

THE ATTITUDE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

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Dedicated
to
Louise Leavell Bowen
My Devoted Helper
in the Christian Ministry

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PREFACE

PREFACE

"The Attitude of the New Testament Toward Civil Government," the subject of this thesis, was suggested to me by Dr. Charles S. Gardner, Professor Emeritus of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Since the question of the relationship of Church and State has become a world issue in the last few years, I have increasingly enjoyed the research. Dr. A. T. Robertson, a few months before his death, gave his approval to my choice of this theme.

It is indisputable that the Christian must know the position of the New Testament relative to civil government in order to live intelligently and consistently as a citizen of any country. It has been my purpose to discover what the Word of God has to say concerning the Christian's attitude and conduct as a member of organized society. As far as I have been able to ascertain, no other book has appeared which analyzes the teaching of the New Testament on this question as I have endeavored to do in the following pages. It is my earnest hope that someone else may be helped by this study.

Quite evidently, it is impossible to recognize duly all the sources that have contributed to the development of this thesis. As far as possible, specific help has been acknowledged in footnotes and in the bibliography. All scripture quotations have been taken in the English

from the American Standard Version, and in the Greek from the text as revised by Westcott and Hort.

I should like to take this opportunity to express to the faculty and to the students of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary my deepest appreciation for the inspiration and encouragement which I have received from them in my work. Especially do I thank Dr. W. Hersey Davis, my major professor, and Drs. J. B. Weatherspoon and F. M. Powell, my minor professors, for their kind suggestions. To Dr. Hugh R. Peterson for his willingness to help me locate necessary information, and to Drs. Thomas A. Johnson and Leo T. Crismon for their instructive guidance in the library, I am indeed grateful.

Claud B. Bowen

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of Problem

Today, the contemporary Christian finds himself face to face with many problems. In a complex world where conditions are exceedingly acute, it is difficult for him to decide exactly what to do in a given situation. Not the least important question to be faced is that of the relation of Church and State. Everywhere this vital problem is widely discussed and demands attention. One of America's outstanding religious leaders says:

Not only in countries like Russia, Spain, and Mexico, where until recently Catholic Christianity - Orthodox or Roman - was in the ascendant, has the position of the Church been rudely challenged. In Protestant countries like Germany and England, Churches have been reminded that the State sets limits to their freedom of action. It is essential, therefore, that those who believe in the Church and desire to see it worthily fulfill its mission should rethink the basic principles which define its nature and its function.¹

Lately, conferences have been held relative to this fundamental issue, while people the world around have anxiously awaited the conclusions reached by Christian statesmen who have taken part in these gatherings. Such meetings are not isolated movements; they are part of a world movement. A growing sense of social responsibility is leading Christians everywhere to question, "Exactly what is the function of the Church in our complex social

1. Brown, W. A., Church and State, preface, p. v.

life, and what must happen in its thinking and in its organization if that function is to be discharged effectively?" Here we find widespread difference of conviction, not only in the opinions of various denominations, but also in the minds of different individuals and groups within each church.

W. A. Brown suggests that the increasing tension between the Church and State is itself the result of a conflict between different philosophies of life.¹ The fact that each organization bids for the individual's loyalty raises the question as to how he is to apportion responsibility between two independent institutions, each sovereign in its own right, especially in the light of the fact that experience shows that the jurisdiction of each, when conceived by itself, impinges upon the jurisdiction of the other.² The State's claim to control the activities of its citizens in regions which have hitherto been regarded as within the special jurisdiction of the Church, has increased the tenseness of the modern problem. Emil Brunner says that the relation between Church and State is "the greatest subject in the history of the West."³ Right understanding of the nature of this relationship, then, is a matter of great practical importance for the State as well as for the Church.

1. Op. cit., p. vi.

2. Brown, W. A., op. cit., p. 28.

3. The Divine Imperative, p. 552.

The remaining pages of this thesis will seek to show what the New Testament teaches concerning civil government. It is not necessary to point out that it is impossible for the Christian to evade this problem. He meets it on every hand. Such questions will be raised as:

1. Are there any basic principles given in the New Testament for the guidance of the Christian in his conduct toward civil government?
2. Is the validity of government determined by the moral character of the administrators?
3. Can the Christian be relieved of responsibility because government officials abuse their office?
4. In case of conflict between civil and religious matters, what should the Christian do?
5. Is a corrupt government better than no government?

Some of these questions can be answered by direct teachings, while others must be answered by implication.

2. History of the State

A study of the State reveals the necessity of its existence. Woodrow Wilson, late President of the United States, declares, "The probable origin of government is a question of fact to be settled not by conjecture, but by history."¹ At first, government rested upon kinship. The original bond of union and the original sanction for magisterial authority were one and the same thing, namely, real or feigned blood relationship. The original State was a family, with the authority of rule being vested in

1. The State, p. 1.

the eldest male. According to Woodrow Wilson, Greek and Roman politics originated in the patriarchal family.¹

In the primitive State, the family was ruled by the father as king and priest. The sons could marry and have children, but they were not allowed to have separate authority so long as their father lived.

In later development, families united into tribes in which the chieftain was still hedged about by the sanctity of common kinship with the tribesmen whom he ruled. Finally, the tribes united by conquest and agreement, and the ancient State emerged with its king, the father and priest of his people.² Government was originally knit together by bonds which were stronger than those of geography. Every man's career was determined before his birth. His blood made his life. To break away from one's birth-station under such a system was not only to make a breach of social, but also of religious, duty, bringing upon oneself the curse of men and of the gods. The thought of practically every nation of antiquity went back to some single law-giver who was responsible for the essential and characteristic form of their government, if not for its inception. "There was a 'Moses' in the background of many nations besides that of the Jews."³

1. Wilson, W., op. cit., p. 5.

2. Ibid., p. 7.

3. Ibid., p. 14.

Two types of political theory have been suggested to us by William Temple.¹ The first is the method of Aristotle, who plainly laid down the proposition that man is a social animal, and that some form of government is a natural consequence of this fact. The second theory does not regard sociality as an ultimate fact of human nature. Rather, isolated individuals, by compact, come to be members of a community to whose directions they offer their own submission and demand a like submission in their fellow-members. According to the first theory, society is growth. According to the second, society is construction. In his discussion of these two theories, Doctor Temple shows that society is a natural unit and does not rest on contract. His convincing conclusion is that it is not only reasonable, but also imperative, to say that the State is necessary.

3. Definition of Terms

This thesis deals with the attitude of the New Testament toward civil government. Because the preceding discussion has been of the State rather than of civil government, a definition of terms is necessary in order that there may be a clearer understanding of the subject. Doctor Brunner describes the State as the form or order of a people, and the government as the function of the State. He says, "The State... is only real in and by means of people. The basic idea of a people is, first

1. Christianity and the State, p. 43.

of all, actual neighborhood in space, and, secondly, blood relationship."¹

James Stalker's definition is:

The State is a kind of rough and elementary morality. Its soul is low, and its instruments are punishments. The law of the State is a rough copy of the law of the conscience. Hence those who live according to the conscience have little or nothing to do with the law, of the very existence of which they may not think once in a twelvemonth.²

C. J. Cadoux defines the State as "the organization which expresses the collective will of a certain more or less arbitrarily defined group of our fellow-men. The State is thus 'our neighbor' in a special sense and has just as much or just as little sacro-sanctity or mystery or right or claim or goodness or badness as our fellow-men in general have."³

Dr. C. S. Gardner, Professor Emeritus of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, holds that the State is a group of people occupying a particular territory, organized for defense against external enemies for the maintenance of internal social order.⁴ "It is a system of relations among a people which affords proper conditions for the realization of the values of life", says Doctor Gardner.⁵

1. Op. cit., p. 454.

2. The Ethic of Jesus, p. 357.

3. The Guidance of Jesus for Today, p. 148.

4. The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress, chapter VI.

5. Ibid.

These definitions, and others not quoted,¹ show that the State is an order based upon human need for social life, and that it serves the purpose of insuring peace, order, and temporal welfare for the community. Civil government is only the expression of the State. "The State is the social spirit, and government is the social institution through which the State expresses its will for the control of individuals and institutions. As the animal organism has feet and hands to do its bidding, so the State has the government."²

The authority of the State is offered to civil government upon the conviction that its will is a will effecting the purpose for which the State was founded.³ Since the State exists to promote the welfare of people, the government is to act for the promotion of that welfare. Rousseau helpfully suggests that civil government is merely an executive organ by which the State-will may be carried into effect. The State to him is the collective moral person formed by the whole body of citizens.⁴

In human life there is a twofold realm: duties, on the one hand, and rights, on the other. The government, executing the will of the State, is a device for watching over the whole to see that all are doing their duties

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1. See: Temple, William, Christianity and the State, p. 55.
Laski, H. J., A Grammar of Politics, p. 25.
McIver, R. M., The Modern State, p. 13.
 2. Coleman, J. M., Social Ethics, pp. 25, 47.
 3. Dealey, J. Q., Ethical and Religious Significance of the State, p. 28.
 4. Ibid.

and that all are obtaining their rights. The acceptance of the government's command is essential, therefore, that its purposes may be made secure.¹ J. Q. Dealey thinks that "men obey the government because the return for their obedience is the 'real' freedom it is the object of the State-life to secure."² The school of Hobbes says that obedience is founded on fear, but if this is true, the early Christians could hardly have survived.³ From Aristotle down to our own time, there has been one constant effort to determine the conditions upon which life should be lived.⁴ No man, in himself, is sufficient. There must be rules to govern the habits of his social intercourse which maintain his health, and the standards of his life, spiritual, not less than material.⁵

4. Method of Approach

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An historical method of approach has been followed. Careful investigation of the New Testament revealed the development of attitudes toward civil government which are presented. Naturally the teachings of Jesus form the basis upon which other attitudes are founded. It is important to know how the Apostolic Christians interpreted the words and conduct of Jesus, because they possessed the most direct information concerning His life and

1. Stalker, James, op. cit., p. 357.

2. Op. cit., p. 34.

3. Laski, H. J., op. cit., p. 28.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

teachings. The influence of Paul cannot be denied. Luke has left us the record of most of the Apostle's ministry. However, a great deal of the information of his life, and a large part of his teachings, come to us from his own Epistles. The General Epistles and Hebrews give us evidence of a serious political relationship in the experience of early Christians, but the climax of the situation is found in the Apocalypse. John lived to the end of the first century A. D., when many Christians had to pay with their lives for their persistent claim of loyalty to Christ. In the conclusion, the findings of this thesis are presented in a brief summary.

CHAPTER ONE
THE ATTITUDES OF THE JEWS TOWARD
CIVIL GOVERNMENT

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THE ATTITUDES OF THE JEWS TOWARD
CIVIL GOVERNMENT

I. A Description of Civil Government

During the New Testament Era

1. Importance of Knowing the Background

The world into which Jesus came may be characterized as Roman, tempered with Greek learning, and inspired by Jewish faith. A study of the background of the New Testament is absolutely necessary if one is to understand Jesus' human life and relationships. S. Angus thinks that we cannot rightly estimate the history of Christianity if we are ignorant of its antecedents, nor can we appreciate its success if we overlook the difficulties it had to encounter.¹ "A solid historical basis is thus easily reached in studying the foundations of Christianity which reinforces the Gospels."² The Interbiblical Period plays a very significant part in bringing Roman power to the front. At the close of the Old Testament the Jews were under the Persians; at the beginning of the New Testament they were under the Romans. It is necessary to know the intervening factors in order to appreciate the fact that the story of Palestine is bound up with the history of

1. The Environment of Early Christianity, p. 1.

2. Robertson, A. T., The Student's Chronological New Testament, preface, p. v.

Rome.¹

The teachings of the New Testament have a fuller meaning for one who knows the civil influences of the first century A. D. "Christianity came in the heyday of 'the grandeur that was Rome'."² Doctor Angus calls attention to the more immediate mission of the Empire to consolidate and civilize, to call order out of social chaos, and to restore peace and security to society.³ The Roman organization gave a weary world a period of rest and recuperation from untold suffering and social upheavals.⁴ One must have an accurate understanding of the Roman world in order to realize the extensive influence of the Empire.

2. Roman Administration

The great social order which existed at the beginning of the New Testament period, the Roman Empire, was organized on the basis of force. It was the creation of a people who were pre-eminently practical. They had never been seriously concerned with social ideals, because they were too busily engaged in organizing and administering a system of society under the sway of very commonplace motives, to devote much time either to a philosophy or to the ethics of the process in which they were

1. Angus, S., op. cit., p. 165.
2. Ibid., p. 194.
3. Ibid., p. 203.
4. Ibid.

engaged.¹ But three great ideals of social order were extant.

The Greek ideal had been thoroughly formulated by Plato, but the Platonic ideal was no longer regnant in social thought.² "The most important philosophical ideal of society current in the time of Jesus was that of the Stoics."³ This school of thinkers made a noble attempt to solve the problem of individual and social life in an age of disintegration and confusion. The recognition that all men should share moral freedom and equality was *based on the fact that all men shared in Universal Reason.* To realize this ideal in a social way would mean that all the results of history would have to be undone and a new world begun.⁴ This system of thought appealed to a limited circle, but beyond that, it was wholly ineffective.

A less definitely formulated ideal than Plato's or the Stoics' was that of the Hebrews. The outlines of this social order, in which the righteous reign of Jehovah over the world was to be realized, were not closely drawn. Jerusalem was its center, and it included the ends of the earth. "It was filled with the glory and peace of Jehovah's presence; in it the swords had been beaten into plowshares, and the trees clapped their hands for joy."⁵ This some-

1. Gardner, C. S., The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress, p. 61.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 61. Isaiah 2: 4; 55: 12.

what nebulous ideal took definite shape in the minds of Jewish people as a political world order. The preferred and ruling class could be none other than that of the Jews.

History has shown how the practical plan won its way by systematic administration. Many practices and ideas were borrowed from other nations, but they were used to strengthen the Empire which was destined to conquer the Mediterranean world.

(1) General Policy

At no other time did the Roman Empire possess so natural or so scientific a frontier as when it was bounded by the Rhine, the Danube, the Black Sea, the Euphrates, the Desert, and the Atlantic.¹ "One may say that Rome re-established the empire of Alexander, limiting it wisely at the Euphrates eastward, but with a wider sway to the west."² This conquering power united the whole Mediterranean world under one control and gradually under one administration.

Rome had no preconceived theory of government for subject nations. She was too wise to meddle more than necessary. With only essential modifications, the existing machinery was used as her instrument of administration.³

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1. Tucker, T. G., Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul, p. 8.
 2. Glover, T. R., The World of the New Testament, p. 137.
 3. Tucker, T. G., op. cit., p. 83. See also Duckworth, "The Roman Provincial System," The Beginnings of Christianity, vol. I, p. 171.

T. R. Glover quotes Livy as saying, "Rome extended her sway almost more by sparing the conquered than by conquering them."¹ C. J. Harpold insists that we have too often "failed to realize that the Roman government varied and modified the administration of her near east provinces from the procedures used in Italy and in her western provinces."² The Romans would have caused themselves a great deal of trouble if they had insisted upon a uniform administration everywhere, without any proportionate advantage. They did not possess a large enough official class or civil service to enable them to dispense with the help of municipal authorities.³

In these eastern provinces, local laws and customs were continued, although they were required to measure up to the general principles and standards of Rome. Even in the case of local surveys, the Romans were willing for each country to use its own particular plan. For example, in Egypt this policy formed the basis of administration.⁴ In the Greek cities of Asia Minor the regular census was continued, and in Sicily, not only were the local king's laws enforced, but his name was preserved.⁵ The growing autocracy of the Empire was destined to diminish the distinctions between citizens, provincials, and slaves,

1. Tucker, T. G., loc. cit.

2. Twelve Tribes of the Apocalypse, p. 1.

3. Arnold, W. T., The Roman System of Provincial Administration, p. 25.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 26.

and to lead toward a cosmopolitan equality among all men. But with all the unity which the Roman Empire brought, it was destitute of that spirit of oneness which Christianity alone can give.¹

Although separate political unions were prohibited in countries dependent on Rome, religions of subject nations and of allies were seldom interfered with if they neither disturbed peace nor encouraged barbarities.² The policy of winning good will by respecting foreign gods was used to an advantage. After every war many new shrines were added to the number of deities in the Capitol. Soldiers came home with new religions, while slaves were allowed to continue the worship of their native lands. A remarkable religious toleration was produced by the state of things in the Empire. Christianity itself shared it.

"Citizens" and "strangers" were technical words among Romans.³ Says C. J. Harpold, "Too often we have taken for granted that the acquisition of Roman citizenship followed the same procedure throughout the Empire in the successive periods of history."⁴ The true born Italians, who were diffused in vast numbers throughout the provinces, might be called citizens of dispersion, while those

1. Conybeare, W. J., and Howson, J. S., The Life and Letters of Saint Paul, p. 3.

2. Duckworth, H. T. F., op. cit., p. 171.

3. Conybeare, W. J., and Howson, J. S., op. cit., p. 310.

4. Op. cit., p. 1.

strangers, who at various times and for various reasons had received the gift of citizenship, were in the status of political proselytes.¹ Paul's relation to the Empire is an example of the latter type.² Both classes of citizens were in full possession of the same privileges, the most important being the exemption from scourging and freedom from arrest in extreme situations. In all cases they had the right of appeal from the magistrate to the Emperor. Seemingly, an accused citizen could be imprisoned before trial only for a very heinous offense, or when he was evidently guilty.³ In most suits, bail was allowed; in others, retention in a magistrate's house was held sufficient.

The representative of Rome, as civil and military governor of all provinces containing an army, was the Emperor.⁴ He was commander-in-chief of all forces, his control being beyond dispute.⁵ In reality, he was master of the situation, and only the army was able to overthrow him. He permitted the senate to pass resolutions and to exercise authority so long as there was no conflict with his own pronounced wishes.⁶

1. Conybeare, W. J., and Howson, J. S., loc. cit.

2. Acts 22: 28.

3. Conybeare, W. J., and Howson, J. S., loc. cit.

4. Tucker, T. G., op. cit., p. 49.

5. Ibid.

6. To belong to the senate and to take part in its debates, it was necessary for one to have held a certain public office and to possess a large sum of money. Tucker, T. G., op. cit., p. 59.

The first citizen of Rome also held the office of Pontifex Maximus, or the chief guardian of religious interest.¹ Most of the Emperors who ruled during the New Testament period tolerated all religions, including Christianity, but whenever they thought that a certain worship was drawing too much attention, immediate action was taken. In the case of Christianity in the last part of the first century A.D., persecution of believers was the rule rather than the exception.

A study of Roman Emperors during New Testament times reveals the influence which they had on the policies of government. Augustus was in power at the birth of Jesus. He set standards that were followed closely by some of his successors. He regarded it as his duty to follow the lines of policy of Julius, his father by adoption. A talent for details rather than a genius for great combinations helped him to work out the system of colonization started by his predecessor.² In his Monumentum, Augustus says, "*About five hundred thousand Roman citizens served under my standard, of whom I sent back to their own towns or planted in colonies more than thirty thousand.*"³ The great commander perceived the necessity of an organized defense of the frontiers, and this led to a thorough organization of the army.

Whatever we think of the life and character of

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1. Tucker, T. G., op. cit., p. 54.
 2. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 100.
 3. Ibid., p. 107.

Tiberius (14-37 A.D.) as a whole, there can be no question of the excellence of his government of the provinces. Josephus points out that Tiberius permitted those governors who had been sent out to their respective territories to stay there a great while, out of regard to the subjects who were under them.¹ This Emperor's solicitude for peace was genuine. "Piso's worst crime in his eyes was that he had 'carried war into a province'."²

Caligula (37-41 A.D.), "that best of slaves and worst of masters, exemplifies the saying of Tacitus that bad emperors are most fatal to those in their immediate neighborhood."³ Rome suffered from his hideous eccentricities of cruelty and from his new burdens of taxation. Little is known of the policy of his government, with the exception of his "pretensions to divinity and determination to thrust his worship on the Jews," which caused serious disturbances both at Jerusalem and Alexandria.⁴

Far more important as a ruler of provinces was the despised and perhaps underrated Emperor who succeeded Caligula. Claudius (41-54 A.D.) kept his governors in excellent control. It is with regard to the franchise and admission of provincials into the senate that his action is most interesting and important.⁵ He was very

1. Antiquities, XVIII. 6. Church and Brobibt, Annals, p. 340.

2. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 141.

3. Ibid., p. 143.

4. Ibid. Scramuzza, V. M., "The Policy of Rome to the Jews," The Beginnings of Christianity, vol. V, p. 284.

5. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 144.

severe with those who pretended unlawfully to have possession of citizenship but was liberal in bestowing it.¹ It was Claudius who made freedmen ministers of state and governors of provinces; Nero imitated his example. Felix, before whom Paul appeared, was one of these freedmen. "Tacitus describes him as 'indulging in every kind of barbarity and lust', and as 'exercising the power of a king in the spirit of a slave'."²

Nero (54-68 A.D.), who was only a boy when he became Emperor, started with excellent promises. He was in favor of relieving the allies. Under his direction was started a wild scheme of abolishing all indirect taxes. However, the intoxication of power was too much for the vain and cruel Emperor, and the rest of his rule was not in harmony with its fair beginning. After the great fire of Rome, he sent some of his freedmen on an excursion to get what they could out of the provinces. Nero was not one of those rulers who greatly extended the boundaries of the Empire.³

The fearful year of civil war which followed the death of Nero was necessarily of little consequence in provincial administration. It is impossible to say which of the three pretenders, Galba, Otho, or Vitellius, would have been the best Emperor.

1. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 144.

2. Ibid., p. 150.

3. Ibid., p. 152.

When Vespasian (69-79 A.D.) became Emperor, he was confronted with all the difficulties bequeathed by civil war. To relieve the desperate situation, the tribute of each province was increased. Vespasian was even accused of deliberately appointing rapacious procurators in order to exploit them afterwards.¹ His general administration, however, was much better than some of his previous acts would lead men to expect. The most important event of his reign was the seige and capture of Jerusalem.²

Titus (79-81 A.D.) did not live long enough to fulfill the promise of his first years of rule. He was succeeded by Domitian. "Though we are tolerably acquainted with the life of Domitian (81-96 A.D.), our knowledge refers rather to his cruelties in Rome than to the administration of the provinces."³ In the first part of his reign, he was very severe toward his governors. In the latter part, persecution of Christians was common, as is shown by the testimony of Irenaeus, who obtained his information from Polycarp.⁴

The most important act of Nerva's brief reign (96-98 A.D.) was the choice of his successor, Trajan (98-117 A.D.), who was a splendid administrator as well as a consummate soldier.⁵ With him begins the long line of

1. Arnold W.T., op. cit., p. 156.

2. Ibid.

3. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 157.

4. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. LXV.

5. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 158.

Emperors who spent most of their time upon the frontiers. Trajan's correspondence with Pliny shows that constant application to details which distinguishes a successful administrator. One letter to him from Pliny reveals the effect of persecution on Christians.¹ Also, the fact is brought out that Christians were severely tested as to their attitude toward civil governors.

Beginning with Augustus (27 B.C.), the provinces subject to Rome were divided into two classes, senatorial and imperial. The condition of the imperial provinces was so much better than that of the senatorial provinces, that, when Achaia and Macedonia begged for relief from their burdens, their petition was thought to be sufficiently answered by their transference from the rule of the senate to that of the Emperor.² The senatorial province was governed by a proconsul, called in Greek; *ἀνθύπατος*.³ He was appointed by lot and held his authority for a year. "The proconsul carried with him the lictors and fasces, the insignia of a consul, but had no military power."⁴

The imperial province was governed by a *propraetor*, *ὑπὸ ἀριστράτηγος*.⁵ He was sometimes termed *legatus*, or *πρεσβευτής*, the representative of the Emperor.⁶ He was

1. Arnold, W. T., op. cit., p. 158.

2. Ibid., p. 133.

3. Acts 13: 7; 18: 12; 19: 38.

4. Maclear, G. F., A Class-Book of the New Testament History, p. 147.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

appointed by the Emperor, and held his authority as long as the latter wished. When he left Italy to take up his work, he carried with him all the pomp of a military commander. The title, proconsul, is never applied to Quirinus, Pilate, Festus, or Felix, but the word ἡγεμών, which defines their official position, is used.¹ Syria was an imperial province and was governed by a commissioner of the Emperor. Augustus considered Syria the point of greatest strategic importance. It controlled trade routes and gave a strong frontier to Rome.² Judea, partly on account of its remoteness from Antioch, and partly from the peculiar character of its inhabitants, was ruled by a special procurator, subject to the governor of Syria, but vested within his own province with the power of a legatus. The governor of Syria had the right, according to his own discretion, to interfere if he had reason to fear revolutionary uprisings or the appearance of any serious difficulties. He would then take command in Judea as the superior of the procurator.³

Judea belonged to the third class of imperial provinces, according to Strabo's classification.⁴ Only a few provinces were, in an exceptional manner, placed under governors of equestrian rank.⁵

1. Arnold, W. T., loc. cit.; Maclear, G. F., op. cit., p. 147.

2. Broughton, T. R. S., The Roman Army, vol. V, p. 433.

3. Schürer, E., A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, div. I, vol. II, p. 48.

4. Ibid., p. 94.

5. Ibid.

It is necessary to mention free cities in order to understand the status of Antioch, Tarsus, Ephesus, Laodicea, and others. They were divided into two groups.¹ The first, the civitates stipendiariae, paid tithes to Rome. The second, cities libere et foederatae, did not pay the tithe or tribute money in head taxes. They signed a contract of peace and citizenship with Rome which could be revoked only when rebellion arose against the provincial rule.²

The city of Rome might be transplanted, as it were, into various parts of the Empire and reproduced as a colony which would serve primarily as a military safeguard for the frontier. Philippi is an example.

The procurator of Judea had his headquarters, not at Jerusalem, but at Caesarea.³ He was attended by six lictors and had a cohort as a bodyguard.⁴ At the time of the great festivals, he went up to Jerusalem in order to put down any uprisings which might occur. The power of life and death was placed in his hands, but if a prisoner possessing Roman citizenship appealed to Caesar, the procurator was obligated to pass the case on to the supreme authority, the Emperor.⁵

Technically, the procurator was a financial officer

1. Harpold, C. J., op. cit., p. 8.

2. Ibid., p. 9.

3. Acts 23: 23.

4. Matt. 27: 27.

5. Acts 25: 12.

attached either to a proconsul or to a proprætor for the purpose of collecting the imperial revenues.¹ An essential part of the Roman organization was a well-devised system for collecting taxes.² The land tax and person tax were the two chief sources of revenue. Care was taken to give each community a certain amount of control, and, judged by the levies commonly imposed by conquerors, the sums to be raised were assigned with intelligent moderation. The magisterial powers for the decision of questions touching the collections were always entrusted to the procurator.³ The local taxes were farmed out to publicani, who in turn sublet them to subordinates.⁴ The procurator fixed the sum to be remitted by the publicani, who knew that whatever they collected above this amount became their own.⁵ This practice lent itself to abuse, and often the publican was held in contempt because of his unscrupulous methods.

(2) History of Contact with Jewish People

The contact between the Jews and the Romans seems to have commenced in the second century B.C.⁶ Judas Maccabeus sought to extend the period of peace which he had gained by victory over the army of Demetrius. He

1. Thompson, G. W., The Trial of Jesus, p. 136.

2. Knox, R. C., Knowing the Bible, p. 171.

3. Dictionary of the Bible, vol. II, p. 253.

4. Ibid.

5. Lightley, J. W., Jewish Sects and Parties in the Time of Christ, p. 340.

6. Ibid., p. 333.

resolved to improve his station by concluding an alliance with the Romans.¹ The fame of this great nation was well established by her conquests in Gaul, Spain, and Greece; and by her victories over Philip, and Perseus, and the Great Antiochus.² With the support of this conquering power, the Jewish leader could feel confident in his strategic position. Accordingly, Judas sent two ambassadors "to the metropolis of the West".³ The policy of the Roman senate was to weaken great states by forming alliances with the smaller ones. A decree, acknowledging the Jews as their friends and allies, was readily passed in 162 B.C.⁴ A letter also was sent to Demetrius, commanding him to desist from any further attacks upon the Jews.⁵ This very treaty alienated a considerable number of Jewish zealots from the councils of Judas.

Other negotiations were made with Rome. Jonathan (161-143 B.C.), brother and successor of Judas, chose men and sent them to confirm and renew the friendship which previously had been made. The virtual recognition of complete independence of the Jewish nation came during the rule of Simon (143-135 B.C.). "The dominion of the priest-king was confirmed on every side, and the land enjoyed profound quiet."⁶ Taking advantage of these

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1. Maclear, G. F., op. cit., p. 41.
 2. I Maccabees 8: 1-16.
 3. Maclear, G. F., loc. cit.
 4. Lightley, J. W., loc. cit.
 5. I Maccabees 8: 17-32.
 6. Maclear, G. F., op. cit., p. 54.

circumstances, Simon sent an ambassador to Rome. His authority was recognized, and protection was offered to the Jews from Rome and all her subjects. "This was a singular illustration of the all-commanding policy of Rome."¹ Needing the good will of the Jews, Roman officials wrote to Simon on tablets of brass to renew with him the friendship which had been established with his brothers, Judas and Jonathan.²

A third member of the Maccabean household, John Hyrcanus, son and successor of Simon (135-106 B.C.), sought and secured a renewal of Rome's friendship. During the next twenty years Judea enjoyed peace under the energetic government of Hyrcanus, who re-established the treaties with Rome and secured his subjects from foreign aggression. In his long and prosperous reign, Hyrcanus raised his nation to a greater height of power and dignity than it had enjoyed since the return from Captivity.³ Unexpected troubles did not allow Judea to enjoy the freedom which had been so difficult to obtain. News reached Jerusalem that a Roman army had seized Damascus and was advancing toward Jerusalem. "Bent on her plan of establishing a universal empire, the great republic of the West was now busily engaged in those wars which gradually placed at her feet the old Asiatic monarchies."⁴

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1. Milman, H. H., History of the Jews, vol. II, p. 21.
 2. I Maccabees, 16: 17.
 3. Maclear, G. F., op. cit., p. 60.
 4. Ibid., p. 67.

The Syrian kingdom had passed into the power of the King of Armenia, This monarch, as well as Mithridates, King of Pontus, was utterly defeated by Pompey in 66 B.C., and the ancient realm of the Seleucidae was now reduced to a Roman province.

In the spring of 63 B.C., Pompey took control of Jerusalem. All alliances between the Jews and Romans were put aside, and Judea obeyed the Empire whose greatest achievements were law and order. The Romans were unequalled in legislation. C. L. McGinty says that the establishment of the Roman Empire was the grandest political accomplishment of any era.¹ A complete reorganization of Palestine was made in order to destroy the influence of the Capitol, Jerusalem, as a center of union.

In the following years there were many attempted revolts which were suppressed with great severity. Not all generals had the restraint and judgment of Pompey.² Under the Persians, and later under the Ptolemies and Seleucidae, the Jews were somewhat passive and inclined to accept any foreign authority without protest. The century of Maccabean liberties had encouraged a new national spirit and had convinced them and others of a military capacity not to be despised.³ "The hatred of the Roman yoke that is revealed in the New Testament

1. Op. cit., p. 197.

2. Knox, R. C., op. cit., p. 169.

3. McGinty, C. L., op. cit., p. 167.

times had its inception just here."¹ "There was among the people a natural and deep-seated resentment against foreign domination and a constant hope that by some means it would be broken; but, on the whole, security and order were more assured than in the days of independence."²

From 63 B.C. to 6 A.D., Palestine was under Jewish or semi-Jewish rulers who were subject to Rome; after 6 A.D., the land was merely one of the many Roman provinces. Antipater, the Idumean, had won the favor of Caesar by helping him in battle, and he had been given political power in return. He appointed his eldest son, Phasaël, as military governor of Judea, and conferred the tetrarchy of Galilee on his younger son, Herod, who later became Herod the Great. The new governor of Galilee soon began to give signs of that decisiveness which subsequently distinguished him. Such energy and determination won the approval of the Romans and ultimately led to Herod's being formally nominated King of Judea in 40 B.C. Actually, it took him three years, with the help of Roman soldiers, to win his kingdom. Herod diplomatically won favor from the successive heads of the Roman state, and he held his power in Palestine until his death in 4 B.C. Throughout the thirty-four years of his reign, he did not fail to cultivate in every possible way friendly relations with

1. McGinty, C. L., loc. cit.

2. Knox, R. C., loc. cit.

his overlords. There was a saying that, among his favorites, Caesar gave Herod the next place to Agrippa, while Agrippa esteemed Herod higher than all his friends, except Augustus.¹ Whenever Caesar visited his eastern provinces, the Jewish king was sure to pay him homage and to assist him with personal support and necessary information. The Roman Emperor, in showing his gratitude, was profane in his concessions.

Judea seemed to be sinking more and more into the form of a Roman province. Herod rivalled other vassal kings in subservience to the Emperor.² Nevertheless, his own government never obtained the cordial support of the great majority of his Jewish subjects.³ They used every possible opportunity to protest against his actions toward them, but his influence with his superiors was too strong to be broken by these restless people.

Shortly before his death, Herod drew up his third and last will in which he divided the kingdom among his sons. Augustus sustained the essential points of the will. Antipas, with the title of tetrarch, received Galilee and Perea. Philip was made tetrarch of Bantanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. Archelaus, with the title of ethnarch, received Judea, Samaria, and Idumea.

1. Josephus, F., Antiquities, XV. 10. 3; Wars of the Jews, I. 20. 4.

2. Maclear, G. F., op. cit., p. 93.

3. A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, vol. I, article on Herod, p. 717.

The Emperor promised to Archelaus the title of king, if he proved worthy of it. However, his government was marked by such gross cruelty and injustice, both toward the Jews and the Samaritans, that complaints were lodged against him before the Emperor. After a reign of nine years, he was summoned to Rome, in 6 A.D., and, his cause having been formally heard, sentenced to banishment to Vienne in Gaul, with the forfeiture of his estates.¹

"And now in truth the sceptre departed from Judah², and the kingdom of David and Solomon, of the famous Asmonean house, and of Herod, sank into the form of a Roman province and was annexed to the prefecture of Syria. The immediate government of Judea and Samaria was given to a procurator, who had a body of troops at his command, and was intrusted in certain cases with the power of life and death."³

(3) General Attitude of the Roman Government Toward the Jews

Ancient and modern historians are too prone to accuse the Romans of oppression. Says H. T. F. Duckworth:

Certainly no one can deny its (oppression's) existence, but ultimately the responsibility for the disastrous war which ruined the Jewish nation lay in the dangerous doctrine of the intervention of God, who would deliver his people from the sacrilegious foreigner. By keeping the masses in a feverish state of expectancy, that doctrine made pacification

1. Josephus, F., The War of the Jews, II. 6. 3.

2. Genesis 49: 10.

3. Maclear, G. F., op. cit., p. 146.

impossible. Worst of all, it lent itself to abuse by all sorts of cranks and rascals.¹

In accordance with their custom, the Romans handed over the local government to the leaders of the Jewish people.² If the tribute assessed on Judea was punctually paid into the treasury, the Empire was little concerned as to how the Jews managed the rest. Except in the case of capital punishment, which required the procurator's sanction, the entire administration was in the hands of the Sanhedrin with the high priest at its head.³ In addition, this body occupied the position of a court of justice. It made its own laws, seized offenders, and, with the exception mentioned previously, punished the guilty.⁴ The Sanhedrin, and doubtless the local courts, had their own police force which carried out arrests and generally gave effect to their decisions.⁵ Jews in foreign cities as well as those at home were under this authority.⁶ A Roman citizen could claim exemption from all Jewish legislation except the law concerning entrance into the inner court of the Temple.⁷ Even he must be punished by death for this offense.

The legislation of the Romans expressly conceded

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1. Op. cit., vol. I, p. 287; Scramuzza, V. M., op. cit., vol. V, p. 281.
 2. Knox, R. C., op. cit., p. 169.
 3. John 18: 31.
 4. Matt. 26: 47; Acts 5: 21.
 5. Matt. 26: 47; Matt. 5: 25.
 6. Acts 9: 1.
 7. Acts 25: 10.

to the Jews the free observance of their own religion and extended its protection to them when sundry attempts were made to suppress it.¹ Judaism acquired such a legal standing that it came to be treated as a religio licita throughout the whole extent of the Roman Empire. That the Jews living in the city of Rome also shared in these legal privileges is especially vouched for by Philo with regard to the time of Augustus.²

The coveted honor of Roman citizenship was the possession of many Jews. "Archeologists and historians have brought to light enough inscriptions and findings to enable us to form some idea of Roman citizenship held by the Jews of the first century of the Christian era."³ Historians have given us definite material on the attitude of the Roman government and officials toward the Jews in Asia Minor. Some of these Jews were Roman citizens living under the protection of Roman family names which were given to them when cities were put under the administration of the Roman Empire.⁴ Paul stated that he was a freeborn Roman from the city of Tarsus.⁵ Josephus affirms that special privileges and rights of full and free citizenship in Tarsus continued down to his day.⁶ In this way the Jews in several parts of the Empire were benefitted

1. Schürer, Emil, op. cit., div. 2, vol. II, p. 256.

2. Ibid., p. 260.

3. Harpold, C. J., op. cit., p. 2.

4. Ibid.

5. Acts 22: 28.

6. Antiquities, XII. 3. 1.

by this attitude of Rome.

Roman tolerance made another concession to the Jews, which was their exemption from military service.¹ For Jews to have performed such service in any but a Jewish army would have been impossible, for on the Sabbath they were forbidden either to bear arms or to march farther than two thousand cubits.² The Roman army of the days of the Empire was divided into two distinct parts: the legions, and the auxiliaries. Legions formed the proper corps of troops and consisted only of Roman citizens. Auxiliary troops consisted of provincials who did not as a rule possess the right of citizenship. The levying of troops lay only on the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine. This is abundantly proved to have been the state of affairs at least from the time of Julius Caesar.³ "From all that we positively know about the Palestinean troops down to the days of Vespasian, this policy may be assumed as certain throughout the imperial period."⁴ Emil Schürer quotes Theodore Mommsen as saying, "The Jews of Asia Minor were freed from the conscription for military service of Pompey in 49 B.C."⁵

II. An Examination of the Attitudes of the Jewish Party Leaders

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1. Schürer, E., op. cit., p. 264.
 2. Josephus, F., Antiquities, XIII. 8. 4.
 3. Schürer, E., op. cit., p. 256.
 4. Ibid., p. 49.
 5. Ibid., p. 50.

The general attitude of the Jewish people toward the Roman government is best understood after an examination of the attitudes of the various parties. To give a few general opinions would not suffice. It was admitted at the trial of Jesus that the Sanhedrin could not execute the sentence of death without the sanction of the Roman authorities, but such an admission did not mean that all the Jews voluntarily accepted Roman domination. Before one can understand the attitude of Jesus toward the Roman government, he must understand the characteristic attitude of the Jewish nation as a whole toward the government of Rome.

1. The Attitude of the Sadducees

No one could be a Sadducee unless he belonged to one of the high-priestly or aristocratic families.¹ The name, "Sadducee," was always used to designate the political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood from the time of the Maccabees to the final fall of the Jewish state.² The political interest of the party tended to thrust the religious interest into the background. Their aim was the welfare of the State as a secular institution rather than the purity of the nation as a religious community. They denied the reality of angels, of spirits, and of the resurrection. Also, they

1. Mitchell, J., A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, vol. II, p. 549; Josephus, Antiquities, XX. 9. 1.
 2. Mitchell, J., loc. cit.

rejected the oral law. The fact that the Pharisees had an overwhelming influence with the people compelled the Sadducees to adopt their policy. The price of power was indeed high, but the priestly order was willing to pay in order to hold the coveted position.

Sadducees were brought in close contact with their Gentile rulers. This serves to explain in part why they pushed their religious desires into the background. "As sober, practical statesmen, representatives of moderate Jewish opinion, they entertained no extravagant notions of the coming high position or brilliant future of Israel."¹ Being in comfortable circumstances themselves, they were satisfied with existing conditions. J. W. Lightley points out that the chief weakness of which the Sadducees were accused was their friendliness toward Hellenism.² They "had ignored the Lord Jesus until the enthusiasm He aroused in the people threatened to precipitate a crisis."³ There was much for them to gain by preventing any one from rebelling against Rome. "The Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation," they said.⁴

After the Romans took direct control of Judean affairs, the political proclivities of the Sadducees found no further scope until the revolution broke out. Then they vainly endeavored to stem the rising tide of

1. Mitchell, J., loc. cit.

2. Op. cit., p. 173.

3. Rackham, R. B., Commentary on Acts, p. 45.

4. John 11: 48.

fanaticism which their wider outlook showed them to be useless and self-destructive.¹ With the fall of the Jewish State, the Sadducees altogether disappeared from history.² Their point of greatest strength was political power, and when they were deprived of this influence, their last hour had struck. It can safely be said that the Romans did not find in the Sadducees enemies to the Empire. In fact, the friendliness of the aristocratic sect toward Rome was quite evident.³

2. The Attitude of the Pharisees

The origin of the Pharisaic party dates from the revival of national life and observances of the Mosaic Law under the Maccabees. At first, the Pharisees were teachers of genuine reform, but in the hands of less spiritual successors, their system became little less than formal observance of carefully prescribed rules. Politically, they were the popular party.⁴

In opposition to the Sadducees, the Pharisees regarded political power as of secondary importance.⁵ They supported the belief that the high-priesthood should not be held by a civil ruler. Pharisaism was essentially legalistic in character, but its legalism was derived from the Law of Moses and from oral tradition, not borrowed

1. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 66.

2. Ibid.

3. Schürer, E., op. cit., p. 40.

4. Carr, A., The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, p. 42.

5. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 19.

from other nations.¹

Joseph Klausner declares that the Pharisaism of "the time of Jesus had no other aim than to save the tiny nation, the guardian of great ideals, from sinking into the broad sea of heathen culture, and to enable it slowly and gradually to realize the moral teachings of the prophets in civil life and in the present world of the Jewish state and nation."² A. Edersheim gives the sentence: "Heaven and earth might be destroyed, but not Israel," as typical of the attitude of the Pharisees toward their own nation.³

There were two different religious points of view from which to judge the political situation, especially at the time when Israel was under heathen government, or under a government friendly to the heathen.⁴ One was that God allowed the Gentiles to have power over the Israelites in order to punish the Chosen People for their transgressions. Hence, the chastisement of God must be willingly accepted. An entirely different conclusion was arrived at when the thought of Israel's election was placed in the foreground. The rule of a heathen nation over the People of God would then appear as an abnormality, the abolition of which was by all means the end for which they must strive.⁵

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1. Steenstra, P. H., Journal of Biblical Literature, vol. XV, p. 33. Also Bratton, F. C., Methodist Review, Sept.-Oct., 1928, p. 135.
 2. Jesus of Nazareth, p. 376.
 3. The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, vol. I, p. 79.
 4. Schürer, E., op. cit., div. II, vol. III, p. 17.
 5. Ibid.

So long as the secular power did not prevent the practice of the law in that strict manner which the legalists demanded, the Pharisees managed to endure. When, however, obstruction was cast in the way of their carrying out the law, violent protest followed.¹

Behind the endurance of the Pharisees lay a deep-rooted desire for the independence of Israel. This feeling provoked a dislike for the dominion of Rome. Their idea of theocracy led them to oppose foreign interference, either outwardly or inwardly, from the time of the Syrian kings on into the period of Roman Emperors. "It was this theocratic spirit which developed national Judaism into a Church with a world consciousness equal to that of Greece."²

Louis Finkelstein gives his theory relative to the attitude of the Pharisees toward the Roman government:

It is not the Pharisees' exclusive interest in religion that brought about opposition to the civil rulers. A more natural and fundamental explanation would seem to be that the Pharisees were inborn pacifists. They believed in the individual rather than in the nation as an ultimate end. More important than the individual's life was his loyalty to the law. They had nothing to gain from victorious war, and everything to lose from an unsuccessful one. The interest of their opponents was in politics, but their interest was in peace.

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1. Schürer, E., op. cit., div. II, vol. III, p. 17.
 2. Scott, H. M., "Pharisees", A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, vol. II, p. 351.
 3. "The Pharisees: Their Origin and their Philosophy," Harvard Theological Review, July, 1929, p. 249.

Doubtless, many authorities would disagree with part of this theory.

The conclusion of the matter is expressed by A. Carr when he says that the attitude of the Pharisees demanded that they should make no terms with Rome or any other foreign power.¹ The doctrine of the Pharisaic party was held widely by the Jews of the first Christian century. It was clearly in the minds of Jesus' disciples when He made His last journey to Jerusalem. It was both the background and the barrier to all His work.²

3. The Attitude of the Scribes

The Scribes were the legal specialists of the New Testament period. The mass of tradition which had grown about the Mosaic Law was extremely complicated. The average person, even though religious, was often bewildered in trying to interpret the Old Testament writings and found himself in need of expert advice. Writers of the Gospels indicate this condition of the people by frequently recording the question, "Is it lawful?"

Most of the Scribes were Pharisees, but the bulk of the Pharisees were not scholars.³ Some of the Scribes were Sadducees.⁴ G. H. Box affirms that "Scribe and priest" formed a combination that persisted long after

1. Loc. cit.

2. Kent, C. F., The Makers and Teachers of Judaism, p. 308.

3. Moore, G. F., Judaism, vol. I, p. 66.

4. Box, G. H., "Scribes and Pharisees in the New Testament," The Expositor, series 8, vol. XV, p. 407.

Also: Acts 23: 9; Mark 2: 16; Luke 5: 30.

Ezra.¹ Simon the Just was both high priest and head of the Soferim, a "class of people who occupied themselves with the Book of the Law, who interpreted it, and who based all their teaching upon this Book exclusively."² At the death of Ezra there came a break in the line of the Scribes, and during the century from 280 B.C. to 190 B.C., the safeguarding and transmitting of Scripture became a matter of individual piety. A group of devout laymen arose who became students and teachers of the Law. The higher function of interpretation was soon added to their care. As the supreme importance of the Law came to be recognized more and more, the scribal profession came to be held in higher estimation than that of the priests. Later, these men joined themselves to the Pharisees or Sadducees, as they wished, and their influence increased. The mass of Jewish people accepted their teaching as authoritative. Not only in Palestine, but wherever the Jews settled, a zeal for the Law accompanied them. "It was the boast of the Scribes that they loved the Law, the truth, and the wisdom of the fathers too well to teach for fee or reward."³

It naturally fell to the Scribes, as especially skilled in knowledge of the Law, to take a leading part in its practical administration. In the local courts

1. Op. cit., p. 402.

2. Ibid.

3. Schürer, E., Neutest Zietgeschichte, p. 443.

they were looked to for advice and judgment. H. Loewe says that the Scribe or Rabbi had a two-fold, if not a manifold, personality; he was a civil judge as well as a religious teacher.¹ The professional employment of the Scribes referred first and chiefly to the Law, and therefore, to the administration of justice. It is not good scholarship to confuse these two functions and to ignore the different attitudes necessary for such a double position.

Although an explicit denunciation of the Roman government by the Scribes is not recorded, it is easy to understand how great was their anti-Roman influence on the people. It showed itself in the synagogues rather than in the Temple, for the details of ceremonials did not come within the Scribes' province.²

Devout Jews who were able to attend the synagogues in Palestine or elsewhere felt the impact of the teaching of the professional lawyers. If any other civil authority attempted to displace the Scribe's obligation of administering justice, a Jew would be quick to notice it. The Scribe, himself, could not tolerate the idea that a foreign power had any right to infringe upon his profession. He did not care to have soldiers of a foreign people constantly watching over him. His teaching implied that Jews were obligated to their own nation first of all,

1. "Scribes", Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.

2. Bernard, J. H., Commentary on John, vol. I, p. 277.

and not to the government of another people.

Therefore, it may be concluded that the Scribes were not friendly to Rome. If the entire effect of their teachings is taken into consideration, they may be called antagonistic to the Roman civil government.

4. The Attitude of the Essenes

The view of the world held by the Essenes was fundamentally Jewish.¹ They were particularly decided in their adherence to a belief in Providence, which they held in common with the Pharisees. "Next to God, the name of the Lawgiver, Moses, is with them an object of the greatest reverence, and whosoever blasphemes it is punished with death."² Their pursuit of ethics was especially thorough, since they took for their instructions the laws of their fathers.³

While the Pharisees and Sadducees were large political bodies, the Essenes might rather be compared to a monastic order. Their origin is obscure, as is their name. According to Josephus, they began in the second century before Christ.⁴ Philo and Josephus agree in estimating the number of Essenes in their time at above four thousand.⁵ As far as is known, they lived only in Palestine; at least there are no traces of their appearance out of Palestine.

1. Schürer, E., op. cit., div. 2, vol. II, p. 202.

2. Josephus, F., The War of the Jews, II. 8. 9.

3. Ibid.

4. Schürer, E., op. cit., p. 190.

5. Philo, Mangey II, 457. Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII. 1. 5.

They lived chiefly in villages, avoiding towns because of the immorality of the inhabitants there.

Almost all of their peculiarities had at least their starting point in Pharisaism, but foreign influences co-operated in the formation of the party.¹ Regular commercial intercourse with India by way of the Red Sea existed quite early. It is only natural that this commerce should bring to Palestine the influences of alien religions, offering certain practices which were readily accepted by the Essenes and others.

Emil Schürer holds that the influence of Pharisaism on the Essenes overshadowed all other contributing factors.² The attitude of this party toward Roman administration might have been more pronounced if membership had been larger and their personal contact wider. There is reason to believe that they did not approve of Rome's domination of Palestine.

5. The Attitude of the Herodians

In every case where the Herodians are mentioned in the Gospels, they are coupled with the Pharisees.³ This does not mean that they agreed with the Pharisees in all their doctrines. They associated with the legalistic party to attain an end which they could not realize alone.

Herodians favored the dynasty of Herod, and they

1. Schürer, E., op. cit., p. 211.

2. Op. cit., p. 211.

3. Mark 3: 6; 12: 13; Matt. 22: 16; Mark 8: 15.

were its political partisans.¹ If the party of Herod in Josephus is the same as that of the Herodians of the New Testament, then their origin must be sought in the time of Herod the Great.² A view of the origin of the party will also determine the conception of its nature. It cannot have been a religious sect or party like the Pharisees or Sadducees. More probably it was a political party composed of adherents to and supporters of the Herodian dynasty. After the death of Herod the Great, the deposition of Archelaus, and the establishment of Roman rule in Judea, the aims and purposes of the party would naturally center in Antipas. Members of a party which wished to see him sit upon the throne of his father might have been in Galilee as well as in Jerusalem. Their ideal was a national one, differing from the ideal of the Zealots as royalistic from democratic. They were ready to oppose and suppress any Messianic agitation of the people.

As long as Rome allowed a member of Herod's family to rule the Jews, the Herodians were satisfied. When Roman administration supplanted the Herodian dynasty, they were antagonistic.

6. The Attitude of the Zealots

The word translated "Zealot" is commonly used to

1. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, p. 512.

2. Armstrong, W. P., "Herodians," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, p. 723.

represent patriotic virtue. For instance, in 2 Maccabees 4: 2, and in The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus, it is applied to the patriots in the days of the Maccabees.¹

A close investigation of the Gospels and of the history of the New Testament period justifies the conclusion that the Zealots exercised a considerable influence on popular thought. The fact that one of them was numbered among the Twelve should lead to a careful study of the words of Christ to ascertain whether or not He disclosed His attitude toward their propaganda.²

In 6 A.D., Archelaus, who for ten years as ethnarch had ruled Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, was accused before Augustus by a joint commission of Jews and Samaritans. Convicted of intolerant cruelties, he was recalled and banished by the Emperor.³ From the date of the procurator's arrival in Palestine, the Jews began to discover that the sly, half-Jewish Herods understood and respected their peculiarities and religious customs better than did the Romans.⁴

Roman administration was not what the Jews had imagined it would be. At first the people resented taxation, but they were persuaded by the high priest, Joazar, to submit. Hatred intensified among the lower classes,

1. Antiquities, XII. 6. 2.

2. Hughes, H. M., "Anti-Zealotism in the Gospels," Expository Times, vol. XXVII, p. 151.

3. Angus, S., "Zealots," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 849.

4. Ibid.

resulting in the formation of an organization.

The Zealot movement began as a protest against the census of Quirinius (6-7 A.D.) when Coponius was procurator.¹ The outbreak did not occur in Judea, but in Galilee, which was not directly affected by the census. It was led by Judas, a Gaulonite, who allied himself with a prominent Pharisee named Sadduk, probably a member of the more nationalistic school of Shammai.² The motives of the party were political and partly religious; the political and the religious were always conjoined in Jewish history.³

Leaders of the Zealot revolts frequently set up Messianic claims on their own behalf.⁴ The evidence is sufficient to justify the statement that in the time of Christ Palestine was seething with dissatisfaction.⁵

J. W. Lightley says that terrible suppression of the Zealot party caused its adherents to be inactive and acquiescent at the time of Jesus' earthly life.⁶ Yet the spirit of Zealotism only slumbered. Resistance to the ruling power seemed to large numbers of the people a necessary preliminary to the inauguration of the kingdom of God. To be subject to Roman taxation meant nothing other to them than to be slaves of the Roman Empire. It was a breach against theocracy.⁷ R. C. Knox

1. Angus, S., loc. cit.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Josephus, Antiquities, XX. 8. 6.

5. Ibid.

6. Op. cit., p. 387.

7. Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII. 18. 16.

holds that the Zealots were a sincere and enthusiastic group who believed that the kingdom of God must be brought in by violence.¹ They were unwilling to wait for a slow transformation of society as the means by which a new world would be established. The method which they preferred was that of an armed uprising.

In the later stage of Jewish history, the Fourth Philosophy, as Josephus calls it, grew more violent.² Its leaders were known as the Sicarii, and their overthrow of all moderate leadership sealed the doom of Jerusalem. The party included in it varied types, from the religious fanatic to the partisan of revolution. Josephus records that these men did not fear death, nor did they mourn the deaths of their relations or friends.³

The attitude of the Zealots is quite evident. They hated the Roman government and took every opportunity to express their feeling. Their tenacious resolution to overthrow the foreign power came to a climax in the war against Rome. In 70 A.D. Titus completely destroyed their religious center, and totally changed the history of the Jews.

7. The Attitude of "The People of the Land"

As was to be expected, a large majority of the people did not belong to any of the groups previously

1. Op. cit., p. 173.
2. Josephus, loc. cit.
3. Ibid.

named.¹ They were the common folk, fishermen and shepherds, artisans and merchants, whose efforts to secure a livelihood preoccupied all their time. The condition of their occupation and living did not permit them to heed the intricate requirements laid down by the Scribes and Pharisees, and consequently, they were avoided by the "separatists," as "unclean", or "sinners who knew not the law." Although their means of support were scanty and uncertain, they did not suffer from extreme poverty.² In the small villages, especially, there were signs of thrift and enjoyment. The religious life of the "people of the land" was often genuine and spiritual.³ "Many, however, suffered from disease and blindness, and such were likely to become beggars and outcasts."⁴

The significant thing about the attitude of these people is that they were easily persuaded by the other groups. They made good Zealots, when enlisted. Their lack of originality did not keep them from following men who led violent movements.

In our examination of the political attitudes of the several Jewish parties, we have seen how the Romans gained the ascendancy and exercised control over the people of Palestine. Their conquest brought to all of

1. Knox, R. C., op. cit., p. 174.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

the Jewish sects the realization of the fact that their independence was at an end. Although the various parties of the subdued people responded to their conquerors in different ways, the populace as a whole protested violently against foreign domination. The few who accepted Roman control without complaint did so with the hope of political recognition.

The restless feeling of the Jews toward their political superiors assured ambitious reactionaries of at least a small following at any time. With this in mind, we can intelligently study the words and actions of Jesus as He came in contact with contemporary government. As He moved against this troubled background, He offered to His people a new conception of loyalty which even His disciples had difficulty in understanding.

CHAPTER TWO
THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

I. An Appraisal of the Sources

1. The Four Gospels

The information concerning the attitude of Jesus toward civil government is found in the Four Gospels. In speaking of these books, Dr. A. T. Robertson says, "The Gospels, it should be remembered, are an interpretation of the facts of Christ's life, in the light of much of the Apostolic history and with some of the Apostolic literature already produced."¹ Since the Gospels deal with facts that antedate Apostolic history, they must in historical study be read before that history.² In the Gospels is found the tradition of Jesus and the Pharisees, while in Acts, the tradition of the Pharisees and the followers of Jesus is given.³ "The Four Gospels are not formal lives of Christ, nor do they together constitute a complete account of the earthly life of Jesus our Lord."⁴ While the Mishna is the classical expression of a religion of a book, the New Testament is the classic of a religion of a person.⁵ Each writer of the Gospels had a specific purpose in view, giving

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1. Student's Chronological New Testament, p. vi.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Riddle, D. W., Jesus and the Pharisees, p. 32.
 4. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. viii.
 5. Bacon, B. W., Jesus and the Law, p. 231.

material relevant to that purpose. Each presents the same divine man, Son of Man and Son of God. Doctor Robertson's opinion is that they exhibit a marvelous reserve in what they do not say when compared with the Apocryphal Gospels of later times.¹

Several years ago, Dr. B. W. Bacon noted the importance of the question of motive in reference to biblical sources. He attempted to focus attention on the situation of the people for whom the books were written, "so that it became relevant to note their needs just as it was relevant to emphasize the messages of books which were the writer's attempt to meet their needs."² It has been shown that the Gospels were produced in the midst of a conflict between the Christian Church and the Synagogue.³ In them are reflected the various struggles of contemporary life.

Truthfulness and historical accuracy are characteristic of the books which deal with the life of Christ. Apparent contradictions occur, most of which can be easily explained, while the more difficult apparent *contradictions are better understood with the help of* recent archeological information. The New Testament is accepted in this thesis at its face value, and all its books are accepted individually, for they have stood the

1. Robertson, A. T., *op. cit.*, p. viii.

2. Riddle, D. W., Jesus and the Pharisees, p. 93.

3. Acts 15: 21; Matthew 21.

test of experience and of criticism as the Word of God.¹

The "several portrayals of the life of Jesus"² are given by independent witnesses "who reinforce" each other.³

"There is a growing conviction among scholars that Mark is the earliest Gospel, followed by Matthew, then Luke, then John," states Doctor Robertson.⁴

2. The Synoptics

Mark, Matthew, and Luke are more like each other than they are like John, and so they have been named the Synoptic Gospels. "John stands apart in style and largely in subject matter, but supplements the others and throws a flood of light on the narratives and addresses of the Synoptic Gospels."⁵ D. W. Riddle declares that in the Synoptics, the discussion is of some particular point as fasting, the Sabbath, or divorce.⁶ "Here Jesus precipitates the question by bluntly contrasting His teaching, of which the source is God, with the Law, whose source was Moses."⁷

That the earliest of the Synoptics formed the framework for the other two is a fact now generally recognized by leading authorities on the New Testament. Matthew and Luke used most of Mark in their books. Only twenty-three

1. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. v.

2. Robertson, A. T., A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 253.

3. Robertson, A. T., The Students Chronological New Testament, p. viii.

4. Ibid.

5. Robertson, A. T., loc. cit.

6. Riddle, D. W., op. cit., p. 46.

7. Ibid.

verses of Mark are wholly distinct from the First and Third Gospels.¹

Although the first three books of the New Testament are very much alike, differences between their presentations are evident. It has been shown that Mark, the earliest Gospel, does not have a definite anti-Pharisaic tendency.² There is, instead, an anti-Scribal basis.³ Doctor Riddle holds that the amount of anti-Pharisaic tradition in the earliest Gospel is in contrast to the situation of the later sources, since it is not clear that Mark implies the Pharisaic character of the Scribal order nor of the Synagogue as an institution.⁴ "The reason that Mark's portrait is less pointedly anti-Pharisaic than that of the later Gospels lies in the fact that (in them) the traditions of the Pharisees had more time to crystallize."⁵

In Matthew a pronounced anti-Pharisaic polemic appears.⁶ This is observable in all relationships, in the editorial alterations of the Markan source, and in the material peculiar to Matthew.⁷ "Here repeated epithets of serpents, children of vipers, blind guides, and hypocrites, have become commonly used designations of the

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1. Robertson, A. T., loc. cit.
 2. Riddle, D. W., op. cit., p. 30.
 3. Ibid., p. 13.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid., p. 93.
 6. Ibid., p. 30.
 7. Ibid.

entire group of Pharisees."¹ While Matthew showed an appreciation of the legalistic point of view and some knowledge and appreciation of the values of Judaism, he intended a gulf of distinction to be understood as existing between Jesus and the Pharisees. Doctor Riddle says that this is a basic element in the point of view of the Evangelist, while Mark brings Jesus and the Pharisees together only after he has drawn lines between Jesus and the Scribes.²

The Sermon on the Mount has a number of sayings not found elsewhere which particularly involve the Pharisees. In it Jesus proclaims a more rigid standard than was held by His opponents. He says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."³ Clearly, Matthew intended for the contrast to be pointed, as is shown by his quoting the words of Jesus, "Ye have heard ...but I say."⁴

In Matthew, the Pharisees figure as the implacable foes of Christ, intent on destroying Him. It is on them that His most terrible denunciations descend. C. T. Dimont calls attention to the fact that it is impossible to read passages of the Gospel of Matthew in which the Pharisees are mentioned without perceiving that the writer is

1. Riddle, D. W., op. cit., p. 30.

2. Ibid.

3. Matt. 5: 19.

4. Matt. 5: 21, 27, 33, 38, 43.

actuated throughout by a strong dislike of them.¹ A vigorous denunciation in the Third Gospel is less commonly noticed, because the author pointed out both the good and the evil in them, instead of the evil alone.

The fact that Pharisaic opposition to Jesus is claimed, by Matthew, to have been carried over beyond His death, is characteristic of the legalists' persistent hostility toward the Savior. The incident is recorded as follows:

Now on the morrow, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a guard: go, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them.²

Matthew, then, inserts an anti-Pharisaic statement into the conclusion of his book, as he did into the beginning of it.

Jerusalem and the Temple are emphasized by the author of Luke instead of the polemic between Jesus and the Pharisees.³ The reader is expected to understand that there was a great gulf between the Savior and the legal party.⁴ To be sure, this impression is not so

1. "Synoptic Evangelists and Pharisees," The Expositor, series 8, vol. I, p. 231.

2. Matt. 27: 62-68.

3. Riddle, D. W., op. cit., p. 32.

4. Ibid., p. 36.

unfavorable as that of Matthew, and there are exceptions in Luke to the generally unsympathetic delineation.¹ Here and there, the dark suggestions are relieved by a brighter tone. A study of Luke and Acts together is required for an appreciation of the full presentation of Luke. In the Gospel, the Pharisees and lawyers play a major part, while in Acts, they are subordinated to the "Jews".²

It seems fair to conclude that the general impression which the author of Luke-Acts desires his readers to gain concerning the opponents of Jesus is unfavorable.

3. The Gospel of John

In reading the Gospel of John, one is immediately aware of the difference in atmosphere and aim which distinguishes it from the first three Gospels. It shares with them a common subject, the life of Christ, and it possesses as well an historical value. There are personal touches, reminiscences, descriptions of scenes, and references to places, which must have been recorded or transmitted by someone who had intimate knowledge of them.³ The purpose of the book is avowedly theological. It portrays Jesus as more than the Prophet of Nazareth, as more even than the Messiah of the Scriptures.⁴ John sees in Him the Incarnate Word, the revelation of the divine

1. Riddle, D. W., op. cit., p. 37.

2. Ibid.

3. Knox, R. C., Knowing the Bible, p. 183.

4. Ibid.

reason and nature of God.¹ He seeks to make Jesus intelligible to the thought and reflection of the age and to awaken a faith which carries with it power of eternal life. He shows that there is a mystical bond between Christ and His followers which is to be realized not in ascetic withdrawal from the world, but through a life of service.²

It is remarkable that the only mention of the Scribes in the Fourth Gospel³, or at any rate, in an early Christian fragment which has become attached to the Fourth Gospel, is in connection with their responsibility for public morals. The story is similar to the narratives appearing in the Synoptic Gospels. The usual basis for testing one's orthodoxy was Sabbath-breaking, divorce, or some ritual. The incident in John adds one detail: "The scribes and Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery."⁴ There was no doubt of the woman's guilt, nor was there ambiguity of penalty prescribed. They asked Jesus for His opinion of the offender, not because they felt uncertain themselves, but in the hope of drawing from Him a verdict which might convict Him of unorthodoxy.

"At some point in the development of the Gospel traditions of Jesus and the Pharisees, this fragment played its part in building up the case against Jesus'

1. Knox, R. C., Knowing the Bible, p. 183.

2. Ibid.

3. John 7: 53 to 8: 11.

4. John 8: 3.

opponents and in placing in still further contrast Christian non-legalism and the standpoint of the legalistic Jews."¹

In place of using the name, "Scribes," John incorporated these teachers of the Law in the term, "the Jews."² The general use of this term for the opponents of Christ belongs necessarily to the position of an Apostle at the close of the first century. It is possible to trace in the books of the New Testament the gradual change by which these words assumed this specific force. In the Synoptics, the term occurs only four times except in the title, "King of the Jews."³ In Matthew, the word marks a position of antagonism. The title in Acts oscillates between the notions of privilege and of opposition, but the course of history goes far to fix its adverse meaning. The word is comparatively rare in the Epistles of Paul. It is not found in the Catholic Epistles, and is only used twice in the Apocalypse.⁴

The distinction of groups in John becomes blurred to the point of disappearance. It seems that the author is not interested in the type of opposition presented by the Synoptics. Doctor Riddle suggests that John represents Jesus and the Pharisees in a relation in which

1. Riddle, D. W., op. cit., p. 43.

2. Westcott, B. F., The Gospel According to St. John, vol. I, p. 19.

3. Ibid.; Matt. 28: 15; Mark 7: 3; Luke 7: 3; 23: 51.

4. Revelation 2: 9; 3: 9.

unfriendliness is not only much farther advanced, but is inclusive of several new factors.¹ He gives as the first one, the alleged association of Pharisees with groups which secured Jesus' death, a new departure from the Synoptic traditions.² As the second departure, he gives the objective attitude toward the Law which is ascribed to Jesus.

John leaves out the element of the Galilean "men of the soil" which the Synoptics class with the repentant "tax-collectors and sinners".³ He puts in their place the Samaritans, who, without a miracle, received Jesus in simple faith at His own word, acknowledging Him not merely as a prophet, but also as the Savior of the world.⁴

The treatment of the trials of Jesus by the Gospel writers shows that John probably had the other Gospels before him as he wrote. He proceeds to narrate what the other three leave out, as in the case of the duration of the Lord's ministry. The examination of Jesus by Caiaphas is merely mentioned by John, but he dwells upon the trial before Pilate, because the trial of the Sanhedrin was ineffective until the decision had been ratified by a responsible representative of the Roman government.⁵ John lived long and wrote when he could expound upon

1. Op. cit., p. 43.

2. Op. cit., p. 52.

3. Bacon, B. W., Studies in Matthew, p. 358.

4. John 4: 19, 34-42.

5. Dods, Marcus, The Gospel of St. John, p. 299.

the effect of the Roman government. He saw persecution in its basest form.

"It is not the passing of time in the dates of the sources," Doctor Riddle concludes, "which causes the difference of atmosphere in the Synoptic and the four Gospels."¹ It is a difference of outlook and point of view. The conflict was not over a specific law, but over "your" Law. The place of conflict was not in the synagogue, but in public debate, often in the Temple. Galilee of the Gentiles was not where decisive action came, It came in the center of official Judaism. John, because of his age and experience, was able to take a wider view, yet he did not forget to record very intimate things.

II. An Analysis of Jesus' Attitude

"Into a great tangle of politics Jesus came."² To make His position more difficult, He was not only a Jewish citizen and Roman subject, but also the Messiah whom the Jews were expecting as the promised king in Herod's place, their deliverer from Rome.³

1. Toward Jewish Civil Government

What the Stoic ethics did for Roman law, the Mosaic code did for the Jews, and more. The Jewish religio-

1. Op. cit., p. 44.

2. Speer, R. E., The Principles of Jesus, p. 41.

3. Ibid.

political rulers accepted the Law of Moses as perfect and complete, and they were ready to punish by death anyone who opposed them. Therefore, it is necessary to ascertain the attitude of Jesus toward the Mosaic Law in order to discover His position with reference to Jewish civil government.

(1) Accepted Jewish Law

Jesus came to fulfill the Law. He did not come in the spirit of a destroyer, even though He spoke as if He were conscious that such a role would be expected of Him.¹ "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished," He affirmed.² His purpose was to bring to fullness everything in the Law, "down to the minutest rules,"³ by going back and placing emphasis on its great underlying principle - love to God and love to man.⁴

A. H. Silver represents a group of scholars who insist that Jesus' attitude toward the Law was determined by His views concerning the approaching end.⁵ He says that Jesus did not oppose the Law in part or in whole, because the incoming millenium would itself do away entirely with the Law.⁶

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1. Bruce, A. B., The Kingdom of God, p. 63.
 2. Matthew 5: 18.
 3. Bruce, A. B., op. cit., p. 65.
 4. Ibid., p. 79.
 5. Messianic Speculation in Israel, p. 9.
 6. Ibid.

There was no thought in the mind of Jesus of His being a rival to Moses. His mission led Him to originate a new life which would bring about new legislation.¹ The Lord Jesus sought to accentuate progress of the Law rather than to encourage its remaining as it was.² Changing conditions demanded the continual enlargement of the Law. He appears also to have taken full advantage of the fact that in His time the Canon, or Scripture, though in many respects already fixed, was not yet authoritatively defined and closed.³

Accusation was made against the Son of Man that He was destroying the Law. Those who accused Him failed to see that His standard of righteousness was higher than, and not antagonistic to, their own.

The fact that Jesus regarded the Old Testament, including the Law of Moses, as God's word, is a point in favor of His being in sympathy with the Jewish written code. He quoted frequently from the Jewish Scriptures, but always with a fuller meaning than the teachers of His day understood. That He used the Torah in the broad sense customary among His people - that is, as embracing more than the contents of the Books of Moses - is also evident.⁴ Civil law played an important part in worship.

1. Bruce, A. B., loc. cit.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Walker, Thomas, The Teaching of Jesus and the Jewish Teaching of His Age, p. 263.

Harvie Branscomb is confident that Jesus was in the most profound agreement with much of Jewish tradition.¹ Not only does He refer to the rule concerning the shewbread² and to what the priest did on the Sabbath³ as being there for them to read "in the Law",⁴ but He also quotes Psalms as from the Law: "... that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."⁵ The truth of the Scriptures was judged by the final moral law. He did not treat the divine revelation of the Old Testament as complete and perfect, nor did He consider the men, through which it came, to be infallible.⁶

Jesus believed in the permanent value of much in His ancestral religion.⁷ The great names of the country's past and the great events of its history were frequently on His lips. Whatever modifications or developments might come from His teachings, the established principles would not be altered. Premeditated laxity in observing the commandments did not commend itself to Him.⁸ This probably is what is back of such sayings as, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the

1. "Jesus' Attitude to the Law of Moses," Journal of Biblical Literature, vol. XLVII, p. 36.

2. Leviticus 24: 5-9.

3. Numbers 28: 9, 10.

4. Matthew 12: 5-8.

5. John 15: 25.

6. Peters, J. P., Journal of Biblical Literature, part 1, vol. XV, p. 103.

7. Walker, Thomas, loc. cit.

8. Ibid., p. 265.

kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."¹

B. W. Bacon declares that Paul is unable to cite from the life of Jesus a single instance of disobedience of, or disregard for, the Law.² "In such a case as the controversy over forbidden foods," says Doctor Bacon, "Paul surely would have cited the authority of Jesus, instead of taking the cross as the starting point of emancipation."³

The attitude of Jesus toward the Law is that of the great Prophets, of John the Baptist, and of many of the enlightened Scribes of His time.⁴ To one of these Scribes Jesus bears witness, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."⁵ He spoke in response to the Scribe's appreciative reply, "Teacher, thou hast well said,... to love Him (God) with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."⁶

Doctor Bacon again suggests that Jesus' attitude to the Law is supremely manifest in the great discourse on filial righteousness uttered to His "unchurched", following a break with the synagogue.⁷ "No book, not

1. Matthew 5: 19.

2. Studies in Matthew, p. 357.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Mark 12: 34.

6. Mark 12: 32-34.

7. Bacon, B. W., loc. cit.; Mark 7: 10-13.

even the Law and the Prophets, can offer a sure foundation for a man's life except in so far as it leads him to imitate the goodness of the Father in heaven, and that not outwardly, but as an inborn, inbred disposition of the heart."¹ The Scribes and the Pharisees were not strong enough to clear away the old for the sake of the new, but overlaid the one with the other.²

The abolition of the ceremonial laws and the consequent opening of the doors to the uncircumcised Gentiles were left for a Pharisee to execute, namely, Saul of Tarsus, who later became Paul the Apostle. "But had not Jesus lent some support towards this negative attitude?"³

(2) Observed Jewish Rites

The childhood of Jesus was spent in a righteous home. He was circumcised as were all boys of good Jewish homes, "and his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover."⁴ It is probable that the boy Jesus had gone to the feasts of the Jews before He was twelve years of age, but there is no scriptural record of previous visits. Jewish theocracy required all Jews to attend the important feasts in order to maintain their standing as good citizens. It is both significant and interesting that Jesus was attending the Feast of the

1. Bacon, B. W., loc. cit.

2. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 370.

3. Ibid., p. 371.

4. Luke 2: 41; Exodus 23: 14-17; Deut. 16: 1-8.

Passover when He first declared His Messianic consciousness, and that on the night before His death, He observed the Feast with His disciples. Jesus never seems to have intended any violent abrogation of those customs of His people which had done so much to keep them unspotted from the world. He had even called the Temple, the center of the theocratic worship, His "Father's House".¹ If the feast in John 5: 1 is the Passover, then Jesus attended four Passover Feasts,² the Feast of Dedication³ which had been established by Judas Maccabeus, the great military idol of all patriotic Jews, and the Feast of Tabernacles.⁴

Often Jesus was found in the synagogue.⁵ Here much of His teaching and healing was done. "In many cases He answered tradition with Scripture; in some cases His appeal was to the oral law."⁶ In compliance with the injunction of the ceremonial law, He commanded the healed leper to show himself to the priest in order to offer the assessed fee.⁷ This was according to the Law of Moses⁸, whom the Jews regarded as the greatest of law-givers.

Observance of Jewish rites is evidence of an affirmative attitude toward Jewish customs. One who neglected the customary observances was liable to punish-

1. Luke 2: 49.

2. John 2: 13; 5: 1; 6: 4; 12: 1.

3. John 10: 22.

4. John 7: 14.

5. Mark 1: 29.

6. Branscomb, Harvie, loc. cit.

7. Mark 1: 44; Matt. 8: 4; Luke 5: 14.

8. Leviticus 13: 49; 14: 2 to 32.

ment by Jewish civil authorities. Although Jesus knew this, fear of authorities was not the provocation of His obedience. Rather, He obeyed willingly, so long as His work was not hindered.

(3) Paid Tax for the Temple

The payment of taxes was a special form of obedience to governmental orders which was demanded by the principle of good will, gentleness, and service.¹ Most important of these taxes was the half-shekel, or the didrachma-tax.² There was no tax of this description anterior to the exile, for down to that period it had been the practice of the kings to provide the public sacrifices at their own expense.³ The raising of this tax to half a shekel cannot have taken place until subsequent to Nehemiah's time.⁴ The narrative of Jesus' paying the tax reflects the condition of things in Palestine before the year 70 A.D. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, the Jews were obliged to pay the two drachmae into the Roman treasury.⁵ It was applied to the support of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

That the Temple tax was paid in the time of Christ is proved beyond a doubt by the unquestionable testimony

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1. Cadoux, C. J., The Guidance of Jesus for Today, p. 150.
 2. Schürer, Emil, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, div. II, vol. I, p. 249.
 3. Ibid. (Ezekiel 45: 17ff.; 46: 13-15 according to the Septuagint).
 4. Ibid.
 5. Josephus, The War of the Jews, VII. 6. 6.

of various authorities.¹ It was paid annually by every male Israelite of twenty years of age or above. In common with other sacred tribute, it had to be in the currency of the early Hebrew or Tyrian (Phoenician) standard.²

"The money changers did a thriving business," says A. T. Robertson, "in charging a small premium for a Jewish coin, amounting to some forty-five thousand dollars a year, it is estimated."³ Temple gifts and other monetary payments came from Jews of the Dispersion as well as from those of Palestine.⁴ Josephus has preserved some interesting letters from Roman proconsuls and from Augustus to Cyrene, Ephesus, and other communities, directing that the Jews should be allowed to forward their contribution to the Temple without hindrance.⁵

The tax, which was to be paid in the month of Adar (March), was six months overdue when Simon Peter was approached by tax collectors with the question, "Doth not your master pay the half-shekel?"⁶

From the answer of Peter, one would judge that Jesus had been in the habit of paying the Temple tax. Also, the answer is strong evidence that the Lord was not known by His disciples to neglect any part of the Law.

1. Matt. 17: 24. Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII. 9. 1. See also Mathews, Shailer, New Testament Times in Palestine, p. 207.

2. Schürer, Emil, op. cit., p. 250.

3. Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. I, p. 142.

4. Schürer, Emil, loc. cit.

5. Antiquities, XVI. 6.

6. Matthew 17: 24.

Peter spoke without appreciating that the relation of Jesus, as the founder of the kingdom of God, to Jewish institutions, was involved in the matter.¹ "Jesus intimates that He might, as the Son of God, claim exemption from the payment of the temple-contributions, but that the rulers might make His refusal an excuse for rejecting him, and so he will do as all devout Jews do, and pay it."² A. Plummer thinks that the old interpretation is probably the right one, that the Son is free from an impost for the maintenance of His Father's Temple,³ especially since the Son, Himself, is greater than the Temple.⁴

Objection has been raised that such an argument would reveal just what He had bidden the Twelve not to divulge, that He was the Messiah. "The answer to this is that the argument would not have gone beyond the Twelve."⁵ Matthew's account of the incident reads: "Jesus spake first to him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? From their sons, or from strangers?"⁶ Some would interpret "from their sons"⁷ as meaning the

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1. Burton, E. D., and Mathews, S., The Life of Christ, p. 163.
 2. Broadus, J. A., Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, p. 56.
 3. An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 245.
 4. Matthew 12: 6.
 5. Plummer, A., loc. cit.
 6. Matthew 17: 25.
 7. Ibid.

whole Jewish nation, or at any rate, all religious Jews. It is not likely that it means fellow-countrymen. A Jew with experience of taxation under the Herods would not think it true that Jewish kings did not tax Jews.¹ If it is true that "sons" means all Jews, then Jesus is teaching that this is a tax which ought not to be collected from Jews, but perhaps might be imposed upon Gentiles.² Surely, the attitude of Jewus does not permit partiality.

Peter was commanded to get the stater in a miraculous way. The stater was equivalent to four drachmae and thus exactly equivalent to the Temple tax for two persons. W. E. Allen thinks that Matthew recorded this illustration of Christ's foreknowledge and power in order to show the independence of the Son of God in regard to paying taxes.³ "Jesus does not direct the payment of the tax out of that which they had at hand, that He might show that He was Lord also of the sea and the fish."⁴ "To send Peter a-fishing," says H. Olshausen, "with a view to sell the fish caught would have been to prosecute a calling and trade to which the Son of God was not appointed, and so this which was here adopted remained as the only form of taking from the fullness of the Father."⁵ Jesus could have obtained the money in another way; but in order to convince Peter of His nature, and of his freedom from all earthly

1. Schürer, Emil, op. cit., p. 250.

2. Ibid.

3. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, p. 191.

4. Aquinas, T., Commentary on Matthew, vol. II, p. 619.

5. Biblical Commentary on the Gospels, p. 248.

laws, He obtained it in this unusual way.¹

This supernatural knowledge respecting the character and the freedom of Christ was a lesson to Peter and through him to Christendom. The act was an instance of the humility of Christ, who, although He was greater than the Temple, submitted to being taxed for the continuance of sacrifices, "which for a few months longer would still have a meaning in foreshadowing the one Sacrifice to be offered by Himself."²

The reason why Jesus submitted to the Jewish civil government in the case of the Temple tax may be given in His own words, "lest we cause them to stumble."³ The freedom of "sons" must not be claimed when such a demand might cause moral offense to another. Jesus recognized standards and practices which fell far short of His ideal, but they were the best of which the people then were capable.⁴ "He deliberately conformed to the obligations of the old order, though He taught a chosen disciple (Peter) that their truest allegiance was now due to a different order, which set them (children of the kingdom) free from this particular obligation, though only to claim them for a more comprehensive service."⁵

1. Biblical Commentary on the Gospels, p. 248.

2. Plummer, A., op. cit., p. 246.

3. Matthew 17: 27.

4. Garvie, A. E., "Did Jesus Legislate," The Expositor, series 8, vol. V, p. 318.

5. Hort, F. J. A., Judaistic Christianity, p. 30.

Says Origen:

It was for the sake of those who were in bondage corresponding to the bondage of the Hebrews to the Egyptians, that the Son of God took upon Himself only the form of a slave (Phil. 2: 7), doing no work that was foul. As then having the form of a slave, He pays toll and tribute not different from that which was paid by His disciples; for the same stater sufficed even the coin which was paid for Jesus and His disciple.¹

(4) Recognized Jewish Administrators

In His last public discourse, Jesus made known His position with respect to Jewish officials. It was only two days before His arrest, an event which had been announced several times to His disciples. The multitude stood anxiously waiting to hear Him speak.² In the first part of His discourse, He declared, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat."³ The Lord meant that the Scribes and Pharisees were in a sense successors of Moses. All the people understood that Jesus meant that the Scribes and Pharisees were the official representatives of civil government, for Rabbinical writers spoke of a Rabbi's successor as sitting in his seat.⁴ The line of official succession was definitely traced. "Moses received ... and delivered to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men

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1. Patrick, John, Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, vol. IX, p. 481.
 2. Robertson, A. T., Harmony of the Gospels, p. 168.
 3. Matthew 23: 1.
 4. Broadus, J. A., op. cit., p. 464.

of the Great Synagogue."¹ The claim of the Jewish civil authorities to be Moses' successors was just, to a certain extent, since most of their explanations substantially conformed to Scripture. Their claim was confirmed by the Son of God when He recognized their position. "The time had not come for turning away from their teachings to new and better teachers."²

W. E. Allen finds difficulty with the verb ἐκάθισαν, translated "sit". He says that the use of the aorist tense may be due to the fact that the editor wrote from his own standpoint and looked back upon the period when the Scribes and Pharisees were in power.³ Welhausen calls it a Semiticism."⁴ Dr. A. T. Robertson explains the verb as the gnomic or timeless aorist, "not the aorist for the perfect".⁵

As civil officers, the Scribes and Pharisees were to be obeyed: "all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe."⁶ In spite of this command Jesus drew a distinction between the moral character of the administrator and the validity of the administration. Immediately after He admonished His hearers to be obedient to civil authority, He warned them to avoid imitation of the rulers' works; "for they say and do not. Yea, they

1. Allen, W. E., The Gospel According to Matthew, p. 242.

2. Broadus, J. A., loc. cit.

3. Allen, W. E., loc. cit.

4. Ibid.

5. Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. I, p. 178.

6. Matthew 23: 3.

bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger."¹ Their commands were to be observed, but their characters were not to be copied.

The Son of Man wanted everyone to understand that He wished neither for Himself nor for His disciples the place of authority which the Scribes and Pharisees claimed. Nor did He seek to incite resistance to those exercising authority. On the contrary, as long as they held the place of authority, whether they were good or bad, they were to be respected.²

Jesus associated with, and was friendly to members of the local *συνέδρια* and of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.³ The centurion at Capernaum, for instance, when he wanted Jesus to come and heal his slave, entrusted his request to an embassy of "πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων", likely to get consent.⁴ Later, Jesus entered the house of one of the "ἀρχόντων τῶν Ἰουδαίων" to eat bread.⁵ Jairus, also, whose daughter Jesus healed, was one of the rulers of the synagogue.⁶ In his Gospel, John gives the record of Jesus' interview with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.⁷

1. Matthew 23: 3, 4.

2. Edersheim, A., The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, vol. II, p. 406.

3. Cadoux, C. J., The Expositor, series 8, vol. XII, p. 312.

4. Luke 7: 2-6.

5. Luke 14: 1.

6. Mark 5: 22; Matt. 9: 18; Luke 8: 41.

7. John 3: 1-23.

The friendship begun on that occasion lasted throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus.¹ Even after the Savior's death, Nicodemus proved his loyalty.² Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the distinguished assembly, was a devoted disciple, and he, too, honored Jesus after the crucifixion.³

It can be said, on the basis of these findings, that Jesus approved of the Jewish judicial system. F. J. A. Hort strengthens this statement by saying, "Jesus emphatically sanctions Jewish civil authority."⁴ Its right administration was to Him one of the weightier matters of the Law.⁵

(5) Condemned Unjust Use of Authority

The invective of Jesus against Scribes and Pharisees is a characterization of their selfish leadership. His perception of the inherent wrongness of their system gave rise to His denunciation of their practice. Realizing that the legalism of their theocracy was deadening, He fearlessly attacked them.

One charge which Jesus made against the legalists of His nation was, "Ye leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men."⁶ In the Mosaic Law, filial piety held a conspicuous place, but even this obligation was set aside by the tradition of the Rabbis,

1. John 7: 50-52.

2. John 19: 39.

3. John 13: 38.

4. Luke 23: 50, 51; John 19:39.

5. Cadoux, C. J., *op. cit.*, p. 312.

6. Mark 1: 8; see Matt. 15: 3.

They taught that a man had only to pronounce the word "Korban" over any of his possessions, and from that moment his obligation to bestow it on his parents was disannulled.¹ "Korban" was the word employed by an Israelite when he devoted anything to God. Therefore, the law of God, "Honor thy father and thy mother,"² was made void by tradition. While Jesus upheld much of oral tradition, "He declared the particular Scribal rulings, which He felt to be counter to the will of God, to be resting upon a human and unauthoritative tradition."³ It is only in the "Korban" saying that Jesus advocated action on the basis of a distinction between what was oral tradition and what was written law.⁴

The Son of God could not work with men who had substituted their own laws for the laws of His Father. "Rabbi Eleazer had said, 'He who expounds the Scripture in contradiction to tradition has no inheritance in the world to come.'⁵ Christ's abstinence from politics helped to evoke a hatred that made the men who claimed to be more pious and patriotic in Israel His absolute foes.⁶ Doctor Fairbairn states that the entire absence of political motive of Christ and of His disciples at once characterizes them.⁷

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1. Dods, M., The Expositor, series 4, vol. X, p. 27.
 2. Exodus 20: 12; Leviticus 5: 16.
 3. Branscomb, B. H., "Jesus' Attitude to the Law of Moses," Journal of Biblical Literature, vol. XLVII, p. 35.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Fairbairn, A. M., "Jesus and the Jews," The Expositor, series 1, vol. VIII, p. 435.
 6. Ibid., p. 433.
 7. Ibid., p. 431.

As Jesus looked on His nation, He saw that it failed to rise to its national vocation, because the rulers relied upon false authority. "Had the rulers responded to these (God's) demands, Jerusalem, instead of bringing upon herself the ruthless armies of Titus in 66-70 A.D., would have become under the leadership of Jesus, the savior of the nations."¹

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, two main causes of complaint against Scribes and Pharisees are mentioned. The first is that they were concerned with laying down a law which they themselves did not keep. The second is that they cared only for their reputation among men. The first charge applies more directly to the Scribes; the second includes also the Pharisees. These two parties were brought close together, not only because a majority of the Scribes were Pharisees, but also because the Pharisaic party adhered closely to the interpretation of the Law by Scribes. Laws were authorized and taught by the Scribes; they were practiced and enforced by the Pharisees.² Together the two parties made up the ruling body of Jewish civil government.

Although it was a general rule that no ordinance heavier than the congregation could bear should be enjoined, it was admitted that the words of the Scribes

1. Denny, W. B., The Career and Significance of Jesus, p. 261.

2. Lightley, J. W., Jewish Sects and Parties in the Time of Jesus, p. 80.

contained only "what made heavy", in contrast to "what lightened".¹ "Again, it was a... principle that where an... increase of burden had once been introduced, it must continue."² Thus burdens became intolerable. The Savior knew that teachers who absolutely disregarded their own laws would soon forfeit all respect for the men who were obligated, and for God, the true giver of their laws. "The living Torah of a good Samaritan, on the words of Jesus, has more divine authority than that of a priest or Levite who neglects the weightier matters of the Law. It is what he finds in the Scriptures, not his sacerdotal or legal proficiency, which distinguishes Jesus' attitude toward the Torah from that of the Scribes."³

According to Theodore Keim, Jesus proved that the Jewish rulers were tyrants,⁴ and cared only for their own comfort.⁵ Those who sat in Moses' seat were, no doubt, poor interpreters, but the main interest of Jesus was to expose their evil practice by which the Law was so wickedly annulled, rather than to point out the weaknesses of their interpretation. The Scribes and Pharisees had tried to make the ideals of the kingdom of God fit their own ideas. In so doing, God's work had necessarily suffered. Revelation is progressive, but the legal interpreters had

1. Edersheim, A., op. cit., p. 407.

2. Ibid.

3. Bacon, B. W., op. cit., p. 360.

4. The History of Jesus of Nazara, p. 206.

5. Matthew 23: 4.

violently insisted that Moses' Law was complete. Therefore, their attitude had crystallized, and minute details were emphasized above essential things. "From Hillel onward, the Pharisees had elaborated a civil code by means of tradition and exegesis from the Scriptures. Rabbis counted two hundred and forty-eight classes of things to be done, and three hundred and sixty-five classes of things forbidden."¹

It was natural that one greater than Moses should express His opinion of those who sat in Moses seat,² and should distinguish between honesty and "law-honesty".³

Jesus' displeasure is directed only against those who regard ceremonial law as of greater importance than moral law. He taught no rebellion against precepts as positive rules but condemned the spirit of teaching which contradicts the Law and the Prophets. Absolute submission to the letter of the Law as something in and of itself sacred, without regard to the object of God in prescribing it, Jesus plainly repudiated, not merely in the case of the extra-canonical law of the Scribes, but also in the case of the Law of Moses.⁴ Whenever a particular law fell below the level of the demands of His moral sense, He dared to speak His conviction. The principle which

1. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 115.

2. Mackintosh, Robert, Christ and the Jewish Law, p. 50.

3. Bacon, B. W., op. cit., p. 355.

4. Arnold, W. R., "Christianity and Jewish Thought," Harvard Theological Review, p. 174.

Jesus taught as opposed to both the Scribes and Pharisees is that God regards the motive, not the deed alone; He regards the heart, not merely the performance. F. J. A. Hort sums up the discussion well when he says, "We must remember that our Lord's words point to their casuistry, their exaggerated insistence on the trifles of formality, and their preference of tradition as such to the original Law, as being only other fruits of the same corrupt tree which produced their hypocrisy and hardness of heart."¹ Jesus did not throw blame upon the Law which was given by Moses. He exhorted the people to observe it. He did throw blame, however, upon those persons who repeated the words of the Law without love.²

With reference to the second charge of self-glorification found in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, Jesus was no less harsh. He said that instead of serving in the spirit of their official position, the Scribes and Pharisees did "all their works to be seen of men."³ David Smith writes, "Nowhere did they so sin against their sacred office as in their assertion of its dignity and their pride in its honorific titles."⁴ One of the commonest of these titles was "Rabbi"; others used were "Father", and "Leader", or "Guide".⁵

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1. Judaistic Christianity, p. 16.
 2. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 476.
 3. Matthew 23: 5.
 4. Commentary on the Four Gospels, p. 398.
 5. Ibid., p. 399.

The Christian ideal has in it no room for such titles as these used by the Scribes and Pharisees.¹ T. H. Robinson gives two reasons which confirm this statement. First, the assumption of these titles is a usurpation of the prerogatives of God and of Christ.² "One is your Master."³ Second, it is a violation of the fundamental principle of Christian ethics. All stand alike on the same level in God's sight, and service alone distinguishes.⁴

What to Jesus are "the weightier matters of the Law" are addressed to the individual Israelite that he may become "perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect."⁵ The multitude heard His discourse, but they heard as individuals. The Divine Teacher never lost sight of the individual, and He would not lose an opportunity to warn against those who shut the doors of the kingdom of heaven by their desire for personal glory.

After His strenuous denunciation Jesus poured out His heart in His closing words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of

1. Robinson, T. H., The Gospel of Matthew, p. 186.

2. Ibid.

3. Matthew 23: 10.

4. Robinson, T. H., op. cit., p. 186.

5. Bacon, B. W., op. cit., p. 353.

the Lord."¹

2. Toward Roman Civil Government

It has been seriously maintained by some eminent authorities that Jesus taught a doctrine which by implication was opposed to Roman civil government.² A number of able men take the position that the failure to enjoin patriotism and other duties, specifically civic obligations, is a defect in the ethic of Jesus.³ What is the truth of the matter? What really was the attitude of Jesus to Roman civil government? What principles did He offer to help His followers to be consistent in their civil relations? The answers to these questions are extremely important. C. S. Gardner says, "Jesus uttered not one direct, significant word concerning the State, and there is no apparent reason why such an utterance would not have been remembered and recorded."⁴

The attitude of Jesus concerning Roman government must be inferred from a few incidental allusions.⁵ The absence in the Gospels of any systematic teaching in regard to politics is indicative of the fact that He was not primarily concerned with earthly government, but with the establishment of a spiritual kingdom. It cannot be said that Jesus failed to see the defects of the Roman government, that He never saw occasions of the use

1. Matthew 23: 37-39; Psalm 118: 26.

2. Gardner, C. S., The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress, p. 333.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

of regal power for selfish ambition, or that He closed His eyes to unjust practices.¹ It was not for Him to change forms of government.²

There were political oppressions all around Jesus to be remedied, and there were social unrighteousness and iniquity to be condemned, but He did not hurl Himself into these social issues of His time.³ "He moves through them with a strange tranquillity, not as one who is indifferent to them, but as one whose eye is fixed on an end in which social problems will find their own solution."⁴ The main strength of Jesus lay in His ethical teaching for the individual.⁵ He confined His teaching to principles and motives, for in politics as elsewhere, He held that principles are eternal and principalities are ephemeral.⁶ Performing civic duties is but applying the principles of Jesus to civil life.

Although Jesus said nothing directly about loyalty to civil government, those who accept His teachings can never be lacking in fidelity to civil administration so long as it performs, however imperfectly, its duty concerning fundamental human interests.⁷ "He said nothing as to patriotism, for no matter how much it may be

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1. Stevens, G. B., The Teaching of Jesus, p. 124.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Peabody, F. G., Jesus Christ and the Social Question, p. 78.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Klausner, Joseph, op. cit., p. 381.
 6. Graves, E. P., What Did Jesus Teach? p. 176.
 7. Gardner, C. S., op. cit., p. 353.

magnified, it remains a relative virtue."¹ Jesus did not inculcate a love of one's country, because He sought to develop a passion for humanity. A patriotism which cannot be absorbed in this higher devotion is of relative and temporary value.²

(1) Acknowledged Existing Authorities

In His own behavior, Jesus was duly observant of all civil laws and ordinances.³ There is no record of His condemning government in itself. He condemned only the injustices committed in its name. He yielded obedience to existing administration and assumed that men ought to submit to constituted authority and discharge obligations laid on them by the Roman government.⁴ Many of His parables turn on the relation of king and subject, master and servant. He drew illustrations for His spiritual teachings from the affairs of government.⁵ In every case, He acknowledged those in authority and approved of loyalty to them.

Early training had a great deal to do with Jesus' position on civil government.⁶ From all indications His parents were good citizens. Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem on a mission of the State when Jesus was born,

1. Gardner, C. S., op. cit., p. 353.

2. Ibid.

3. Scott, H. M., The Ethical Teachings of Jesus, p. 79.

4. Ibid.

5. Mark 10: 42; Matthew 5: 25, 26; 5: 41; 17: 25; Luke 14: 31.

6. Horne, H. H., Modern Problems as Jesus Saw Them, p. 20.

having gone there in accordance with the "decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled."¹ The home at Nazareth, in Galilee, was established under the rule of Herod Antipas. The boyhood and youth of Jesus were spent in a community governed by a Jewish tetrarch under authority of Imperial Rome. He became familiar with the impost of taxes, with the customs that the Jews collected from their brethren for the Roman master, and with the social prejudice against collectors. He became familiar also with the land, property, and poll taxes payable by Jews, as Roman subjects, into the Imperial treasury, collected through the agency of the Jewish courts. To procure tribute to Caesar was the purpose for which Joseph had been enrolled in Bethlehem.

As far as records show, Jesus never boasted of His citizenship. Other great teachers like Plato and Mohammed committed themselves to a definite form of government, but Jesus was too wise for that.² His coming was not for the purpose of setting up one government in opposition to all others. Had He opposed the Roman Empire and fought against kings, He would have handicapped Christianity in every monarchy since.³ Doctor Gardner thinks Jesus could not have discussed the political situation explicitly without raising issues which would have sidetracked His whole

1. Luke 2: 1.

2. Fiske, G. W., A Study of Jesus' Own Religion, p. 299.

3. Ibid.

program into a political movement. "He steered so entirely clear of the question," he says, "that when His enemies sought to secure His destruction on the ground that He was attempting to lead a political revolution, the Roman Governor, who would naturally have had information regarding such an undertaking and would have been especially sensitive as to that matter, dismissed the charge even without serious investigation."¹

To interpret the words, "Judge not that ye be not judged,"² to mean that Jesus denounced civil officials is to assume that He went as far as the Pharisees themselves in laying down petty rules as to the minutiae of conduct. It is certain that He contended most vigorously against this practice. "What He meant is clear enough when it is borne in mind that He was substituting His law of love for the ancient law of retaliation in dealing with offenders."³ Jesus wanted His followers to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecuted His Church, rather than to organize against existing authority.

The prayer of Jesus, given by John in the seventeenth chapter of his Gospel, reveals the attitude of Jesus towards His followers in their connection with civil government: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil

1. Op. cit., p. 334.

2. Matthew 7: 1.

3. Gardner, C. S., op. cit., p. 337.

one."¹ He does not call Christians out of the social and political order which is necessary, not only to the prosperity of nations, but also to their existence. Christians "are the salt of the earth"² and the "light of the world,"³ and should "so let 'their' light shine before men; that they may see 'their' good works, and glorify 'their' Father who is in heaven."⁴ Christ does not attempt to suppress civil government, but He inspires political life with a more generous temper, and directs it to higher ends. He affirms the sacredness of civil authority and enforces civil duties with new and divine sanctions.⁵ A. T. Cadoux states that Jesus recognized the use of arms as essential to the maintenance of authority in any actual civil government.⁶ He also says that Jesus recognized, as part of the divine will, the exercise of coercion for governmental purposes.⁷

There were several attitudes toward Roman government in Palestine in the time of Jesus. The enemies of the Savior were on their guard to catch something from Him which would define His attitude on the troublesome issue. On one occasion some Pharisees and Herodians tried to ensnare Jesus with the question, "Is it lawful to give

1. John 17: 15.

2. Matthew 5: 13.

3. Matthew 5: 14.

4. Matthew 5: 16.

5. Dale, D. W., Laws of Christ for Common Life, p. 187.

6. Jesus and Civil Government, p. 40.

7. Ibid.; see John 18: 36; 19: 11; Romans 13: 1, 2.

tribute unto Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"¹ There was bitter controversy concerning this question, even between these two parties. The Pharisees contended that to pay tribute to a heathen king was disloyalty to their Divine King. To an orthodox Jew, the levying of the capitation-tax was doubly odious, not only as a burdensome exaction, but also as the badge of subjection of the Chosen People of God to a detested and despotic Gentile power.² Refusal to pay tax, the Herodians held, was equivalent to rebellion against Rome. Both Pharisees and Herodians thought that Jesus would sufficiently commit Himself on this theme to give them the evidence they needed to convict Him. "So far He had proved that He feared nothing, neither the Temple authorities when He drove out the money changers and the traffickers, nor the most honoured of the nation when He attacked the Scribes and Pharisees; therefore let Him declare without any fear of persons, whether they should pay tribute to Caesar."³

To have said, "No", would have been to command rebellion; to have said simply, "Yes", would have been to give a shock to deep feeling, and, in the eyes of the people, to deny, in a sense, His own claim of being Israel's Messiah-King.⁴

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1. Mark 12: 14, 15. See Matt. 22: 15-22; Luke 20: 20-26.
 2. Harris, S. S., Christianity and Civil Society, p. 1.
 3. Klausner, J., op. cit., p. 317.
 4. Edersheim, A., op. cit., p. 385.

Jesus immediately perceived their knavery and hypocrisy. From the time He was ten years of age, when Archelaus was deposed and the tax was levied, the question of tribute had caused trouble. He knew the positions of the Jewish parties, and He could not be drawn into the dispute so easily as the tricksters assumed. "Why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny that I may see it. And they brought it."¹ By accident, or more probably as the result of cunning calculation, the coin was one which bore the full expression of the Roman domination.² "On one side were the haughty, beautiful features of the Emperor Tiberius with all the wicked scorn on his lips. On the obverse, the title of Pontifex Maximus."³ The Emperors, down to the Flavii, caused special coins for Judea to be struck without an image, but with merely the name of the Emperor and the customary Jewish symbols.⁴ Naturally, especially at the festivals, the very numerous image-impressed coins flowed into the money-market at Jerusalem.⁵

"Whose is this image and superscription?" asked Jesus. "Caesar's," they answered. "And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."⁶

James Stalker says, "By Von Ranke this has been

1. Mark 12: 15.

2. Keim, T., op. cit., p. 162.

3. Farrar, F. W., The Life of Christ, vol. II, p. 231.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Mark 12: 17.

called the greatest of all the sayings of our Lord, this being an historian's estimate; for the whole modern history may be looked upon as a series of experiments to ascertain what is Caesar's and what is God's. It was singularly characteristic of Him who uttered it, for it did not directly and in so many words answer the question, but put His opponents into the hole into which they had tried to push Him."¹ C. K. Kent states, "These words do not proclaim divine right of kings. Jesus is interested primarily in things that are God's, but His absolute sense of justice demanded that Rome be paid for whatever service she rendered."²

"It would therefore be quite as incorrect," says Theodore Keim, "to find in Jesus' answer merely a subtle evasion and with-holding of His real opinion, as to find in it an unconditional recognition of Roman domination, or an unconditional renunciation of terrestrial redemption of the people and of terrestrial rule of the Messiah."³ Westien, Der Wette, and Volkmar hold that Jesus evaded the question.⁴

The point of Jesus' reply is that the very coin in which the tribute was paid bore on its face proof, not only of the subjection of the Jews to a foreign government, but also of their obligation to it.⁵ Coinage is a

1. The Ethic of Jesus, p. 360.

2. The Life and Teachings of Jesus, p. 196.

3. Op. cit., p. 264.

4. Ibid.

5. Goulde, E. P., International Critical Commentary on Mark, p. 226.

privilege claimed by a ruling power, but it is also one of the things in which government most clearly represents the interest of the governed.¹ Tribute in this way becomes not an extortion or exaction, but a return for service rendered. The change from $\delta\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\iota$ (give), to $\alpha\pi\acute{o}\delta\omicron\tau\epsilon$ (give back or render), gives the whole principle.² It was not a question of giving what might lawfully be refused, but of paying what was lawfully claimed. The tribute was not a gift, but a debt.³ The Jews could not rightfully accept the protection of Rome while declining to pay anything towards her maintenance. Caesar gave them the inestimable benefit of stable government. So long as the Jews were willing to receive from Caesar, they must consent to give tribute in return. They had no right to enjoy the protection of an ordered State and refuse all obligations to conform to its laws. The political issue, as Jesus handled it, became a moral one.⁴ S. Liberty affirms that Jesus' answer "is clearly the fountain-head (as proved by the reproduction of the phraseology) of the new political philosophy laid down by Saint Paul in the thirteenth chapter of Romans as to relations with higher powers."⁵

While Jesus admitted that the Roman Empire had a

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1. Goulde, E. P., op. cit., p. 226.
 2. Plummer, A., Cambridge Greek Testament, Mark, p. 278.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Scott, E. F., The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 77.
 5. Political Relations in Christ's Ministry, p. 100.

right to exist and to exact tribute, He also added the injunction, "Render to God the things that are God's."¹ Discharging a duty to Caesar in no way interfered with duty to God. "The paying of the coin, with Caesar's image upon it, to Caesar was wholly compatible with a man's giving himself, made in God's image, to God."² The way in which the question was stated implied that there was a conflict between the claims of the earthly and heavenly governments. But Jesus showed the questioners that each government has claims. Conflict of duties is one of the perplexities of life. The question of the relation of the Christian to civil government has light shed upon it by the answer which Jesus gave. Whenever the Son of God came in contact with officials of government, He did not treat them as usurpers of power, but as men who were in the capacity of serving God in civil administration. Says C. J. Cadoux, "The responsibility of administrators limits our own in that they are responsible for the stewardship entrusted to them."³

(2) Proclaimed Difference between Civil
Government and the Kingdom of God

Luke alone among the writers of the Four Gospels, records formally the attempt made by the Jews to implicate Jesus in criminal practices against the Roman Empire.⁴

1. Mark 12: 17.

2. Plummer, A., Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, p. 147.

3. Op. cit., p. 169.

4. Luke 23: 2.

The whole company of Jewish rulers accused Jesus before Pilate of the very crime which they wanted Him to commit.¹ During the course of the first Roman trial, Pilate asked Jesus, "What hast thou done?" Jesus answered him, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."² In the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus is quoted as saying of His disciples: "They are not of this world even as I am not of this world."³ The same Greek words *ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσὶν* are used as in the saying of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world,"⁴ with slight variation in positions and with more emphasis given to the earthly realm in the latter case.

Charles S. Gardner assumes that the words, "My kingdom is not of this world," might bear the meaning that His kingdom had no significance for the temporal order of society.⁵

But they might equally well mean, and taken in connection with the body of His teaching most probably did mean, that His kingdom, although including the temporal order within its scope, was founded on a principle, made use of means, and was motivated by an aim which radically distinguished it from the political dominations that arise out of the struggle of selfish human interests; that He did not propose to substitute

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1. John 6: 15.
 2. John 18: 36.
 3. John 17: 16.
 4. John 18: 36.
 5. Gardner, C. S., op. cit., p. 335.

for the Roman rule another which was in principle like it.¹

Three ideals that governed Roman civilization, which were also the ideals of Jesus, are suggested by W. J. Dawson.² First, the Romans sought to fashion unity in religion; Jesus, too, reduced religion to its simplest elements. Second, the Romans aimed at universality in their empire; Jesus, too, aimed at universality, but He used spiritual, not carnal, weapons. Third, the Romans taught worship of State as the basis of all religion; Jesus also taught loyalty to an invisible kingdom as the only real form of religion, loyalty to the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Although many similarities between the two kingdoms may be suggested, there were distinct and definite differences which must be considered. The whole attitude of Pilate, who as governor of a Roman province was supposed to keep the central government informed of any irregularity, showed that he understood that the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed was not in conflict with the Roman government.³ The Roman procurator seemed to understand that the kingdoms were different. He was not alarmed by the charge "which in any other circumstances he could not have treated so cavalierly."⁴ If the acts of which Jesus was accused could have been proved, they would have been overt acts

1. Gardner, C. S., op. cit., p. 335.

2. The Comrade Christ, p. 113.

3. Goulde, E. P., Commentary on Mark, p. 284; Bernard, J. H., Commentary on the Gospel of John, vol. II, p. 612.

4. Ibid.

of treason. The fact that Pilate paid so little attention to them, and did not treat Jesus' silence in the face of them as an evidence of guilt, proves conclusively that he understood the facts.¹ In this first trial before Pilate, it is seen how John complements the other Gospels. "It would be extraordinary that Pilate should simply hear Jesus admit that He claimed to be King of the Jews, and at once declare, 'I find no fault in this man.' But a conversation with Jesus had convinced Pilate that He did not claim to be a king in the ordinary sense."²

As the process of inaugurating the kingdom of God in this world continued, differences between the two kingdoms became more and more evident. There was a difference in method. Roman civilization was built on force. As the armies of Rome conquered nation after nation, the impression of its physical power was indelible. Jesus gave His followers one weapon which, with the power of God's Spirit, was to conquer people: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."³ The principle of Christ-like love was destined to bring a transformation in all spheres, working gradually as leaven.

In the kingdom of God there is no favoritism.⁴ God, who knows what is in man, can justly assign to every

1. Goulde, E. P., op. cit., p. 284; Bernard, J. H., op. cit., vol. II, p. 612.

2. Plummer, A., The Gospel According to Luke, p. 521.

3. John 13: 35.

4. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 392.

man a place. There are no empty honors of which men might boast, for the only honor is a large opportunity for service. "Whosoever would be first among you shall be bondservant of all."¹

Never did Jesus use the idea of "kingdom" in the sense of territory or country, but rather as the reign of God in the heart.² Temporal kingdoms pass away, but the kingdom of God is eternal. Voluntary membership was and is universally offered by Jesus to all who would accept His principles. Conditions for entrance into God's kingdom are not changed by time or location.

(3) Defined the Source of Civil Government

All authority must be traced to a common source. Pilate, who said six times that Jesus was innocent, wanted to release Him as inferior to, and powerless in the face of the Roman government. "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?"³ In reality it was Pilate who did not know.⁴ "Jesus answered him, Thou wouldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above."⁵ Jesus calls God the source of all authority. In the words of Karl Barth, "Behind the existing order stands God."⁶

1. Mark 10: 44.

2. Robertson, A. T., Keywords in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 58.

3. John 19: 10.

4. Abbott, E. A., The Fourfold Gospel, vol. III, p. 552.

5. John 19: 11.

6. The Epistle to the Romans, p. 486.

When Pilate spoke of his power, Jesus reminded him that all earthly power is dependent on God. "I have" is contrasted with "given". Authority comes to the government from the State, but to speak of any inherent authority in the State is incorrect. Pilate thought that the Roman Empire had all authority and sovereignty, but the inherent power which it used had been allowed it by the Absolute Sovereign, who is eternal and universal. B. F. Westcott points out that there was truth as well as error in Pilate's claim of the right to act.¹

The two required to be distinguished in order that the real relation of the civil and the theocratic powers to the death of Christ, might be laid open. In the order of the world, Pilate had the authority which he claimed to have. It had been given to him to exercise authority. As the representative of the Emperor, his judgment was legally decisive. But still his right to exercise authority was derived, not inherent. Human government is only valid as the expression of the Divine Will.²

Pilate, who did not know this, was abusing a great and legitimate office partly through a heathen's ignorance. In so doing he was less guilty than the false accusers who sat in Moses' seat.³

God delegated authority to Jesus Christ.⁴ It is, therefore, through Jesus Christ that God acts in His dealing with men, and it is to Jesus Christ that all authority is delegated for the control of human affairs.⁵

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1. The Gospel According to John, p. 302.
 2. Westcott, B. F., op. cit., p. 302.
 3. Innes, A. T., The Trial of Jesus, p. 96.
 4. Coleman, J. M., Social Ethics, p. 250.
 5. Ibid.

The Savior encourages those whom He sends out to witness for Him by promising the protecting power of absolute authority.

(4) Definitely Condemned Rebellion

A growing influence in Jewish politics was coming to a climax about the time of Christ's earthly ministry. The Jewish race had long looked forward to political deliverance.¹ Every devout Jew prayed day by day, "Proclaim by thy loud trumpet our deliverance and raise up a banner to gather our dispersed and gather us together from the ends of the earth. Blessed be thou, O Lord! who gatherest the outcasts of thy people Israel."² The Jews anticipated the deliverance of Israel, their restoration, and their future pre-eminent glory, and they all connected these events with the coming of the Messiah.³ The hope of being ultimately rescued from Roman rule was based upon the belief that the Jews were Jehovah's chosen race. With the coming of the Messiah the brilliant promises of God would be realized. "The stranger would be trodden down; Israel would be consoled, and the Messianic Kingdom with its center at Jerusalem would suddenly burst upon the world."⁴ A perusal of the literature belonging to this period reveals how deep and

1. Jenks, J. W., The Political and Social Significance of the Life and Teachings of Jesus, p. 30.

2. Edersheim, A., op. cit., vol. I, p. 78.

3. Ibid.

4. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 343.

widespread was the Messianic hope and expectation.¹

Prophecy played a prominent role in causing the Jews to have an attitude of expectation. The Scriptures had taught the Chosen People to look for a personal deliverer, but they had misinterpreted His way of deliverance.

Abraham saw the days of Christ; Moses wrote of Him; David foresaw that God would 'raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne; Isaiah spoke beforehand of the suffering, redeeming servant of Israel; Jeremiah prophesied of the Lord of Righteousness; Ezekiel announced the Coming Shepherd of God's flock; and Daniel spoke of the Anointed One.²

From Samuel onward, all the prophets told of Messianic times and the day of Gospel grace.³ And so when times of oppression caused the Jews to feel despondent, it was only natural for them to look earnestly for someone to deliver them immediately from their trouble. The greater the oppression of the enemies became, the more strongly this hope seized the masses.⁴

The reader of the New Testament is often struck with the practice of Jesus of withdrawing from public notice directly following His miraculous deeds. No doubt He wanted to be alone, but a partial explanation of His action is that He did not want to encourage the people

1. See Psalms of Solomon; Assumption of Moses; Enoch; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

2. Young, G. L., Bibliotheca Sacra, April, 1922, p. 224.

3. Luke 1: 69; John 8: 56; 6: 47; Acts 2: 30; 3: 24; Isaiah 53; Micah 5: 2; Jeremiah 23: 6; Ezekiel 34: 23; Daniel 9: 25.

4. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. 61.

in their desire to set Him up as their political leader against Rome. They had seen His works, showing that He could do all the necessary things for the maintenance of an army, and they were looking for an opportune time to crown Him as political Messiah. The occasion came after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand people. Jesus had to withdraw to prevent their plans being carried out.

Excited people, having concluded that Jesus was the prophet of their expectation, wanted to seize Him ($\acute{\alpha}\rho\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\nu$) and make Him king. Only John, of the Gospel writers, tells of the plan to be executed.¹ Even the disciples had to be constrained to leave, because they were in sympathy with the crowd. Jesus wished to remove them from the atmosphere of political excitement which had been generated.² If the Savior had been in favor of political rebellion, this would have been a fine time to express His feeling. However, "he declined to embark on the sea of political revolution."³ The next day after the disappointing experience, Jesus "repulsed the vulgar crowd by elevated spiritual teaching couched in metaphors that were incomprehensible to the multitude of ignorant fanatics."⁴ He declined to obtain by political methods what He knew could only be accomplished by spiritual

1. John 6: 15; Mark 6: 45; Matthew 14: 22.

2. Bernard, J. H., op. cit., p. 184.

3. Sampey, J. R., The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 147.

4. Ibid.

forces. These half-hearted seekers after the loaves and fishes and political power turned abruptly from Jesus and walked out of the synagogue to walk with Him no more.¹ They felt that Jesus had disillusioned them, and they cared not for spiritual power that consisted in intimate appropriation of the life of Jesus as God's Son.²

To understand the full significance of Jesus' condemnation of rebellion against Rome, it is necessary to know something of the movements of the Zealots. Palestine was infested with their doctrine that any government which tried to rule the Jews must not be tolerated. T. Walker holds that Jesus was denouncing the Zealots when He said, "Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the sons of God."³ "The folly of Zealot propaganda was also in His mind when He said, 'Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council.'⁴ Another well known exhortation, "Resist not him that is evil," may even refer directly to Roman authority, according to the statement of J. W. Lightley.⁵

Christ's disapproval of violent methods could not be

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1. John 6: 59.
 2. Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. V, p. 100.
 3. The Teaching of Jesus and the Jewish Teaching of His Age, p. 159; Matthew 5: 9.
 4. Ibid.; Matthew 5: 22.
 5. Op. cit., p. 394. See also Lake, K., The Stewardship of Faith, p. 30; Matthew 5: 39.

made clearer than His statement relative to one of Pilate's cruel outbursts.¹ "Some of the multitude told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."² This was an exceedingly good opportunity to condemn the Roman officer for such an outrage. But a bad matter would have been made worse if He had spoken words of condemnation, as much as the deed deserved it. Instead of giving over to those who reported the incident, Jesus replied, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."³

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem was an opportunity for the King to start rebellion. He had avoided attention on all other occasions. He invited it here.⁴ It is His final claim to Messiahship, but no one could be misled into thinking that His spirit on that journey was the spirit of a revolutionist.

On the last night of Christ's earthly ministry, in response to His unequivocal words on the coming dangers, two swords were produced by the disciples at very short notice.⁵ The answer of the Master revealed His disdain of the idea. When He was in danger of arrest, Peter cut off the ear of one of the offenders with a sword which he evidently had at hand.⁶ The healing of the man's ear

1. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 394. See also Lake, K., op. cit., p. 30.

2. Luke 13: 1.

3. Luke 13: 3, 5.

4. Lightley, J. W., op. cit., p. 391.

5. Luke 22: 38.

6. Mark 14: 47; Matthew 26: 51; Luke 23: 38; 22: 49.

and the Lord's reply expressed His feeling of contempt for revolutionary methods. "Jesus deliberately ran all risks in the belief that men might be moulded and fashioned for a better purpose."¹

The last argument used to support the statement that Jesus condemned rebellion is the way in which He treated the popular idea of a Davidic king. His enemies were silenced by the pertinent question of the Messiah's descent from David: "How say the scribes that the Christ is the son of David? David, himself, said in the Holy Spirit,

The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?"² Religious Jews were looking for the appearance of one who should be neither more nor less than David had been.³ "They expected to see once more a warrior-king judging at the gate of Jerusalem or surrounded by his mighty men or carrying his victorious arms into the neighboring countries, or receiving submissive embassies from Rome, and in the meantime holding awful communication with Jehovah, administering His Law and singing His praise."⁴ Jesus knew that He must lead a life altogether different from that of David. He was David's Son, but He was also the Son of God. "The title, 'Son of David',

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1. Lightley, J. W., loc. cit.
 2. Mark 12: 35-37; Psalms 110: 1.
 3. Seeley, J. R., Ecce Homo, p. 20.
 4. Ibid., p. 20.

was unattractive to Jesus because it yielded itself too easily to the ambitions of military Messianism."¹ Doctor Bosworth does not mean to say that the Son of Man renounced the prophetic name. The belief in His Davidic lineage could hardly have been so common among early Christians if He had been known to have disclaimed it.² Paul recognized Jesus' descent from David, but he did not hold the Scribal view of Messiahship.³ It was particularly desirable that Jesus should disdain any such military ideals when the Scribes and priests were trying to make Him an object of suspicion among Roman officials. He brought out the fact that it was the Scribes who taught the Son of David type of Messianism. It was, therefore, they that might well bear the burden of sinister Roman distrust.⁴

In summarizing this discussion, the words of Theodore Keim may be used:

*Jesus by no means denied to Himself the sonship of David, but He wished to show His opponents to how small an extent the meaning of Messiahship was exhausted by the Davidic Sonship, by the derivation from the great earthly sovereign, and, indeed, by the popular opinion of a restoration of the material empire which accompanied this derivation.*⁵

The kingdom of Christ must go deeper than political reform and revolution. It must be established, not as

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1. Bosworth, E. I., The Life and Teaching of Jesus, p. 329.
 2. Ibid., p. 330.
 3. Romans 1: 3.
 4. Bosworth, E. I., loc. cit.
 5. Op. cit., vol. V, p. 186.

a State founded by violence of rebellion and war, but as a spiritualizing and ennobling force within the souls of men.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways."¹

(5) Prophesied Persecution of Himself and
His Followers

Disciples of Jesus have the words and example of their leader to encourage them in the time of persecution which He clearly predicted. In His discourse which is recorded in the tenth chapter of Matthew, the Master says, "But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you; yea, and before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles."² J. A. Broadus says that this saying of Jesus is introduced as more important than what precedes, not merely because the disciples would be before tribunals of greater dignity, but also because the councils before which they would stand could punish with death, a thing which the Jewish tribunals at that time could not do.³

The word rendered "governors" in Matthew 10: 18 is a general term which would include "several kinds of Roman provincial rulers: propraetors, proconsuls (like Sergius

1. "The Passing of Arthur" from "The Idylls of the King,"

The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, line 406, p. 464.

2. Matthew 10: 17-19.

3. Op. cit., p. 225.

Paulus and Gallio), and procurators (like Pilate, Felix and Festus)."¹ It is used in the same broad sense in 1 Peter 2: 14.

As to being brought before kings, examples are found in the persecution of James and Peter by Herod Agrippa I,² and in the appearance of Paul before Agrippa's son, Herod Agrippa II.³ "The term 'king' was also frequently applied to the Roman Emperor or Emperor,⁴ and in that sense is the example of Paul's trials before Nero."⁵

It was a custom in the first Christian century to make very elaborate addresses and effectual appeals, and when before Roman tribunals, to employ a lawyer, such as Tertullus, who understood Roman law and judicial methods and could deliver well-wrought orations. When faced with persecution, the Apostles were more anxious to give testimony in the name of Jesus than they were to defend themselves. In the hour of tribulation the Master promises help from above. He says, "Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. The spirit of your Father speaketh in you."⁶ The personal testimonies of countless Christians have revealed the strength of Jesus' words. In their suffering and patience they have been saved.

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1. Broadus, J. A., op. cit., p. 225.
 2. Acts 12: 1-3.
 3. Acts 26: 2.
 4. 1 Peter 2: 13-17.
 5. Broadus, J. A., loc. cit.
 6. Matthew 10: 19, 20.

The servant cannot expect to be above his master, nor can Christians expect easy lives when the Master was ill-treated. He predicted that He would be put to death by civil authorities.¹ J. Stalker points out that "Jesus lived under three governments - that of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, that of the Jews, and that of the Romans - and painful it is to observe, as we follow His career step by step, that He is never brought into contact with any of these without suffering injustice."² Power of physical life and death was entirely in the hands of Roman authorities, and Jesus accepted their treatment as part of God's plan.

(6) Accepted Illegal Treatment without Appeal

It appears that in no case whatever did Christ countenance any appeal to the secular courts.³ "It was Christ's fixed resolution to enter into no contest with civil power. Therefore He enjoins upon His followers an absolutely passive behavior towards it, and He does so in every rule that He lays down."⁴ S. Liberty suggests that the condemnation of Jesus stands for all time as the political murder of one whose only crime was an appeal for national reform, which the men in power did not want.⁵

The Son of Man submitted without a struggle to the

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1. Mark 10: 34; 9: 12, 31; Matthew 17: 9, 12, 22f; 20: 18f; 27: 63; Luke 17: 25; 18: 32; 24: 7; 12: 40.
 2. The Ethic of Jesus, p. 359.
 3. Seeley, J. R., op. cit., p. 3.
 4. Ibid., p. 250.
 5. Political Relations in Christ's Ministry, p. 123.

indignities inflicted on Him by the various governing bodies. Into their hands He fell, in obedience to His own general precept not to withstand him who is evil, but to turn the other cheek.¹ Throughout the trials, although He knew His legal rights, and saw that the forms of procedure were not properly observed, He refused to protect Himself at the cost of throwing the slightest suspicion upon His conception of His mission.² In His mind was the purpose for which He came.³ It was better for Him to lose His life than to save it at the expense of His ideals and His mission. "There was no use of giving what was sacred to the dogs, or of casting pearls before swine."⁴

Jesus' concern was to keep from being delivered to Rome on a wrong issue.⁵ He was careful to let Pilate know that He was a king. "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth ~~heareth~~ my voice."⁶ Of his own accord Pilate told the accusers that he found no fault in Jesus. The Son of God did not go into court expecting to get earthly freedom through law; He went with the determination to carry out God's purpose and to fulfill the Scriptures.

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1. Cadoux, A. T., op. cit., p. 151; Matthew 5: 39.
 2. Burton, E. D., and Mathews, S., The Life of Christ, p. 226.
 3. Sampey, J. R., op. cit., p. 147.
 4. Cadoux, A. T., loc. cit.; Matthew 7: 6.
 5. Liberty, S., op. cit., p. 99.
 6. John 18: 37.

CHAPTER THREE
THE ATTITUDE OF APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANS
TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER THREE

THE ATTITUDE OF APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANS

TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

1. As Revealed in the Acts, Chapters 1 to 8, 10 to 12*

John and Peter share the distinction of being the first of the Apostles to be placed in prison for Christ's sake. Jesus had foretold that fate for them,¹ and now it had become a reality.² Little did the Apostles understand the meaning of Christ's words on the night He closed His public ministry.

Conflict with civil authorities arose after Peter preached his sermon in which he explained to the excited crowd that God's power made possible the healing of the lame man.³ Sadducees were offended at Peter's mentioning the resurrection, and they, with the priests and the captain of the Temple, laid hands on the Apostles and placed them in prison. "On the morrow" Peter and John were brought before the council for trial.⁴ This council, the Sanhedrin, was composed of seventy-one members. There

*For convenience, the book of Acts will be divided into two sections so that Paul's attitude toward civil government may be studied separately from that of the other Apostles. The first division includes chapters 1 to 8 and 10 to 12; the second, chapters 9, and 13 to 28. These last chapters reveal a definite advance in the position taken by the Apostles.

1. Luke 21: 12 to 16; Mark 13: 11 to 13; Matt. 10: 19 to 22.
2. Robertson, A. T., Epochs in the Life of the Apostle John, p. 69. See Carver, W. O., The Acts of the Apostles, p.47.
3. Acts 3: 12 to 26.
4. Acts 4: 7 to 12.

were chief priests, that is, the heads of each of the twenty-four classes into which the priests were divided; the Scribes, men who were skilled in all the Jewish law; and the elders, grave and learned men chosen to complete the number.¹

Peter courageously faced the rulers whom he recognized as civil officers, and spoke.² W. O. Carver helpfully points out that the occasion was used not for a defense, but for witnessing.³

The rulers were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John,⁴ because the followers of Christ were plainly not educated Rabbis nor schoolmen at all, but unlettered and without official position of any kind. Merely private men, formerly fishermen, they had defied the highest ecclesiastical rulers of the Jewish people. Immediately the council "conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable sign hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name."⁵ Peter and John were called in and charged "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."⁶ But Peter and

1. Lumby, J. P., Acts, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, p. 124.

2. Acts 4: 8.

3. Op. cit., p. 47.

4. Acts 4: 13.

5. Acts 4: 15-17.

6. Acts 4: 18.

John said that the question must be settled in the sight of God. They had already decided in the light of their Christian experience, and said, "We are not able, what we have seen and heard, not to speak."¹ That is to say, they defied the authorities who had stepped in between them and their duty to God.²

In this first conflict between the Church and earthly authority, the Apostles asserted a great principle - that the Christian conscience is the supreme court of appeal. W. M. Furneaux says that these two men can claim spiritual descent from the Three Children before Nebuchadnezzar - "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us....But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods."³ Socrates had declared to his judges: "I will obey God rather than you, O Athenians. If you would dismiss me and spare my life, on the condition that I should cease to teach my countrymen, I would rather die a thousand times than to accept the proposal."⁴

Peter and John were not required to retract what they had affirmed but only to desist from affirming it in the future. But they accepted no such compromise. They said with Micaiah, "As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak."⁵ "So their words

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1. Acts 4: 20 (literal translation).
 2. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. 68.
 3. Op. cit., p. 63; Daniel 3: 17, 18.
 4. Ibid.
 5. 1 Kings 22: 14.

have become sacred watchwords to which men who have had powers, civil or ecclesiastical, arrayed against them, have turned for comfort."¹ A. B. D. Alexander declares that Paul would have endorsed the noble protest of Peter and John.² To have compromised the message with the rulers would have been disobeying God. Obedience to men is a Christian duty, but only in so far as it does not involve disobedience to God. "Co-operation with others is a Christian duty, but only in so far as there is common ground between the Christian and his fellows."³

These two men of God did not forget the eternal distinction between right and wrong. There was for them, as there is for Christians today, a higher law than submission to outward authority. Later, all the Apostles came to know what it means to be in prison for Christ, when they were "delivered by the skill of Gamaliel, the Pharisee, in scoring a point against the Sadducees."⁴ Once more, the Apostles were commanded "not to go on speaking in the name of Jesus",⁵ but in this they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name."⁶ Peter again was spokesman for the Apostles. The whole group took a definite stand and declared "We must obey God rather than men."⁷

1. Furneaux, W. M., The Acts of the Apostles, p. 63.

2. The Ethics of Saint Paul, p. 318.

3. Cadoux, A. T., The Guidance of Jesus for Today, p. 152.

4. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. 69; Acts 5: 18-42.

5. Acts 5: 40.

6. Acts 5: 41.

7. Acts 5: 29.

In chapter seven of the book of Acts, another incident takes place which implies a favorable attitude toward Jewish civil government. It is the case of Stephen's being stoned. However harshly he condemned the Jewish rulers, he submitted to their illegal punishment without protest. Instead of showing his disapproval of their action, the Spirit of Jesus led him to pray for those who were taking his life.¹

In chapter ten, Peter is divinely led into fellowship with a Roman, Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band.² Italian cohorts were sent to any part of the Empire as they were needed. The procurator at Caesarea would need a cohort whose loyalty he could trust, for the Jews were restless. It was a new experience for the Apostle to the Jews, and he cautiously made the providential visit. Was he going to condemn Cornelius for being a soldier and forbid his becoming a Christian until he should give up his military work? A. T. Cadoux points out that the book of Acts gives more than one case of soldiers accepting Christianity, but has no suggestion that they were required to drop their profession or were discountenanced for continuing it.³ He goes further and says that the Pauline and other Epistles have no hint of such a requirement.⁴ Whether one agrees with Cadoux or not, there is

1. Acts 7: 60.

2. Acts 10: 1.

3. Jesus and Civil Government, p. 29.

4. Ibid.

not found in Luke's record any adverse criticism toward this phase of Roman administration. "These Roman centurions," says A. T. Robertson, "always appear in a favorable light in the New Testament."¹ It cannot be said that the general attitude of the Jews is expressed in Peter's statement: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respector of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him."² The fact that the Romans hated the Jews and the Jews hated the Romans was not unknown to Peter. The main reason for the Jewish hatred was the domination of the Romans over the Chosen People. Peter probably had not grown to believe assuredly that God would save Roman officers, but he had seen it done once.

The first division of Acts closes with Herod Agrippa's putting forth his hand to afflict certain Christians. He killed James, the brother of John, "and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also."³ God delivered Peter from prison. He went to the group who were praying for his delivery and said, "Tell these things unto James (the Lord's brother), and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place."⁴ Although he did not speak disparagingly of the government's action, he wisely left without trying to appeal for justice.

1. Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. III, p. 133.

2. Acts 10: 34.

3. Acts 12: 1, 2.

4. Acts 12: 17.

There would have been no justice given to him by the weak and sensuous king whose power came from Rome.

2. As Revealed in the Acts, Chapters 9, 13 to 28

Luke's accurate account of Paul is tremendously helpful in studying the Apostle's attitude toward civil government.¹ In fact, a large amount of information about Roman administration is found in Acts.² The law and institution of Rome appear here frequently and in many forms. There are references to Roman army officers and to detachments of military service. Provinces of Rome and cities with Roman municipal organization are mentioned. "Roman penal procedure lies behind the stories of Paul's experiences in several cities in the Empire."³

When the Christian Church began to carry its message into the Roman Empire, it was impossible to ignore the existence of that great government. Says E. Troeltsch:

In reality the Pauline world Church, in opposition to the revolutionary conclusions revealed in the Apocalypse, did not merely recognize the State (and its agency, civil government) as permitted by God, but prized it as an institution which at least cared for justice, order, and eternal morality. In this respect Paul drew upon the Stoic doctrine of moral law which is written in the heart, and ascribed also to the heathen a knowledge of goodness which is outwardly expressed in the State and in their legal system.⁴

The importance of knowing Paul's position is significant,

1. Luke 1: 1-4.

2. Cadbury, H. J., "Roman Law and the Trial of Paul," The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 297.

3. Ibid.

4. The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, p. 80.

because for many centuries the conservative attitude of Christianity toward political and social life was decided by his doctrine.¹

Paul seems to be an exception among the Apostles in the observance of Jewish ceremonial law.² He said that he had died to the law that he might live unto God.³ Since his views did not coincide with those of the Jews, Paul faced trouble continually because the Judaizers followed him with their destructive work. In the fifteenth chapter of Acts, the Judaizers and Paul settled, for a short time, the matter of ceremonial requirements for salvation. D. W. Riddle declares that Paul directly teaches against the legalistic practice of the Law (Torah).⁴ Paul's experience and personality not unnaturally led him to follow certain lines which were diametrically opposed to the standards of Judaism. Some apparent inconsistencies in Paul's ministry may be pointed out, but these do not prove that Paul had a sympathetic attitude toward Jewish civil government.⁵

The Apostle to the Gentiles took an attitude of friendliness toward the Roman government which he never concealed. He did this for two reasons. One is that he had been reared in Tarsus which was under Roman influence.

1. Troeltsch, E., op. cit., p. 82.

2. 1 Corinthians 4: 9; 9: 5; 15: 9.

3. Galatians 2: 20; 6: 2; Romans 7: 4; 1 Corinthians 9:20.

4. Jesus and the Pharisees, p. 80.

5. Acts 21: 26; 16: 3.

In the surroundings amid which he grew up there was a certain attitude of friendliness to the Imperial government. The new citizens in general, and the Jewish citizens in particular, were warm partizans of their protector in the new imperial regime.¹ Mark Antony and Augustus Caesar favored the city of Tarsus, and naturally, it received every possible concession. It was made a free city by Mark Antony "twenty years before Christ."²

Paul had a citizen's rights in Tarsus.³ W. M. Ramsay suggests that it may be confidently assumed that Paul was careful to keep within demonstrable law and custom when he claimed to be a citizen of Tarsus in describing himself to the tribune.⁴ According to the strict interpretation of the Roman law, the "civitas" superseded all other citizenship.⁵

Another reason why Paul was unusually friendly toward the civil government of Rome is that he realized the importance of the instruments of the Empire in extending the kingdom of Christ. Jesus never claimed Roman citizenship, but Paul emphasized the possession of his on several occasions.⁶ W. O. Carver points out that Paul's language in Acts 22: 25 puts Roman citizenship first for emphasis.⁷

1. Ramsay, W. M., Saint Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen, p. 31.

2. Burr, A. G., The Apostle Paul and the Roman Law, p. 18.

3. Acts 21: 39.

4. Op. cit., p. 31.

5. Ibid.

6. Acts 16: 37; 22: 25; 25: 10, 11.

7. Op. cit., p. 221.

When he first appeared in Acts there was no hint that the Apostle was a Roman citizen, but as soon as he started to work among Gentiles, his Latin name was given by Luke in anticipating his civil relationship.¹ In order for him to have free citizenship, his father, and possibly his grandfather also, had to have the right of a free Roman citizen.²

The martial law under which all other provincials lay did not apply to him who could say with Paul, "Civis Romanus sum."³ Certain privileges accompanied this dignity.⁴ Only a Roman citizen could appeal against the decision of the governor. Duties levied by a free town were not paid by a Roman citizen. He had almost the exclusive right to serve on provincial juries. His right to vote or to own land was protected. A Roman citizen could not be expelled, as were Aquilla and Priscilla.⁵

Salvation is not to be limited to any one nation. This was the point of disagreement between Paul and the Judaizers. The Apostle to the Gentiles saw himself as a "debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish,"⁶ and he stood ready to preach the Gospel of Christ to all men. To him, it was in every

1. Acts 13: 9.

2. Harpold, C. J., The Twelve Tribes of the Apocalypse, p. 4.

3. Ibid. Also, Acts 22: 28.

4. Arnold, W. T., Roman Provincial Administration, p. 25.

5. Acts 18: 2.

6. Romans 1: 14.

way permissible to use his knowledge of Roman government and his right as a Roman citizen for his Master. As he took the Roman highways and turned them from military and commercial to Christian and spiritual purposes, he used his citizenship for the work of the Kingdom.

"Once a Roman citizen, a man might be said to have changed his nationality and to belong to the one great family of Rome."¹ W. S. Muntz believes that it would have been practically useless for Paul to have proclaimed universal brotherhood, by which saints on earth were to live as members of a heavenly commonwealth, if Rome had not first educated the people in the conception of political brotherhood.² Certain barriers of national animosity and exclusiveness had been broken down or weakened, thus leading to a realization of a common citizenship in a universal empire.³

Paul allowed his enemies to violate his privilege of Roman citizenship on eight different occasions.⁴ He even had to protect himself by fleeing, as he did from Damascus, Jerusalem, Thessalonica, and Berea.⁵ But when he asserted his citizenship, he did so with pride and with effect.⁶ "At Philippi he brought the magistrates cringing to his feet in the prison. At Jerusalem he turned the

1. Kelso, J. L., Expository Times, vol. XII, p. 79.

2. Rome, Saint Paul and the Early Church, p. 53.

3. Muntz, W. S., loc. cit.

4. Acts 9: 25; 13: 50; 14: 19; 16: 19; 17: 10; 17: 13; 18: 12; 21: 30.

5. Acts 9: 15; 9: 35; 17: 10; 17: 14.

6. Acts 16: 37; 22: 28.

cheek of Claudius Lysias pale when he declared himself."¹
 On his second journey he chose a Roman citizen to be his
 companion.² In following his usual plan of confining his
 preaching to the centers of Roman life and influence,
 Paul capitalized on his connection with the Empire.

From Acts 21: 33 to the end of the book, the Apostle
 Paul is a prisoner of Rome. Subordinate officers could
 dispose of some cases,³ but for others they prepared the
 information to be submitted to the higher tribunal.⁴
 After Paul asserted his Roman citizenship, he was given
 consideration which he would not have received from Jewish
 rulers. It is instructive to compare the lenient and
 common-sense attitude of these trained Roman aristocrats
 with that of the turbulent local mobs who dealt with
 Paul in Asia Minor, Greece and Jerusalem. This Christian
 statesman usually had little trouble in making friends
 with Roman officials, such as Asiarchs, Julius, and others.⁵

In the face of the treatment which he received from
 Felix⁶ and Festus⁷, Paul demanded his rights and appealed
 to Caesar: "Caesarem Apello!"⁸ He was willing to die
 according to law if he had done anything worthy of death,

1. Kelman, J., op. cit., p. 79.

2. Acts 16: 37.

3. Cadbury, H. J., op. cit., p. 301.

4. Ibid.

5. Acts 19: 31; 27: 2; Romans 16; Phil. 1: 13.

6. Acts 24: 26.

7. Acts 25: 9.

8. Farrar, F. W., The Life and Work of Saint Paul, p. 349;
 Muntz, W. S., op. cit., p. 36.

but he wanted a fair trial.¹ This is the second time that Paul went beyond the example of Jesus. The Son of God refused to ask for justice in order to save His life. W. M. Ramsay thinks that Paul's reason for doing this was to gain a recognition for Christianity as a religio licita, and to place it in this respect on an equality with Judaism.² F. J. Foakes-Jackson declares that Paul had no cause to feel any bitterness against Roman rule.³ Caesar was to him the supreme embodiment of justice on earth to whom he was able to appeal when no other judge had the courage to protect him.⁴ Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, tells how he dealt with the Christians in his province: "There were others also brought before me, possessed with the same infatuation; but being citizens of Rome, I directed them to be carried thither."⁵ This seems to imply that it was the custom for citizens to be sent to Rome if they were accused of a capital offense. H. J. Cadbury says:

Paul's appeal to Caesar served two purposes. The author of the Acts doubtless understood it as does his reader as a providential step to get Paul to Rome. Paul intended in this way to escape from danger and to achieve his desired good.⁶

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1. Acts 25: 11.
 2. Muntz, W. S., loc. cit.
 3. History of the Christian Church to A.D. 461, p. 61.
 4. Ibid. Acts 25: 10, 11.
 5. Hurst, J. F., History of the Christian Church, vol. I, p. 167. C. Plinii et Trajani, Epistulae, p. 97.
 6. The Beginnings of Christianity, vol. V, p. 319.

Luke, in Acts, shows that Paul's attitude to Roman civil government was definitely positive and sympathetic. Not only did the Apostle recognize the Empire's right to exist, but he also connected himself with it and as a member claimed his rights of citizenship. "The Jew did not cease to be a Jew nor to yield obedience to Jewish and Roman authority when he became a Christian."¹ On becoming a Christian he entered into a new relationship which was additional to those associations in which he already stood.²

Besides acknowledging civil authorities, Paul gave full allegiance to Christ.³ He did not make compromises in his Christianity for the sake of his Roman citizenship; rather, he used his political connection to increase his area of Christian service.

3. As Revealed in the Epistles of Paul

Thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament come from the pen of Paul. "They fall into four groups which are distinguished from each other by style and subject matter, and yet each group shows the marks of Paul's master mind."⁴ The first group contains First and Second Thessalonians and treats mainly the subject of the second coming of Christ. The second group,

1. Seeley, J. R., Ecce Homo, p. 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Phil. 1: 21.

4. Robertson, A. T., The Student's Chronological New Testament, p. xxi.

composed of First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, deals with the great Judaizing heresy that sought to fasten Jewish ritualism on Christianity. Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians fall in the third group, the chief topic being the Person of Christ. The last group consists of First Timothy, Titus, and Second Timothy, and the chief concern of the Apostle in them is the future of Christianity.¹

In order to understand the Epistles of Paul, one must be familiar with Luke's account of the Apostle to the Gentiles in Acts. The Acts and the Epistles supplement each other remarkably well, though chiefly in an incidental way. "Paul's Epistles stand as the marvelous expression of his own conception of Christ and the application of the gospel to the life of the Christians in the Graeco-Roman world in which they lived by eternal principles that apply to us today."²

Paul's letters were written to meet real emergencies. A. Deissmann strongly contends for the idea of calling the Apostle's Epistles "letters", rather than "Epistles", because Paul wrote to particular churches or groups of churches or persons to meet immediate needs.³ Doctor Robertson plainly and convincingly states that the Epistles

1. Robertson, A. T., loc. cit.

2. Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. IV, p. xiii.

3. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, pp. 9-11.

are not incidental letters nor literary epistles.¹ "They are thunderbolts of passion and power," he says, "that struck center and that fire now for all who will take the trouble to come to them for the mind of Christ."²

A study of Paul's Epistles in the order of their writing reveals the Apostle's growth as a theologian and interpreter of Christ. The scarcity of material dealing with civil government prohibits a detailed study of the development of Paul's relation to the Empire and its administration. Years of experience mellowed the Apostle's attitude and caused him to think more of the sacrifice of Christ for whom he had suffered "the loss of all things."³

There are the clearest indications in the New Testament that the mistrust and antagonism, which have so long existed between the Church and State, began early.⁴ Therefore, Paul had to insist with great energy on the duty of submission to secular government. This is an indication that many of the early converts to the Christian faith were inclined to be harsh in their criticism of kings and magistrates, and to dispute civil authority. It was not easy for Christian men and women in Apostolic times to give respect and allegiance to the Roman Emperor, who was the high priest of paganism.⁵

1. Robertson, A. T., loc. cit.

2. Ibid., p. xv.

3. Philippians 3: 8.

4. Dale, R. W., Laws of Christ for Common Life, p. 188.

5. Ibid.

Paul's direct references to the civil government and to the relation of the Christian to it, if few, are emphatic. A. B. D. Alexander states, "He simply lays down in a few memorable sentences principles of far-reaching application which contain in germ the essence of the rulers' authority and the spirit of the subjects' obedience."¹ No one can read his letters without receiving the impression that the State had for Paul a very significant and sacred meaningfulness, that the government was viewed by him as a divine institution, and that civic duty was in his opinion a thing not merely of legal but of moral obligation.²

In the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul deals with questions of civil government current at that time. This appears to be the first direct treatment of the question in his Epistles. The Church of Rome was plainly composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and the Apostle sent the Epistle that the Romans might know the true meaning of his gospel.³ The Jew as a citizen of theocracy believed that it was derogatory to his character, if not an act of treason toward God, to acknowledge allegiance to any earthly government. He could not forget Deuteronomy 17: 15: "One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not

1. Op. cit., p. 314.

2. Ibid.

3. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., vol. VI, p. 321; Romans 1: 15; 2: 16.

put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother." This belief had already fomented trouble in Palestine.¹ It had led to unrest which caused the banishment of Jews and Christians from Rome.² "In a statement of Suetonius that the Jews of Rome made a commotion under the leadership of one Chrestus, there is perhaps an indication that a portion of the Roman Christians in their lively freedom of Christian liberty may not have felt quite rightly apprehended in their relation toward authorities."³ It is possible that the sect of Ebionites which ascribed all civil government to the devil's control had also influenced Christians.⁴

William Sanday points out that two considerations, especially, have caused Paul to discuss the subject in the letter to the Romans.⁵ The Apostle knew the turbulence of Roman Jews and the danger of their attitude on the future of Christianity. The fascination which Paul felt for the power and position of Rome is another incentive for his writing the letter. Paul was unusually anxious to support the existing government. His instructions contained definite direction as to good citizenship, while he tacitly discouraged anything like revolt against

1. Acts 5: 36, 37; Josephus, F., Antiquities, VIII. 1. 1.

2. Acts 18: 2. McGarvey, J. W., and Pendleton, P. Y., The Standard Bible Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, p. 506.

3. Olshausen, H., Romans, p. 396.

4. Evans, W., Romans and Corinthians, p. 98.

5. Commentary on Romans, p. 370.

the constituted authorities of the State.¹

The Book of Romans is imperial in tone and style, because it was written to be sent to Rome.² The author wrote as one who felt that he had a message as majestic as Rome herself. He was convinced that Christianity could do what Roman emperors tried and failed to do.³

Absence of any reference to particular circumstances, and avoidance of any special terms in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, make the general principles applicable to any period or place.⁴ Up to the time of the writing of this letter, the Roman Empire had never appeared in the character of a persecutor, nor had it even tolerated persecution in others.⁵ Could this be the reason why Paul is so sympathetic with Roman administration? He begins the thirteenth chapter of Romans with the statement that the State, and civil government, are divinely appointed or permitted by God.⁶ He declares, "There is no power but of God."⁷ At the time when this was written, Nero sat on the throne. W. Rauschenbusch thinks that Paul wrote his commendations of Roman justice during the early and happy years of Nero's reign when that gifted prince was still under the influence of Seneca.⁸ But

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1. Bevan, W. L., Gospel and Government, p. 5.
 2. Kelman, J., Expository Times, vol. XIII, p. 88.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Sanday, W., op. cit., p. 369.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Romans 13: 1, 2.
 7. Romans 13: 1.
 8. Christianity and the Social Crisis, p. 110.

H. Olshausen holds that the person of the ruler is separated from the office.¹ Whatever may be the details of error or of wrong in the exercise of civil authority, it is even at its worst so much better than anarchy that it forms a main instrument and ordinance of God's will.² Paul did not mean that Christians are to approve of the administrator's character or deeds, but that the recognition of magistrates as ordained of God carries with it submission to law.

"Therefore," (since powers that be are ordained of God) Paul concludes, "He that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment."³

A second principle set forth in Romans 13: 3-5 is: "The end of government is beneficent."⁴ The purpose and value of civil government is to support the cause of right and to enforce just retribution on wrongdoing. "Retribution is an inherent principle in a moral universe."⁵ Emil Brunner calls the State with its agencies of administration "a manifestation of spiritual forces and purposes, the bearer of culture, the guardian of justice and of human values against arbitrary violence, and the

1. Op. cit., p. 396.

2. Moule, H. C. G., "Romans," Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, p. 214.

3. Romans 13: 2.

4. Sanday, W., International Critical Commentary on Romans, p. 371.

5. Dodd, C. H., The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 203.

creator of community in a human society which would otherwise dissolve into atoms."¹ Whether civil rulers are conscious of it or not, by ruling well they are performing and continually devoting themselves to sacred ministrations laid upon them by the Almighty.² It is significant that Paul uses in this connection the same expression *εἰς τὸ ἄγαθόν* which he employs in an earlier part of this epistle, (*εἰς ἄγαθόν*)³ to denote that highest good which is the portion of God's loved ones for whom all things are working together. The phrase, "minister of God", is repeated (verse 4) in order to emphasize the positive and negative aspects of civil power. Even the sword is mentioned as just means for vengeance. B. Helm boldly declares, "God meant judgment to go as far as taking the life of a criminal where his crime forfeited life and the right vindication of law called for it."⁴ H. C. G. Moule says, "The Caesars appear to have literally worn a sword or dagger as an emblem of imperial power."⁵

Fear of civil authorities should not be the highest motive for the Christian's submission to rulers. Since resistance to existing rulers tends to weaken and to destroy the principle of government which God has set up for the good of the race, the Christian ought to submit

1. The Divine Imperative, p. 443.

2. Romans 13: 4; 12: 12.

3. Romans 8: 28; 13: 4.

4. Commentary on Romans, p. 415.

5. "Romans," Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, p. 214.

to authorities for conscience's sake.¹ "Conscience leads us out of the turmoil of human suffering back to our Primal Origin, back to God."²

That the spheres of the Church and State are not identical is brought out in Romans 13: 6, 7: "For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service attending continually upon this very thing." The Christian is morally bound to pay taxes, both tribute and custom, even though they have been imposed without his consent, or in opposition to his judgment.³ The word translated tribute (*φόρος*) denotes a tax or annual compensation paid out by one province to a superior as the price of protection.⁴ The Romans made all subject nations pay tribute. Custom (*τέλος*) means properly the revenue which is collected on merchandise either imported or exported.⁵ W. Sanday adds that *τέλος* represents dues paid for support of civil government.⁶ Paul appeals to the Christian's subjective obligation again when he commands him to give "fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" is due.⁷ It is reasonable to believe that the Apostle would have approved of Polycarp's statement to the governor who bade him denounce Christ

1. Beet, J. A., St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 326.

2. Barth, K., The Epistle to the Romans, p. 491.

3. Beet, J. A., loc. cit. Luke 20: 20-25.

4. Barnes, A., Commentary on Romans, p. 315. Moulton, J. P., and Milligan, George, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament.

5. Ibid.

6. Op. cit., p. 366. Matt. 17: 25; 1 Macc. 10: 31.

7. Romans 13: 7.

and swear by the fortunes of Caesar, "We are taught to give honor to princes and potentates, but such honor as is not contrary to God's religion."¹

In Romans 13: 8-10, Paul summarizes all that he has said in the first seven verses of the chapter. The outstanding thought of these concluding verses is "he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law" because "love worketh no ill to his neighbor."² As a follower of Jesus Christ, Paul looks beyond the laws of temporal world-power to the abiding principle which Jesus gave, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."³ Given faith in God and love for man, there naturally follows obedience to whom obedience is due, honor to whom honor, and tribute to whom tribute.⁴ Says Karl Barth:

Even in the world of shadows love must come into active prominence, for it does not stand under the law of evil. Conduct is positively ethical when it does not conform to this world (Rom. 12: 2), when, within the framework of this world and in complete secrecy it bears witness to the strangeness of God. Love is still the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12: 31), the eternal meaning of our comprehensible ways, and the realization of their 'highest places.'⁵

It has been suggested by Walter Rauschenbusch⁶ that Paul spoke well of the Roman government before it became an agency of persecution. But Paul probably suffered

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1. McGarvey, J. W., and Pendleton, P. Y., op. cit., p. 510.
 2. Romans 13: 8, 10.
 3. Mark 12: 31; Matt. 22: 39.
 4. Alexander, A. B. D., op. cit., p. 317.
 5. Op. cit., p. 492.
 6. Op. cit., p. 110.

much at the hands of Roman officials during his first imprisonment (Acts 24: 27; 38: 36), and it is likely that after he was released he could see the rising tide of persecution. Yet even of this government he speaks in terms of profound respect, calling upon Christians to pray for it. Following his release, he wrote to Timothy, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of truth."¹

Clement interpreted Paul's words to be favorable to civil government in spite of its ill treatment of believers in Christ. In his letter to the Corinthians just after successive periods of persecution, he included a prayer of the character which he would deliver on behalf of secular rulers:

Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth ...while we render obedience to thine almighty and most excellent name and to our rulers and governors upon the earth. Grant unto them, therefore, O Lord, health, peace, concord, and stability that they may administer the government which thou hast given them without failure. For thou, O heavenly Master, King of Ages, givest to the sons of men glory and honour and power over all things that are upon the earth. Do Thou, Lord, direct their counsel according to that which is good and well pleasing in Thy sight.²

1. 1 Timothy 2: 1.

2. Sanday, W., op. cit., p. 371.

Still more significant is the letter of Polycarp which was written very shortly after he had met Ignatius on his road to martyrdom. In it he emphasized the Christian custom of combining the command to pray for rulers with the command to love one's enemies. "Pray also for Kings and powers and princes and for them that persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the Cross, that your fruit may be manifest among all men, that ye may be perfect in Him."¹

W. Sanday says that Paul's teachings concerning the Christian attitude toward civil government influenced Justin Martyr, Athenagorus, Theophilus, Tertullian, and others.² The Apostle's use of the plural in 1 Timothy 2: 2 made his appeal universal and lasting. His suffering at the hands of rulers did not cause him to discontinue his earnest exhortations for fidelity to existing governments, and a prayerful attitude toward administrators.

Not only did Paul exhort the younger preachers to teach Christians to pray for rulers, but he also urged them to encourage good citizenship (Titus 3: 1-3).

J. O. Dykes states, "It is curious to observe that the churches to which Paul addressed the most explicit instructions on this subject were those of Rome and Crete."³ Rome was the natural focus for the dissatisfied

1. Sanday, W., loc. cit.

2. Ibid., p. 372.

3. "Civil and Social Duties," The Expositor, series 2, vol. VII, p. 208.

and lawless. There the venality of the court, the license of the aristocracy, and the corruption of justice were most conspicuous.¹ In Crete, likewise, local reasons existed which called for a similar warning. For one thing, it was thickly populated with Jews, and wherever Jews were found they were noted as fomenters of dissatisfaction.² After a Roman general had destroyed their democratic constitution and placed the Island under the orders of a *propraetor*, the citizens of Crete never again received with kindness a new master.³ It would seem, then, that the Apostle gave good advice to the people to whom he wrote.

W. Lock, in referring to Paul's exhortation in Titus 3: 2-3, affirms that such a command would be necessary at any time and place to Christians who might regard their allegiance to Christ as exempting them from loyalty to a pagan emperor.⁴ He, in accord with Dykes, believes that the Epistle has a peculiar appropriateness for the Cretan church, partly because of the large number of Jews in the Christian body, who doubtless there, as at Rome, would be *assidue tumultuantes*, and partly because of the turbulent character of the Cretans themselves.⁵

Paul realized that individual converts would

1. Dykes, J. O., loc. cit.

2. Ibid. 3. Ibid.

4. International Critical Commentary on Pastoral Epistles, p. 151.

5. Ibid.

misrepresent the Christian faith to their contemporaries if they revolted against the Emperor or ran away from civil obligations. The Apostle sought to enjoin private citizens to be submissive as long as the government should stand. Brevity of Paul's teaching about civil government does not in any way cause the directness of his speech to be overlooked.

4. As Revealed in the General Epistles and Hebrews

In the first Epistle of Peter is the most direct teaching dealing with civil government found anywhere in the general Epistles. Peter wrote after the Roman government had inaugurated the procedure of "persecution for the Name" which was considered regular and proper throughout the second century. He urged his readers to be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear."¹ The word for "answer" (*ἀπολογία*) is used strictly as an answer to a legal charge.² It was a common thing for Christians to be stopped on their journeys to name the person of their allegiance - Christ, or Caesar.

Peter exhorted in the face of severe trials, "Be subject to every ordinance of man."³ *Πάση ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει*/really means "every institution (ordinance) set

1. 1 Peter 3: 15.

2. Ramsay, W., The Expositor, series 4, vol. VII, p. 387.

3. 1 Peter 2: 13.

up by man." The idea involved is that, while order is a divine command, all special forms of civil government, by consuls or kings, republican or monarchical, are mere means of carrying out God's design for the welfare of society, and depend upon the will of man.¹ W. Sanday believes that the command of Paul is repeated here with even greater emphasis, but Charles Bigg disagrees.²

Declares Doctor Bigg:

Both in expression and point of view Saint Peter differs very widely here from Saint Paul who speaks of Caesar as holding his authority from God, not from the people (Rom. 13: 10). A doctrine of divine right could be built upon the words of Saint Paul, but not upon those of Saint Peter.³

We prefer to go contrary to Doctor Bigg and to say with Doctor Sanday that Peter's exhortation is almost identical with Paul's, which is found in the thirteenth chapter of Romans.

Duty of civil obedience, urges Peter, has as its motive, "for the Lord's sake."⁴ It is the will of God that happiness of human life is to be promoted, and civil society conduces to that end. So long as the established government cannot be upheld unless individuals are submissive, it is God's will that the established government be obeyed. Late in his Epistle Peter alludes to the

1. Bigg, C., International Commentary on Peter and Jude, p. 139.

2. Ramsay, W., op. cit., p. 371.

3. Bigg, C., loc. cit.

4. 1 Peter 2: 13.

example of Christ, and directs his readers to "follow His steps".¹ Jesus never implied by words or deeds that His followers should rebel. Rather He encourages them to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."²

Paul and Peter alike realized that even an imperfect and corrupt government functions, on the whole, for greater good than does lawless anarchy. Both men were against revolutionary attempts to destroy established order. The fact that men had been made free³ with the freedom which Christ gives, brought with it an obligation to use freedom rightly.⁴ Martin Luther comments in this respect, "Although you are free in all externals (for you are a Christian) and ought not to be forced by law to be subjected to secular rule (for there is no law for the just), yet you ought spontaneously to yield a ready and uncoerced obedience, not because necessity compels you, but that you may please God and benefit your neighbor."⁵ Paul's conduct before Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa⁶ may be noted as a practical illustration of Peter's concept, "Honor the king."⁷

Peter, in agreement with Paul, believed that the ultimate design of civil government is to protect the

1. 1 Peter 2: 21.

2. Mark 12: 17.

3. 1 Peter 2: 16.

4. Plumptre, E. H., "Peter and Jude," The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, p. 114.

5. Ibid.

6. Acts 18: 14; 23-26.

7. 1 Peter 2: 17.

liberties, properties, and lives of mankind.¹ For this purpose laws with suitable sanctions are enacted, and officers are chosen to oversee the execution of these laws. Therefore, it is the duty of a Christian to yield obedience to all laws of the government under which he lives, if they are not inconsistent with the will of God. When the human ordinance contradicts the divine ordinance, requiring one to do what God forbids, or forbidding one to do what God requires, the words which Simon Peter spoke to the members of the Sanhedrin remain true, "We must obey God rather than men."²

The author of Hebrews merely mentions the fact that Christians are to obey their civil authorities, "Remember them that had the rule over you;" "obey them that have the rule over you and submit to them;" "salute all them that have rule over you."³ These words are in concord with those of Peter. W. L. Bevan thinks that Hebrews gives clear indication of an age in which persecution was expected as the normal Christian experience.⁴ Nevertheless, the author of the book did not alter his attitude toward civil government because of the likelihood of persecution. He urged his readers to respect their superiors.

5. As Revealed in the Apocalypse

1. Brown, J., Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, p. 246.

2. Acts 5: 29.

3. Hebrews 13: 7, 17, 24.

4. Op. cit., p. 6.

There is a strong contrast between the language employed by Paul and Peter on the subject of the duty of Christians to obey the Roman government, and the abhorrence with which John in Revelation speaks of the Empire.¹ Paul and Peter had urged Christians to honor the king,² but John did not ask his readers to do so. The trustful attitude of Christians toward the Roman State was giving place to a feeling of grave suspicion. This was not without cause. It is conceivable that John had actually witnessed the persecution of Christians at Rome, and had perhaps been in great danger himself. "It is not unnatural," declares F. J. Foakes-Jackson, "that the Apostle to the Gentiles should speak of the Roman Empire as the restraining influence of the world (1 Thess. 2: 6), and that John should rejoice at the prospect of the fall of the Babylon of his day, the abominable city of Rome which was drunk with the blood of the Saints (Rev. 17: 6)."³

John wrote Revelation in the midst of the blazing fires of persecution.⁴ In apocalyptic imagery and symbolism he portrayed the gigantic struggle between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Caesar.⁵ John

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1. Foakes-Jackson, F. J., History of the Christian Church to 461 A.D., p. 51.
 2. Romans 13: 1-7; 1 Peter 2: 13-17.
 3. Op. cit., p. 51.
 4. Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. VI, p. 275.
 5. Ibid.

found it necessary to use figurative language in order that he might reveal his message in a form as free as possible from grounds of imperial attack. He was writing about Rome and did not dare to write more plainly.¹

The climax of opposition is uncovered by the Revelation of John which revives the traditional hatred of the Jews for the imperial government of Rome.² It is obvious that the author was still influenced by his pre-Christian point of view, "and contributed vivid images and burning words to emphasize his detestation of the Roman world and all it stood for. He had no hope of seeing persecution stop. It was but the logical outcome of the past misdeeds of a grinding despotism."³

Many circumstances indicate that the Revelation was written during the persecution under Emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D.).⁴ In the reign of Vespasian, Christians seemed to have enjoyed a comparative immunity. Available knowledge of the period renders it unlikely that anything occurred, either under him or Titus, to call forth language so intense as that of the Apocalypse.⁵

What had brought about this hot outburst of fury against the Roman government, which was so generally tolerant of all the various religions of its subjects?

1. Robertson, A. T., loc. cit.

2. Bevan, W. L., op. cit., p. 6.

3. Ibid.

4. Knox, R. C., Knowing the Bible, p. 254.

5. Charles, R. H., A Critical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, p. xcv.

The answer to this question is that new religious phenomenon of imperial times known as Emperor worship.¹ Domitian, more than any Emperor before him, insisted on public recognition of his claim to divinity;² refusal to worship the Emperor meant death. To profess belief in Christ brought social ostracism, suffering, and banishment. Emperor worship did not disturb the worshippers of other gods.³ Compliance with the claims of the imperial cult was made a test of loyalty to the Empire. In the earlier days, Christians had been persecuted for specific crimes, such as anarchy, atheism, or immorality. But in the latter days of Domitian, the confession of the name of Christ was equivalent to a refusal to accede to the Emperor's claims to divinity, and entailed the known penalty.⁴ Already Christian blood had been shed at Pergamum, the official seat of Emperor-worship.⁵ Christians of Smyrna, another important center of the imperial cult, were told that soon they would be cast into prison.⁶ John urged them to be "faithful unto death".⁷

It is with these extreme conditions in mind that the contents of Revelation are to be understood. The

1. Case, S. J., The Revelation of John, p. 22.

2. Charles, R. H., loc. cit.

3. Robertson, A. T., op. cit., p. 271.

4. Charles, R. H., loc. cit.; Rev. 2: 3, 13; 3: 8; 12: 11; 20: 4; 13: 15.

5. Case, S. J., op. cit., p. 38.

6. Revelation 2: 10.

7. Ibid.

aim of the author is not to predict events of a remote future, but to comfort the oppressed, to strengthen fidelity to Christ, and to give assurance of relief and ultimate victory.¹ Doctor Robertson insists that it would be better for one to see the same application to times of persecution through the ages than to try to fit the various symbols on particular individuals.² "The same Christ who was captain of salvation in the time of Domitian is the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith today. The individual should see hope in Christ as he faces similar situations."³

John sets forth in Revelation the final triumph to the individual.⁴ "He that overcomes" appears in all seven letters which he wrote to the seven churches.⁵ Afterwards it is repeated once in the last part of the Apocalypse as if to stress the value of genuine loyalty to Christ.⁶ "The words, 'He that hath an ear let him hear'⁷ form a striking point of connection between the Apocalypse and the first three Gospels, more especially with the first of the three. There, in the discourses of our Lord, who also speaks here, 'he that hath an ear let him hear'⁸ and 'he that reads let him understand'⁹

1. Knox, R. C., loc. cit.

2. Op. cit., p. 278.

3. Ibid.

4. Charles, R. H., op. cit., p. ciii.

5. Revelation 2: 3.

6. Revelation 21: 7.

7. Revelation 2: 7.

8. Matthew 11: 15.

9. Matthew 24: 15.

are not mere calls to attention, but they also intimate that, for the apprehension of what had been delivered, more was necessary than the outward ear; they voiced a demand for deeper spiritual understanding."¹

While John did not exhort his readers to be faithful to the Roman government, he did not encourage rebellion against it. He seemed to be more anxious that the Christian should stand firm in his faith, and he protested against any compromising adjustments between Christianity and paganism.² He penetrated to the eternal issues underlying the conflict of his day. The truth is set forth for all time that it is not Caesar, but Christ; not the State, but the Church, that should claim the absolute allegiance of the individual.³ The Christian is given consolation to strengthen him: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."⁴

1. Hengstenberg, E. W., The Revelation of St. John, p. 166.
2. Case, S. J., op. cit., p. 55.
3. Charles, R. H., op. cit., p. xciv.
4. Revelation 11: 15.

CONCLUSION

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The first law of sound exegesis is to avoid reading back into first century documents attitudes and ideas which belong to the twentieth century. It has been remembered in the presentation of this thesis that the words of the New Testament bear an immediate relation to the thoughts and movements of the time in which they were written. Spoken at another time and under other conditions, they would have been spoken differently. Because of this, the student of the New Testament must seek to find principles instead of rules, in order to apply correctly scriptural teachings to daily living. Circumstances differ with each individual, but the essential value of Christian principles holds good in all cases. The fact that the writers of the New Covenant could lay down principles which could guide Christians universally and throughout history can only be explained by divine inspiration. Those who accept the teachings of the New Testament are not without axioms to direct them in every sphere of conduct and in every epoch of time.

Although the record of the good news about the Son of God does not claim to be a textbook on civil government, it can be fairly said that the books of the New Testament agree in setting forth certain vital principles relative

to the subject of this thesis. The writers of the books were more concerned about the inner life of man than about external relations. They proclaimed the power which creates new men with Christlike characters who live consistently according to spiritual obligations. In the final analysis, what government actually becomes depends upon what its citizens and administrators believe or disbelieve about eternal things.

Without exception the writers of the New Testament trace all authority to God. Earthly rulers can claim authority only as a trust, never as an absolute possession. Whenever civil authority is mentioned by the inspired writers, it is with the implication or with the definite statement that the administrator must depend wholly upon the Source of all power.

Inasmuch as civil powers are ordained of God, it follows that Christians are to be obedient to the existing government. This principle applies even when certain requirements are unpleasant and exacting. There were many believers in the first century who greatly desired divine approval of their conduct in disobeying certain laws concerning tribute and taxes, but they utterly failed to have their desire gratified. Others would have rejoiced to know that they were not obligated, as Christians, to respect contemporary rulers. Civil administrators during the period of New Testament history were not ideal governors, nor were they interested in

the work of the Kingdom, but as existing powers they were due respect. Using as a basis the New Testament's recognition of the indispensability of civil government, one concludes that man must have laws to govern his actions in a congested world. It is evident, then, that even an inferior government is better than no government.

Validity of government, according to the New Testament, is not determined by the character of its officers. Comparatively few officials were converted to the cause of Christ, yet government had a definite service to perform in preparing the way for the spread of the Gospel. Readers of the New Testament are urged to honor and respect governors, not because of their characters, but because of their relation to the divine purpose of the ages. Christians are entreated to pray for civil administrators, in order that citizens may "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity."

Another principle with which the inspired writers dealt specifically is that obedience to man is forbidden in spiritual relations. God allowed Caesar to rule, but He did not permit the individual's loyalty to Caesar to displace personal allegiance to Him. With the expanding influence of Christianity, it was inevitable that conflict would arise between the heathen government and the Christians under it. The demand was soon made by civil rulers that Christians accept the lordship of Caesar as superior to that of Jesus Christ. What were the Christians

to do? They took the only course that faithful followers of Christ can take - they proclaimed their allegiance to Jesus Christ, in spite of dreadful consequences. It would have been contrary to the demands of the Master, Himself, for them to have compromised their convictions in order to have evaded the terrible punishment which awaited them. The crucifixion of Jesus had proved to these disciples the truth that the Christian life is not easy. The New Testament does not promise immunity from pain, but it does promise inner fortitude for the endurance of trials and tribulations.

On the whole, the attitude of the New Testament toward civil government is favorable. A study of the twenty-seven books reveals the fact that the State does not conflict with the kingdom of God so long as the State confines its authority to its own sphere.

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