exactly the same thing – 'Wherever you find love, you find God.' We must not take the old views and the old theological statements about God. No, no; we have outgrown all that. Another man, a teacher of theology, actually wrote that he had found more of the love of God in the brothels and the bar-parlours of Algeria than he had ever found in a church. That is the kind of thing to which I am referring. People may say they are atheists, but if they are manifesting love, that is God. 'God is love,' they say, and they mean, 'Love is God.' You see, therefore, the importance of our study of these verses.

In other words, the contention that confronts us is that all we must do is love our fellow-men and then we are loving God, 'whatever God may be'. We must not start with our theology and doctrine and definitions – that is all unnecessary. Indeed, there can be a 'religionless Christianity'. It is said that we do not need the church at all, but need only go out into the world knowing that wherever we find love, there we find God.

Our whole interpretation of this passage in Romans 13 is dependent upon our attitude to this teaching. So what do we say in answer to it? There are many comments we can make, and the first is that it is a complete reversal of the order of things in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are customarily divided into two 'tables' – the first table [the first four commandments, which deal with our relationship with God], and the second table [commandments five to ten, which deal with our relationship with other people] – and if you say that nothing matters but the commandments, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'; 'Thou shalt not steal', and so on, which are summed up in the command, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', then you are excluding the first table of the Ten Commandments.

The second comment is equally obvious: this view completely reverses the order in which the Lord Jesus Christ placed these commands. There are people today who do not refer to Him as 'the Lord Jesus Christ' but as 'Jesus', and say that He is the greatest religious teacher of all times, an inspired man. If you are dealing with such a person, you can say, 'Well, if your authority is the teaching of Jesus, you should know that you are actually reversing what He said. He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." And then comes the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" [Mark 12:30-31].'

But still more seriously, do you not see that to put anything before God is an insult to the glorious God? Nothing and no one must be put before Him. Human beings? Of course not! Even the Son bows before Him and says, 'Holy Father'. The glory of God! Any teaching that tries to dismiss this and says, 'It is your neighbour who is of paramount concern', is guilty of blasphemy against the eternal and all-glorious God.

But, in the fourth place, this teaching breaks down and can be shown to be completely wrong because it takes such a false view of the self. Scripture says that you shall love your neighbour *as* you love yourself. Now if you take that out of its context and put it first, or leave the first commandment out altogether, it shows a woeful and lamentable ignorance of the truth concerning men and women as the result of the Fall.

What has the Fall done to humanity? What has it done to the 'self'? It has made us all self-centred and selfish. Indeed, this is an essential part of preaching; it is the whole message of the Bible. The terrible thing that sin has done to us is to turn us in upon ourselves, and thereby spoil our view of everything. That is why there are wars. From whence come wars and fightings among you?' asks James [James 4:1], and he answers, 'Even of your lusts that war in your members.'

What is the explanation of all the great trouble in the world today? Lust, immorality, vice, theft, robbery, these problems that are filling our newspapers and that are mounting so rapidly that the politicians are really at their wits' end trying to discover what can be done about them, and on top of that, all the international tension – what is the cause of all these things?

The answer is self, selfishness, self-centredness. So if you tell the modern man or woman, 'You must love your neighbour as yourself', you are telling them to do something that they cannot do. Their selfishness makes them incapable of it.

So if you only tell a man to love his neighbour as he loves himself, he will understand the exact opposite of the Apostle's words here, and our Lord's words in the passages that I have already quoted. He will think you are telling him to be selfish and to get all he can for himself; and so, being like that, he cannot be fair to his neighbour, indeed, he is inciting his neighbour to behave in the same way. So, of necessity, you have quarrels and wars and all these things. That is our fourth answer to this popular modern teaching.

The fifth answer, it seems to me, is very interesting and important. They are all interesting, of course, but this one merits, I think, more attention than it has often received. This modern teaching about loving your neighbour as yourself completely fails to understand the meaning of the word 'love'. One of the tragic features of life today is the debasing of 'love' into 'lust'. This is a contradiction of true love and shows a woeful ignorance of the way in which the Bible deals with the word 'love'.

Our one word 'love' is used to translate three different Greek words, and it is interesting to trace the use of these three words. The first, *eros*, refers to the flesh, to fleshly desire, sexual love. It is erotic love.

The second word is *phileo*. Here is a word that stands for natural human friendship and affection, the love of members of a family for one another.

The third word is the word *agape*. This is the great word of the New Testament, and it is the word used here in Romans 13. At the end of his commentary on the *Gospel of John* [published by the Banner of Truth Trust], William Hendriksen has a most interesting note on this very subject. He goes into it with his customary thoroughness and tells you about the argument that has gone on throughout the centuries as to whether or not the two words *phileo* and *agape* mean the same thing. He quotes the authorities on the various sides and comes to the conclusion - with which I am in entire agreement - that the words have different meanings.

Hendrikson deals with this subject as part of his commentary on the last chapter of John's Gospel, where we read of our Lord's words to Peter during one of His post-resurrection appearances. It is the occasion when, after the disciples had been out fishing all night, our Lord made Himself known and they ate breakfast together. Then we read, 'So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee' [verse 15]. In this verse, the word 'love' occurs twice, but in the first instance, it is the Greek word *agape* that is used, and in the second, *phileo*. It is as if our Lord said to Peter, 'Do you really love me in a profound sense more than these others?' And Peter replied, 'Lord, you know that I am fond of you.'

The account continues, 'He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' – again that word *agape* – 'He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee' – that I am fond of thee – 'He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?'

Yes, but this time our Lord used the word that Peter had used – *phileo*. He came down to the level of Peter. And we are told, 'Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'

And I agree entirely that Peter was upset because our Lord had changed the word and had come down to Peter's level, thereby indicating that He accepted that Peter's love really was not what it should be. Peter had claimed a great deal; he had said, in effect, 'Though all the others deny thee, I never will; my love is greater.' But through his denial at the trial, he had given proof that his love was not greater.

Now this is all so interesting. But Hendriksen, even in his exhaustive treatment of this subject, does not point out something that I would have thought was a powerful argument with regard to this matter, and it is an argument that has been pointed out by others. It is of considerable significance that *agape* was never used in classical Greek, it was never used by Greek philosophers and poets, though they wrote a lot about love, and it was used very rarely in the Septuagint. Yet in the

New Testament and in early Christian writings it is the habitual word. Paul, for instance, only uses *phileo* twice, but he has *agape* thirty times.

And there is another piece of evidence that Hendriksen fails to adduce, but that, to me, is crucial in this whole argument about the meaning of *agape*. Why did the Apostle Paul ever write the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians – that great chapter on love? Why did he enter into all these definitions, saying, 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own', and so on? Why was all this necessary? Why did he not just talk about love?

The answer is quite simple. Here was something new, about which, for all their culture, their philosophy and their wonderful ideas, the Greeks knew nothing. It was a new word, in a sense, but the idea was newer still. This was a type of love that men and women by nature knew nothing about, not even in that period of the flowering of Greek culture and civilization. But it is the great word of Christian teaching and it is the great word of the Christian life.

So when people today start with 'loving thy neighbour as thyself', taking it out of the context of the love of God, they are simply displaying their ignorance of the newness of this whole conception of love as it is to be found, not only in this little passage, but also in the whole of New Testament teaching.

The sixth argument, an argument that I have, in a sense, already suggested, is that it asks men and women to do something that it is quite impossible for them to do by nature because of the effects of sin and the Fall. It expects the natural person to do something that only a Christian can do, and that is rank heresy, the heresy of Pelagianism. We must never allow such an error.

There, then, are my six reasons for rejecting this modern specious teaching about 'seeking for the gracious neighbour', and so on, the view that tells us not to be interested in theology and doctrine and definitions. This enables me to come to the positive statement. There is only one way whereby men and women can ever love their neighbours as themselves. And what is that? Well, obviously, first, you need a

right view of yourself; you must be clear about how to love yourself. What is this self? How do you discover the truth about yourself? And here you come across the profundity, from the psychological standpoint alone, of the biblical teaching.

Throughout the Bible, the teaching is that men and women cannot know themselves until they stand in the presence of God. The world is as it is because of man's wrong view of himself. Why is this? Because of the original Fall, the original rebellion against God. The subtlety of the devil! He put it in terms of self: Has God said? Cannot you see that God is against you? He is not allowing you to use the great qualities and propensities that are in you. Don't listen to him. You eat of that fruit, then you will be as God!

A wrong view of self! It was accepted by Eve and by Adam, hence the fall and hence all our trouble.

So this is basic. You will never have a true understanding of yourself until you see yourself under God and in the light of God. There, and there alone, you get to know the truth about yourself. There have been many other views of man, and we could take them up one by one and show how false they are; we could show how they nearly all cancel one another out. But we need not waste time. The world itself is proving that each one is false – whether it be the Marxist view, or the materialistic view, or humanist, scientific or biological views and ideas. They are all proved to be wrong in practice.

That is why, in the Ten Commandments, the first table deals with man in his relationship to God, and the second table with man in his relationship to man. That is why our Lord, in summarizing the law, said, 'This is the first and great commandment' – total love to God – and then added, 'The second is like unto it' – it follows from it – 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' [*Matt.* 22:38–39]. So the only way whereby you can ever love your neighbour is to know the truth about yourself.

Now the law – and this is the very thing the Apostle is saying – should give us this knowledge of ourselves. That is why it was given. As Paul puts it to the Galatians, 'The law was our schoolmaster' [*Gal.* 3:24]. What for? To teach us how to love our neighbour? No! 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ', which means, to show us our need of

Christ, to show us our failure, our total inability, to make us see that so plainly that we give up even trying and look to Christ. The law was never meant to save us, it could not do it because, as Paul says, there is that which the law 'could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh' [*Rom.* 8:3].

It is a total misunderstanding of the law, a misunderstanding of which not only the Pharisees but their modern representatives are guilty, to think that all that is needed is to tell men and women, 'Love your neighbour', and then all will be well. That is the one thing that they cannot do, and the law, which is quoted as if in support, is the very thing that was given to show its impossibility, to shut them in, in complete failure, to aggravate their situation, as the Apostle put it earlier in Romans: 'The law entered, that the offence might abound' [*Rom.* 5:20]. It never had a saving purpose. It was meant to pinpoint the offence, to bring it out. We find all that in Romans 7, as well as in chapter 5.

Because people twisted and perverted it, the law has not succeeded in showing us our need of God, but the gospel has come in, and the gospel does this still more effectively. Mark you – and this is vital – the first part of the preaching of the gospel is to preach the law. That is inevitable, is it not? Here is Christ! Christ has come. But why has He come? The gospel says that God sent His Son into the world, but why? You are bound to ask those questions. It is no use saying to people, 'Come to the Saviour, all is well. Don't bother about theology. Don't bother about repentance.' But why should anybody come to the Saviour?

Now the moment you ask those questions, you are bringing in the law. As the law was the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, so He, in turn, has come to do what the law could not do for us, because of our inability to carry it out. So if you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He had to die upon the cross, that He bore our sins, you are saying that men and women are sinners. There is no one who reveals our sin to us more than the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that he had to come into the world and live and die and rise again is the greatest conceivable manifestation of our sin and guilt.

Once we understand the law, it does reveal our sin to us, as Paul came to understand, by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Life in Two Kingdoms

Paul had thought he was well, that he was complete, perfect 'without the law'. But, he says, the moment he truly understood the law, 'Sin revived, and I died' [Rom. 7:9]. But the cross of Christ is the greatest exposure of man's sin and guilt. It is only as you 'survey' the cross that you begin to know yourself.

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the prince of glory died*

- what happens to you? -

*My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*
Isaac Watts

And pour contempt on all your foolish boasting and on everything you have ever thought about yourself. You are humbled to the dust:

My sinful self my only shame.
E. C. Clephane

The cross reveals this in a way that nothing else does.

But not only that; our Lord, all that He did and all that happened to Him, not only establishes our sin and our guilt, but at the same time establishes our utter deadness, our spiritual deadness. 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins' [Eph. 2:1]. And not only that; He establishes above everything else our complete helplessness. The law had been given, but nobody could keep it; teachers have taught, and so have philosophers and others, but they have not helped at all. It is just as if they had never lived. Why? Because man is completely helpless.

So it comes to this: the gospel of Jesus Christ not only establishes my guilt, but establishes that I am so rotten by nature that I must be born again. It tells me that I cannot possibly love my neighbour because my nature is wrong. It is a nature that hates; it is a nature that loves self. It is all wrong! So there is no purpose in just starting with me and my neighbour and saying, 'I'm not interested in doctrine. Don't be

concerned about finding God, go and find your neighbour.' I am so rotten, and so is my neighbour, that we can never love one another. The whole coming of Christ and all He did and taught emphasizes the fact that we need to be made new creatures.

Now it is vitally important to understand this because the gospel now goes on to tell us that, in the love and the grace of God to us, our rebirth becomes possible. But the gospel always emphasizes that we are saved by the grace of God alone. 'By grace are ye saved through faith' – nothing in ourselves; it is all given; it is all received – 'and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast' [*Eph.* 2:8-9]. There is no room for boasting. We have seen the Apostle saying that many times; he says it throughout all his epistles. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' [*Gal.* 6:14]. 'We are his workmanship' [*Eph.* 2:10] – entirely, from beginning to end.

But thank God that this is a teaching that tells us that we can be born again, that we can receive a new nature, that we can become 'new creatures', that we can have a new mind and a new outlook on everything. In his letter to the Corinthians, when dealing with this very point about love of the neighbour, Paul says, 'Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' [*2 Cor.* 5:16-17]. In the past, Paul's one canon of judgment had been this: Is a man a Jew or is he a Gentile? If he was a Jew he was all right; if he was a Gentile he was a dog. The Greeks had a similar classification – the Greeks and the barbarians, the wise and the unwise – it was always division, the opposite of love. But now, because he has this entirely new outlook, Paul sees men and women in a new way.

I repeat that without this new nature of love, people will never be able to love their neighbour. They will never see other people truly, but will see them in terms of an Iron Curtain, or colour, or a thousand and one other divisions. Here is the only way to love – become new creatures, new creations, born again with new hearts, new natures, new outlooks, new everything!

And not only that, we have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling

Life in Two Kingdoms

within us, and the Spirit produces fruit. We are devoid of love, 'hateful, and hating one another,' says Paul to Titus [*Titus* 3:3]. I need love, where can I get it? Oh, the Spirit alone can give it me! 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance' [*Gal.* 5:22–23] – the very things we need in our dealings with one another.

So that is the positive statement. I can love my neighbour as myself when I am 'born of the Spirit', 'born again', 'born from above', when 'the mind of Christ' is in me, and the fruit of the Spirit is manifest in my total relationships. I can do it then – and then alone. But that is only the beginning; I have further reasons to give you as we work this out together in the next study.

Fourteen

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Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

We are dealing with the statement in the ninth verse where the Apostle says that all the commandments are briefly comprehended in the saying, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' We have seen that this is a quotation from Leviticus, and that it was quoted more than once by our blessed Lord and Saviour, and was also quoted by James. We have also seen that it is a most important statement at this present time.

Let me explain what I mean. Fundamentally, of course, the Scriptures are always of exactly the same importance. It is a part of our preaching of the Bible to go on repeating that fact, unlike those who do not regard it as the inspired and infallible Word of God, and who therefore tend to say that its message changes from age to age and generation to generation. They say that it must, indeed, change according to scientific discovery and the advance of knowledge, and so on, while we say that the truth, being God's truth, once and for ever given, is always the same and speaks to each generation of men and women in exactly the same way. That is our fundamental proposition. But while we assert that, we must also be equally careful to

point out that it is the business of the preacher and the teacher to show the particular relevance of this one unchanging message to each particular age and generation.

As you look at the long history of the church, you will find that in different eras particular aspects of the teaching of this one unchangeable and unchanging truth have had an unusual and exceptional significance. The obvious example, of course, is the doctrine of justification by faith at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Equally, in the eighteenth century, the doctrine of regeneration was the truth that was especially emphasized among the Methodists.

This, then, is an important principle, and it is a principle that the Apostle lays down once and for ever in 1 Corinthians 9, where he says that when he speaks to a Jew, he speaks to him as a Jew; when he speaks to a Gentile, he speaks to him as a Gentile; to a man under the law, as 'under the law'; to a man who does not have the law, as not under the [verses 20-21]. The message is the same, but he points it out and applies it and shows its relevance in differing ways according to the differing circumstances. Not to do this is to make a very grievous mistake. It is to fail as preachers and teachers, or as people talking to others about the Christian faith. This is a part of evangelism. I have known men who, having read the Puritans, have preached in this century exactly as if they belonged to the seventeenth century, even in manner and expression. And there is only one thing to say about that kind of thing – it is pathetic. It is not only failure, it is pathetic failure.

No, no; we are to show how certain aspects of truth have an unusual importance at given points in the history of humanity; and so we now return to the fact that the matter that we are now dealing with is of particular relevance at the present time.

Here is a teaching about which we really must be clear. As we have seen, people have misunderstood the words that we are studying as meaning that if you love your neighbour you need not worry about your love for God because the way to love God is to love your neighbour. Now this is a very specious and subtle error, so we have started giving detailed answers to it. We have shown that this teaching reverses what the law itself says, and that it also reverses our Lord's own teaching. Not only that, we showed that it misses the real greatness of

the content of the word 'love' in the New Testament. Furthermore, we argued that the teaching is heretical because the natural man cannot love his neighbour.

Then, positively, we saw that love of our neighbour begins by seeing ourselves as we really are, as helpless sinners before God. And we saw that God Himself gives us a new nature: 'all things are become new' [2 Cor. 5:17]. So we not only have a true view of ourselves, we also have a true view of other people. We no longer think of people as Jews or Gentiles, British or non-British, on one side or the other of the Iron Curtain: those are not the categories in which we think. The natural man or woman thinks in those terms, they cannot think in any other way, that is their whole trouble, that is why their world is as it is. But that does not apply to us.

And so we resume our study of this most important matter with the question: How, then, do we think? Well, it is the mark of Christian men and women that they now view all people as souls in the sight of God. Our Lord goes as far as to say that this applies even to the most delicate and tender of human relationships. He says that He will divide a father from a son, a mother from her daughter and a mother-in-law from her daughter-in-law. The sword that He has brought does divide in that way, and every Christian knows how true this is. It does not mean that you have finished with natural human relationships, but it does mean that you are not controlled by them, that you see even your relatives as souls rather than as your relatives.

This is the essence of the new understanding that is given to the Christian. Here is a way of thinking that transcends all natural thinking, and, as far as the Christian is concerned, abolishes all human distinctions. Colossians 3:11 reads: 'There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free.' That is done away with; that is natural thinking, not Christian thinking. In other words, Christians not only see themselves differently, they see their neighbours differently, and the whole point is that the two new ways of thinking are both absolutely essential before any one can love his neighbour as himself.

In practice, it works like this, does it not? You have seen yourself to be nothing, and if you are nothing, then you are not

proud any longer; you have nothing to boast of, nothing at all. And now you see your neighbour not only as a soul, but also as a sinner, as one who is exactly as you were, who is under condemnation, who is hell-bound and absolutely helpless. So you feel no superiority over him.

Now if you judge yourself and others in terms of human ability or social position or bank balance, then there will be superiority and inferiority because we are all different; but here there is no difference. We could not be worse than we are, we could not be more lost; but neither could they. 'There is none righteous, no, not one' [Rom. 3:10]. All that is found in Romans chapter 3, but it runs through the Epistle and it is the argument that is involved here. You see your neighbour exactly as you see yourself; you see your neighbour and yourself as completely hopeless, entirely dependent upon the grace and the mercy of God. So we now begin to feel sorry for this neighbour.

We can perhaps put it like this: with this insight you see people as souls who are victims and dupes of the devil. So when they do things that you dislike and that are offensive and hurtful to you, you do not so much see what they are doing, nor the fact that it is they who are doing it, as the devil behind them, making them do this sort of thing, and you are sorry for these poor people who have lost their reason and are behaving in an irrational manner. You do not get annoyed with a man who is beside himself, who has lost control, who is suffering from a mental illness, you are sorry for him because you know he cannot help it.

So as you look at your neighbours you have a great sorrow in your heart for these people and sympathy for them. There is a desire within you to help them, to help them to be delivered, even as you have been delivered yourself. This is the only way in which you can ever come to love your neighbour as yourself. It is completely impossible in any other way. That sounds a very strong statement, but I am making it not only because the Bible teaches it everywhere, but because human life proves the Bible to be true; and it is as true today as it has ever been.

Then, of course, if these people are converted and become Christians, we have still greater reasons for loving them as ourselves. We are now sharers of the same nature, members of

the same family; we are now bound together by bands and cords that are greater than anything that can ever be known on the human level. We have the same interests, we are facing the same enemy, we have the same problems and the same glorious hope ahead of us, facing us all. We are born of the same Spirit, we have the same Father, and the same Saviour, everything is the same. We share everything together. Everything conspires to make us one. So naturally we love our neighbours as ourselves. That is the way in which this statement here must be interpreted.

But then, on top of all this, there are various appeals in the Scriptures to help us to see this still more clearly. One of the most glorious of all is the great statement in the second chapter of Philippians: 'Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others' [verses 3-4]. And we have already had the same teaching in Romans chapter 12. But how can we do this? And why should we do it?

Here is the answer: 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' [*Phil.* 2:5]. Then the Apostle reminds us of what our Lord has done for us; how He did not hold on to His position and prerogatives but laid them aside, and deliberately humbled Himself. Do the same, says Paul: 'Let this mind be in you.' It is in you - 'We have the mind of Christ' [*1 Cor.* 2:16]. Yes, but practise it, let it operate within you, let it govern your thinking. We can sum it all up, as we found in the last lecture, in words from 1 John: 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another' [*1 John* 4:11] - and it is irrefutable logic. If you now anything about the love of God, that becomes inevitable.

That, then, is our reply to this modern specious teaching that says, 'Don't worry about God, start with your neighbour.' Oh, what a lie it is! What a denial of the gospel! In just the same way the Pharisees denied the gospel. If you say that men and women as they are by nature can love their neighbours and that, therefore, all they have to do is to help their neighbours, then you are saying that there was never any need for the Son of God to come into this world, that the cross was completely unnecessary, and so is regeneration.

This kind of teaching takes many forms. I remember before

the last world war, when there was fighting between Japan and China, a man who was a typical exponent of this teaching was flourishing here in London. He put forward the suggestion that he and others would go and 'stand between the two armies', and thereby put an end to the war. Fortunately they did not do that, but even if they had, they would not have succeeded. There is no greater denial of the gospel than this. It is much more serious than drunkenness or drug-taking, or any other particular sin. Yet it is being preached as the gospel, and has a great deal of popularity.

This teaching is not only completely wrong, it does not work. It is, I would remind you again, nothing but talk, and sentimental talk, which is not realistic because it does not face the facts. It is put forward by people who spend their time sitting in studies in universities, perhaps passing through a certain stage of their careers, detached from life, knowing nothing of the practicalities of life. It all sounds very wonderful, but the moment you come down into life, and mix with men and women, you find it is a sheer impossibility.

And what is still more extraordinary is the fact the people who are most fond of talking in this way, and who interpret the gospel like this, are – not at all infrequently, I regret to say – some of the most difficult, and certainly some of the most bitter, people I have ever met. And they express their bitterness in their criticisms of those who do not agree with them. They are intolerant and self-righteous, which is the very opposite of the spirit that the Apostle is talking about. This shows the fallacy of this teaching. You see, you may be against war and fighting and things like that, yes, but if your spirit is bitter, then you are transgressing far more than a man who is fighting for his country; if your spirit is bitter, that is a greater sin, that is hatred.

So I repeat that we must not interpret the command, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', as doing away with theology and doctrine; it is the exact opposite. We will see this as we proceed with the passage.

Look at the tenth verse: 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.' Now having said in the eighth verse, 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law', and in the ninth verse, 'Thou shalt love thy

neighbour as thyself', why does the Apostle suddenly drop into a negative in verse 10?

I do not think that there is any real difficulty about this. In verse 9, Paul quotes the second table of the law, which gives negative injunctions, and that is his concern at this point. He is now down at the level of practicalities, the ordinary details of daily life, and there the law itself deals in negations: 'Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet.' So, as Paul is dealing with negatives, he sums it up by saying, in effect, 'Now love does not do these things, so if you do love you will never do any harm to your neighbour.' That is the way to interpret this verse. Paul is showing that love encompasses the negative injunctions: if you are loving you will not be guilty of breaking them.

But, of course, the concept of love is very positive. And so the Apostle ends the tenth verse with the words, 'Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' Now you must not say that the 'therefore' only links with the first part of that tenth verse. You must not say that love is the fulfilling of the law because love does not do any harm to its neighbour; that is not the connection. The last part of the tenth verse is a summing up of the whole statement from the beginning of the eighth verse, and, indeed, right back to the beginning of the twelfth chapter. Paul is saying that when we are truly loving to our neighbour, we cannot possibly, at the same time, be doing him any harm, and so we are fulfilling the second table of the law.

But there is more to it than that. When Paul says love is the fulfilling of the law, he does not mean you are merely to love your neighbour in a negative sense. You do not stop at that, you go beyond it. The words, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law', mean that it is love alone that enables you to fill the law right to the brim, as it were. In other words, by merely keeping the particular injunctions of the law, you are carrying out the law, but not fully, because the law does not stop at negatives. The law wants you to go beyond not doing your neighbour any harm, it wants you to love your neighbour as yourself.

So the Apostle says that we must not think of the law as a mere aggregate of rules and regulations. We must not think of it as something that we must carry out mechanically, looking

at its precepts – one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten. It includes these things, but we can keep them all and yet not have filled the law right out, because we have done them mechanically. And so it is that Paul winds up this particular argument.

There, then, is the exposition, but certain questions are raised here that we must just note. The first is: Who is my neighbour? Is the Apostle saying all this merely with reference to our relationship with fellow-Christians? The answer is no. It includes fellow-Christians but it does not stop there; it means everybody. We have an authoritative statement about this in Luke chapter 10 where we read, 'Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?' [verse 25-29].

That is the way people get out of it, and the answer our Lord gives is the parable of the good Samaritan. Our Lord says to the lawyer: That is your neighbour! The fact that he is a Samaritan and you are a Jew does not stop him being your neighbour. And you do not know the man who has been robbed and maltreated, but he is also your neighbour, he is the one whom you love as yourself. And this is the teaching throughout Scripture. As Christians we are to love all men and women as ourselves. Remember, our Lord goes as far as to say, 'Love your enemies' – love your enemies! – 'bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you' [Matt. 5:44].

Is this possible? My answer is this: If God did not love His enemies, there would never have been any Christians. God loved us when we were enemies. 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another' [1 John 4:11], and with the mind of Christ in us we are able to love, because, as we have seen, we do not see the man, but the victim of the devil and of hell. We love our enemies and do good to them that hate us. If we do not, then we are probably nothing but sentimental religious people. Here is the test – 'Love your enemies'!

And 'enemies' is not to be interpreted simply in terms of countries. It is very much easier, is it not, to love a country than it is to love an individual! It is very much easier to say, 'Ah, well, those people are this, that and the other, but there must not be fighting between nations', than it is to love your neighbour who is actually standing next to you at the moment and has been very difficult and unkind and malicious and cruel. But this is Christianity. It is always easier to love people when they are a long way off, but you are to love the man or woman next to you. Love your neighbour as yourself: it is all-inclusive.

But the really important question that in some ways is raised here is this: The Apostle is addressing Christian believers, but he quotes the law, so what is the relationship of the Christian to the law?

This has been a great subject of debate and discussion in the church throughout the centuries. Let me put it to you like this: How am I to live the Christian life? How do I please God? I have understood the truth, the doctrine, but how am I to live it in actual practice? Here is the great problem for all of us.

Now there have been two main schools of thought with regard to this. They have been there in different forms and guises throughout the centuries and they are still in existence. One can be designated under the title of *mysticism*. That means the contemplation of God, the culture and nurture of the soul, the search for love. The mystic recognizes that our actual state and condition is of vital importance and asserts that we should have the love of God and the love of Christ in us. And he concentrates on this, searching for the knowledge of God, the experience of Him, and, especially, of His love.

The second school of thought has sometimes been called *rigorism*. This does not put its emphasis so much upon contemplation, meditation and experience as upon activity. It says: It is not so much a question of cultivating a spirit of love as of actually knowing what to do in detail and in practice, and in proceeding to do it.

So we can put forward the alternatives as mysticism or rigorism, but we can equally express them as love or law. And here, in this passage, the two are brought together - 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' But though the Apostle says this, and

though we have found it in other places, there has been great confusion about it, both before and after the Protestant Reformation, and there is still confusion at the present time. So what is the position?

Now there are certain principles that we can lay down as absolutes and about which we all agree. We are all clear, I trust, that we are no longer 'under' the law. We have seen many statements to that effect in chapters 6 and 7 of this Epistle. Of course, we are all by nature 'under the law'. That is why we are told that our Lord was 'made of a woman, made under the law' [*Gal. 4:4*]. We are all under the law of God: not only the law as a 'schoolmaster', teaching us how to live, but, and most importantly, the law as condemnation.

The law condemns us all. That is stated categorically in the third chapter of Romans, and we must constantly keep it in mind. 'Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin' [*Rom. 3:19-20*] – and it can never do more than that. That is what the law was meant to do, that is what it does do.

But as Christian people, as believers, as those who are in Christ, we are no longer under the law. We are 'dead to the law' – that is the great argument of chapter 7. We are 'dead to sin' [chapter 6]; 'dead to the law' [chapter 7]. We have finished with it. 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death' [*Rom. 8:2*]. This means that I am no longer under the condemnation of the law. Not only that, it means that I am no longer vainly trying to fulfil the law and failing. I am finished with that, too.

So, then, what is my position? Well, as Paul constantly tells us, we are 'under grace' [*Rom. 6:14*]. But does that therefore mean that we have nothing to do with the law? Many have interpreted it like that, have they not? Many say, 'You mustn't talk to us about law; as Christians, we've finished with it.' You are familiar, I am sure, with that argument.

But if you say that Christians have nothing to do with the law, you are contradicting the Apostle Paul. Here he is, in this thirteenth chapter, talking about the law, giving us some of

the details of its second table, and applying it to Christian people. So we must obviously be careful in our handling of this assertion.

Now we have finished with the law in the matter of uselessly trying to justify ourselves by it. We have also finished with the condemnation that the law pronounces upon us. But we can still be addressed and appealed to in terms of the law because it is still the perfect expression of the way in which God would have us live. It still applies to us in that way.

In other words, you do not sit back in a chair and think beautiful thoughts of love and say that that is all that is necessary. No, you will never improve upon the Ten Commandments as a statement of the way in which God would have us live. Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law, and, in his reply to the lawyer, our Lord summarizes it as the love of God and the love of our neighbour – these two sections. So that is how we are related to the law as Christians.

So we must get rid of the idea that love is a mere sentimental feeling. Love always expresses itself in action. Let me give you a comparison. In Galatians 5, Paul says that there is no longer circumcision or uncircumcision, but 'faith which worketh by love' [verse 6]. That is it! It is exactly the same. Law works by love, as faith works by love. And so it is true to say that if we love God and love our neighbour we shall be carrying out God's commandments for us.

We do not observe the commandments *in order to* make ourselves Christians, but we observe them, the details of the law, *because* we are Christians. You see the difference? The trouble with the Pharisee, with the moralist, with people who deny the gospel, is that they are trying to make themselves Christians by attempting to keep the commandments. It cannot be done. It was a yoke, says Peter, that we could not bear [Acts 15:10]. It was grievous. Nobody could do it. No, it is the other way round.

That was how we interpreted Romans 8:3-4 where we are told, 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that' – in order that – 'the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' And here, in

Romans 13, Paul has a slightly different way of saying the same thing.

So we must beware of the teaching that tells us that all we need to do is to concentrate on love. The Apostle himself specifically contradicts that here in this very passage, as he does throughout chapters 12 and 13, and in all his epistles. In Ephesians 4:17, he says, 'This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.' Then he tells his readers the kinds of things that they must not do; he comes down to details and says, 'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour . . . Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole, steal no more' [verses 25-28]. That is Christianity. Christians are not people who walk with their heads in the air, thinking beautiful thoughts of love; they are told not to steal any more. We need these practical details.

In Colossians 3, Paul comes down to details and particularities in a most extraordinary manner: 'Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth' [verse 8]. And he has just said, in verse 5, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness . . .' What! Does a Christian need to be told all this? Yes, he does! You do not just preach love to Christians, you must tell them in detail what they must not do.

That is one side, but there is another. There is an extraordinary transition from the end of Colossians chapter 2 to the beginning of chapter 3. At the end of chapter 2, Paul says, 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days' – do not listen to these people who come to you and say, 'Now look here, as a Christian you should not eat this or that, you should not observe this special day – 'which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels . . . why, as though in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not . . .)' – do not listen to people like that – ' . . . after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the

body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh' [verses 16-18, 20-23].

So there is Paul, at the end of chapter 2, telling the Christians in Colosse not to listen to these people who bring up their rules and regulations, and to have nothing to do with them. Then in chapter 3, he goes on to say, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence . . . [verse 5]. Is he contradicting himself? No. As usual, he is holding a perfect balance. He points out the danger of a kind of mystical contemplation of love unrelated to the facts of life. But equally, he points out the danger of legalism and of being so lost and immersed in details that the spirit is forgotten.

Many have fallen into one or the other of these errors. I often think that one of the greatest dangers confronting the great Puritans was this danger of legalism. People constantly asked them, 'What shall we do in this instance?' So they drew up long lists of things that conscience decreed should and should not be done; it was almost a complete set of rules for life. They called this approach 'casuistry'. The man who started it was a man called William Perkins, a very great man, but I always have a feeling that he leaned very much in the direction of legalism, a danger of which he himself was aware, up to a point.

It is very interesting to trace the conflict that arose among the Puritans. Some – Walter Cradock and people like him – tended to put the whole emphasis upon the spirit; they are called the Radical Puritans. And let us not forget that even before them, the great Bishop John Hooper of Gloucester, and John Bradford, burnt at Smithfield in London, put their emphasis upon the spiritual side, though they did not neglect the other. But then Perkins and many of the others were so concerned about the danger of antinomianism, and of talking about love and doctrines without practising them, that they tended to go to the other extreme and to give long detailed lists that virtually come under the condemnation given by Paul at the end of Colossians 2.

Ultimately, you must see the all-importance of maintaining a balance. Both sides are necessary. You must not talk only about the spirit, the letter is also vital. But you must not only

talk about the letter, 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life' [2 Cor. 3:6]. No, we need the letter and the spirit, and that is what the Apostle is teaching here. Letter and spirit; law and love: 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 13:1, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity' – love – 'I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' You have gifts, yes, but if they are not accompanied by love, if they are not manifestations of love, they are no use.

Paul continues, 'And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor' – surely a man who does that is full of love? No! He may be a very selfish person, acting out of pride. I can 'give my body to be burned' – but if I do not do it in love, and have no love – 'it profiteth me nothing.' This is the perfect balance. You concentrate on the spirit but you also take care of the details. The love will help you to carry out the details and without the details the love is quite useless.

To take an illustration, the difference I am talking about is similar to the difference between a mechanical performance and real art. A musician may play the piano absolutely correctly, without a single wrong note, yet be entirely devoid of any true art. The playing of the notes is not enough; the piece of music has a soul and the artist is the one who, while technically correct, brings out the soul of the music. The great artist, of course, must not make mistakes. The pianist must not say, 'Ah well, I've got the touch. I'm an artist. I don't bother about my exercises. I don't mind if I make a mistake here or there.' Every great musician pays absolute attention to details, to every single note; yes, but not only to that because he knows that without the soul, the music is lifeless and fairly useless.

And may I say to my fellow-preachers that this is equally important in preaching and teaching. There is no greater mistake than to think that if a man preaches the right doctrine he is of necessity preaching. You can stand and mouth the correct words and terms, and help nobody at all. There must be life; there must be power. The mere statement of correct

beliefs and points of view – that is not preaching. There has to be something extra, something beyond that. The spirit alone gives life. Let us beware of a dead orthodoxy that in the end becomes legalism under which nobody is ever converted or stimulated to live the Christian life.

I have often thought, in this connection, that Wordsworth puts it rather well. In his poem, *To a Skylark*, he describes the skylark as a

Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam.

The mystic is the man who 'roams'; so often he loses himself in the mystic contemplation, and loses contact with life, having wonderful experiences, but of no value to anybody. Like Peter, he wants to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration and put up the tents. But there are problems at the foot of the mountain.

Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam.

True to the kindred points of Heaven and of Home!

William Wordsworth

It is all right to have your head in the clouds, as long as your feet are on the earth. That is the balance. So you do not only talk about love, and you do not only talk about law. Not the mechanical carrying out but the full carrying out. The art! The glory! The spirit! The vital ingredient! 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' May God fill us with this love.

Fifteen

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

We have come to one of the most eloquent passages in the whole of the Bible, but we are looking at it now because it constitutes a new subsection in this thirteenth chapter of Romans. It is introduced, as you notice, by the words 'And that', and it is important that we should realize the significance of those words. Their meaning is, 'moreover', 'in addition to', 'on top of that'; they introduce an extra thought. In the context of Paul's argument, they indicate that he is bringing in an additional circumstance in order to heighten the force of what he has just been saying. The same expression is found in Ephesians 2:8, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; *and that* not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' Paul is adding to the statement; he is taking it further and lifting it higher.

Now the words have exactly the same significance here in this eleventh verse. In other words, in this passage at the end of chapter 13, the Apostle gives a further reason for doing all the things that he has been calling us to do from the beginning of the twelfth chapter. As we saw, that was the great division, the turning-point in the whole Epistle, the point at which Paul

moves from doctrine to application, and issues a number of exhortations. Now, having done that, in verses 8, 9 and 10, he is summing it all up.

We have considered the first argument that the Apostle uses in order to encourage us to fulfil all these commandments and injunctions: it is the whole question of love as the fulfilment of the law. And he makes that perfectly clear. But now Paul introduces us to his second big argument.

This passage is always, of course, associated with the final conversion of that great man, St Augustine of Hippo. He was in deep trouble, in agony, under conviction by the Holy Spirit, seeing things fairly clearly with his mind, but with his flesh holding on to a life of sin. He had been going through this process for some time, and there he was, pushed backwards and forwards and in utter misery. There is no more miserable state than that of being under conviction of sin without seeing the way of release.

Augustine tells us that he was in the garden one afternoon when he suddenly heard the voice of a child saying, '*Tolle lege*' – 'Take up and read.' So going into the house, he picked up 'the Apostle's book', and this is what he read: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' And in a flash the whole glory of the gospel and the way of salvation became clear to him. It was the great turning-point in his life.

That does not add to the Scriptures, but we are all in the flesh and these associations are sometimes of very great value to us. A passage that has been used like that in the conversion of such a giant, is obviously worthy of our unusual attention. The same is true in the case of Martin Luther – 'The just shall live by faith' [Rom. 1:17], and I remember emphasizing that when we were studying the first chapter of this Epistle.

So for all these reasons this is a passage that should move all Christians to the very depth of their being. It is magnificent literature and is one of the most moving and eloquent passages that you will find anywhere in the whole range of Scripture. But there is always a special danger about these great passages, and that is the danger of being so carried away by the eloquence that we miss the meaning. I remember saying this at the end of chapter 11, and several times during our study of the

eighth chapter. We get such pleasure, in a kind of aesthetic sense, that we fail to stop and examine what exactly they are saying to us. So we must be very careful to make sure that we know what the Apostle is saying here. And, of course, his purpose is to give us the great, final reason for paying heed to his injunctions.

Now much as I, in many ways, dislike having to do this, we must analyse this passage. If you really want to appreciate a great piece of music, it is a good thing to analyse it. Though you start with its general effect upon you, you must not think that this tells you everything; that is sometimes a more or less emotional response. No, you analyse it; you get to understand it. Then, when you play the whole piece again, you find you get much more out of it. It is exactly the same with a passage of Scripture such as this. By venturing to dissect it, we are not going to destroy it, we are not going, as it were, to lay sacrilegious hands upon something that is too beautiful to touch: that is never true with Scripture. It is always the case that the more you dissect it – on condition that you remember the whole after you have done your dissection – the more you will get out of it. So we have to analyse this great statement, and we find that it falls very naturally into two parts.

Now there is nothing new about the two parts. They are doctrine and practice; argument and application; reason and exhortation. That is what we have here, and we must work it out. Paul starts by saying, 'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.' And immediately we see the two elements: the statement – 'knowing the time', and the application – 'time to awake out of sleep'.

Then Paul continues: 'for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed' – that is statement, doctrine; 'The night is far spent' – that is the same; 'the day is at hand' – that, too, is doctrine. Then: 'let us therefore . . .' here is the application.

So I want to consider this with you, and, I repeat, it is very important that we should do this. I suggest, furthermore, that a test of our true Christianity, a test of the life of Christ in us, is whether we enjoy this sort of analysis. I always feel that a portion of Scripture like this can in many ways be compared with food. There are some people who bolt their food. They get something out of it, of course, they are getting their calories,

but they are missing the enjoyment of the flavour and the aroma. Many people are like that with the Scriptures. They rush through the passage; they have done it, they think, but oh, what they have missed!

So I propose to *chew* this with you, and to keep it in our mouths a good time before we swallow it. Do not miss the pleasure of savouring the Scripture. Masticate it thoroughly, break it up, and you will find that there are things there that you never imagined.

So let us proceed like this: immediately, it seems to me, as we look at the passage in general, we find that the Apostle is putting forward certain basic and fundamental principles for our consideration. Here is the first. We are reminded that Paul's approach here is typical of the New Testament way of dealing with the whole question of conduct. In the first place, the New Testament never deals with conduct and behaviour in and of itself – never! I defy you to give me a single example. And this is important because that is where it is in a class of its own as distinct from moral systems.

In the second place, we are reminded here again that we do not follow these moral injunctions in order that we may become Christian, or in order to be Christian; we live like this because we *are* Christian – and what a world of thought there is there! We are back again fighting the whole fight of the Reformation – justification by faith, as against justification by works – and the popular doctrine today is the doctrine of justification by works in various forms. That term is not used, but that is the teaching: you make yourself a Christian by doing certain things. This is the modern heresy. And it is the exact opposite of the New Testament teaching.

To put it in a third form, according to the New Testament, we cannot understand this teaching concerning our conduct if we are not perfectly clear about our position, about what is true of us, for our behaviour is an expression of what we are.

And so, fourthly, our conduct is, and always must be, based upon our understanding of that position. You notice how Paul puts it: 'And that, *knowing the time . . .*'. Now if he cannot assume this knowledge on our part, his argument falls to the ground. We have seen this so many times. In Romans 8:18, for example, we read, 'For I reckon' – we know – 'that the

sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Similarly, at the end of that chapter, Paul writes, 'I am persuaded'. His actions are based upon his knowledge.

The second basic principle that faces us as we look at this passage is the vital importance of doctrine, of the truth that Paul is presupposing. The Apostle always follows the same method – that is what is so wonderful about the Scripture – and he invariably shows how doctrine and practical daily living are always intimately associated and inextricably intermixed. This passage is a perfect example. In this section of the Epistle the Apostle is supposed to have finished with doctrine and to be dealing with practical application, but doctrine keeps on coming in! It is like King Charles's head, you cannot keep it out. And here, in this great statement, doctrine and practice are mixed up together so that you pass from one to the other and then back again. Once more we are reminded that the two cannot be separated.

Realizing the inter-relationship of faith and works, doctrine and practice, is the best way of avoiding the great dangers that always confront the Christian, the dangers of antinomianism and of legalism. Antinomianism – and it is dealt with frequently in the Scriptures – is the belief that you have nothing to do with the moral law. A man who holds this view is therefore unconcerned about his conduct. He is against [*anti*] the law [Greek: *nomos*]; he does not recognize it. And this is a condition that has worked havoc many times in the long history of the church.

So we shall consider this subject not only because of the passage that is immediately before us, but also in order to complete our consideration of the previous subsection [verses 8–10] and to show the relationship of that section to this, the final subsection of the whole passage and of the whole movement of thought at this particular point. Paul has already been dealing with love and law and he is still doing that.

Let us, then, look first of all at antinomianism, this terrible danger of turning our backs upon, and finishing, as it were, with the law. How does it arise? Well, it is amazing to see how subtle it is. Here are some of the ways – not in any order of importance – in which we are all liable to fall prey to it.

The first is that we become intellectuals, only concerned about the intellectual formulation and understanding of the doctrines of the Scripture. One of the great dangers confronting every true Christian is the danger of living on, and relying upon, orthodoxy alone. You see how the danger arises. Orthodoxy is absolutely essential, that is why I recommend that you read books of doctrine by Dabney, or any work by any great theologian such as Hodge or Warfield or Calvin. Doctrine is vital. But if you say, 'As long as I'm clear about the doctrine, and have my head packed with it, I needn't worry about anything else', then you are guilty of antinomianism.

This attitude has, as I say, often wrought havoc in the history of the church. Men have been so keen to contend for orthodoxy that they have ignored the way in which they have been doing it; they have been unconcerned about how they have lived their lives. As a result, all that they have claimed to believe has been blatantly, flagrantly contradicted by their conduct. They have stated the doctrine perfectly, and talk fluently about justification and sanctification, and so on, but with no evidence of sanctification in their lives they have done grievous harm to the doctrine. I have known men display their knowledge of doctrine and defend orthodoxy when they were not sober – quite taken up with this subject while drinking too much. This is one way in which antinomianism manifests itself.

Another way – a kind of subdivision of what I have just been saying – is that antinomianism has always been a particular danger to those people who are known as Calvinists, those who hold the great doctrines of predestination and election, and especially the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. It is the charge that has always been brought against them, and, of course, there has been a certain amount of substance to that charge, though not always as much as the antagonists have made out – we worked that out in our consideration of Romans chapter 8.

The devil can come as an 'angel of light', and he has to such people. He says to them, You are saved, nothing can ever shake that, nothing can ever make any difference – nothing. 'Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor

any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' [Rom. 8:38-39]. Therefore it does not matter very much what you do. Even if you fall into grievous sin, it is all right.

Now that is a true statement, but if you trade on that, if you take advantage of it and turn it into an excuse for laxity and for licence, you are guilty of this terrible thing known as antinomianism. And this has manifested itself many times among people who hold to what are called the doctrines of grace. Nothing must be taken for granted in this Christian life; there is always the devil. So you must always watch and pray, and not fall into the danger of allowing him to turn even a great doctrine like the final perseverance of the saints into an excuse for licence and for sin.

But antinomianism is not confined to Calvinists. Those who are at the extreme opposite pole are equally liable to it. Indeed, if I were asked to give my opinion as to the greatest cause of antinomianism at the present time, I would not hesitate to say it is 'believism'.

Now believism has taken many forms. Once known as Sandemanianism, it is a teaching that says that you do not need to worry even about your feelings, you do not need to worry about anything, as long as you say that you believe in the Lord Jesus. That is the one thing that matters. In support of this view, Paul's words in Romans are quoted: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved' [Rom. 10:9]. Paul's words to the Corinthians are misused in exactly the same way: 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost' [1 Cor. 12:3]. It is maintained that if you say that, it puts you right.

You are familiar with this approach. It says, 'Don't worry whether you feel anything or not; don't worry whether you are conscious of a change in your life or not. If you say that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for your sins, you are saved.' Your declaration of that is what saves you. And you can do whatever you like, whenever you like.' And there are hundreds of people who have believed that such a profession has made them Christians; but they have gone on living the same old life.

I have often had to see people who have got into trouble because of this teaching. I once had a most interesting conversation with a young man who came to see me because he had suddenly realized that there was no correspondence between what he claimed to be and what he was. He said, 'There's no change in me.' In other words, he realized that he had been guilty of antinomianism.

Another form that believism can take is the teaching that has sometimes been known as the 'take it by faith' teaching. 'Don't worry about your feelings,' people say. 'Take it by faith.' And the response is, 'Well, I took it.' This has been a very prevalent teaching in the matter of sanctification. Sometimes, having been given the teaching, enquirers are asked, 'Do you believe that?'

'Yes,' they reply.

'Then thank God for it,' comes the answer, 'because you have taken it by faith.'

'But,' they say, 'I don't feel any different.'

'Don't worry about that,' they are told. 'You have received it, so thank God for it.'

But their lives do not show that they have 'got it', and this leads to great misery. These people are persuading themselves that they have received sanctification whereas, in actual fact, they have not. They are not paying any attention to their works – indeed, they are told not to examine themselves because that is sinful, a denial of taking sanctification by faith. They must not look to themselves but entirely to the Lord: it is all in Him and they have taken it all. So they are not allowed to look at their lives, though this is what the Apostle has been telling us to do.

That is antinomianism, and there is a great deal of this form of it at the present time. There are people who claim to have received sanctification by faith who are guilty of snobbery, of pettiness, jealousy and envy, and, indeed, increasingly, unfortunately, even of sins belonging to the flesh: drunkenness, and so on. Antinomianism is a most subtle threat and it can come at us from any direction or any theological quarter.

Another very prolific cause of antinomianism is mysticism – a term I am using in a very general sense to cover all con-

centration upon inward moods, feelings and states. There are people who say that nothing matters except what one feels: experiences, sensations. That is everything to them. They are always seeking some mystical experience, and they are negligent about their lives, even though they can be bad-tempered, or spiteful, or have many other faults. Their lives bear no evidence of their relationship to God, or of their union with Him though this is their great concern. It is always very dangerous to put the whole of your attention upon your feelings and your moods and states.

And another, increasingly common, manifestation of this danger of antinomianism is a preoccupation with phenomena. That was the trouble in the church at Corinth, where the Christians were interested in – and, indeed, consumed by – the gifts of the Spirit. The Apostle had to rebuke them because, while they were obsessed with these gifts and boasting of them, they were neglecting ordinary common decency and denying the very truth. In 1 Corinthians 5, we read: 'It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you' [verses 1–2]. They were so concerned about the gifts, and so concentrating on them, that they were tolerating this vile form of immorality. Their disregard of the law was also taking many other forms, such as getting drunk before they came to the Communion service. 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof' [2 Tim. 3:5].

Now antinomianism in all its various forms is corrected by this great passage in Romans 13. It was to save these people in Rome from that very kind of danger that the Apostle has been writing as he has from the beginning of chapter 12, and here he is now driving his teaching home with this great appeal of his.

But then there is the danger at the other extreme, the danger of legalism, which says that doctrine does not matter at all, and neither does experience, that nothing matters but practical daily life and living. I need not stay with this; we touched on it as we studied the previous subsection. But it arises because, in

their fear of antinomianism, people swing too far and unconsciously become legalists, putting themselves back under the law.

So there are these twin dangers – antinomianism and legalism – that are both wrong and both very dangerous. If we listen to the teaching of this great Apostle, however, we shall always be saved from them both. But how does Paul do this? Well, as we have seen, in his teaching Paul does it by never dealing with these issues separately. He never deals with conduct and behaviour without providing us with reasons and motives.

As we have looked at this subsection, we have seen, firstly, that Paul follows the approach that is used throughout the New Testament. Secondly, we have seen the vital importance of linking together doctrine and practice. This is important because it saves us from both antinomianism and legalism. Now we come to a third basic principle that stands out in this passage, and that is the practical application of this teaching to our daily life and living.

How are we to live this Christian life? Here, once more, Paul gives us the typical New Testament teaching. Let me give you the negatives first. The Apostle never teaches – I defy you to contradict what I am saying or to give me evidence! – what is called ‘the victorious life’. Nor does he give what is known as ‘overcoming teaching’. In these teachings we are told that we are miserable because we are failing, because we are falling into certain particular sins, but that we can be happy, we can be delivered, we can live a victorious life, an overcoming life. And then we are told how to obtain an experience that will at once deliver us. We are presented with the question: ‘Do you really want this victorious life?’ And an attempt is made to bring us to a great crisis. We are promised, ‘If you do want this life, you can have it here and now. You can get complete deliverance in one experience, and you will then be more than a conqueror.’

Now that kind of teaching has had a great vogue since about 1873, but I assert that it is not to be found in the New Testament, indeed, that the New Testament teaches the exact opposite. I say this for the following reasons.

First, the teaching about victorious living, you notice,

always starts with 'me'. 'Are you unhappy?' they ask. 'Are you in trouble? Are you failing? Is something getting you down? Now listen, we have the very thing you want.' That is how the teaching is couched. But that is unbiblical. The New Testament never starts with our happiness, but always with God and His holiness. And if we do not do that, we are already and inevitably going astray. We must never start with ourselves – never. Christianity is not a system to make us happy.

What is salvation? What is the meaning of the cross? What is the meaning of the resurrection? Why did the Son of God ever come into this world? Why did He die on the cross? Why did He endure all He did? Why did He conquer death and the grave? What is the object of salvation? Why did God send Him to do all this? And there is only one answer: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself' [2 Cor. 5:19]. Of course you get great joy out of that, but you must not say that it was done for that reason. If you do, your emphasis has gone wrong, your relative positions are wrong, you are reducing the Christian faith to the level of the cults. Indeed, the gospel goes out of its way to tell us that as Christians we may very well have a worse time in this world than people who are not Christians. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake' [Phil. 1:29], and Christian people have sometimes had to suffer more than anybody. The purpose of Christianity is not primarily to make us happy and give us release and ease. The primary object of salvation is to reconcile us to God, to vindicate Him and His holiness; it is to bring us to God. We must always put that in the first position.

This other teaching presents us with the wrong motive for believing. My motive should be not so much to be happy as to know that I am one of God's people, and to enjoy the privilege of being such a person. This is the New Testament teaching. We find it here in Romans and everywhere else.

And the scriptural method of teaching sanctification is precisely what we have in this great passage that is before us. It does not say to me, 'Now come along, do you want this? All you have to do is to surrender and believe. Take it by faith and you have it.' What I find here is that Paul is presenting an

argument. He says: You know certain things, and in the light of those, then this follows. He makes a statement that must be worked out, a truth that must be put into action. The New Testament always starts with the objective truth and not with my subjective condition. That is what we must grasp. You start with the great truth and then apply it to yourself.

The Apostle assumes that we have this knowledge. That is why he writes, 'And that, *knowing* the time . . .'. If we do not have it, he has nothing to say. And what does he assume we know? It is all that he has been saying in the first eight, or the first eleven, chapters. In other words, the Apostle's teaching is that unless we have a general idea and comprehension of the way of salvation, and the plan and purpose of salvation, we will never be able to live this life because all the motives are based upon these great doctrines, these aspects of truth. So if we do not have a grasp of these, we cannot be sanctified. We do not receive sanctification in a package, in an experience. No, no; Paul says, in effect, 'You have a grasp of the truth I have been laying before you, therefore work this out.' That is how the New Testament deals with this whole matter of sanctification.

This is an urgent and vital matter. We have already seen it illustrated in a fascinating manner in the first ten verses of this very chapter. Did you notice the kind of gradation through which the Apostle takes us? In dealing with that whole question of the 'higher powers' and our relationship to other people, his first argument is the argument of fear. 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers' – why? – 'For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.' Very well. 'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.' That is how Paul preaches sanctification! He says: If you resist these powers, you put yourself under judgment, and you will be punished.

Having brought in the motive of fear, the Apostle goes on repeating it. 'Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?' So, if you do not want to be afraid, 'Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid.' This is not

taking sanctification by faith, this is not getting it in an experience, Paul is reasoning with his readers. He says: Realize what you are doing. You have got to face God in the judgment. '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.'

So when Paul preaches sanctification, the motive he gives is fear. But he does not stop there. In the fifth verse he goes on, 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath' – that is the first reason – 'but also for conscience sake.' And we interpreted that as meaning that you do not live a good life merely because you are afraid of the judgment. You must use that argument, but then there is this further motive: you have an enlightened conscience and understand what is right and what God wills and expects of you. So for that reason, 'for conscience sake', as it is put, you should live a good life. Paul has moved from the level of fear to the level of conscience and reason and understanding.

But then, you remember, the Apostle takes us to the top of the mountain. He sums up as he goes along, and he says, 'For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' Fear! Conscience! But he does not leave it at that. Finally: 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.' But you notice that the whole time Paul is reasoning, he is presenting his case, and he is putting it at different levels in order that we, seeing it, may then proceed to put it into practice.

And here, in this last section, the Apostle comes to his great final argument. You can call it the eschatological argument, the apocalyptic argument, the argument of the last times, the coming of the Son of God.

And so we see that the Apostle is incapable of dealing with the question of conduct and practice without bringing in all the great essential doctrines of this glorious way of salvation. That is the way, and the only way, in which we can ever grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, and become truly sanctified. That is how we will avoid the twin dangers of

antinomianism and legalism and be enabled to walk the way that Paul characterizes in his Epistle to the Galatians as: 'faith which worketh by love' [*Gal.* 5:6].

Sixteen

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

We have been emphasizing the New Testament teaching that Christian conduct is always the outcome and the application of doctrine and of truth and that is exactly what Paul is demonstrating here. In this final argument, he really only puts one big doctrine before us, and this is, to use the jargon, the technical term, the doctrine of eschatology, or, if you prefer it, the doctrine of the last things, the doctrine of God's ultimate purpose. Paul uses that doctrine here in order to enforce the appeal that he began in the first two verses of the twelfth chapter: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.'

That is what we are to do, and here Paul gives us this great reason for doing so. He has, of course, argued it out in detail as he has gone along, and has been supplying his reasons, as we have seen. But now this is a summing up of it all in a great

climax – ‘And that . . .’ Paul is saying, in effect, ‘Do all this, especially in view of . . .’ That is the way in which he introduces this great doctrine of the last things.

Here again, this is something that is unique to Christianity, something that differentiates our Christian faith from every other form of teaching. We have often pointed out that there are many moral systems in the world. Christianity does not have a monopoly of ethical teachings and never has had. Even before our Lord came into this world, there were the Greek philosophers; they had their systems of ethics and of morals, and they talked about utopias. Seneca, a contemporary of Paul’s, had many moral maxims, and the critics have often tried to show that there is nothing new or unique about Christianity because most of the moral teaching in the New Testament can be found in Seneca.

But these critics always miss the fact that differentiates Christian teaching concerning conduct from every other moral teaching or ethical system, and from all forms of humanism, whether ancient or modern. This is that these systems know nothing at all about, and are not interested in, the great doctrine of the last things. They lack the motivation that this doctrine gives, and that is why they always fail in practice.

The particular differentiating mark of the Christian faith is that it puts everything in the light of eschatology. Indeed, it would be very simple to show that this is the dominating note of biblical teaching from beginning to end. It is a great argument in the Old Testament as well as in the New. The Bible looks at everything in the light of the ultimate goal, the ultimate destiny that awaits, not only every one of us as individuals, but also the whole world, and, indeed, the whole cosmos. So we must obviously pay very careful attention to this doctrine because if we do not grasp it, then we shall not only be missing the greatest motive of all for Christian living, we shall also fail to understand so much of the biblical teaching.

The two verses at the beginning of chapter 12 give us a hint of this teaching – the Apostle constantly repeats it, as he is bound to do, in view of its importance. Romans 12:2 says: ‘And be not conformed to this world.’ That is it: ‘*this* world’. These two words at once suggest that there is another world: there is

this world, and there is the unseen, spiritual world to come. This is the note that runs right through the Bible, and here, in this subsection at the end of the thirteenth chapter, we have one of the best, and certainly one of the most moving statements of this doctrine of the last things and its intimate connection with life and conduct in this world.

This passage, as is almost invariably the case, divides itself into two parts. Sometimes the Apostle keeps them quite separate, but here he tends to mix them. But that does not matter, it is for us to notice the two parts of this great statement. The first, of course, is the doctrinal part, because the motive is always to be found in the doctrine. Then the second is the outworking of this doctrine in our daily life and living. We analysed the passage in this way in the last lecture.

Again, I must remind you that the Apostle's words, 'And that, knowing the time', indicate that he assumes that we know what he is going to say. His argument, his whole case, depends upon our knowledge of these things. John puts this still more explicitly. He says, 'I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it' [1 John 2:21]. Now to me that is wonderful. I am never tired of saying that the whole art of teaching is repetition. Foolish Christian people say, 'I know that!' But you need to be reminded of what you know, and that is what John is doing.

Peter also makes exactly the same important point. There are people who have a kind of tourist mentality when they come to the Scriptures; they do not enjoy going over the same ground and feel they ought to be hurrying on. Always hurrying on! They want to know the whole Bible, and they end by knowing none of it because they have not grasped this point about repetition. 'Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things,' says Peter, 'though ye know them, and be established in the present truth' [2 Pet. 1:12]. He is not writing something they do not know. People who are always on the look-out for something new are betraying the fact that they are not Christians – 'And that, knowing . . . '.

So I ask a question at this point: Do we know these things? Are we familiar with them? Have we realized the vital importance of doctrine? Have we realized that there is a sense in

which we will never understand the practical teaching of the New Testament unless we already 'know' these things, these doctrines? And here, in particular, of course, it is this great doctrine of eschatology, of the last things.

In order, then, that I may imitate the Apostle, I am going to remind you of what you know! What is this doctrine? Again, we can divide it up. If we take the terms the Apostle uses they will lead us into the New Testament teaching about the ultimate things: 'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent.' The first thing, therefore, is this: if we know this doctrine, then we will realize the significance and importance of the time in which we live.

Now some people would translate this expression, 'the time', as 'the season', and that is equally good. Paul does not mean time in general, but is obviously referring to some special time – this particular time or season in which we live.

That, then, raises the question: Is Paul referring to some contemporary event? Is he saying, 'In view of the present circumstances, you ought to live like this'? Sometimes we find that in the New Testament. If you read 1 Corinthians 7, for instance, you will realize that at that time there were special circumstances that the Apostle used as an argument in connection with his exhortation. We read also that there were times of persecution, and so on, and special teachings were given for those times. But I think I can show you quite easily that the Apostle does not use 'time' in that way here. Rather, there is here a big principle, a great statement. We find the word used in this context in many places in this very Epistle.

In Romans 3:24-25, for example, we read, 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.' And then Paul says, in verse 26, 'To declare, I say, *at this time* his righteousness.' He is speaking about our Lord's death on the cross, which was a comparatively recent event. And with that in his mind, he says, in effect, 'Now God is declaring, at this time, his righteousness in overlooking the sins of the people in

the past, as they brought their offerings and sacrifices into the temple.'

This expression is also used in Romans 5:6: 'For when we were yet without strength, *in due time* Christ died for the ungodly.' There is obviously something special about that. But an even better example is in chapter 8, beginning at verse 18: 'For I reckon that the sufferings of *this present time* are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' There it is! That is a most important as well as a most moving verse.

The word comes again in Romans 9:9, which is really a quotation from the Old Testament: 'For this is the word of promise, *at this time* will I come, and Sarah shall have a son' – God is indicating a special time. And we have it again in Romans 11:5: 'Even so then at *this present time* also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.'

These passages clearly refer to a special time. But in what way? We can best answer that by putting it in the form of a statement. There is nothing that so differentiates Christians from all who are not Christians as their point of view of time and history. That is what the Apostle is dealing with here. He says: 'You know this time; you understand the time, the period in which you are living.' Christians have a special view of time and history that nobody else possesses.

Now the question of time and of history has become very important in this twentieth century. Since the beginning of the Second World War, there has been more interest in the whole subject than there has been for many, many centuries. Because of the precariousness of life, because of the wars, people have been made to think in a new way about the meaning of life and time. That was the trouble with the so-called 'great' Victorians: everything was too leisurely, too safe, in a sense. That was what led so many of them astray, even many of the theologians. They were influenced by the calm, the quiet, and the apparent endlessness of things as they were. But we have lived in a century of calamity and catastrophe, a kind of earthquake of a century, and have been forced to reconsider the whole meaning of history. Consequently, many books have been written on the subject of history and of time.

Now to non-Christians, time is very largely a matter of

calendars – that is common to all their ideas about time – and they have many different and conflicting theories. Some believe that time is linear, like a line that stretches ever onwards, and they would say that time and history indicate progress and development. That view was especially popular in the nineteenth century, and theories about evolution fitted it very well. They were a part of the whole outlook that everything was developing and moving upwards towards some kind of perfection, though there was a considerable lack of clarity about when this perfection would come and what it would be like.

But many historians (I am still talking about non-Christians), who were governed more by the study of history than by the study of biology or by the followers of Darwin, did not hold very much to the linear view of history, in fact, they thought it was nonsense. They were familiar with the fact that there had been great civilizations in the past, in China, in Persia, in Egypt, in Greece and Rome: great dynasties, great empires, great knowledge. But they had all come to nothing. They had risen, but then had fallen. They would climb up, and up, but then reach a plateau, and begin to go down. And many people said that the whole of history was, after all, just a question of circles, of cycles. That, too, has been a popular view.

Now we need not go into these theories, but it is very important that we should know about them. I sometimes think that you can do very good evangelistic work with intelligent people along this very line. It is always a good approach with such people because they are bound to confront the facts that you put before them.

So those have been the two main theories, but there is one thing about which non-Christians nearly all agree – especially, again, the historians – and that is that they can detect no real purpose in history. A great statement of this was made by the later Mr H. A. L. Fisher, professor of history in Oxford and, in the First World War, a member of the Government, Minister of Education. He was also a great authority on history, and he says in a preface to his book (I think, on European history) that, having studied history all his life, he has come to the conclusion that it has no discernible purpose; things happen, but there is no plan, no line.

Many scientific humanists, men like Professor Julian Huxley, would say the same thing. Holding the view that everything is the result of chance, Huxley says that he can discern no definite purpose in anything. Man may go up, he may go down; we do not know. There is a kind of agnosticism. And, of course, you are familiar with the fact that physicists are agreed in talking about what they call 'the second law of thermodynamics', which just means that the world is slowly running itself down, and running itself out; that it is cooling down.

All this is very interesting. There is a great contradiction here. There are those who say that everything is progressing, but equally great scientists are saying that everything is giving out energy and running down. And it seems to me that the facts are entirely on the side of the latter.

But all this comes down to the fact that these historians, philosophers and scientists do not understand history and do not understand time. Some say that there will be an end because of this running down, others say that everything will go on, but they do not know where, or what, or how, or whether it will be better or worse. So their interest in history tends to be in the history of great men – the history of personalities, people who have influenced the world – and the history of wars, the history of conquests. But, of course, that is outdated by now, people do not like that any longer, although it is of tremendous importance if you merely take a secular view.

The fashion today is to be interested in the history of trade and economics. It is not wars that matter, but supply and demand, the Marxist view. An attempt is made to explain everything in terms of that. Several books have been written recently that claim to be able to explain the whole of the Puritan movement in terms of economics and factors of that kind. But then, of course, other people see nothing of importance in history except in the history of science and scientific discovery, which, to them, is of the very essence of history.

But what a difference there is when we turn to the biblical view, the Christian view! 'And that, knowing the time . . .' – what time? It is the time in which we are living. We understand our present time, unlike secular historians who have no

idea, hence their rival theories. We know. But what do we know? What is the biblical teaching with regard to time and history?

In general, we can put it like this: the Bible tells us that there are two types of history. There is the sort of history to which I have been referring, which we may describe as man's history, or, better still, as the history that God permits. We are not machines or automata, and God allows us to do certain things, but always under His ultimate control. We call this aspect of God's will His 'permissive will'.

I can illustrate that quite simply. There is teaching in the Bible about the power of the devil. The devil is allowed to do many things – yes, but he is always under the control of God. You find that in the first chapter of Job. The same idea appears in our Lord's words, 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out' [*John* 12:31], spoken with reference to our Lord's death on the cross. The devil is still active, yes, but he is very much in chains. So God permits man's history, but nevertheless it is all under His control. That is the first type of history.

The second type is the history of God's plan and purpose with respect to this world. This is not a history that God merely permits; He produces it. This is the really important and significant history, this is what the Bible is concerned about. It is God's history, holy history, or, if you prefer it, redemption history.

The Bible includes the first type of history. It contains much about the history of other nations, much about kings and births and marriages and deaths and wars, and all that sort of thing. Yes, but that is only background, as it were, that is only the setting, the stage on which God produces *His* redemption history by His interventions, His eruptions into time. This is the history that really matters, and this is what Paul has in mind when he uses this expression, 'the time'.

What, then, are the characteristics of God's redemption history? The first is that this is obviously a history that is predetermined by God. He has planned it all. I need not keep you with this. If you believe at all in prophecy in the sense of foretelling, then that is exactly what it means. Prophecy is only possible because God has predetermined that certain things should happen at a given time. That is what the Bible

teaches from beginning to end. You find it, in a negative sense, in a phrase like 'the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full' [Gen. 15:16]. God's punishment will not come until the iniquity of the Amorites is completed. It is seen in a more positive form in verses such as, 'But when *the fulness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law' [Gal. 4:4]. Or again, '*In due time* Christ died for the ungodly' [Rom. 5:6].

The fulfilment of prophecy is something that is not only fascinating, but is also one of the wonderful proofs of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. It is one of the most glorious arguments for the truth of the Christian faith. In the Old Testament many details are given about the coming of our Lord: the time, the place and the manner. It is the same with regard to His death and His resurrection, and so on. And all this is but a part of the history that God produces. He predetermined it all, and everything is known to Him with the exactitude that is only possible in God Himself.

The second outstanding characteristic of this history that God produces is that it is progressive, and is always leading on to a predetermined end. 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world' [Acts 15:18]. And God knows the end as well as the beginning. So the Bible constantly uses phrases such as: 'Then cometh the end'; or, 'Then the end will come.' God does not act haphazardly. His actions are not reactions to what man does. We must get rid of that notion once and for ever.

God is always the initiator; He is the prime mover, the great cause. He has planned this whole history from the foundation of the world and is bringing it about as events in this world of time. It is all happening progressively, and is leading to the predetermined end. This is the fact that stands out so clearly and in such a contrast to the statements of the historians and the scientific humanists and others, who say that they see no end or purpose in it all. But it is only the Christian who is aware of this.

The third characteristic is the most important of all. This history that God produces, and the time element in this history, must always be thought of primarily and essentially in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. How do you divide

time? Well, the world, even in its ignorance, does the right thing. Even the unbelieving world divides history into BC and AD. It does not know why it does it, it does not actually believe it, but it still persists.

The Bible, which always divides time in terms of the Lord Jesus Christ, reveals three divisions of time – the time before He came into this world; the time when He came and lived in the world and went back out of it into the glory; and then His final coming again. Let me give you some examples. Take the words of our Lord Himself in Mark 1:14-15: 'Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' His coming fulfilled the time. The time prior to that looked forward to this time, His coming. He has arrived, so it is 'at hand', it is with us.

There are other examples. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul, referring to the past, says, 'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples' – examples – 'and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.' That was written in the first century, but Paul could refer to that time as a time in which 'the ends of the world' have come upon us. He means that we are now living in the period of time, the era, that is subsequent to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world.

I have already quoted Galatians 4:4, 'When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.' The previous time has come to an end. It has fulfilled itself, filled itself out. We have reached the fulness of that other time of expectation and of prophecy and of looking forward. We are starting with a new time.

And then there is a great and moving statement in the Epistle to Titus: 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' [Titus 2:11] – 'in this present world' or 'this present time'. That is the idea.

Then it appears again in 2 Peter 3:14: 'Wherefore, beloved,

seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' The Apostle writes this after having said, 'Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' And he continues in verse 15, 'And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you' – probably referring to this very subject that we are studying together at this moment.

So Paul says, 'Knowing the time'. This is what you and I know. It is not world wars that determine time for us. No, no; we are living in the age, in the time, between His first coming and His second coming. That is 'the time'. That is what Paul is talking about. Or, to put it another way, 'the time' is the interval between what He has done and what He is yet going to do. Or again – and Scripture often puts it like this – you and I, like these Roman Christians, are living in the last period in the history of the world, the last section of time, because when He comes again, 'time shall be no more'. That is why you will often find the New Testament Apostles, in their epistles, telling the people – and they say the same to us – that we are living in the 'last days'. Take, for instance, 2 Timothy 3:1: 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.' That does not mean some future last days; these last days have been in existence ever since the Son of God went back to heaven. Our Lord Himself, however, taught us that there will be an accentuation towards the end. He says, 'And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man' [Luke 17:26] – just before the end. But that is just a climax to what is already taking place.

Or take it again at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by his Son.' There is also that expression in 1 Corinthians 10:11: 'They are written for our admonition, *upon whom the ends of the world are come*.' This is the period of the end. It is 'upon' us. We are in the last phase, the last portion of human history. John, also, constantly repeats this in his first letter, especially in the second chapter:

'Little children, it is the *last time*: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the *last time*' [1 John 2:18].

So the Apostle is saying that you and I, as Christians, 'know' this time in which we are living; we understand it. We know all about kings and princes, births, marriages, deaths, wars, acquisitions, scientific discovery . . . All right! We are not here to depreciate all that. But to us that is not the way to look at history; that is not what is of significance. The non-Christian lives for that kind of thing, he knows nothing more, but we know differently. We know that what really matters is what God has done in this world in the person of His only begotten, dearly beloved Son. He has come; He has lived; He has taught; He has borne our sins; He has died; He has risen; He has conquered the last enemy; He has ascended; He is seated at the right hand of God and is waiting 'till his enemies be made his footstool' [Heb. 10:13]. We are living in the last period, the last phase in the history of this world.

Now that is only Paul's first statement in this passage and, of course, it is vital because certain things follow from it. We shall see how, holding that view of time and history, we must also hold a very definite view of life in this world and, still more important, of the future and of life beyond this world. Christian conduct is governed by this understanding, and if we do not start with the knowledge that we are living in this extraordinary time between the first and the last, or second, comings, the Apostle's argument will not only not appeal to us, it will not help us, and we shall be missing the real point of one of the great exhortations of Scripture.

Seventeen

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

On the last occasion, we saw that Paul assumes that we know this *time* in which we are living, which we have defined as the time between the two comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we proceed to the second matter that the Apostle takes for granted in his argument, and that is our view of life in this world.

Again, it is essential to the understanding and practice of Christian conduct that we should have the right view of our life here and now. It is another way of looking at this 'time', and follows of necessity from that first postulate. It is because we view time in that way, that we inevitably have a view of life in this world that is entirely different from the view held by people who are not Christian.

So the Apostle here reminds us of the Christian view. He does this with two key words: 'night' and 'darkness'. 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand' – as we look at this world, we see it as it is: 'night'. So Paul continues: 'let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' And then he works that out in detail.

This is tremendously important for us. The world is so

much with us, too much so, and in spite of the fact that we are Christians, we very much tend to be governed in our thinking by the prevailing notions and ideas that are current in the world round and about us. This is especially true at this present time. There have been periods in the history of the world when life has been very difficult and cruel, when men and women had to work for a very meagre wage, when there were pestilences and natural calamities, and everybody realized that life was grim. But for various reasons, as the result of so-called 'advances', that is, on the whole, no longer the case. So people tend to take a different view of life in this world. Their view is often put in the phrase, 'Isn't life wonderful!' They talk about living life with a capital 'L', and feel sorry for all who lived in times past.

Now that, broadly speaking, is the view taken by the non-Christian, but the view taken by the Christian is the exact opposite. Christians look out upon life as it is today and see it as 'night', as 'darkness'. Furthermore, they take that view of life in this world when it is at its best, not only at its worst. The moral man, the ethical man who is not a Christian, the so-called 'good pagan', the good man, as the world sees him, does, of course, regard certain things as being 'dark' and 'of the darkness', but Christians view the whole of life in that way.

The Apostle has already given us a hint of this. We saw it at the beginning of the twelfth chapter, in the second verse, where he says, 'Be not conformed to this world.' He has also given us other hints. In chapter 8, verse 23, he tells us, 'Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' That is the same truth put in a different way.

Indeed, this teaching is implicit in the first seven verses of this thirteenth chapter, and we have dealt with them at great length. Why do you need 'the powers that be'? Why do you need government? Why do you need magistrates? Why do you need a sword? Why are these things necessary? The answer is obvious: it is because of the nature of life in this world, because of the way in which men and women in sin conduct themselves. Were it not for the 'night' and the 'darkness', you would not need the powers that be. So we are not surprised

when we come across this teaching in an explicit form in verses 11 to 14.

This is not a teaching that is confined to the great Apostle – it is the teaching of the whole Bible. Children of God are ‘strangers’ in this world, they are ‘pilgrims’. This is at its clearest in the New Testament. John 3:19, for example, says, ‘This is the condemnation’ – what is? – ‘that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.’ Again, our Lord stands up, as it were, in the world, in the midst of men, and makes His great claim: ‘I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ [John 8:12]. This is as plain as anything can be. And later on He exhorts the people: ‘While ye have the light, believe in the light’ [John 12:36].

I could give you many other statements from our Lord’s own teaching and from throughout Paul’s epistles. In 1 Corinthians 4:5, the Apostle puts it like this: ‘Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ But one of the most glorious and moving statements of this teaching is in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians: ‘That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son’ [Col. 1:10–13]. What a wonderful statement that is of this same principle.

But Peter is not to be outclassed in this matter. He has his own way of saying this: ‘Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ [1 Pet. 2:9]. Again, what a glorious statement of the contrast – ‘out of darkness’, ‘into his marvellous light’.

John is equally concerned about this and equally rejoices in it: ‘This then is the message which we have heard of him, and

declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin' [1 *John* 1:5-7]. He continues in the second chapter: 'Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past' – that is the truth about us – 'and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now' [verses 8-9].

The whole of the New Testament is full of this teaching, and in the case of the Apostle Paul it is perhaps not surprising that he makes a good deal of it because when he was commissioned to preach, he was commissioned in these very terms. When on trial before Agrippa and Festus, he explained that our Lord had said to him, 'But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee' – what for? – 'to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me' [Acts 26:16-18].

Now those passages put salvation explicitly in terms of the contrast between darkness and light, or night and day. There are other places where this is implicit, and where it is obviously the whole basis of the argument, and it is important that we should remember these passages also and carry them with us as we expound the Apostle's words here in Romans 13. For instance, we see this contrast in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4: 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.'

And, again, the Apostle reminds the Galatians at the beginning of his letter to them: 'Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins' – why? – 'that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father' [*Gal. 1:3-4*]. Then in Ephesians 2:1-2, he says, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' That is the typical New Testament teaching about life in this world.

John puts it very clearly: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever' [*1 John 2:15-17*]. And later on, he says, 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness' – 'in the wicked one' [*1 John 5:19*].

Here, in Romans 13:12, Paul assumes that we are very clear about this teaching, and that this is our view of life in this world. But what does he mean by 'night' and 'darkness'? Well, he uses these terms to convey the ultimate state of humanity outside of Christ. From an intellectual standpoint, it is the darkness of ignorance. Here, of course, is the theme that is elaborated everywhere in the Scriptures. That is what the Fall did to men and women: it cut them off from the vital and most essential knowledge.

Elsewhere the Apostle puts this in a more elaborate form. One of the clearest statements he ever made of this darkness is in Ephesians 4:17-20: 'This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk' – you are Christians, he says, and you must not go on living as you used to live and as unconverted Gentiles still live. Why not? Here is the answer – 'in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' And then he describes the kind of life they lived as a result – 'who being past feeling have given themselves

over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ.' You know differently.

And that is how the Apostle describes the world at its best, at its most enlightened. In all the really important matters it is blinded, it is in the night. First and foremost, it is in the dark with regard to God Himself. At the end of His great high priestly prayer, our Lord says, 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me' [John 17:25]. That is the whole trouble in the world today. It does not know God – it is ignorant, blinded, alienated by wicked works. It needs the light. Even the Greek philosophers, fumbling after God, 'if haply they might feel after him, and find him' [Acts 17:27], did not find Him. They were like men groping in the dark at noonday.

The world is equally ignorant in its understanding of man. It was all very well for the Greek philosophers to put up as their great slogan, 'Know thyself.' But is there anything more difficult than that? That is where we fail, all of us. We do not know the truth about ourselves.

And humanity is also in the dark with regard to life and the whole purpose of life and living. Death, too, is nothing but impenetrable darkness, 'without a hope to cheer the tomb'. At death, everything seems to collapse; it is final darkness. The world would not go on living as it does for a second if it knew something about the judgment to come. But it does not, it is unaware; ignorance, and the judgment beyond.

And it is the same with regard to eternity and all that lies beyond death and the judgment. This has been expressed in many of our hymns:

*O'er heathen lands afar
Thick darkness broodeth yet.*

Lewis Hensley

And it is as true of this country as of any so-called 'heathen country'. It is true of all our civilized countries: 'thick darkness broodeth yet'. In the nineteenth century, two books were published about the same time. One was called *In Darkest Africa*, and the other, by General Booth, was called, *In Darkest England*. 'Darkest Africa'! Everybody was more or

less prepared to use that term, but they could not see that England was equally dark in the vital spiritual sense.

So by 'darkness' Paul means the darkness of ignorance, intellectual darkness, lack of awareness of the things that really matter and count. But the word is equally a description of the moral condition of humanity. In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul expresses this plainly and clearly, using the very language of Romans 13. He says, 'But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.' Then he describes people in the darkness: 'For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober' [1 Thess. 5:4-8].

The Apostle is giving us a picture of the kind of life that is lived by people who lack the light of this knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They belong to the night, to the darkness. They indulge in what he calls 'the unfruitful works of darkness' [Eph. 5:11]. Many descriptions of this state are given to us by the Apostle. In Ephesians 5:8, he says, 'For ye were sometimes darkness' – once upon a time you were in the darkness – 'but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.' And then he goes on to say, 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them' – why? – 'For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' [verses 11-14].

But if you want a stark description, read the second half Romans 1 or 1 Corinthians 6. That is darkness: moral darkness, a life of evil and sin. 'Dearly beloved,' says Peter, 'I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles' [1 Pet. 2:11-12]. That is the description of this 'night' about which the Apostle is speaking. The whole outlook and behaviour of men and women who are not Christians belongs to that realm.

Then to intellectual and moral darkness, you can add the darkness, the night, and the gloom of despair and hopelessness.

*Men die in darkness at your side
Without a hope to cheer the tomb.*

H. Bonar

Nothing at all! The final bankruptcy as they approach death! They hate it; they hate the thought of it. Everybody tries to keep young and to look young. You must not talk about death, that is said to be morbid. It is because of this utter final despair, 'the darkness' about our ultimate destiny.

And this teaching that the Apostle puts before us here is, as we have seen, the essential teaching of the New Testament. Take another example, this time from the Sermon on the Mount: 'The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' [Matt. 6:22-23]. What a text for today! That is the Bible's description of life in this world as it is without Christ.

The world, of course, talks about 'ages of enlightenment', and says we are now living in such an age. It glories in the eighteenth century, when the so-called 'Enlightenment' came in and, so they say, has continued ever since, with all the accumulated knowledge and the wonderful discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We are living in an enlightened world, and we are so sorry for our rude and ignorant forefathers who lacked all this wonderful knowledge and enlightenment. But the Bible looks out upon it all and says: It is the night. It is darkness.

All that the world boasts about is entirely on the surface. There is no change whatsoever concerning the supreme subjects I have referred to; there is no more light today than there has ever been. In fact, one of the encouraging things for the Christian preacher at the present time is that learned authorities are tumbling over one another in their autobiographies and interviews to tell us that really they are completely in the dark about themselves and about life and death, and, above all, about God. All the enlightenment has not given any light at

all. 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' [Matt. 6:23]. That is the scriptural verdict on the sophistication and enlightenment and culture of this present age.

And that is the world at its best, at its highest. The light it produces and in which it glories is entirely artificial. With regard to everything that is of vital and eternal importance there is nothing but darkness, and the proof is that men and women still commit the sins they have always committed throughout the running centuries and, above all, still remain ignorant of ultimate matters.

Now the Christian is someone who realizes this, who knows it, who understands the character of the world, and, therefore, never trusts to human culture, never gets excited about it, never relies on it or glories in it or says how wonderful it is. Now let us be clear about this; as we saw earlier, Christians do not dismiss or despise culture or say that it is useless: it has its place. Yes, but it is a subordinate place, coming under the heading of 'common grace'. It is like an artificial flower; it has its beauty and it can show certain of the faculties and propensities of human beings, but it is not living, it is not real. These things can be used to the glory of God but in and of themselves they belong to the realm of the night and of darkness, and Christians always see their limits.

So I can sum it up like this: as Christians we belong to the light and always realize that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world, fighting the world and the flesh and the devil. 'For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened' [2 Cor. 5:4]. We remember that our Lord said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation' [John 16:33]. Our view of this present world is that it is a dark and doomed world, a condemned world, under the wrath of God. And all the efforts of all the politicians of every party will never change it; they are mere ripples on the surface and do not affect the real position at all. But we are not depressed when we say that because we know that 'here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come' [Heb. 13:14].

Bunyan understood the truth about this passing world. What is our life in this world? A *Pilgrim's Progress*! We do not settle down here, we do not even want to stay here for ever and for ever; that would not be satisfactory for us. We realize that we

are passing, as it were, through Vanity Fair with all its gaudy colours and supposed enlightenment, but we travel on, pilgrims on the way to eternity.

That, therefore, is the second great principle: because we are what we are in Christ Jesus, we know the truth about life in this world.

Then, thirdly, the Apostle assumes that we have a particular view of the future. This, also, is something that is unique to Christian people. Paul expresses it in two words: 'salvation' and 'day'. 'For now', he says, 'is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.'

Again, this is, of course, a crucial matter. It is the very essence of the Apostle's argument. If you merely look at this world, you might end in depression, but the Christian never does. 'For here we have no continuing city,' says the writer to the Hebrews [*Heb.* 13:14]. It is all right, the door is open, this world is not all there is.

So let us look at this first term, 'salvation', and especially Paul's phrase here: 'our salvation'. I agree with those who say that this is not the best translation here. It is all right in a way, but it rather tends to conceal the true meaning. A literal translation reads: 'nearer is of us the salvation', and I prefer that. The words 'our salvation' are misleading as they might be wrongly interpreted in a subjective, experiential sense, whereas the literal translation reminds us that the Apostle is talking about 'the salvation', this objective salvation, the salvation that is outside us and to which we are moving. If it is left as 'our salvation', then people will immediately rush to interpret it in terms of feelings, moods, states and experiences. All right, that is a part of the Christian life, but that is not what the Apostle is talking about here. Here he is saying that the salvation is, as far as we are concerned, nearer than it was when we believed.

What, then, does the Apostle mean by 'the salvation'? Is he suggesting that we are not already saved? Is he denying the doctrine of assurance of salvation? Is he saying that no one has a right to say, 'I am saved', because Christians are people who are going 'towards' salvation?

This point has often been raised and people are ready to divide over it. I have known very good Christian people who

have disliked the doctrine of assurance of salvation. They say, 'I wouldn't like to say that I'm saved. I can only say I'm hoping to be saved.' They regard it almost as presumption to say that you are saved, and they are always ready to quote Paul's words: 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Such talk is often found among people who hold a high Calvinistic doctrine, and they live a kind of depressed life, never being sure of where they are, but hoping.

No, let us be clear about it: this is quite wrong. If you speak like that, you are making the Apostle Paul contradict himself. He says that he is himself saved, and he has phrases such as, 'unto us which are saved' [1 Cor. 1:18]. But there is really no difficulty about this. It is just a question of what may be called 'the tenses of salvation', of which there are quite clearly three. It is true to say that *we have been saved*; it has happened to us. But it is also true to say that *we are being saved*. And there is a third sense in which we rightly say that *we shall be saved*.

Let me explain. As regards the guilt of sin, I am already saved. Now I say that by the grace of God, but do not take my word only for this. See how the Apostle puts it: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' [Romans 8:1], and we interpreted that verse like this:¹ not only is there no condemnation, there never will be. 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath' – He already has, Greek aorist tense – 'made me free from the law of sin and death' [Rom. 8:2]. I am not under law but under grace. I am saved. I am dead to sin. I have been crucified with Christ. I have died to sin with Him: 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him' [Rom. 6:6]. It has happened. I assert that, and must assert it, and, as Christians, we should all assert it and rejoice in it and glory in it. We have been saved from the curse and the condemnation of the law. As far as the guilt of sin is concerned, I have already been cleared; it is gone, once and for ever.

But when I consider the question of my relationship to the power of sin, and the pollution of sin, I cannot say that I am saved; it is not true. There is the remaining pollution; there is

¹ See *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17: The Sons of God*; and *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:17-39: The Final Perseverance of the Saints*.

the remaining falling into sin. Read the first and second chapters of John's First Epistle and there you find it – the fight, the conflict, the failure. 'And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world' [1 John 2:1-2]. This is progressive; this is continuous; this is sanctification. I am progressively being saved from the power and the pollution of sin. Christ is being formed in me. So that is the second tense, the second way of looking at our salvation.

But then there is, equally, this third way, and the Apostle is dealing with that here. Here he is looking to the ultimate, to the final and complete salvation. He puts this in many different ways. Take, for instance, 1 Corinthians 1:30: 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness' – there is the first – 'and sanctification' – there is the second – 'and redemption.' I am already redeemed, yes, but the final redemption, which includes glorification and all that goes with it, all that lies in the future.

And here, I repeat, the Apostle is dealing with this future tense. Let me remind you of words he has already written. In these last chapters, and particularly at the end of this chapter, he is summing everything up, but he has said it all in the eighth chapter in these words: 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Then he goes on to say, 'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' – and this is equally true now – 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for' – there is something I am waiting for. I am redeemed, I am forgiven, I am justified, my guilt has gone, I am being sanctified, but I am 'waiting for', what? – 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body' [verses 18-23].

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is very interested in the same truth. At the end of the first chapter, he asks: What are angels? And he answers: 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' [verse 14]. That has nothing to do with this world; salvation is 'the world to come, whereof we speak', as he says in the fifth verse of the next chapter. That is entirely future. Or take what he says at the end of the ninth chapter: 'And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation' [*Heb.* 9:27-28]. This is the ultimate, the absolute.

And, finally, listen to the Apostle Peter: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' [*1 Pet.* 1:3-4]. In the same chapter, he says, 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith' – what is that? – 'even the salvation of your souls' [verses 8-9].

My dear friends, do you know these things? Are you certain of them? Do you understand the time in which you are living? Do you understand the nature of life in this world? Have you this outlook upon your ultimate, full, final salvation, and do you live your daily life in the light of these things? That is what the Apostle is exhorting us to do.

Eighteen

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

We are looking at the subsidiary doctrines that are involved in this great general doctrine concerning the last things, and the Apostle assumes that we know certain things. We have already considered some of them. He assumes that we know the real significance of the meaning of 'this time', the time in which we are living. What a transformation that makes in our whole conception of history!

Then we have seen that Paul also takes for granted our knowledge and our understanding of life in this world, that what the world calls enlightenment, we call darkness. That does not mean that we retire out of it, or that we see no value in culture, but, giving all these things their maximum content, it is an evil world and we are delivered out of it, translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

We have now begun to consider the third truth that Paul tells us we know, and that is our outlook on the future. Here again, our view is unique. The Apostle puts it in terms of 'salvation', and we have seen that salvation has three aspects – past, present and future. Here, in verse 11, it is surely perfectly

clear that the Apostle is using the word in the third sense; he is talking about the ultimate salvation that awaits us. This is something with which we are quite familiar because the terms 'the day', or 'that day', or 'the day of the Lord', and so on, are used so frequently in the Scripture.

Our Lord Himself constantly dealt with this theme in His own teaching. In Mark 13:30-32, for example, He says, 'Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.'

Now there was a great controversy about all this in the early part of the twentieth century. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there had been a move to teach what was called 'the Jesus of history', that is, that our Lord was just a man, a great religious teacher, very little concerned about the supernatural and the future, and so on. An attempt had been made to reduce Him to a teacher of morality and ethics, even of politics. This became a popular movement, but it was demolished by a man whose name is very familiar, Dr Albert Schweitzer. That does not mean that he was right in his thinking, because he was not, but he exploded that particular theory by showing that there was nothing more characteristic of the teaching of our Lord than His constant emphasis upon what was going to happen, upon what He was yet going to do, the apocalyptic element in His teaching.

Now Albert Schweitzer regarded our Lord's apocalyptic teaching as a sign that He was a creature of His age, and even suggested that He was a little abnormal in that He was obsessed by the idea that He was going to come again. But what Schweitzer was able to establish was the fact that if you took the apocalyptic element out from the Gospels, then there was really nothing left at all, and certainly nothing to explain our Lord's influence upon His contemporaries. So if we do not have this element in a very prominent position in our thinking, we are not being true to our Lord's own teaching.

After our Lord died, the apocalyptic element is strikingly evident in the teaching of the Apostles. It is interesting to see how, at the very beginning of the church, when Peter preached

to the people who came crowding round after the healing of the lame man, he wound up his sermon like this: 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began' [Acts 3:19-21]. That is a most striking statement. Peter is able to show that 'the restitution of all things' has been preached all the way through the Old Testament. And here he is now, as the first spokesman in the Christian church, giving great prominence to this teaching.

It is a theme that runs right through the Acts of the Apostles. The Apostle Paul, in a sense, made it the central part of his message in Athens. When he was preaching on Mars Hill, this was his great point: God 'hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead' [Acts 17:31]. Paul was preaching to Stoics and Epicureans, philosophers, clever, sophisticated people, and that is what he preached to them. He knew that they would ridicule it; nevertheless he preached it because it is an essential part of this Christian message.

And our Lord's return is a prominent theme in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. In the first chapter, he talks about that 'day' and he comes back to it again in chapter 2: 'Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ' – better, 'the day of the Lord' – 'is at hand' [2 Thess. 2:1-2].

Then in writing what is agreed by all to be his last letter, his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle puts it like this: 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day' [2 Tim. 4:8]. He has already said something similar in the first chapter: 'The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but,

when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day' [2 Tim. 1:16-18]. And he has also already written in this letter that though he is in prison, he is not ashamed: 'For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day' [2 Tim. 1:12]. And in Titus 2:13, he says, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' This is a constant theme in the preaching and teaching of the great Apostle.

But this teaching is not confined to Paul. It is one of the great motives, one of the great appeals, of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In chapter 6:11-12, the writer says, 'And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Then in verse 18, he says, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.'

James makes the same point. In his last chapter, for instance, he tells the corrupt rich men to 'weep and howl' - why? - 'for your miseries that shall come upon you' [verse 1]. And Peter says, 'Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ' [1 Pet. 1:13]. John uses exactly the same argument in his first letter, and, of course, the whole of the Book of Revelation is confined to this theme. This teaching is everywhere! All these men use it as a great argument. Everything is to be viewed in the light of the teaching about the salvation which is yet to come.

So it is clear that in Romans 13 Paul is referring to none other than the great doctrine concerning our Lord's second coming, His appearing again in this world. He has been here once; He is coming again. The author of Hebrews puts it like this: 'And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the

second time without sin' – not in connection with sin this time – 'but unto salvation' [*Heb. 9:27-28*]. And this teaching is generally used, as Paul uses it here, in terms of a great appeal for conduct on the part of Christian people who know and believe these things.

Again, let me remind you that we are obviously dealing with something that is unique and confined solely to Christian teaching. Nobody else knows anything about this doctrine. Not only are non-Christians not interested, they ridicule it. To them it is a joke, a foolish idea that is believed by these obscurantists who call themselves Christians. But as we have seen, it is integral to New Testament teaching.

In order that we may gather the full weight of this doctrine, we must be clear as to what the teaching is. 'Knowing . . .', says Paul, and that includes knowing something about the form in which this great event will take place. And there is no difficulty about this, for we are given abundant teaching. We are told that when the Apostles were standing on the Mount of Olives and looking up into heaven, 'Two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' [*Acts 1:10-11*]. That is it!

The second coming of our Lord will not be a spiritual coming, as many have tried to explain it away, but will be seen with the naked eye. It will be in a body, a glorified body but still a body. Our Lord Himself taught this. He said, 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven' [*Matt. 26:64*].

The Book of Revelation is full of this teaching: 'Every eye shall see him' [*Rev. 1:7*]. When He appears again, it will be the mightiest event that the cosmos has ever known or can ever know. He will not come as He came the first time – it will not be as a babe but as the great 'Lord of lords, and King of kings' [*Rev. 17:14*], 'conquering, and to conquer' [*Rev. 6:2*].

But what is the purpose of His coming? This, again, is equally clear. He will come to complete the work. Now when I say 'complete', I am not talking about the work of atonement – that is already complete. But He will come to complete the

work for which He originally came, the work He was sent into the world to accomplish. John tells us what this is. He came 'that he might destroy the works of the devil' [1 John 3:8]. He came to undo, to nullify, everything that the devil had done. That describes His work in its general form, but I shall refer to other elements as we go along.

But immediately, when our Lord comes again, there will be a general resurrection both of the good and of the bad. Our Lord taught that there will be a rising from the dead for the purpose of the judgment that He will come to execute. That is what Paul was referring to in Athens when he said that God 'hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained' [Acts 17:31]. In our Lord's teaching, this is found in John 5:24-25, and also in Matthew 25 in our Lord's three pictures or parables. In each parable He emphasizes this element of judgment – that He will return to judge and to pass sentence – and then, having done that, He will set up His eternal kingdom of glory. As Peter puts it, 'Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' [2 Pet. 3:13].

So there it is in general terms, but let us look a little more closely at the consequences, because if Paul's argument is to carry weight with us and to influence us, then we must know the teaching in detail. The first aspect – and we must put this first in view of the Apostle's words in verse 13 – is 'that there should be time no longer' [Rev. 10:6]. That is a great statement. We are still living in this particular time – 'knowing the time'. But then, when He has come, time will come to an end. God starts time and He ends it.

What else? Peter tells us that 'the elements shall melt with fervent heat' [2 Pet. 3:10]. We must always realize, as the Apostle has reminded us in Romans 8, that it is not merely man who has fallen, the whole of creation has fallen with him. So in order to get rid of all the works and the effects of the devil and of evil and of sin, the very elements will be melted in the heat. There will be a dissolution that will purge evil and all its influences and pollution out of the whole cosmos. And that, of course, is but preliminary to a kind of grand reconstruction of the entire universe.

Our Lord Himself taught this most plainly in Matthew 19. We read in verses 27 to 28: 'Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'

Now the interesting word there is the word 'regeneration'. We are familiar with the term in the context of what happens to us when we are born again, when we become Christians. It has the same general meaning here, but now it is not speaking of anything that happens in us, but of something that will happen to the entire cosmos. The whole universe was affected by the fall, so that we do not see it now as it was originally. But it will be restored when the great regeneration takes place after our Lord has returned.

But in many ways, the best statement of this total restoration is the one we considered when we were studying Romans 8: 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' [verses 18-22].

That is the exposition of the word regeneration in our Lord's teaching. The word translated 'creature' means 'creation' – not only the animals, but everything – the rocks, the flowers, the trees – everything bears marks of the Fall of man. When man fell, part of the punishment was that God cursed the ground [Gen. 3:17]. There was the Flood with all the cataclysmic events involved in it. But all that will be done away with, and the universe will be restored to its original condition, as it was created by God.

The Apostle makes exactly the same point in Ephesians: God 'having made known unto us the mystery of his will,

according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him' [*Eph.* 1:9-10]. And we must never diminish this in any way whatsoever. That is what will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again into this world. Not only humanity, but the whole cosmos will be involved.

But to return to human beings, we must make clear a fact of which the world is ignorant – for the world, all this will mean condemnation and a committal to eternal punishment. The devil and all the fallen angels, and all who have listened to them, and been duped by them, and who have served them rather than God, all these will be cast from the presence of the Lord into everlasting destruction. The world, of course, regards this as monstrous, impossible and ridiculous, but it is the plain teaching throughout the Scriptures.

In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul writes in a terrifying manner of this judgment. He says, '... when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that day' [*2 Thess.* 1:7-10]. But the world knows nothing about this; that is why it is as it is and lives as it does.

Our Lord teaches in the same way. He talks about the place 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' [*Mark* 9:44, 46, 48]. It is He who says, 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' [*Matt.* 8:12]. It is He who tells of Dives (the rich man) and Lazarus, and points out that 'a great gulf' is 'fixed', so that if we belong to the section where Dives is, then there is nothing to anticipate but terrible punishment [*Luke* 16:19-31]. And in His three parables in Matthew 25, He again deals with this very issue. He tells how the Son of Man will turn to those on His left hand and say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these shall go away into everlasting

punishment: but the righteous into life eternal' [Matt. 25:41, 46].

Now if you believe that the Scriptures are the divinely inspired words of God Himself given through men, then you believe that the whole of the Bible is leading up to this final judgment. And it is inevitable, of course, because otherwise the devil has defeated God. This must be the end, as we are told quite plainly by the Lord Himself and by His Apostles, as we have been previously told by the prophets who foresaw His coming and who generally fused, as it were, the first and the second comings – 'the day of the LORD's vengeance' [e.g. Isa. 34:8].

But the thought I want to leave uppermost in your minds is the significance for Christians of the second coming of our blessed Lord and Saviour, because that, after all, is what the Apostle is talking about here in Romans 13. He is addressing members of the church, and while he reminds them that he has taught them about the general consequences of our Lord's coming, and the consequences to unbelievers, he is particularly concerned about all this with respect to those who are believers. He says: You know about this great day that is coming.

So what do we know about it and how does this become a motive for holy living? What will be the effect upon believers of the Lord's coming again in judgment to wind up the whole of salvation? Well, you can divide it in the following ways. First, is there anyone, I wonder, who will be surprised when I say that when our Lord comes again there will be a judgment of believers? Let us be clear about this – it will not be a judgment in the sense that our salvation will be in question. No, it is what is called 'a judgment of rewards'.

Here is the evidence for that. John puts it like this: 'And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming' [1 John 2:28]. Now John does not say that we shall be lost when He comes. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' [Rom. 8:1]. That is settled.

But though you are saved, you may be 'ashamed at his coming'. And that is the motive that Paul puts forward here.

He says in effect, You know that He is coming; so, remember this: be careful that you are not ashamed when He comes.

We find this teaching expressed perfectly in 1 Corinthians 3, where Paul is dealing with the respective positions of himself and Apollos. The silly people in Corinth had been putting one up against another, so he says, 'We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble' – then – 'every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire' [1 Cor. 3:9-15].

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul shows that at the judgment the question of our salvation is not involved, but what is involved is the question of our reward. A man or woman may suffer loss, and all they have done may be useless, as it were; nevertheless, they will still be saved 'yet so as by fire'.

These are the things that we must bear in mind. This is of the very essence of Paul's argument to us: a judgment of our works, a judgment of rewards. He repeats that in 2 Corinthians 5:8-11: 'We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad' – Paul is writing solely about Christians here – 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.' There is no question about this – as Peter says, 'Judgment must begin at the house of God' [1 Pet. 4:17], and that is the sort of judgment that will begin there.

So the first thing we must realize about this second coming

of the Lord as far as we are concerned, is that it will judge us. I am emphasizing this. I know many people who are very interested in the whole matter of the second coming, and though they regard themselves as experts on it, and on the times and seasons, they never mention this judgment of Christians. They would not talk so glibly if they realized that the first aspect to emphasize is that every one of us must appear before the judgment throne, or judgment seat, of Christ.

Secondly, at our Lord's coming, we shall see Him, and see Him as He is. That is the prospect awaiting us as Christian people. I go beyond that. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God' [Matt. 5:8], but if you really want to understand the fulness of this salvation, the point to grasp is that it involves the body as well as the spirit and the soul.

Listen to Paul in Romans 8:11: 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' And in verse 23, after he has said in verse 22 that 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now', he says, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' The body will be redeemed; it will be glorified.

'Beloved, now are we the sons of God,' says John, 'and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' [1 John 3:2]. That is 'glorification'! The entire person will be completely and perfectly redeemed; there will be no trace in any part of us – body, soul or spirit – of the effects of sin and evil. All the works of the devil will be taken out of us, as from the whole cosmos, and we shall be perfect and entire 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing' [Eph. 5:27] in the presence of God.

And, in addition to that – and if this is not a motive that works with us, whatever will? – not only will all this happen to us, but we shall be privileged to hear certain words uttered by God Himself. Our Lord Himself tells us these words: listen to them in Matthew 25. Here our Lord is dealing with people who have been given certain talents by their lord, who, when

he returns, says, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord' [verse 21]. And in verse 23: 'His lord said unto him' – another servant – 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.' Our Lord is talking about His future coming, and that is how He puts it.

Then in verse 34, we read: 'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' And, finally, in verse 46: 'The righteous into life eternal.' These are but some of the things that await us who know these things.

Let the Apostle himself put it again, in that most moving statement in his last letter: 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing' [2 Tim. 4:6–8]. That is what we are looking forward to; these are the things we know. We shall receive a crown of righteousness from His blessed hands; we shall be crowned. 'The crowning day is coming by and by'!

And then, as Paul works it out so gloriously in 1 Corinthians 13:12, 'Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.' Full knowledge, full understanding, full enjoyment.

Now the Apostle compresses all that, and infinitely more, into this brief statement that we are examining together: 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' That is it! And that is true of us! Here we are now, in the flesh, but that is what we are going on to. This is the motive, this is the appeal, this is the argument.

Do we know this? Are we living by this? Is this the grand motive in our lives? This is the Christian position; this is the thing by which and on which we should live. It is this that enabled the Apostle to face all those possibilities at the end of that eighth chapter of this great Epistle to the Romans. Led as

sheep to the slaughter, suffering and buffeted every day, but it does not matter, for I know: 'For I am persuaded' – I am certain – 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' [*Rom. 8:38-39*].

In Romans 8:30, Paul has made the grand leap: 'Whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Are you living in the light of your glorification? Do you know about the salvation, the day, 'that day', 'the day of the Lord', the day of the Son of God, the day of His glorification – finally, fully – and ours also, with the devil and all that belongs to him destroyed and banished for ever and for ever? May God, by His Spirit, through the Word, bring these things to our knowledge in a living manner.

Are you living in the light of your glorification?

Nineteen

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

We are examining the last argument that the Apostle produces to encourage the Roman Christians, and us, to live the Christian life as he has been outlining it from the beginning of chapter 4. We have seen that in these verses Paul blends doctrinal argument with practical application, as he always does. You must never isolate Christian living from doctrine. The two are indissolubly bound together and we divide them at our peril. And the Apostle here, very typically, does not keep them separate even as he writes them down – he mixes the two together. Yet there is a clear doctrinal argument here, and an application. So we are first working out the doctrinal argument, and that will lead us to the practical teaching.

Now we have seen three aspects already. The first is that the Apostle assumes that we know and understand the time in which we are living. Secondly, we have seen that because we have that view of time, we obviously have a very special view of life in this world. And then, thirdly, we have seen that we also have a definite outlook upon the future.

And so we come now to the fourth principle, about which the Apostle is equally concerned to remind us, and this is the great change that we know has taken place in us. This is implicit in the three points we have already considered: it is the reason why we take a different view of time, of life in this world and of the future from the vast majority of people. It is not that we are inherently different from other people, or that we have more ability, or that we are better than they are. No, it is entirely due to the fact that this change has taken place in us.

Paul again brings that out in two words. First, he says, 'Now is *our* salvation . . .'. You remember that this means, 'the salvation as far as we are concerned', and the word 'our' sums it up very well. The second word is the little word 'us': 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let *us* therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let *us* put on the armour of light. Let *us* walk honestly, as in the day.'

Now the 'us' is a differentiating word. The world is divided up into 'us' and 'them', and Paul does not make his appeal to them, but only to us. This is, of course, quite basic, and it is where so much of the modern confusion arises. There is a sharp, fundamental distinction between the church and the world and this appeal can only be made to those who are in the church, to believers. The New Testament writings are therefore not concerned to appeal to the world for right conduct. That is not their business.

Now salvation must never be thought of primarily or essentially in terms of feelings or experiences. They are involved, but in many ways they are the least important part of our salvation. The great thing is that we no longer belong to 'them'. This change in our state, in our condition, and, still more important, this change in our position, is a major aspect of our salvation. Our feelings come and go, but, thank God, they do not make any difference to our position, to our real condition and our relationship with God.

Let me use a simple illustration. Imagine a child who belongs to a great family, say the royal family, and then think of another child outside that family. Now the child of the royal family may be very miserable, while the child outside is full of happiness because everything is going well. But this variation

in the feelings does not make any difference at all to the relationship, to the position. Though that royal child feels he is having a hard time, he is still a member of the royal family. And the happiness of the other child does not bring about a change in his position; he still belongs to the family into which he was born. And this is the great truth that is emphasized throughout the New Testament. Whatever your feelings, the great question you must ask yourself is not, 'What do I feel like?' but, 'What am I?'

I am reminded of the story concerning the well-known Scottish evangelist, John McNeil. When preaching on the subject of assurance, he used this illustration to show how treacherous feelings can be. As an evangelist, he was often away from home, and on one occasion he came back feeling depressed for various reasons. He told his wife that he felt that he was a stranger and did not really belong to the family. But she turned on him and said, 'Whatever you may feel, you are my husband and the father of these children. This is a question that is not determined by feelings; the relationship is a fact.'

Whatever we may feel, thank God that is not what ultimately matters; it is what we are that is the deciding factor. Do we belong to this 'us', this 'our', or are we still with the world and belonging to 'them' – those who are outside? This is a tremendous question because what the New Testament tells us about 'us' is that we have been taken from the darkness and have been put into the light. We no longer belong to the night; we belong to the day. This is the fact that the Apostle says we know, and it is because of this that he can make his appeal to us.

'I am the light of the world,' says our Lord, 'he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' [*John* 8:12]. That is His way of putting this. When the Apostle Paul received his commission on the road to Damascus, as we have seen, it was given to him in these very terms. The risen Lord said to him, 'I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their

eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God' – then – 'that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me' [Acts 26:16-18]. But the great thing is this change: 'darkness to light', 'from the power of Satan unto God'.

As we have seen, it is not surprising that the Apostle should constantly express our salvation in terms of darkness and light. So he says to the Colossians, 'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son' [Col. 1:12-13]. That is what we must take hold of, and that is what the Apostle is emphasizing here.

Of course, as I have pointed out, Paul is summing up what he has been saying in many different places. He said all this in Romans 6, where he starts with the question, 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' Notice the 'we'. The answer is, 'God forbid. How shall *we*, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' Now you can only say that about a Christian. Anyone who is not a Christian does not belong to this 'we'. Then Paul continues, 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him' [Rom. 6:1-6].

But because this great change is such a fundamental point to the Apostle, he goes on repeating it in chapter 7. At the beginning of that chapter, he reminds the people of what they know of the law, and uses the illustration of a woman who is bound to her husband by the law as long as he is alive, but the moment he dies, she can marry again. And if she does, she is not an adulteress. Because he died, she is free from that law.

In verse 4, the Apostle applies that illustration: 'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of

Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' Nobody can do that unless this inner change has taken place. The natural man cannot bring forth fruit unto God. He is only capable of what the Scriptures call 'dead works', without life, and without fruit. 'For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter' [*Rom.* 7:5-6]. It is the same argument all along.

And then in the eighth chapter, the Apostle repeats it again. 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death' – he is talking about himself but he is representative of all other Christians – 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh' – why? – 'that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us' – who are we? – 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

Then Paul works out this great contrast: 'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded' – here it is – 'is life and peace' [*Rom.* 8:2-6]. We are all in one or other of these two groups, and Paul is saying that as Christians we are no longer in the flesh, we are no longer under the law, we are no longer carnally minded. We are in Christ. We mind the things of the Spirit and walk after the Spirit.

Now this is just another way of putting the great doctrine of the new birth, the rebirth – and this is the essence of Christianity. We can never say too often that Christians are men and women who are born again. That is why they are essentially different from non-Christians. They are not merely a little bit better: the point about them is that they are absolutely different. There is a difference in nature and a difference in relationship.

Take my illustration of the two children, one of whom is a member of the royal family. Now he may be much less able

than the other child, he may be inferior in every way – royal birth does not guarantee intelligence or any other ability. But what matters is not ability but the fact of birth.

And it is exactly the same in the Christian life. This is the explanation for something that often causes people much confusion. They do not understand how it is that a man of the world who is not a Christian sometimes appears to be a very much better person, living a very much better life, than a Christian whom they know. They say, 'This man isn't a Christian and this other one is, but look at their lives!'

But that is just a complete misunderstanding of the doctrine of the rebirth. You judge whether or not people Christians, not by their behaviour, but by their nature. And the truth is that the Christian is born again, with a new nature. Christians are partakers of the divine nature. Now they ought to be altogether better than non-Christians, and that is the very argument that the Apostle is using here. Us! We! What we ought to be because of what we are! This is something that we must lay hold of very carefully.

Now this kind of argument is not confined to the Apostle Paul; the other New Testament writers make use of it also. Peter puts it like this: 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love another with a pure heart fervently' [1 Pet. 1:22]. He is appealing to them to love the brethren, and the very term 'brethren' makes the point. We are members together of the same family. But Peter does not take this for granted. He puts it plainly for us. Why does he make this appeal? The answer is in the next verse: 'Being' – you have been – 'born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' [1 Pet. 1:23]. You have become one of the brethren only by being born again of incorruptible seed; no man or woman is a member of God's family if that birth has not taken place.

John's teaching is the same: 'All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness' –

in the wicked one [1 *John* 5:17-19]. You see the distinction? John says, 'we are of God'; 'the world' – no, it is not of God – 'lieth in the wicked one'. And the devil not only touches them, he has them in his embrace; he controls them completely.

And here in Romans 13, the Apostle assumes that we know this teaching. 'Knowing this' – that we are in this special position, that this applies to us, that it is only true of people who are in our position. This is not pharisaism because it is entirely due to the new birth, not to anything that we have produced. It is the people who are not Christians who are the modern Pharisees. They are the self-contained, self-satisfied men and women of the world who believe in morality and ethics and say that they do not need the new birth and dislike its teaching. Pharisees never like the doctrine of the new birth because they claim they can make themselves good. But we say that we are what we are by the grace of God.

The Apostle assumes that we know all this; but at this point he introduces a statement that at first looks as if he is contradicting himself. In verse 12, he says, 'the day is at hand', while in verse 13, he tells us to walk honestly, 'as in the day'. How do you reconcile these two statements? How can we be walking in the day, if the day is yet to come, if it is still awaiting us?

Of course, we know that there is never a real contradiction in the Scripture. We believe that is impossible because it is divinely inspired, and in actual practice there is never any contradiction. If your interpretation of one Scripture makes it contradict another, you can be sure that your interpretation of one or the other, or perhaps of both, is wrong. We therefore know that the contradiction here is only apparent. So how do we deal with it?

Well, this again opens out before us a wonderful doctrine – the doctrine concerning our position as Christians. The apparent contradiction is resolved in this way: 'the day' is in the future, Paul has made that quite clear. But the wonderful thing is that we who are Christians already belong to 'the day', even while we are still living in this world. Though it is true that the day is yet to come, we are there in spirit.

The clearest explanation of this truth is found in the Scripture itself. The Apostle has already put this point in the tenth verse of the eighth chapter. In verse 9, he says, 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his' – he is not a Christian at all. And verse 10 continues, 'And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.' The Apostle warns that we are already as saved as we ever shall be as regards the spirit, but not as regards the body. So he then goes on to say, 'But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

Let us call in Peter to help us to understand Paul. Peter, who was a simpler man, puts it like this: 'For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit' [1 Pet. 4:6]. It is exactly the same distinction. We still have to die – the body must die – but in a spiritual sense, we have passed through death unto life in the spirit. That is why it is true to say that Christians never really die. The body dies, but they do not, they fall asleep [Acts 7:60].

Take again Paul's words in chapter 6 of this great Epistle. Here he reminds us that we are joined to Christ; we died with Him, we were buried with Him, but also, he says, we have risen with Him: 'Now if we be dead with Christ' – and when he says 'if', he means, 'as we are', or, 'because we are' – 'we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord' [verses 8-11]. That is our position. We are 'dead with Christ' and 'alive unto God'. The Apostle puts it still more strongly in verse 14: 'For sin shall not have dominion over you' – why not? – 'for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' This has already happened. We already belong to the realm of the day though we are still in this world of time.

And then, as I have repeatedly reminded you, the Apostle puts this in a most wonderful way in the eighth chapter where he summarizes for us this whole process of salvation: 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified' [Rom. 8:29-30]. Now that is speaking of us. Spiritually speaking, we are already glorified though we are still in this world and our bodies are not yet glorified. In the eyes of God it has all happened and we are there in the realm of the Spirit.

The Apostle constantly plays on this idea because it is the most enthralling idea that one can ever grasp. Take, for instance, the way he works it out in the famous passage in 2 Corinthians 6:14: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' – why not? People seem to spend so much time arguing about what that means that they forget the reasons, which are much more important. Here is Paul's argument. 'For', he says, 'what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?' He is saying there that you and I are righteous.

'But I still sin,' you say. 'I'm aware of my unrighteousness.'

That is perfectly true. But actually you are righteous. 'God', as Paul reminds us in Romans 4, 'justifieth the ungodly' [verse 5], declaring him to be righteous in Christ. 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' [2 Cor. 5:21].

But let us go on with Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 6. 'What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?' he asks. Then: 'What communion hath light with darkness?'

'Well,' you say, 'but we've moved into philosophy now. Of course it's true that you can't mix light with darkness.'

But this is not a bit of philosophy. Paul is telling us why we should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and his reason is that we are light and they are darkness. In one sense, the light is yet to come, but we are already in it.

Then: 'What concord hath Christ with Belial?' Now 'Christ',

at this point, really means Christians, and Paul says that we have no 'concord with Belial'. And he continues: 'Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore' – in the light of these things that are true of you – 'come out from among them, and be ye separate' [2 Cor. 6:14-17].

But this is stated still more plainly and clearly in Ephesians 2:4-5, which is one of the most amazing passages that the Apostle ever wrote: 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, [by grace are ye saved;] – we are all clear about that, are we not? We have been quickened, we are born again, we are no longer dead in trespasses and sins, we are alive: we know this.

But then Paul goes on to say: 'And hath raised us up together' – you are still in agreement, are you not? It is quite true. We know that we have been 'raised' from the death of sin; we are alive. We are spiritual people – otherwise we would not be studying this passage. So there is no trouble here. Then – 'and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' That is equally true of us and yet we tend to forget. That is what the Apostle means in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 when he says, 'Let us, who are of the day'. The day is yet to come. Yes, but we, though still in this world, belong to that day. In exactly the same way, at this moment, because we are Christians, and because we are 'in Christ', He has 'made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' [Eph. 2:6]. That is what we sometimes stumble at and fail to realize.

This is so thrilling that the Apostle goes on repeating it. In Ephesians 5, where he is again appealing for righteous conduct, he says: 'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.' Then: 'For ye were sometimes' – at one time – 'darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord' – and because of that – 'walk as children of light' [Eph. 5:6-8].

Now you see what he is saying? We ourselves, essentially

and spiritually are already 'light in the Lord'. But this is only true of us spiritually; there are remnants and relics of darkness still left in us: that is the old nature and is true of the body.

And then Paul says it again to the Philippians. He is once more dealing with this same question of conduct, and he says, 'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For' – here it is! – 'our conversation is in heaven' – that means, 'our citizenship is in heaven' [*Phil.* 3:17–20]. Heaven is where we belong, that is our home, though we are away from it for the time being. Though we are citizens of countries in this world, our citizenship as Christians is in heaven. But non-Christians are citizens only of earthly kingdoms.

The Apostle puts this change that has taken place still more explicitly to the Thessalonians. Here is his argument: 'But of the times and seasons' – of this great day – 'brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.' Then notice the contrast: 'But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness' – and it is because of this that he says – 'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober' [*1 Thess.* 5:1–6]. Is this not wonderful? You are already there, you are already 'in the day' and 'in the light', and yet it is still to come.

This is emphasized constantly in the New Testament. All the New Testament writers rejoice in saying it. Here is Peter putting it in his way: 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation' [*1 Pet.* 2:11–13]. We are in the

world and not of it; we are 'strangers and pilgrims' – people who are away from home.

And this is the great argument in the eleventh chapter of the mighty Epistle to the Hebrews. It was the whole secret of those men and women of faith. The writer puts it as plainly as anything could ever be stated: 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth' [Heb. 11:13]. They knew! They already, in anticipation – proleptically – belonged to the place to which they were going.

In many ways, this is the most wonderful thing we can ever realize.

There is an old hymn which goes, 'I am but a stranger here, heaven is my home.' I have heard preachers ridicule that hymn, but in doing so, they were confessing their ignorance of New Testament doctrine. It may be that they are right when they say you should not teach children to sing hymns like that without their knowing what they are singing, and we do sing such words so glibly, do we not? But for Christians, it is nothing but the simple truth.

*The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
From faith and hope may grow.*

Isaac Watts

We are going to the glory! We are 'waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body' [Rom. 8:23]. We are looking forward to glorification, and yet it is absolutely and equally true to say that glory has already begun for us. It is in us, and we, in a spiritual sense, are already there.

And what we experience together when we look into these wonderful and glorious things is this: foretastes of heaven! Not worldly entertainment, not even when it is purified and at its best, but 'glory begun below'. Glory has already started for us, and yet we look forward to the glory that we shall enter into fully when we have been completely rid of all the remnants

Life in Two Kingdoms

and the relics that still adhere to us of the darkness, the night and the world.

So take hold of these great thoughts: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand . . . let us walk honestly, as in the day' [*Rom.* 13:12-13]. 'Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord' [*Rom.* 6:11].

Twenty

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

Historically, and from every other standpoint, this is one of the magnificent, moving passages that are so freely scattered about in the epistles of this mighty Apostle Paul. Here he is giving us the final and the great motive for Christian living. We have considered the essential doctrines that he reminds us of here, and we now move on to the argument that inevitably arises from knowing these doctrines.

I am anxious to stress the fact that Paul is making an argument, and that this is the way in which the New Testament always presents its teaching on sanctification. We can never emphasize this too frequently. There are many other views with regard to sanctification. Some people, for example, will tell you that you can receive it as an experience. But that always seems to me to be quite incompatible with a statement such as the one we are now looking at. These verses give us the typical New Testament way of preaching sanctification – it is always this ‘therefore’, this argument. Teaching about sanctification follows on directly from the truth, the doctrine, from

everything about which we have been reminded concerning ourselves.

What, then, are some of the deductions that should inevitably be drawn from this doctrine? The first, obviously, is that we belong to the day. We have considered this in its doctrinal form, and it is the basis, as it were, of the practical argument that we must work out for ourselves. Like all the other New Testament writers, when Paul deals with this question of conduct, what he is really saying to us is this: Now do not forget what you were, but do realize that you are no longer that.

It is good for us to be reminded of what we were and what our condition was. We were under the wrath of God. That is true of the whole of humanity: 'And all the world may become guilty before God' [*Rom.* 3:19]; 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' [*Rom.* 1:18]. The Apostle started this Epistle by laying down those great propositions.

Our danger was terrible. We were face to face with nothing but perdition, and hell, and we were completely helpless. But this is the message that we have believed, this is what makes us Christians, that we have been delivered by the action of God Himself. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,' Paul has already said in the first chapter. Why not? 'For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' [verse 16]. Or, as he puts it in that favourite way of his in the third chapter, where, having said that we are all under condemnation, he continues, 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now' – and here is all the difference, here is something new, known only by the Christian – 'the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets . . . for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' [*Rom.* 3:20–21, 23–24].

This is how Christian men and women face the problem of living in a world like this. They do not just look at actions or possibilities, they start by reminding themselves that they were hopeless sinners under the wrath of God and facing

nothing but hell, sinners whom God, out of His infinite grace and kindness, and love, mercy and compassion, has delivered, even at the cost of the death and shed blood of His only begotten Son. That is what Paul is saying.

Elsewhere Paul writes, 'Know ye not . . . ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price' [1 Cor. 6:19-20]. Peter uses exactly the same argument: 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers' – what with then? – 'but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' [1 Pet. 1:18-19]. That is why you ought to live in this way: 'Be ye holy; for I am holy' [1 Pet. 1:16]. And this was the whole object of the coming of the Son of God into the world.

Our Lord did not merely come to deliver us from punishment and from hell. He did do that, that was His first object, but the work of the Lord was not merely negative. Though this is implied in this passage here, Paul states it explicitly in many other places. There is, for example, no better statement of the positive purpose of the atonement than in Titus 2:14: 'Who gave himself for us' – what for? – 'that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

So often we stop at forgiveness and regard the cross merely as a message of forgiveness. Some people carry this to a ridiculous extreme by saying that you can take Christ as your Saviour and perhaps go on like that for years, and then later on take Him as the One who sanctifies you, or as your Lord. What an abuse of Scripture! What a wresting of Scripture in a wrong way! You cannot separate these doctrines. In the words of Cecil Frances Alexander, He died not only that 'we might be forgiven', but, 'He died to make us good.' That was the whole object of everything He did. Indeed, the angel who announced his coming said that to Joseph: 'He shall save his people from their sins' [Matt. 1:21]. Not from sin, but from sins.

Further, God's ultimate object is that we might be 'partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light' [Col. 1:12]. Peter says that our Lord came and did all that He did, 'that he might bring us to God' [1 Pet. 3:18]; it was to bring us to glory. John makes the same point. The Son of God has come, John says, 'that he

might destroy' – undo, nullify – 'the works of the devil' [1 John 3:8]. That is not negative but positive. He came to restore all things, that all things might again minister to the glory of God.

So this is a part of Paul's argument, and this is how the New Testament presents us with the teaching of sanctification. Paul has said: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God' – that is it – 'that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice' [Rom. 12:1]. And here he sums it all up again, but you and I must work out the argument. The trouble with so many of us is that, instead of facing the problem of Christian living in this way, we tend to face it in terms of particular sins and problems. So often, as people talk to me, I find that they do not follow a line of argument, as the Apostle tells us to do, but they look at things in and of themselves. That is to reduce Christianity and Christian living to the level of morality. No, this is the Christian way; you must see its inevitability from the great doctrine that you already claim to have believed.

But let me put it to you again in terms of particular arguments that you work out. Having seen that the great object of redemption is deliverance from the captivity of sin and Satan, and from the darkness and the night, you then go on and see that the second argument is the inconsistency, therefore, of still living in the old way.

It seems so simple, does it not, and it should be obvious. So why are any of us in trouble? Why do we experience remorse and repentance, and why are we miserable and cast down and defeated? It is because we have not grasped as we should, or have temporarily forgotten, something that is so simple. 'Knowing the time, that . . .'. Yes, but we do not; that is why Paul had to write his letter, and that is why preaching is still necessary. Paul says, 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not . . .' – it is utterly inconsistent to behave in any other way. 'Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.'

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul works out the argument for us in greater detail: 'This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.' Why not? Because you are no longer one of them. You were: you were Gentiles and you lived the life of the Gentiles, but you are now something different. They walked, 'in the vanity

of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness' – then – 'But ye have not so learned Christ' – is that what you have learned from Him? Is that the truth that you claim to have believed concerning the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, as the Saviour of your soul? – 'if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus' [Eph. 4:17-21].

Paul is saying: You really must face this. Is Christ the author of sin? Did He simply come into the world to enable you to go on sinning because He guarantees that you will be forgiven when you sin? Is that what you have learned, is that the gospel you have received, that Christ just provides you with a safe way of sinning since, however much you sin, you know He has died for you and you are covered by His blood? If you think that, then you are denying Him. That is nothing but anti-nomianism and, as we have seen, there is nothing more dangerous. 'Ye have not so learned Christ'!

The Apostle John puts it even more strongly. People call John the Apostle of love, and he is that, as are all the Apostles. But John is greatly misunderstood in this respect; he is much more severe than the Apostle Paul ever is. This is how John puts it: 'This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth' [1 John 1:5-6]. He puts it still more strongly in the second chapter: 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him' [1 John 2:4].

That is scriptural teaching, and it is very different, is it not, from appealing for people to come forward to receive the blessing of sanctification? Where has such teaching come from? It is not in the Scriptures; it contradicts them. The Scriptures teach that if you say you know Him, and are living in darkness, then the only thing that can be said is that you are a liar, a barefaced liar, and the truth is not in you. 'Ye have not so learned Christ.'

Peter, too, works out the utter inconsistency of saying that

we know these things while living as if we did not. He says, 'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you' [1 Pet. 4:1-4]. You work out the argument: it is completely inconsistent to continue living and behaving in the way that we did before we were born again. We can never emphasize this too strongly.

But we must also realize the danger of living as if we belonged to the night and as if we were still in the darkness. The Apostle is appealing to us to 'walk honestly' because we now belong to the day, and then he tells us what we must not do. He puts this quite clearly to Timothy: 'Having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things' – fly away from them as far as you can – 'and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life . . .' [1 Tim. 6:8-12]. Why? Because you are a 'man of God'.

'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' The alternative is always a life of loss that wars against the soul. In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle talks about a poor man called Demas: 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world' [2 Tim. 4:10]. Demas had not intended to go wrong or to go back, but had succumbed to the subtle influence of evil, to the life of the night and of the darkness.

Peter, if anything, expresses this danger still more clearly. In his first letter, we see exactly the same approach, the same way of first stating the doctrine and then drawing the deduction. 'But ye' – Peter first of all reminds his readers of who they are –

'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people' – a people for God's special possession, but for what purpose? – 'that ye should shew forth the praises' – the excellencies – 'of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' – that is what you are – 'which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy' [1 Pet. 2:9-10]. This is Christianity, and this is the way in which it presents the doctrine of sanctification. You were that, but not any longer; now realize positively who you are.

And then Peter continues quite practically: 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you' – the word that Paul also uses – 'as strangers and pilgrims' – which, as we have seen, is just another way of telling us that we are no longer what we used to be, that we no longer belong to this world, but are travellers, people away from home, whose citizenship is in heaven. This is pure argument. Remember that the honour of your homeland and of your family is in your hands, and you are here to reveal Him and to show forth His excellencies. '. . . as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts' – why? – 'which war against the soul.'

Now Peter is writing to Christians, remember. You see the artificiality that has often come in with false holiness teaching? You must realize that you are still face to face with these powers that 'war against the soul', and they are dangerous. John Bunyan has put this once and for ever in *The Pilgrim's Progress* where he talks about Christian and Faithful going through Vanity Fair. That is what the world is. Read old Bunyan again and you will see how people, failing to remember that they are pilgrims and strangers, become interested in the world and turn aside. So they get into trouble and have to be extricated.

The point I am making is that we must not look at these 'fleshly lusts' in and of themselves. I constantly say this because I find that people always come to me about the problem in and of itself. And all I have to do is to say, 'Look here, relate all this to your soul; don't be praying so much about the particular temptation – you are then suggesting it to yourself – but realize the truth about yourself, be positive in your whole outlook.' That is the way to overcome sin. Not

always to be dealing with the sin itself, but to see yourself as you are. And among other things, you realize that it does not matter how holy you are, sin is always dangerous: it wars against the soul.

And then in verse 12, Peter goes on to a further argument: 'Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.' You live as people of God not only for your own salvation, but because other people are watching you, and you bring the glory of God into disrepute if you fail. On the other hand, if you do the right thing and live as you should, you never know the effect you are going to have upon others. They may 'glorify God in the day of visitation' by what they have seen in and through you.

This is a great argument. These things – 'the world, the flesh and the devil' – are a positive danger to us. So we must not play with them, we must not live as near as we can to them. So many people seem to be doing that these days. A new thinking has come into evangelical circles, it seems to me, that says, 'Get as near as you can to these things.' And people think they are clever! They will soon find that they war against the soul. Indeed, the evidence is already forthcoming; there is a slipping, a lowering of standards, even in the approach to the Bible, and in everything else.

If you start making compromises in your practice, you will soon be making compromises in your beliefs – in your view of the Scriptures, for example. And I think we are witnessing a great deal of these compromises simply because we do not realize the danger of the night and of the darkness. Why should we want to be in any way similar to the world? Oh, I know the specious argument that this will help to win people. But such an approach is the exact opposite of the teaching of the New Testament.

Then another argument, or solemn deduction is the terrible danger of presumption. Now I must handle this carefully because it can be misunderstood, and often is. I am referring to the danger of glibness, the danger of wresting the Scriptures to our own destruction, to use the language of Peter [2 Pet. 3:16]. It is a false assurance that is based only upon a kind of intellectual deduction. We have already referred to this. There are people who ask, 'Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?'

And when you reply, 'Yes, I do', they say, 'Very well, then you are saved.' And they leave it at that. They do not use the arguments of the First Epistle of John, the tests as to whether or not you truly are a Christian – and, remember, according to that Epistle, keeping the commandments is a very prominent test.

Presumption is a terrible danger, and in order to deal with it, there are some terrifying passages in the Scriptures. Take the beginning of Hebrews 6: 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame' [verses 4-6].

And there is a parallel passage in the tenth chapter of Hebrews: 'For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord' [verses 26-30]. Then verse 31 continues with the tremendous statement: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

Now we are not concerned at the moment with the full exposition of those passages. I believe in the final perseverance of the saints as taught in Romans chapter 8, so why were those passages ever written? It was in order to warn us of this danger of presumption. Christians must never live solely in the realm of the intellect. They are not allowed to. You can argue intellectually about assurance, but if you only do that, you may be going to hell. Christians must be consistent. Men and women who really are Christians are concerned as much about their hearts and their wills as they are about their minds.

Theoretical people who live a life that is the exact opposite of what they claim to believe are in the greatest possible danger, and should always be pointed to Hebrews chapters 6 and 10.

There are other Scriptures that give the same teaching: 'Wherefore, my beloved,' says Paul to the Philippians, 'as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' [*Phil.* 2:12-13]. Not, 'Take it by faith'; not, 'Hand it all over to the Lord.' No, work it out yourself, but, remember, 'with fear and trembling'.

'But,' you say, 'where is Paul's faith? How can he possibly say a thing like that? I'm saved. Everything is settled. I don't have any doubts or troubles. Why does the Apostle speak of 'fear and trembling'?

It is because Christians know something about the holiness of God. That is why they always walk and approach God 'with reverence and godly fear' [*Heb.* 12:28]. It seems to me that the Apostle Paul knew more about this than anybody. He preached and lived in fear and trembling. But this is not a craven fear. This is the fear of offending against such a loving God and Father, the fear of in any way bringing the gospel into disrepute, the fear of falling by the wayside. As Paul says, '... lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway' [*1 Cor.* 9:27], which means disapproved or disqualified.

'Let your moderation be known unto all men,' says Paul in Philippians 4:5. Why? 'The Lord is at hand.' It is the same argument. Though Christians are assured of their salvation, they walk in the fear of the Lord. This is what our fathers used to call 'godliness', but we hear so little about it today. Instead, we are faced with the glib assurance and the business methods of worldliness. But all that is foreign to the New Testament: everything here is in fear and trembling. There is 'the joy of the Lord' but it is a holy joy. It never presumes; it is never glib; it is never slick; it is never superficial.

James puts it perfectly clearly in his way: 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter

rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure' [James 5:7-11].

James has already addressed the rich: 'Go to now,' he says, 'ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you' [James 5:1-6]. And then he tells those who have suffered to be patient, but it is all in terms of the 'coming of the Lord'.

Peter uses the same argument: 'The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer' [1 Pet. 4:7]. Then: 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer' – remember, he is writing to Christian believers! – 'or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' [1 Pet. 4:15-18]. I need say no more. All these are warnings against presumption.

But let me turn to another note. Those are the warnings, now let us look at the positive teaching. Think of the glory that is coming, that is awaiting us – this 'day' of which Paul writes. We saw in a previous study how wonderfully John expresses this in the third chapter of his first letter. We have also had it all in Romans chapter 8 when Paul refers to 'the

manifestation of the sons of God' [verse 19]. 'For I reckon', he says, 'that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us' [verse 18]. That is about us! That is coming!

So the final argument is the shortness of the time that we have to prepare for this glory that awaits us. The epistles are full of this kind of exhortation: 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory' [*Col.* 3:1-4]. Do you know what comes after that? 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth' [verse 5] – because of that glory that is coming. It is coming to you! You shall be manifested, you shall appear with Him in glory, and you will be glorified by Him.

And Peter says, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' [*2 Pet.* 1:10-11]. There is not much time; the day is at hand. We must be preparing! 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless' [*2 Pet.* 3:11-14]. It is all an appeal based upon an argument; you are reasoning it through. As John says, 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself' [*1 John* 3:3].

Let the Book of Revelation speak the last word to us on this subject. It is a great picture: 'I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give

honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is' – what? – 'the righteousness of saints' [Rev. 19:6-8].

The church is the bride of Christ, and the appeal is this: Prepare your trousseau, your wedding clothes. Get ready for the marriage ceremony. Get ready for this great wedding that is to take place. The fine linen is righteousness. Be diligent! It is coming! 'The day is at hand.' Prepare for this glorious wedding of the Bridegroom with His bride, the church, of which you and I by the grace of God are members, having been called by Him out of the darkness into His marvellous light, translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Twenty-one

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

We have seen that in order that we may pay heed to the exhortation that Paul has been giving us since the beginning of Romans chapter 12, we must know and grasp and understand these doctrines that we have considered together. And then, knowing them, we are able to draw together the deductions.

But before we go on to what I have described as the second division of this final subsection – the practical application – there is one point we must deal with, a kind of residual point that comes under the heading of doctrine. This is the whole question of what the Apostle really believed about the nearness of the coming of the Lord.

Now you notice certain phrases that Paul uses. He says, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' That is not the difficult phrase, but it introduces the others. The difficult statements are: 'The night is far spent', and, 'The day is at hand.' We know that this expression 'the day', found so often in the New Testament, is generally associated with the coming of the Lord, and here, on the surface, the Apostle

seems to be teaching that he thinks that this is very near, 'at hand'. Now a great deal has been made of this, and we must therefore consider it.

There is a teaching, which began in the nineteenth century but has been very popular in the twentieth century, that says that at the beginning of his life as an Apostle, Paul expected the Lord to return almost at any moment. It is also maintained that this was the opinion of all the early Christians. Indeed, some of the exponents of this teaching go further and say that our Lord Himself thought that. This was the conclusion drawn by Dr Albert Schweitzer, who, as we have seen, used that argument to deal with liberal theologians who were attempting to reconstruct what they called 'the Jesus of history'.

Schweitzer showed that one of the main emphases of our Lord's teaching was His coming again to conquer His enemies and to set up His eternal kingdom. But while he rejected the liberal Jesus of history, he also rejected the Christ of the New Testament, who is the Saviour of the world. He made out that our Lord was merely in some kind of ecstatic condition and as a man had exaggerated notions of His own importance. That is the kind of teaching with which we are now dealing. It holds that the Apostles and others were confident that the return of our Lord was imminent.

Those who hold this view go on to say that as the years passed and our Lord did not return, the Apostle Paul changed his mind, and came to the conclusion that his first view was wrong. Furthermore, he felt that he must prepare Christian people and the Christian church for a long period of time before the second coming. They point out that in Paul's later letters, you therefore do not find teaching about an imminent return. But they are in some trouble over this thirteenth chapter of Romans because here, they say, Paul is teaching that the return of the Lord is at hand. They therefore maintain that Paul became a kind of intellectual backslider at this point, and reverted to his former wrong teaching. They say that this is the only place he mentions it in this Epistle, or in any of his later letters, so he made a slip, as it were.

Now this is important for us because it is one of the subtle ways in which an attack is made upon the inspiration of

Scripture. If it could be established that the Apostle Paul has made a mistake, and that the teaching in his early epistles is wrong, then you could no longer claim that Paul's epistles are the result of the unique and special inspiration of the Spirit who guided him infallibly. This false view says that the Apostles were inspired as poets can be inspired, but that, of course, they not only can, but do, make mistakes, and here is a glaring example. So in the interests of our belief not only in the reliability but also in the infallibility of the Scriptures, it is essential that we should deal with this argument.

The case that is put forward is essentially that in some of the early epistles, particularly 1 and 2 Thessalonians, there is unmistakable evidence that the Apostle believed in the imminent return of our Lord. Take, for instance, 1 Thessalonians 4:15, where Paul refers to the fact that we who are alive at the coming of the Lord shall not go before ('prevent') those who are dead ('asleep'). This is proof, it is said, that Paul obviously believed that the second coming was going to happen in his own time. It is also said that Paul virtually makes the same point in 1 Thessalonians 5, and also in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, where, writing to comfort people who are being persecuted, he says, 'Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.' It is thought that the whole background to that is the belief in the imminence of our Lord's return.

It is claimed that there is similar evidence in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31: 'But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.' An important verse, which is always quoted, is 1 Corinthians 15:51: 'Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.'

Then in Philippians 4:5 there is a statement that seems to lend weight to this argument: 'Let your moderation be known

unto all men' – why? – 'The Lord is at hand.' But, for those who support this theory, that does not help as much as they would like, because *Philippians* is one of the later epistles!

Other New Testament writers are also quoted. Take *Hebrews* 10:37: 'For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' Again, chapter 5, verse 8, of *James* – an early letter – reads, 'Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' And Peter writes, 'But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer' [*1 Pet.* 4:7], a verse that is similar to the verses in *Romans* 13 that we are now considering.

Then, finally, in *Revelation* 22, we find, 'And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand . . . And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be' [verses 10, 12].

That is the evidence that is commonly adduced to support this particular contention. So what is the answer? Well, I have already given you what should be enough in itself: this attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the early and later epistles of Paul breaks down completely in face of the fact that some of the verses I have quoted are in later epistles, as we can see from the *Philippians* passage and this one in *Romans*.

Secondly, we have important evidence in our Lord's own teaching. In *Matthew* 25, He says that the kingdom of heaven is like a man going to a far country and our Lord refers to a long absence: 'After a long time the lord of those servants cometh' [verse 19]. In this parabolic teaching, our Lord gives a clear indication that there is to be an interval of time before He comes back. Indeed, He says this quite specifically in *Matthew* 24:14 and the parallel passages: 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.'

Now if we had nothing but that, it would be more than sufficient. This, remember, was before the crucifixion, when the gospel was confined only to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel', as our Lord puts it to the Syrophenician woman [*Matt.* 15:24], but He makes it quite clear that before the end comes, this gospel must be preached to all nations throughout the world.

At the end of John's Gospel, there is a very interesting kind of footnote to our Lord's teaching on this subject. In John 21:20-23, we read, 'Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following . . . Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?' – what about this man? – 'Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'

Now John was writing possibly towards the end of the first century. At any rate, his Gospel is one of the later writings in the New Testament canon. He takes up this point of our Lord's return and says that people have misunderstood our Lord's words. Our Lord did not say that John was going to live until He came back but was simply telling Peter to mind his own business. This was outside Peter's province and he should not be concerned about it.

That is the main evidence with regard to our Lord Himself. What, then, about the Apostle Paul? Well, this is particularly interesting. We see here the lengths to which the so-called higher critics had to go and the extent to which they twisted and forced the Scriptures in order to undermine their authority because 2 Thessalonians 2 deals with this question once and for ever. There the Apostle warns the people not to listen to anyone who is teaching that the Lord is coming immediately: 'Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ' – better, 'the day of the Lord' – 'is at hand' [verses 1-2].

In other words, some of these teachers said that they had had a revelation ('by spirit') others that they had received teaching ('by word') that the day of the Lord was imminent. Indeed, some were even falsely claiming that the Apostle Paul himself ('by letter as from us') had been giving this teaching. Paul says: 'Don't believe it. It's not true.' And he gives the arguments to refute this teaching. So there were people who were teaching these things, but Paul was not. And further on in that second

chapter of 2 Thessalonians, Paul goes out of his way to point this out. 'Remember ye not,' he says, 'that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?' [verse 5]. When he had first been with them, the Apostle had given them the full gospel, as he did everywhere he went.

At the end of the first chapter of his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul puts it like this: 'For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you' – that is, when he first went there to preach – 'and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.' When the Apostle preached he always preached a full gospel. He did not just call for a decision and say, 'Come to Jesus.' Paul evangelized by preaching 'the whole counsel of God'. He often reminds people of that, and here he reminds the Christians in Thessalonica that when he was with them he had told them 'these things' and he explains what these things are.

What are they? Here, again, is a most important bit of evidence. Paul had pointed out to the Thessalonians that that day would not come before certain things had happened. 'Let no man deceive you by any means,' he writes, 'for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped' [2 Thess. 2:3-4]. You may regard the 'man of sin' as the Roman Empire, or you may say that he is yet to come, but for the purposes of this argument, your interpretation, whatever it may be, does not matter. All we need to show is that the Apostle is concerned to say that the return of our Lord is not imminent.

Then we come to verses 6 to 7: 'Ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let' – he who now restrains will restrain – 'until he be taken out of the way.' There has been considerable argument about the meaning of these verses. Some say that the words 'he who now letteth' refer to the Holy Spirit; others say that the Roman Empire is meant and that Paul is visualizing the day when it

will no longer be in control. But again, for the purposes of our argument that does not matter, for the Roman Empire lasted several more centuries after this. What is plain is that the Apostle is saying that when he first preached to the Thessalonians, he did preach the second coming of Christ, but made it clear that it would not happen immediately because certain things would happen first.

So if we had nothing else to guide us, that is more than enough. It is agreed by all those who call themselves scholars that the letters to the Thessalonians, and especially the First Epistle, are the earliest of all Paul's letters. So here we have proof that early on, even before he had written 1 Thessalonians, the Apostle had taught quite plainly that the return of the Lord was not going to happen at once because certain things had to happen first.

But, of course, in a very interesting way, in this Epistle to the Romans, we also have an argument that completely refutes this charge that is brought against Paul and the Apostles. Do you remember the great teaching of chapter 11? The Apostle, dealing with the case of the Jews, writes, 'I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' [*Rom. 11:11-15*].

And then towards the end of the chapter, Paul says, 'As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance' [verses 28-29]. And in verses 31 and 32: 'Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' And earlier he has talked about 'all Israel' being saved [verse 26], adding: 'For this is my

covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins' [verse 27], and so on.

Now when we worked that out¹, we saw that the Apostle teaches us explicitly and plainly that sometime before the end there will be a great gathering of converted Jews into the kingdom of God, into the church. So how can he possibly claim or even think for a moment that the second coming of Christ is imminent, since in the same letter he writes that it is breaking his heart that the Jews are increasingly rejecting the gospel and he has to turn away from them? 'From henceforth', Paul said when he was at Corinth, 'I will go unto the Gentiles' [Acts 18:6]. He shook the dust from off his feet and became the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

So we have clear teaching, not only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians but here in Romans itself, showing that when the Apostle writes, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand', he cannot possibly mean that the return of the Lord is imminent. If he does mean this, he would not only be becoming an intellectual backslider, but must be in a bad condition, because he cannot even remember, at the end of chapter 13, what he has argued at length in chapter 11! It is just a monstrous suggestion from beginning to end.

And not only that, we have further evidence. In Philippians chapter 1, the Apostle tells us how he views his own life. He is a prisoner in Rome, and does not know at what moment he is going to be put to death, but this is how he puts it: 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain' – he thinks in terms of dying – 'But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better' [verses 21-23]. That is his normal way of thinking.

And in his last letter of all, the same thought is clearly there: 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand' [2 Tim. 4:6]. Paul is not thinking so much of the coming of our Lord as of his own death and his departure out of this world.

And this teaching is not confined to the Apostle Paul. The

¹ See *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 11: To God's Glory*, Banner of Truth, 1998.

Apostle Peter speaks in the same way. 'Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me' [2 Pet. 1:12-14]. He too does not imagine that the return of the Lord will come at any moment; he speaks in terms of dying.

Then in his next letter, Peter uses a further tremendous argument. Scoffers have arisen, and he writes that he has warned his readers about them: 'This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first' – they had been taught this – 'that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' – you see, it is the scoffers who teach that, the Apostles had never taught it, but the enemies were always saying this – 'for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of . . .' [2 Pet. 3:1-5].

Then Peter works out the argument, and this is the key to it: 'Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night' [verses 8-10]. That is Peter's real answer. These people do not know. They think that God is controlled by time in the way that they are. He says that you must not think of these things in these material ways, in this calendar fashion. No, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'

So I would sum it up like this. We must always remember, when we are dealing with the subject of our Lord's second coming, that we are dealing with what we may call 'prophetic time', which, as we saw when we were defining Paul's words,

'the time', is very special and particular. Prophetic time always deals with the important happenings; it is not so interested in lesser events. Take the prophecies in the Old Testament, for instance; have you noticed how often they seem to foreshorten history and merge together the first coming of Christ and His second coming, as if to obliterate the interval between? That is 'prophetic foreshortening'.

A classic example is our Lord's statement in the synagogue of His home town. Luke writes, 'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee . . . and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord' [*Luke 4:14, 16-19*]. Then He closed the book and began to expound the passage.

But you notice what our Lord did? He was reading out of Isaiah chapter 61 and, as has often been pointed out, He stopped before He came to the end of the quotation. Isaiah 61:2 reads, 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD' – that is where our Lord stopped – 'and the day of vengeance of our God . . .' – that is the second coming, the final judgment. In his prophecy, Isaiah telescopes the first and second comings. But our Lord was anxious to show the purpose of His first coming, so when He came to the final statement, He closed the book and He did not mention the further aspect of Isaiah's prophecy. That passage in Isaiah is an illustration of 'prophetic foreshortening'.

In Acts chapter 2, there is another interesting example. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter was preaching in Jerusalem, and people were asking what all this was about, Peter said, 'These are not drunken as ye suppose . . . but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men

shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my hand-maidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved' [Acts 2:15-21].

Was the whole of that passage fulfilled on the day of Pentecost? Obviously not. A part was, but a part refers to the final end. The prophet Joel, like Peter, merges the two into one because, as we saw when we were interpreting the meaning of 'the time', from the standpoint of prophecy, the interval between the first and second comings is, as it were, nothing. We must always keep that in our minds.

Another important principle is that sometimes, in dealing with some of these scriptures, it is almost impossible to tell whether the writer is talking about our own death or about the coming of the Lord. There is a sense in which we can easily understand that, for the moment we die and go out of this world, we already are entirely in that other realm. The two are different, and we must maintain the difference, but they so belong together that sometimes they seem to merge and the writer appears to be thinking about both his dying and the Lord's second coming. After all, death is just a kind of rehearsal or anticipation of what will happen in its full perfection at the time of the second coming.

So I finally sum it up like this. Christians are already living in 'the day'; they already know of the glories of eternity that are awaiting them. The result of this should be that their whole view of life in this world is controlled entirely by that thinking, so that they say of their lives: 'For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away' [James 4:14]. That is the Christian view our life in time. To the non-Christian, it is a long stretch and it goes on and on, but to Christian men and women, everything that happens before the glory that awaits them is nothing but a vapour.

Listen to Paul expressing that. Here he is in the flesh, surrounded by trials and troubles and tribulations, but this is how he describes it: 'Our light affliction, which is but for a

moment' [2 Cor. 4:17] – a moment! That is all! 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal' [2 Cor. 4:17-18]. That is typical of Christian thinking about life in this world.

It is not that Christians are unrealistic, but that when they contemplate that which is awaiting them, life in this world appears to be nothing; relatively it is short. The thought of the things that are not seen makes everything else appear to be passing evanescence, 'but for a moment'. As Paul puts it in writing to Titus, Christians are people who wait and look for 'the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' [Titus 2:13]. Or, as Peter says, not only do you wait for it, you are hastening it: 'hasting unto the coming of the day of God' [2 Pet. 3:12].

So for us as Christians, this is our whole view of time. Of course, our salvation is 'nearer than when we believed' and in a sense it is very near indeed. If all these things are but for a moment, then it is 'at hand'. We begin to understand what is meant by a thousand years being but as one day. We do not think in terms of kings and princes, births, marriages and deaths, wars and elections. No, no! We think of these great events – first coming! Second coming! Everything else is, as it were, nothing but a puff of air, a mere vapour.

That is why you will find this teaching running right through the New Testament. We are called upon to be always ready, always waiting, always having our 'loins girt about' [Eph. 6:14]. It is not that we think He is going to come at any moment – we know that certain things must happen first – but that, taking the prophetic view of time, we know that it is at hand. It has been at hand for Christians in all generations from the very beginning, and it is for us.

And that, it seems to me, is the answer given by Scripture itself to this modern attempt to undermine or cast doubt upon the authority and the infallibility of the Apostles and of the Scriptures that they have written for us. There was no change in the opinion of the Apostle Paul; he was not in error at one time. His teaching is a whole; it is consistent.

Life in Two Kingdoms

What is of importance for us is this: Are we able, with the Apostle, to look out upon life as it is at the present time, whatever may be happening to us, and say, 'our light affliction', not because the affliction itself is light, but because it becomes light when put side by side with the glory that awaits us? If we see that glory then, clearly, anything that happens to us here is a light matter, and it is only for a moment. The everlasting glory awaits us and our affliction is working for us 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' [2 Cor. 4:17]. God grant that we may so know these things that this is our view of time and of life in this world.

Twenty-two

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

This is the last great appeal that the Apostle makes to us and to these Romans to whom he is writing. He appeals to us to put into practice the instructions with regard to daily life and living that he has been outlining in chapter 12 and in this chapter. We have considered the doctrinal aspect of Paul's appeal, and now we come to the practical teaching, and here the Apostle once more tells us in detail how we are to live. He has already been telling us, but he now sums it up again. This is expert teaching. If we learn nothing else, let us try to learn from the Apostle how to teach, and, as I have said, the whole art of teaching is repetition. It is fatal to assume that we know these things or to think that because we know them, they are in the forefront of our minds. They are not. We need to be reminded, and that is what the Apostle is doing here.

Furthermore, Paul never stops at general principles only, he always applies them: it is very bad preaching and teaching that does not invariably end with application. We must never take a merely theoretical view of the Scripture. Indeed, as we saw at the beginning of chapter 12, the whole point of the remainder

of this great Epistle is to draw out the inevitable practical application of the doctrine that Paul has been giving, and he keeps on doing this as he goes along from paragraph to paragraph.

We are now concerned with the practical application of the things we know, and it is clear that we can again divide this up. Paul starts with a general appeal. Having done that, he goes on to particular exhortations, and then he winds it all up with a final exhortation. This man had been given a logical mind; he thought clearly, reasoning from step to step, and in order to bring out the real truth, the Spirit of God, in a very remarkable manner, used all those gifts that God had given Paul in his natural birth.

We start, then, with Paul's general appeal to us: 'Now it is high time to awake out of sleep.' It is no use going on to the particular appeals if we are not clear about this. There is no point in the Apostle going on to the details of his teaching, if the people who are reading his letter, or listening to it being read, are half asleep. The first thing you do is rouse your congregation. So Paul makes this universal exhortation. The words 'high time' mean that we are in an hour when we should be raised out of sleep. 'Sleep' simply means a lethargic condition. Paul is telling Christians that they must rouse themselves, they must shake themselves out of this condition of lethargy and torpor and sleepiness into which they have fallen. They must do it themselves.

This exhortation is frequently to be found in Scripture, and is a warning that is often given by our Lord Himself. It is the whole point of the five foolish virgins in the parable of the ten virgins – this carelessness, this sleepiness, this lack of watchfulness and preparation. Or again, our Lord says, 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning' [*Luke 12:35*].

Another very good exposition of this teaching is found in our Lord's words: 'And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man'

[*Luke* 21:34-36]. And you are familiar with the way in which our Lord frequently says, 'Watch and pray' [for example, *Mark* 13:33], and 'Watch!' 'What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch' [*Mark* 13:37].

This exhortation to awake out of sleep and to be watchful, to be on the alert and always ready, is characteristic of our Lord's teaching. And it is often found in the teaching of the Apostle Paul. It is here in Romans 13, and in 1 Corinthians 15:34, where he says, 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not.' Awake! That is the emphasis. It is also found in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity'; and in Ephesians 5:14: 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' Then in his series of exhortations in 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul says, 'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation' [verses 6-8].

Peter makes the same point in these words: 'And beside this, giving all diligence . . .' [*2 Pet.* 1:5]. In other words, you must not be half asleep, you must not be lethargic, you must not be slack.

As this kind of appeal occurs so frequently in the New Testament, the question for us to ask is what exactly it means. Since it is so important, we really must know something about it in detail. And first of all, it means 'general discipline'. The Apostle has to address this to individuals as well as to churches. He has to say to Timothy, 'Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee' [*2 Tim.* 1:6]. Now there he is employing a picture not so much of a man falling asleep and nodding at his post, as of a fire that is going out and has just a little spark left. The Apostle says: Stir it up, rake it, shake it. Rekindle the embers that are gradually dying.

One of our greatest dangers as Christian people is of drifting along, just allowing things to come and go and to influence us without our being in charge. Or, to put it another way, it is the danger of spiritual laziness. I suppose this is the commonest of all the dangers confronting us, and it is just when we are in this

condition that the devil gets his opportunity with us. So we are exhorted by the Apostle to rouse ourselves up, to take ourselves in hand and give ourselves a shake.

There are many illustrations that will enforce this point. You may have often found yourself nodding off as you read a book. Now there is no purpose in sitting with a book in front of you if you are half asleep. Nothing goes in at all and you are wasting your time. So what do you do? You rouse yourself and perhaps go out for some fresh air. You may put a wet towel round your head! All right, do that spiritually. But whatever you do, see that you are awake, says the Apostle; pull yourself together. 'Away dull sloth and melancholy'!

This is all implicit in this exhortation in Romans 13:11. There is an increasing tendency for Christian people to think of themselves as those who just sit and listen. Only a few are active; the majority sit back and look on. It is so false to the New Testament. One of the main functions, therefore, of preaching and teaching is to rouse us out of this lethargy and to get us to rouse ourselves. And this involves a very definite act of discipline: you just pull yourself together and make sure that you are spiritually awake and alive.

Then you must go further. Having shaken yourself, you must begin talking to yourself and asking yourself questions. I have often emphasized this point. Christians should always be talking to themselves, and talking to themselves about themselves! Christians who do not do this are in a very bad condition indeed. It is an essential part of the Christian life that we should be addressing our souls. There is a hymn in which we do this:

*Awake, my soul; away our fears;
Let every trembling thought be gone.*

Isaac Watts

That is what I mean when I say we must address ourselves and shout at ourselves, and make sure that this self, this soul, is really alive and alert.

Then, that in turn leads to self-examination. If we do not examine ourselves we shall soon be soundly asleep! We avoid sleep by asking ourselves questions, the most important of

which are these: To what extent am I really being governed in my life and living by my Christian faith? What determines the general tenor of my life – is it the world and its outlook and teaching or is it Christian teaching and the message of the Christian church?

We must examine ourselves about these things. There is a terrible danger of assuming that we are all right simply because we are members of the Christian church, either because we have been christened, or because of a decision taken years ago, or for some other reason. There is a tendency to think, 'Well, we've done the big thing, we're members of the church, now we just go on.' We assume that because we are Christians, all is well, and in that state we can fall asleep. We can unconsciously become slack, or, to take the metaphor that is used in the Scripture, we can be like a ship gradually drifting away from her moorings. Though there is practically no perceptible movement, we are drifting, and we will suddenly wake up to find that we have gone a long way down the stream without being conscious of it. That is the danger.

So we must examine ourselves constantly. 'Examine yourselves,' as Paul puts it to the Corinthians, 'whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves' [2 Cor. 13:5]. Note that he addresses that to Christian people.

Now there has been a teaching in this century that has very much disliked such an exhortation and that regards teaching about self-examination as almost being a condition of doubt. It says, 'Now you've believed, you must never examine yourself because in so doing you are looking at yourself. Instead of looking at yourself, look at the Lord.'

But that is a very dangerous teaching. It is the inspired Apostle Paul himself who tells us to examine ourselves, and the other New Testament writers all exhort in a similar way. And so I say, very practically, we must examine ourselves in the light of this great teaching of the gospel, and each of us must ask: 'Am I really living according to this teaching? Does this determine how I spend my time? Is this the biggest factor in my life?' That is the essence of self-examination.

Then, that leads to a constant reminder of these great truths about which the Apostle reminds us at the end of this chapter. Are we always aware of these things that he has told us we

already know? Are we alive to the age in which we are living? Have we an understanding of the times? Do we see the significance of the spiritual battle that is being waged around us and within us? These are the ways in which we 'awake out of sleep'.

The danger is that lethargy can take over both churches and individuals in the churches. You go to meetings and talk to your friends and feel that all is well. You are in the Christian life and it goes on habitually. You are carried on by some kind of momentum. But then you wake up one day feeling very ill, or you find yourself in great trouble, and suddenly you do not seem to have any reserves. You have been living on meetings or on friendships, and you discover you have nothing yourself. And this is because, unconsciously, you have been dropping off to sleep, you have been sitting back, you have been, as it were, at ease in Zion. You have been losing what you had and you have not been taking in. Your presence in a meeting is not in itself proof that you have been partaking of the truth as it is in Jesus. So you must examine yourself and make certain that you can answer the questions that the Scriptures put to you.

And then that brings us to a further way in which this waking up can be done in practice, and that, of course, is by constant reading of the Scriptures. And when I say reading, I really mean reading! I do not mean dashing through the allotted portion for the day. You can do that and get no profit at all. If it is mechanical, it is valueless. We must read the Word, we must listen to it, we must ask it questions, and we must allow it to ask us questions and to search us. And we must also read books that help us to understand the Scriptures.

But not only that; I have often advocated the reading of biographies because of the danger in reading in a purely theoretical manner. The danger for some people who are fond of reading is that reading can sometimes be a substitute for thinking. They read so much that they stop thinking. As they read, they are putting themselves to sleep spiritually. You can have great knowledge, but if you do not apply it, it is of no value to you. So balance your reading. If you are a great reader of theology, make sure that you also read something that will examine you – and that is where biographies are so good.

Read about spiritual men and women, people used of God

and filled with the Spirit. Read about their lives. They will search you; they will examine you. They will make you examine yourself, and you will say, 'If that man or woman could be like that, why am I not?' That is the way to rouse yourself, to awaken out of sleep and to remind yourself of the possibilities of the Christian life.

So that is the Apostle's great general appeal, and if we have not responded to this, it is idle to go on to consider the details. But he does go on to the particulars, and it is essential that we should also.

Under this heading, the Apostle has two groups of pairs. Once more, he reminds us of the tremendous importance of details in the spiritual life. If we keep ourselves only to generalities, we shall go astray. We must come down to practicalities, and the Apostle, of course, if we listen to him, will never allow us to escape, because he always makes the application for us. And here he is telling us that we are to pay heed to the practical details that he puts before us because of what and who we are, and because of what has happened to us. We can put it like this: because Christians have been washed, they must keep themselves clean.

I rather like to think of it like that, and that is actually how our Lord Himself put it. You remember the incident where we are told, 'Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'

Then this is what happened: 'And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.'

And you remember what happened next: 'After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.'

Now here is the message: 'Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now;

but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all' [John 13:1-10].

That passage is really an exposition of this very truth. Peter stumbles constantly. After our Lord has got him over the initial stumbling when he objected to his feet being washed, then Peter, of course, goes to the other extreme and says, 'Well, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.'

'No,' says our Lord. 'You have been washed, and therefore only your feet need washing.'

In other words, you are clean, so just keep yourself clean from the defilement of the dust that has gathered on you as you have walked through the world.

Peter himself has another way of making this very point. In his second letter, he reminds his readers of what has happened to them. They 'have obtained like precious faith . . . whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, *having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*' Now they have already escaped that. They have been taken out of the world, and, he says, because of that, 'Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.'

Then in verse 8, Peter writes: 'If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Then comes the negative: 'But he that lacketh these things' – the people who do not show diligence in adding to, or furnishing out, their faith, and keep on in the old way – 'is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged' – has been purged – 'from his old sins.' It is exactly the same exhortation.

Then Peter puts it in a positive way: 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure'

– you are elect, make it sure – ‘for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall’ [2 *Pet.* 1:1, 4-10]. Now to some people this teaching sounds contradictory, but it is not, of course. You are to keep yourself clean *because* you have been washed. It is no use telling people to keep themselves clean if they have never had the original washing. This is only an exhortation to those who have been cleansed.

In Romans 13:12-14, Paul goes on to explain this in a most interesting and fascinating manner. What must we do in particular? Paul, as we have said, puts it here in two pairs of exhortations. In his first pair, Paul gives a negative injunction followed by a positive; the second pair reverses the order, and a positive instruction is followed by a negative.

The first pair deals with our dress. Now this is a moot point; it is difficult to decide, in fact, it cannot be decided, exactly what actions the Apostle is thinking of here. But I tend to think that his mind is progressing in this way: having been asleep, you rouse yourself, and then the first thing you do is get dressed.

How, then, are we to be attired? And the Apostle first of all gives us the negative instruction: ‘Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness.’ Put them off! We must not keep them on; they must not be anywhere near us. He uses the same expression in Colossians 3:8: ‘But now ye also *put off* all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.’ And you find the same word in Hebrews 12:1: ‘Let us *lay aside* every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.’ The picture is that of casting away some clothing, divesting oneself of it.

Further, it is interesting to notice that the Apostle uses a tense here which carries the meaning ‘once and for all’ – cast off once and for all – and at the same time has the idea of keeping it like that. You cast them off once and for ever and do not, as it were, let them come back.

Again, people are sometimes in trouble about this because there seems to be an apparent contradiction. The Scriptures say that you ‘*have put off* the old man’ [Col. 3:9], yet they tell you that you must ‘*put off* . . . the old man’ [Eph. 4:22]. But there is no contradiction. The Scriptures are telling us to realize what we are because, in an ultimate sense, the old

nature has been put off. In effect, Paul is saying, 'In your constant practice put it off, finish with it in your mind, put it away once and for ever.'

And in verse 12, what does the Apostle tell us to cast off? He tells us to put away, once and for ever, 'the works of darkness'. Have you noticed how the Scriptures, when they deal with sins, have a fondness for referring to them as 'works'? In another passage, Paul writes, 'Now the *works* of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God' [*Gal.* 5:19-21]. Those are the 'works' of the flesh. But then, by contrast, Paul says, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering', and so on [verses 22-23].

And in Ephesians 5:11, the Apostle uses the same term: 'Have no fellowship' – have nothing to do with – 'the unfruitful *works* of darkness.' This is very significant. Paul is really saying that those things that he describes as 'the works of the flesh' and 'the works of darkness' really do not belong to human nature at all. They are not 'fruit', as it were; they are not the outcome of the essential true character of man as God made him at the beginning in His own image and likeness. They are artificial creations that man has introduced into the world. It is very good to hold that idea in our minds because it will help us to see those things for what they really are.

And the Apostle is telling us to divest ourselves of the unfruitful works of darkness. They do not suit us. We are to have nothing to do with them. We are now born again, made in the image of God's dear Son. We have been fashioned anew and these things are not becoming.

But then, as he always does, the Apostle puts this positively. The Scriptures never stop at the negative, but go on to the positive: 'Let us put on the armour of light.' And here again, 'put on' means, 'put on once and for all'. Notice also that Paul does not say the 'works' of light, as a parallel to, and as a contrast to, the 'works' of darkness, but says the 'armour' of

light, again emphasizing the point that works of darkness are categorically different from the fruit of light. A better translation would be 'weapons': 'Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the weapons of light.'

Now why does Paul say, 'weapons of light'? It is because these are the articles of clothing that are appropriate to us as people who belong to the light, to the day. 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day,' says Paul, and we have seen how we already belong to the day that is coming. In a spiritual sense, we are already out of this world. Our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. And Paul says: Let your clothing be suitable.

You find the same idea in Philippians 1:27: 'Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.' As children of the light, you must have clothing that is appropriate, clothing that is 'of light'. In Ephesians 6:13, Paul refers to this clothing as 'the whole armour of God'. It is the clothing that is given by God. And because God is light, all that God gives is of the light.

This links up with John's words in his first letter: 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin' [1 John 1:7]. We have the privilege now of walking with our Father and we must be clad in clothing that is appropriate for walking with God, who is light, and appropriate for us as children of light and of the day.

But there is also another meaning, and this is indicated by the very way in which the Apostle expresses it: 'Put on the armour' – the weapons – 'of light' – not only because it is appropriate but because you will never be ashamed of it. Our Lord Himself dealt with this point when He said, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come' – has come – 'into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God' [John 3:19-21]. There is the fundamental idea. Then take the commentary on that by the Apostle Paul, once more in Ephesians 5, where he reminds us of the principle that '... whatsoever doth make manifest is light' [verse 13].

But you can look at it like this: Paul is saying: Do not be clothed with the works of darkness.

Why not?

Because as a child of light, you will constantly find yourself in the light of God, and then when you are there, your clothing will be revealed. When you are walking in the darkness, you do not see it, nor does anybody else, but it is a terrible fact that when you suddenly find yourself in the light, you see your clothing and you are ashamed of it. 'The light maketh manifest.' Other people see it, too, even non-Christians, and they say, 'Fancy a Christian like that!' And you are ashamed of yourself. To return to our Lord's words: 'But he that doeth truth cometh to the light' – he is not ashamed, nor afraid – 'that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.' But, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light' – why? – 'lest his deeds should be reproved.'

So the Apostle says: You must apply all this. If you never want to be ashamed, always be clothed, not with the works of darkness, but with the armour, the weapons, of light.

Then, finally, why does Paul talk about weapons? He has been talking about clothing, but now he suddenly changes the figure.

There is no difficulty about answering this question. It is because Paul is reminding us that we are constantly, perpetually, fighting in a war. Every Christian is a soldier; we are all in the midst of a tremendous battle. Life, to Christians, is a constant warfare; we are fighting 'the good fight of faith'. And that is why it is essential to be clothed with armour, with the whole armour of God. We need to have both defensive and offensive weapons, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and Ephesians 6:14-17 we are given details of these weapons.

Or if you prefer to work it out in a less military manner, though the illustration is that of the Apostle himself, then go back once more to 2 Peter 1 where we find an alternative way of saying, 'Put on' – be clothed with – 'the armour of light': 'Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity'

[verses 5-7]. Those are the weapons of light. If you are clothed with them, if you have supplied yourself and your faith with them, and are encompassed with them, then you are in a position to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil; and if you do these things, as Peter says, 'you shall never fall' [verse 10]. And so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Twenty-three

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And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

In verses 11 to 14, Paul's general appeal to us, as we have seen, is to rouse ourselves and realize the situation in which we are placed as God's people. He then turns to particular appeals and tells us, first, how we are to dress ourselves, and we were considering that in our last study. We come now to verse 13 and the second pair of specific exhortations which concern how we are to live, how we are to conduct ourselves. I do not want to make too much of the sequence, and yet I think it is here. You rouse yourself, dress and go out into the world. You walk and live your life in the world; it is this we are now considering. Again, notice that the Apostle puts it in two ways, the positive and the negative. In verse 12 he puts the negative first and the positive second, but he reverses his order here. This is obviously not of very great importance, and yet it is interesting that Paul does vary it. I imagine that the reason is something like this: the moment we are converted, we have to do something about the old nature, the old habits. So he exhorts us to put that nature off before telling us what to put on.

But now, as regards living in the world, we have only just set out, so the Apostle tells us positively what we are to be like, and then he reinforces that by means of a negative. Here is the positive statement: 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day.' That is to be the characteristic of our walk in life, our 'conversation', as it is sometimes translated.

Now the Greek word translated 'honestly' carries within it the ordinary meaning of living honestly, and yet the authorities are agreed in saying that the original meaning, and the sense in which it was commonly used at the time, also has the idea of gracefulness and elegance. So it can be translated, 'Let us walk in a seemly manner', 'Let us walk in a decent manner.' This is a very good way of looking at it. Because we are Christians, there should be an element of gracefulness about us, about our life, indeed, an element of elegance.

Anything unseemly does not fit the Christian. It is a contradiction of the truth that Christians believe and claim for themselves. 'The habit doth proclaim the man', writes Shakespeare, and he is right. It is equally true that the way in which people live tells you a lot about them. So there should be a correspondence between belief and conduct. And in using the expression, 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day', Paul brings this out. As in the previous verse, when he spoke of the armour, or the weapons, of light, he was reminding us that we do belong to the day. So let us show by our lives that we always realize that.

There are things that can be done under the shroud of darkness that people shrink from doing in broad daylight. That is the idea here. It also applies to clothes. It does not matter very much how you are dressed in the dark; many things can be passed off in the dark. But if you remember that you belong to the day, you do not even think of doing the things that belong to the night. Remember that as a Christian you are always walking in the light with God and with your Saviour, and remember also that the light is always upon you. Remember, further, that the light is upon you from the standpoint of those who are not Christians. They are watching and observing you. They are always scrutinizing you, and they are always ready to discover any defects and use them as an argument against Christianity. They are doing that today, just as they always have done. So, says the Apostle, remember all this

and walk and live as those who already belong to the day that is coming. Then your conversation, your behaviour, your deportment will have this gracefulness, elegance and seemliness; it will be your outstanding characteristic.

That, then, is the positive exhortation as to how we are to walk through this world. This is an evil world, a world that is full of darkness. We do not belong to it: we are in it, but not of it. So we remember the honour that is in our hands, and the name that we bear. We are all, as Christians, like citizens visiting a foreign country, who always have to bear in mind that the reputation and honour of their country is in their hands. We have read in the papers of people going on holiday, crossing from Dover to Calais, and disgracing the name of this country by their behaviour. That is the argument here. Remember who you are, and walk in a manner that is suitable and becoming and decent and gracious.

Then Paul gives us the negative exhortation, and he puts it in three pairs of words. The two words in each pair can be taken separately, or they can be combined to make an adjective and a noun, the adjective reinforcing the noun. It does not matter which way you take it.

So, then, how are we *not* to walk? First, 'not in rioting and drunkenness', or, 'not in drunken rioting', or, 'not in riotous drunkenness'. What is called 'rioting', we would generally call revelling or carousing. People behaved like that then, as they do now. There were feasts and drinking parties – nocturnal processions of half-drunken men and women, walking through the streets, shouting, masquerading, making a nuisance of themselves and disturbing everybody else. This rioting, of course, goes with drunkenness, the one leads to the other.

Alas, we are again becoming more and more familiar with such behaviour. During the Victorian period there was a little of this, of course, but it was more under control. But today, as the restraints disappear, and as people no longer accept the gospel or believe in the supernatural, and, consequently have no moral standards, this kind of drunken rioting is coming back. You get people deliberately going out in a semi-drunken condition to smash shop windows and damage anything they like.

Now such behaviour is to be remote from the life of the

Christian. Someone may ask, 'Why does the Apostle have to write like this to Christian people?' The answer is that it is very difficult for us to visualize the condition of the early church. Our respectability is sometimes a serious disadvantage to us as we study the Scriptures. This is not, obviously, an argument for licence, but one of the great problems in the Christian church at the present time is that it has become a middle-class movement. There is a great deal of inbreeding, and we know very little about the life of people who are out in the world.

But the condition of the early church was entirely different. The church, in a place like Rome in particular, had come into being as the result of the conversion of people who had been brought up in paganism. They had never known any other kind of life, they had been steeped in it, and so it was necessary to remind them that they must no longer live in that way. It took them time to see this.

You may find that very difficult to believe, but I have had experiences that make it very easy for me to understand all this. I remember an old man who was converted at the age of seventy-seven. He had lived a violent and a vicious, sinful life, and it was literally true of him that, even after his conversion, he could not speak without swearing. He had no vocabulary; he could not express himself in any other way. And I will never forget what happened after he had been converted for a number of weeks. One morning he was getting up and – I am telling you the exact details – he needed a clean pair of socks. So he shouted to his wife to bring him the socks. But to his horror he found that he could not even do that without cursing. He was astounded that he, a born-again man, a new man, was still using that old language. So he fell back on his bed and said, 'O Lord, give me a clean mouth!' And he testified that he did receive it.

I tell that story to show that this negative appeal of the Apostle is not as unnecessary as you may think. This, I repeat, is where respectability can be a danger. It was necessary to tell these people that they should not live that old life any longer. They had had an experience and had become members of the church, but this kind of life was going on round and about them. The temptation was there, and sometimes some of them

would fall. So the Apostle has to say, 'You must no longer have anything to do with rioting and drunkenness.'

We come, then, to the second pair of words: 'chambering and wantonness'. This refers, of course, to sexual licence and to the sin of promiscuity in particular. Again, we must shake ourselves out of our smugness and our mere respectability if we want to have an intelligent understanding of the teaching of the New Testament epistles. When people had been brought up in conditions of polygamy and in conditions of licence and promiscuity, it took them some time to get these things clear, as, of course, missionaries have found. The danger is that many missionaries, when they go to pagan lands, are rigid and legalistic, not understanding the background of the people. They must, as we must too, when we read the New Testament. It was not as simple and easy for Greeks and Romans to understand these things as it is for us, with our background of moral teaching.

But we will be seeing more of this licentious behaviour in this country too, so, if you know people who have been converted out of a pagan life, do not be legalistic with them, do not be rigid; try to understand them, try to help them. Do not turn away from them in a pharisaical manner. Realize the fight they must wage and understand that it does take time to work out in detail the implications of this great salvation.

But then we come a little nearer home. You may have been feeling quite happy so far. 'Rioting and drunkenness' have not been saying anything to you, nor have 'chambering and wantonness'. But now 'strife and envying'. Is it necessary to speak about this? Do you feel surprised that the Apostle should mention rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness to Christian people? But into exactly the same category Paul puts envying, strife, mischief-making, backbiting, causing division, quarelling, standing up for your rights. It is most extraordinary, but we must never forget it. Strife and envying belong to exactly the same family as the other sins. And this is in the church! This is where we begin to see the problem. This concerns us all, does it not? The New Testament always emphasizes that the spirit that leads to strife and envying is also the spirit that leads to rioting and drunkenness and licentious behaviour.

We must always remember that what matters from the New Testament standpoint is not so much the particular acts as the spirit in us that leads to them. In the epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle, in describing what we all used to be like, says this: 'Among whom also we all had our conversation' – our way of living – 'in times past'. How? 'In the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind' [*Eph.* 2:3]. The general category is that we lived according to the lusts of our flesh, and Paul subdivides that. The lusts of the flesh manifest themselves in two ways: 'the desires of the flesh', which means the bodily part of our nature, but also 'the desires' – the lustings – 'of the mind'. And the teaching there, as it is here and everywhere else, is that the lusts of the mind are quite as bad as the lusts of the flesh. And here again our respectability is dangerous and tends to produce pharisaism in us. But we must never separate these things. The Scripture always puts them into the same list.

You find another example of this principle in Galatians 5, which we considered in our last study. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.' We are in no trouble about this; we would have said it ourselves, would we not? But the Apostle does not stop there – 'idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath' – a bad temper! A person in a temper is as much a person of lust as someone who is guilty of chambering and wantonness or drunkenness; 'Strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like' [*Gal.* 5:19-21].

You see that they are all mixed up, and I repeat that it is fatal for us to divide them. If we are from a moral, religious background we tend to think that the only sins are the sins of the flesh. And we hold up our hands in horror at them. Yet we do not hold up our hands in the same horror when we are confronted by 'strife and envying'. And I would very much like to know which has done the greater harm to the Christian church and to the cause of our Lord and Saviour. Is it the sins of people inside the church, or the sins of people outside? There is no question at all about it – it is the sins of those who are inside, the sins of the mind, and the sins of the spirit.

And then take another example. Paul writes to the Chris-

tians at Colosse: 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness' – you notice, covetousness, greed for money, goes into the same category as those other sins – 'which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these' – it is the same list – 'anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds' [Col. 3:5–9].

So it is a most important principle. We must not introduce an artificial distinction between sins of the body and sins of the mind. The desires, the lusts of the mind, are as bad as the lusts of the body, if not actually worse. I think that anybody reading the four Gospels impartially would come to the conclusion that our Lord made it quite clear that the sins of the Pharisees were worse than those of the tax-collectors and sinners. Of course, it is wrong to make this a competition. All I am concerned to do is to show that our way of looking at these things certainly needs to be more balanced.

These, then, are the particular matters concerning which the Apostle gives his exhortations to these Christians in Rome. Be awake, he says, Be alive. Then know how to dress and how to live.

And that brings us to the great final exhortation. This is not an afterthought but is a vital part of the Apostle's whole process of argumentation and of his whole appeal. He has been taking us through the all-important details, but he never ends with these. He always ends by lifting his whole argument up and putting it into the right perspective.

There is only one way in which we can put these appeals into practice. There is only one way whereby you and I can 'cast off the works of darkness', 'put on the armour of light', 'walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying'. What is this way? It is this: 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Once more this is one of those double exhortations that are so characteristic of the Apostle. Again he starts with the

positive. What does he mean by 'putting on the Lord Jesus Christ'?

Now Paul is not talking about justification. Christ is our righteousness, but he is not considering that, because he is dealing with Christian people who are already justified by faith. He is writing here of armour, of clothing, of the way in which we live. The Apostle is very fond of the notion of putting on, and it is a very good analogy. We find many examples of it in the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians, and in other places too. Another valuable way of expressing the thought that appears here in Romans, but using slightly different terms, is found in Philippians 1:27: 'Only let your conversation be as it *becometh* the gospel of Christ.' Live in a way that is fitting, that is becoming. It is again this image of dress. See, as it were, that there is no clash between hat and coat, or any other accessory. Let there be an elegance, a rightness and appropriateness about your outfit. That is the idea. The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, talks of being clothed with humility [1 Pet. 5:5]. These analogies were of great value to Christians in the first century, as they are to us.

But the question for us now is this: What exactly does the Apostle mean by 'putting on the Lord Jesus Christ'? First, he means that we must put on the doctrine concerning our Lord. You notice that Paul gives the full title. He does not say, 'Put on Christ.' No, it is, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' Remember that He is your Lord. He is *the* Lord, but he is also your Lord in particular. 'Know ye not that . . . ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price' [1 Cor. 7:19-20]. He owns you. You belong to Him. Paul, in opening up his letters, usually calls himself 'the bondsman of Jesus Christ'. This is how we are to reason these things out, and to argue with and to speak to ourselves. As you go out into the world, say, 'I am not my own, I am the bondsman of Jesus Christ. He is my Lord. He is my Master. He is my Owner. I have no right to live as I want to live; I do not live to please myself.'

Now Christian people are fond of saying things like that; but then they also say things like, 'But this is the sort of person I am.' If that means that you are giving yourself an excuse for misbehaving, you have no right to be that sort of person. It does not matter what you are by nature. We were all some-

thing like that, but we are no longer, because we belong to Christ. Our Lord tells us quite plainly how we are to live. We do not decide. He does. So putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means that we remind ourselves that He is the Lord. As you are putting on your clothes in the morning, put Him on in this sense. Remind yourself that you are not your own, that you belong to Him, and that you live to His glory. You are the bondsman of Jesus Christ.

Then *Jesus*. This tells us – and this is why we have the four Gospels – that the Lord of glory came into this world as a man, ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ [Rom. 8:3], and He lived as having assumed the form of a servant. He constantly says that He does not speak of Himself and that He does not do things of Himself. He does everything and speaks everything that the Father has given Him to do and to speak. That is how we are to live. Remember the man Jesus and live and walk through this world as He did. That is the force of that name.

And then *Christ*. Now here we see our Lord as Messiah, as Deliverer. We are reminded of what He has done ‘for us men and for our salvation’. Why did the Lord ever become Jesus? It was in order that He might become the Christ. This is just another way of saying what the Apostle has already said at the beginning of chapter 12: ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God . . .’, and in 1 Corinthians 6:20, ‘Ye are bought with a price’, and that price is the blood of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. ‘Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.’

Then, in a second way, this exhortation means that we should follow His example. That is a frequent appeal in the New Testament. Peter, in his second epistle, makes the strongest appeal that can ever be made to Christian people. He tells them in detail, ‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors . . . As free, and not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. 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 even hereunto were ye called:

because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously' [1 Pet. 2:13-14, 16-19, 21-23]. That is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ: following in His steps and imitating His example.

But it means more. Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means living upon Him. He Himself said, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you' [John 6:53]. This is essential. But those who heard Him misunderstood. He was talking spiritually, and meant that we must feed on Him. As the hymn says:

*We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain-Head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

Bernard of Clairvaux

When He was here on earth our Lord found it essential to pray to the Father. He was living on the Father. And in John 6 He tells us that we must live on Him in the same way as He lived on the Father.

So putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means that we not only realize that He is the Head, and that all sustenance and everything else comes from Him, but that we must deliberately partake of Him. We are putting on the Lord Jesus Christ when we come to the communion table. There we are living on Him, partaking of Him and of His life. We are to feed on Him.

But these words also mean something else. The command to put on the Lord Jesus Christ means that we are to rely on Him. It is like the soldier putting on his armour. We put Him on in this way: conscious of our weakness and of our need for strength and ability and power, we turn to Him and say

*I need Thee every hour, stay Thou near by;
Temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh.*

Annie Sherwood Hawks

Life in Two Kingdoms

In other words we realize that we are walking through a world of darkness, a world of sin, the kind of world that the Apostle has been describing to us. And who are we to withstand the world and the flesh and the devil? We cannot do it, we are defeated. When we put on the Lord Jesus Christ we realize our reliance on Him, and the strength and power that He can give us. And we read our Scriptures. This does not mean that we merely read our daily portion and tick it off. No, the value of reading the Scriptures lies in absorbing the truth they proclaim, remembering that 'he himself hath suffered being tempted', and that, because He has, 'he is able to succour them that are tempted' [Heb. 2:18]. So we look to Him for sympathy and understanding, and we know that he bears with us. 'We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin' [Heb. 4:15]. By reading that and knowing it to be true we are putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and this will enable us to live in the way which the Apostle has been indicating.

But I take it a step further. The command, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ' means, 'Hide in Him.' We need to do this because of what surrounds us – the fiery darts of the wicked one, and all that we know of him; the world, the flesh and the devil. Hide in Christ. The writers of the great hymns all knew something about this and have often expressed it:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure –
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.*
Augustus Toplady

Hide me! Another hymn puts it like this:

*O Lamb of God, still keep me
Close to Thy wounded side;
'Tis only there in safety
And peace I can abide.*

*What foes and snares surround me,
What fears and sins within!
The grace that sought and found me
Alone can keep me clean.*

James George Deck

Or Charles Wesley:

*Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly*

– to be embraced and covered –

*While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is nigh.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!*

Charles Wesley

That is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. You are hiding in Him; He is covering you; you are in Him. You *are* in Him, so *hide* in Him.

There in its essence, surely, is what is meant by, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' And then Paul goes on, 'Make not provision for the flesh.' What about this? How does it strike you? Does it offend your literary taste? Do you feel that Paul has ended on an anticlimax? Having led us up and up until he says, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ', are not his next words a descent from the sublime to the ordinary? I suppose, if we were judging these things merely from the standpoint of literary form, we might think so. But he did not write to produce a literary masterpiece. This man is a physician of the soul, a pastor with a tender heart. He is concerned not with how his epistle may read, but with how these people may live. He knows so much about life, and he knows about the devil. 'We are not ignorant of his devices' [2 Cor. 2:11]. He knows how easily moved and thrilled we are by a grand climax and

exhortation, but he also knows that, before we know what has happened, we have sinned, because the world, the flesh and the devil have immediately come and have caught us. Although thrilled by his magnificent language, his glorious appeal, we have suddenly fallen. Paul is always practical. He always has his negative injunctions as well as his positive. The last thing he says to us, therefore, is, 'Make not provision for the flesh.'

Now, the flesh is not only the body, it is our human nature apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit upon us. It is man left to himself. You remember the great contrast in the eighth chapter, 'in the flesh' and 'in the Spirit'? That is the meaning of the flesh here. Paul is saying, 'Make no provision at all for the natural man.' We can put it still more directly in this way, 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and put self right out.' The words, 'provision for the flesh', refer to gratification of the self. Many a man gets drunk in order to boost his own ego. He has no confidence in himself when he is sober, but when he takes a few drinks he is full of self-confidence. That is one way of feeding self, and there are many ways of doing this. Paul is telling us, Get rid of your self. Do not feed your self in any shape or form. Do not give your self anything to eat. Do not give your self anything to drink. Do not indulge your self at all. Paul has said all this before, in verses 12 and 13 of chapter 8. But in summing up this great appeal concerning the right and appropriate kind of conduct he is bound to say it again here. So get rid of this self; starve him, insult him, hit him, knock him out, do not spare him in any way at all. Self is the cause of all our troubles – drunkenness, revellings, chambering, wantonness, envying, strife – all these things are but manifestations of self.

One of the best ways in which both the positive and negative parts of this exhortation have been expressed is in a great hymn of Johann Caspar Lavater:

*O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede;
My heart be daily nearer Thee,
From sin be daily freed.*

*Each day let Thy supporting might
My weakness still embrace;
My darkness vanish in Thy light,
Thy life my death efface.*

*In Thy bright beams, which on me fall,
Fade every evil thought;
That I am nothing, Thou art all,
I would be daily taught.*

That is it! Put Him on; put self off.

*Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be Thou my life and aim;
O make me daily, through Thy grace,
More worthy of Thy Name.*

*Daily more filled with Thee my heart,
Daily from self more free;
Thou, to whom prayer did strength impart,
Of my prayer Hearer be.*

*Let faith in Thee and in Thy might
My every motive move,
Be Thou alone my soul's delight,
My passion and my love.*

Johann Caspar Lavater

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for your self!