the opinion

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the opinion is published the first Thursday of each month throughout the school year by students at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 N. Oakland Ave., Pasadena, Calif. the opinion welcomes a variety of opinions consistent with general academic standards. Therefore, opinions expressed in articles and letters are those of the authors and are not to be construed as the view of the seminary, faculty, student council, or editors of the opinion.

Editor in chief..................H. Jeffrey Silliman
Literary Editor..................Belden C. Lane
Consulting Editors.............Robert L. Hubbard
                           Gerald T. Sheppard

Past issues of the opinion are filed in the Reference Room of McAlister Library.
Another year is well off the ground at Fuller Theological Seminary. Faculty are busy teaching; students are busy learning; the staff is busy staffing; and all other processes seem to be running at a normal seminary speed.

In all seriousness, this does promise to be a good year at the Seminary. At the new student retreat, the opinion's correspondent concluded that the incoming students were indeed a significant addition to the Seminary community. The older and upper classes have by now been distilled down to only the best, so they should be better than ever.

Faculty participation at the new was very encouraging to all of the students who attended—new and old alike. Some of us older students found ourselves actually getting excited about the coming year. This had not been written into the goals of the retreat, and came as a pleasant surprise. The opinion would urge that this kind of faculty interest and activity not stop with the new student retreat.

Such activity could take several channels of action. One thing would be for faculty members to be aware of the content and demands made in courses taught by their colleagues. Too often requirements in one course are based on an abstract level of achievement. Such awareness would greatly enhance integration of the course material by the students.

Another course of action would be for more faculty members to take the lead of a few of their colleagues by finding it possible to each lunch with the students at least a couple of times per week. This is a natural point of contact for much fruitful interaction and certainly would help faculty to conserve their valuable time.

The opinion does not mean to imply by these suggestions that the faculties at Fuller Seminary are not interested in the welfare and progress of the students. Rather we are suggesting several courses of action which to us would build on and deepen the interest and involvement that is already there. These suggestions are offered in hopes that we might indeed have one of the best of years for all of us here.

HJS
In a most crucial political year in the history of our nation it is most significant that many people in this society—especially students—find themselves not wanting to participate in the political processes that presently exist. The opinion suspects that not a mere few here at Fuller find themselves thinking these kinds of thoughts. To this point we would have only one thing to say.

The politics of silence, whether the silence is due to some sort of pious aloofness of the political system or a cynical indifference to the realities of Politics '68, is a most deadly form of politics. May we remind all of us that to remain silent is to endorse the status quo or the ultimate outcome. This is especially unfortunate if it occurs among Christians who of all people can add depth and perspective to the political life of a nation.

The opinion, therefore, urges all of the Seminary community to become involved in the political life of our nation in this critical time. To this end we would call your attention to two of the articles in this issue of the opinion. Mr. Goff's and Dr. Ladd's articles are offered to help us all think through our responsibilities as citizens of both this world and the world to come. Let's not cop out to the politics of silence.

HJS
NOTES ON "THE GRADUATE"
AND OTHER CHRISTIAN FILMS
by Belden C. Lane

"The Graduate" created quite a controversy around our house when we first saw it three weeks ago. My wife thought it was shallow and crude, I thought it was profound, and our cat was confused about the whole situation. As a result of our disagreement I set out to seriously reconsider my views regarding contemporary films. What makes a film good or bad? What is the purpose of the film writer and director as artists? What are the good contemporary films trying to say?

Friedrich Schiller, the eighteenth century German poet and dramatist, argued that true drama draws from the stuff of reality, but alters this reality in order to expose the illusions within it. True drama "declares war on naturalism." It refuses to simply present man and his struggles in their photographic form. Drama does not serve as a mirror, but rather as a magnifying glass, blowing up aspects of man's behavior, showing them to be illusive and unreal. In short, it seeks to change man, not merely to reflect him.

The aim of the artist in this view, therefore, is to expose the illusions by which men live. Arthur Miller, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce stand among the twentieth century illustrations of this understanding of art. Their works abound with the household illusions of modern man. And equally concerned with the subject are those in the film art. In fact, illusion hunting has perhaps become something of a game. The list of these "illusion films" is steadily growing. There is "Bonnie and Clyde" or Bank Robbing Can Be Fun, "Darling" or God, If I only Had Money, "The Hustler" or The Name of the Game is Cool, and "The Graduate" or Things go Better with Sex, to name only a few. Each of these films "Blows Up" an illusion of modern man and supposedly passes judgment on it.

This process of exposing illusions is given a different name in psychotherapy. The aim of the therapist (at least some therapists) is to encourage the client to "take off his masks," to drop the shields by which he excessively protects himself from himself and from others. Some might even compare this process to that of the preacher as he "reveals sin," confronting man with his failure to please God. Yet, in all of

*Belden C. Lane, a senior at F. T. S., was graduated in 1966 with a B. A. in Humanities from Florida State University.*
these the activity is the same. It is a process of "stripping." It "exposes," "takes off," and "reveals." All of this can be good in so far as it goes. Man needs to be reminded of his failure to live in reality. He needs to be confronted with his sin. But is it enough to stop at this point? How is man to live without his illusions? What is the individual to do after he has taken off his mask? How long is the sinner to stand un­clad, viewing his sin?

"Stripping" can never become an end in itself. It is not enough to reduce man to moral nudity. Man must be healed, not merely diagnosed. The artist must equip man with the tools for facing reality. The therapist must guide the unmasked person to his true self. The preacher must lead the sinner into grace.

If this is not done, if stripping becomes an end in itself, then what effect does this have upon the "stripped" individual? Unquestionably it confirms him in his illusion, his mask, his sin. In fact, the individual may even grow to use this process of stripping as a means by which he can accept his failures while never having to change them. It may become a form of pseudo-confession which keeps him from genuine repentance and healing. (the American pulpit has long made use of the jere­miad to perform the same service.) Viewing a film which vividly portrays one's own illusions and failures may become not an irritating and soul-searching experience, but rather an enjoy­able one -- a catharsis, a "voluptuous crucifixion," to use the image of Tennessee Williams.

This, I fear, is the danger involved in "The Graduate" and other such films which I and others have often been too quick to sanctify as moral statements. It seems to me that "The Graduate" only does half of its job. It adequately ful­fills its task of stripping, but it fails to offer any viable solutions to the problems it exposes.

The film presents an excerpt from the confused and empty life of Benjamin Braddock, a college graduate who doesn't know where he has been or where he is going. Enfiling his dull existence, however, is an affair with the wife of his father's business partner. Yet Ben grows to despise this alliance. He seeks meaning and love, finding neither in his relationship with Mrs. Robinson. His life is full of the "sounds of silence." One night he says, "Mrs. Robinson, for once could we say a few words to each other?" Yet after futile attempts at hollow conver­sation he resigns himself to the act, saying, "Let's not talk at all." Later he says to her husband, "What happened between us was nothing. We might as well have been shaking
hands." To Benjamin Braddock sex without love is empty and meaningless.

As far as it goes, "The Graduate" is an authentic portrayal of life in middle class suburbia. It thoroughly achieves its task of stripping. We are led to experience the complete ennui that accompanies sex for the sake of sex. But how does the film carry out the task of "reclotthing?" What solution does it offer for the problems it presents? What change does it advocate?

The end of the film is its weakest point. Benjamin and Elaine, Mrs. Robinson's daughter, run away from the empty, hedonistic values of their parents and determine to make a new life together. The idea apparently is that the failures of the vulgar, middle class, older generation will be corrected by the confused, but honest and pure spirit of the young. Never trust anyone over thirty. This seems to be the message of "The Graduate." As a result, I must judge it as indeed shallow and naïve. It is but a half-truth. It adequately presents man's sins, illusions, and masks, but it fails to provide any genuine means of healing and repentance.

This is not by any means to blanketly condemn "The Graduate" or the contemporary theatre. I don't condemn Mike Nichols for lacking a sound theological understanding. I really don't expect anything better from him. But what does concern me is the way I and others have tended to sanctify this type of film. It is particularly easy for theological students, filled with all the proper presuppositions, to draw the proper conclusion from such films and then expect everyone else to have done the same. This was why I found "The Graduate" profound and my wife found it shallow. From now on I hope to be slower to "Christianize" contemporary films and quicker to listen to my surprisingly theological wife.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ASSASSINATION
OF SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY
by William F. Goff

The most shattering experience of my entire life was the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. I was driving back to the Caltech library with two fellow-students after a combination study break and victory celebration. We listened to the last words of Bobby's victory speech. I remember him saying, "And now on to Chicago...." I said, "Sock it to 'em, Bobby." His speech ended and then almost immediately the announcer who began summing up the election night's events said, "Something's happened at the Ambassador!" And then the chaos, the frantic shouts, the pleas for help. "Oh, God, no! It can't be." I feared the worst. We stopped in the middle of the street, stunned, listening, hoping, and then raced back to the dorms. The rest was a nightmare. I watched the horror-stricken faces on TV. I listened to the continuous stream of reports on the radio. I couldn't even look at a book. I could only pray that Bobby would live. Finally I slept from 5-7 AM. At 8 AM my mind was a blank and I could hardly begin to write answers on my New Testament final. All I wanted to do was listen to the radio. I couldn't pull myself away from it. And then, later, the news that Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was dead. I felt sick, empty, numb. Why did it happen? What could this possibly mean?

I had campaigned for Robert Kennedy. I was unusually moved by his announcement of candidacy in March. That same day I purchased his book, To Seek a Newer World. As I read it I became increasingly impressed by his political stance. Here was a man who spoke words of reconciliation -- between rich and poor, black and white, old and young. Here was a leader with a keen perception of America's problems who offered proposals rather than rhetoric. Here was a politician who dared speak not from consensus, but from conviction.

Out of curiosity I visited the Kennedy Headquarters in Los Angeles shortly after it opened. I had planned only to take a look, but ended up staying most of the day to help. It was an amazing experience. There, Kennedy's words took on flesh. There were all kinds of people: old and young, black and white, men and women, hippie and straight, all working with a contagious enthusiasm for a common dream. I sat at a table signing up a continuous stream of student volunteers and thinking how tremendous it would be if there could be such reconcili-

William F. Goff is a graduate of UCLA and a senior at F. T. S. in the D.Th.P. program.
iation and enthusiasm and cooperation in the Church. I had lunch that day with a lovely Negro girl with whom I developed a beautiful friendship. She worked at the headquarters every day from its opening to its close. She traveled all over as a "Kennedy girl." She was nearly crushed by his assassination.

Back at the seminary I appointed myself head of the students for Kennedy, Fuller branch. I set up a little table of bumper stickers and buttons. I pushed Kennedy in countless little discussions. I was elated at President Johnson's announcement of non-candidacy. For the first time it seemed that the dream might become a reality.

The night of May 24, my sister called from the Sports Arena where she and some of her friends had extra tickets for the big Kennedy night. I rushed to the arena and sat in the twelfth row (in what we later learned were $250 seats) to watch some of the best entertainers in the business sing and play and speak for RFK. I was thrilled to see and hear this man whom I felt more than ever could become our next and finest President. It was a night I will long remember.

And now that vigorous, bold, young leader is dead. What does this possible mean to me? In June I could not have answered that question. But this summer I have read about Robert Kennedy and learned about him from others who knew him well. I have come to some conclusions that are meaningful to me.

The first of these is that a politics of compassion has its source in Jesus Christ. Through Bud Hinkson of Campus Crusade for Christ, I learned that Bernard Medie, Crusade's African director (and an African) was a close personal friend of the Kennedy family. Mr. Medie reported that Robert was a devout Christian man who regularly led family devotions. This report was confirmed by reading in the book, RFK, "Bobby was always very devout...probably the most devout of all the children." I felt assured that Robert Kennedy is now with the Lord. I also realized that the key word in his campaign -- reconciliation -- was no accident. It came out of his Christian convictions. I recognized as never before that creative, compassionate political leadership comes from a commitment to Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean I will become a politician. It does mean that I cannot be silent on politics in the pulpit. It also means that as a part of the Body of Christ, the Church, I must do all I can to continue the Incarnation by active and responsible political action.
Second, Kennedy's assassination made me realize that now as in the past an active commitment to Jesus Christ makes one a target for all the forces of evil. Kennedy's chief opponent in his career was a gangster. His assassin was a racist. The same sort of violence that crucified our Lord shot Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. Yet violence is not the possession of just a few. We rushed to see "Bonnie and Clyde." We shout "kill the umpire." It seems to me that there is a definite link between Kennedy's assassination and the fact that my Kennedy bumper sticker was scratched off my car twice.

Third, I was impressed by Kennedy's humor. It was Nietzsche who said that every serious pursuit must be conducted in a spirit of play. With a wit that was often pointed at himself, Robert Kennedy carried on his last campaign in a spirit of play. He was able to joke about his long hair, his money, his accent, his "ruthlessness." Humor was part of his life style. In 1965 the newly elected Senator Kennedy spoke to the Women's National Press Club dinner for the new Congress: "I want to assure you I have no Presidential aspirations -- nor does my wife Ethel Bird."

Inspired by Kennedy's example I tried poking fun at myself in some of my sermons at church this summer. It was a liberating experience that made me enjoy preaching as never before.

Fourth, reflection on Robert Kennedy's assassination made me realize that the words of his late brother -- "The torch is passed on to a new generation" -- are for me. I cannot depend on political or church leaders to solve the problems of our country and our world. Only with the greatest reserve could I vote for any of the nominated candidates for President in November. For me, voting for the President will involve a tragic moral choice. But I cannot sit back in despair. Neither can I simply wait and hope for the day when Edward Kennedy will seek the Presidency. As a part of the new generation I have to take up the torch now. I have to develop a life style that is compassionate, courageous, fun loving, -- Christian. I cannot put it off. I cannot escape to the library as the world crumbles around me. Neither can I drop my books and rush into some frantic activism. What I must do is apply my theological training to the real world by strategic participation in the pursuit of social justice.
Kennedy's assassination changed my life. By reflecting on his life, I have been lifted out of the despair I felt at his death. I face my senior year with eagerness. I am excited about becoming a minister. What Robert Kennedy once said has become true in my life: "Tragedy is a tool for the living to gain wisdom, not a guide by which to live."

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TWO ROOMS IN THE LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE?

by Ted Proffitt

A seminary such as Fuller has two goals. One is to produce excellently trained ministers of the Word of God." (D. W. Corbin, the opinion, Vol. VII, No. 8, p. 10) Exegetical skills are a definite part of this training. The other goal is that of preparing young men and women to pursue advanced degrees in Biblical studies. Here exegetical skills are also important, as are linguistic skills. Such persons who go on beyond the BD should be able to handle a critical apparatus and read Greek and Hebrew (not to mention Aramaic, Arabic, Latin, French and German) as fluently as they would a Sunday supplement. The present program, stressing as it does parsing to the neglect of word studies and exegesis, does "...establish a point of greatly diminished (sic) returns for our effort (and) time." (Ibid, p. 11) This does not mean Fuller must do away with languages or give no further language exams after the first course. Such would mitigate against the goal of preparing students for the ministry.

Rather, a program is needed which will meet both the goals stated above. An honors BD program should be instituted for those pursuing advanced degrees and open to those able to pass an exam. The standard BD program would continue for those wishing to enter the ministry without becoming "Biblical scholars," but desiring to be good ministers, "rightly dividing the Word of truth." This added "room" would give the school (and curriculum) the flexibility it currently lacks.

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Ted Proffitt is a middler at F. T. S. He graduated with a B. A. in history from California State College at Fullerton in 1965.

Editor's note: We have reprinted this article, which appeared first in the opinion, June, 1968, because a rather crucial step in Mr. Proffitt's argument was omitted by a typographical error.
DOES THE BIBLE GUIDE US in our relationship to the state and participation in war?

While it doesn’t spell out a comprehensive social ethic that gives easy and ready-made answers for today’s social problems, it does give us fundamental principles.

The most casual reading of our Lord’s Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 makes it clear that it is not the business of Jesus’ disciples to build a society free from the plagues of social evil and war. War and turmoil will persist to the end of time; only the return of our Lord in power to complete His work will ultimately solve the evils of a fallen social order. The primary task of the Christian and of the church of Jesus Christ is to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in all the world until the coming of the end (Matthew 24:14).

Does this mean, as many Christians seem to assume, that the Christian has no interest in social issues? Two passages from the New Testament throw light on the relationship between the Christian and the state.

TAXES

In the twelfth chapter of Mark, certain of Jesus’ enemies tried to trap Him with a question: “Teacher, we know that you are true and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?”

George E. Ladd is Professor of New Testament Theology and Exegesis at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. He received the Th.B. and B.D. degrees from Gordon College and Divinity School and the Ph.D. from Harvard.
This was a potentially explosive question. Zealous Jews believed that only God had the moral right to receive gifts of money from His people, and that taxes paid to the support of the Roman Empire were a necessary concession to the evil character of the world. Therefore, when Jesus asserted that it was proper to pay taxes to support the military might of Rome and its power structure, it sounded as if he was denying the sovereign rights of God.

On the other hand, to deny the right of Caesar to collect taxes even from the Jews would be interpreted by the partisans of the court of Herod, the king of Galilee, as implicit sedition. Read superficially, Jesus' answer appears to avoid the issue; but in reality it embodies a profound theology. Asking for a coin used to pay such taxes, He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They answered, "Caesar's.” Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”

In this statement Jesus shows that we have responsibility in two different spheres of existence: human government and divine government. Each has its legitimate claims which we must meet. Caesar, the representative of human government, has legitimate claims which are represented by the obligation to pay taxes. The briefest reflection will remind us that the Roman state was not a Christian state, or a theocracy like Old Testament Israel. Religiously, it was polytheistic; and politically, its sovereignty was sustained by brute force. Military legions at the borders of the Mediterranean world held back the barbarians, made possible a stable civilization and produced an extended period of peace, the famous Pax Romana.

Even though it was a pagan, warlike state, said Jesus, the Roman government held legitimate claims over all of its citizens, even over the people of God. Since law and order were preserved by Roman force, even God's people were obligated to contribute to its support.

It is obvious that the claims of God must be of a higher order than the claims of Caesar, although
this is not stated in the words of Jesus. The church father Tertullian said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s—his image on the coin; give to God what is God’s—His image in man, yourself.” Jesus’ statement implies that when the claims of Caesar are properly carried out, they will not transgress the claims which God has upon His creatures. We may conclude that the claims of the state are legitimate and right within their proper boundaries.

**DEMONIC POWER**

Another element in the teachings of our Lord places the power of the political order in a different light and suggests something of the demonic power behind political power. The principle embodied in human authority is a different principle than that embodied in the kingdom of God. “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44). The temptation to use power in an arbitrary and oppressive way as the mere assertion of authority is an implicitly evil principle. Human government should issue in the well-being of its citizens, but it can easily lead to the aggrandizement of the rulers and the oppression of the ruled. Rome aimed to be mistress of the world, not merely that the world might receive her benefits, but that Rome might have greater glory. Jesus rejected this principle of greatness: Power for power’s sake was evil.

A demonic element behind the political structure is even more evident in the account of Jesus’ temptation. Satan showed Jesus, probably in imagination, all the kingdoms of the world, and said to Him, “All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). The meaning of this passage will be clearer when we discuss the same tension in Paul’s writing.
PAUL ON GOVERNMENT

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul lays down four fundamentals in the Christian relationship to the state, even a pagan one like Rome.

First, human government as such is a divine institution. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:2). Biblical theology presents two different orders of divine reality: the order of creation and the order of redemption. Ultimately, God is sovereign lord over both orders. Although He sustains a special relationship to His people through the redemption achieved by Christ, God is at the same time Lord of the universe. As its creator and sustainer, He has ordained the principle of human government as a means of providing law and order. This is true of a pagan state as well as of a Christian state. Therefore, "he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed" (Romans 13:2). The power exercised by the human state is a derived power from God, and rests on divine sanctions.

Second, since the state derives its authority from divine sanction, God requires obedience and submission of its citizens, especially Christian citizens. Citizens obey not merely because the state has the power to enforce obedience, but "for the sake of conscience" (vs. 5). Disobedience to the state is therefore disobedience to the will of God. A Christian citizen cannot have a good conscience toward God and be deliberately disobedient to the structure of law and order.

A third principle limits the objective of divinely appointed government: good order. The divinely ordained purpose accomplished through human government is human justice; the primary emphasis is placed on the punishment of the wrongdoer, so the one who pursues good conduct has nothing to fear. When Paul says that if one does what is good he will receive the state's approval (vs. 3), he can hardly be thinking of any specific concrete rewards,
but of the blessings of freedom from oppression, and peace and tranquility to pursue one’s affairs.

A fourth principle lays down the basis of law and order: the sword. “He does not bear the sword in vain” (vs. 4). The sword was the symbol of Roman authority on the local level through civil magistrates, and on the worldwide level through the Roman armies. In these words, God’s Word clearly establishes the principle of force as the basis for human law and order. At root, it makes little difference whether this force is exercised through local police punishing wrongdoers within the community, or in international terms through armies enforcing justice among nations. Paul even says that the use of the sword in enforcing justice is an execution of God’s wrath upon the wrongdoers (vs. 4).

ANTICHRIST

Revelation 13 presents a different picture of the state, one where it is altogether demonically inspired. The interpretation of Revelation is notoriously difficult, and I can merely state my own conviction. While the prophecies of this book have to do with the Antichrist who will emerge at the end of time, the setting of the book is the situation in John’s own day in the Roman Empire. Tendencies which will come to full disclosure in the Antichrist were already evident in the power of Caesar, and we see in Revelation 13 the picture of Rome as the historical type of the Antichrist of the end time.

The point to be made is that the state pictured in Revelation 13 has transgressed its divinely appointed bounds of preserving order and has become a totalitarian power, demanding not merely obedience and submission of its citizens, but their total allegiance, including their worship. Christians are no longer free to worship Christ; they must worship Antichrist. Here the state has usurped prerogatives which belong to God alone. Justice and good order have been swallowed up in a total demand. The legitimate boundary between human order and divine order has been obliterated. Human order has deified itself; its power has become completely demonic.
Biblical interpreters have often argued that Romans 13 and Revelation 13 embody two completely different views of the state. I think it is better to recognize, as we did even in Jesus’ teachings, that the principle of human authority intrinsically embodies a tension between the divine and the demonic. As an instrument of order and justice, human authority expressed in government is divinely ordained. However, this very principle of authority is always subject to abuse and distortion; and when power becomes an end in itself and seeks its own glorification, transgressing the divinely appointed bounds of good order, it becomes demonic. No form of government, whether monarchical, oligarchical, or democratic, receives the approval of Scripture; all can be an instrument of law and order and therefore a divinely ordained institution. Every form of government, including the democratic, bears the seed of demonic power and the potential of becoming totalitarian.

NONRESISTANCE

The Christian faces the problem that the basic ethical teachings of Jesus embody a clear element of nonresistance which seems to contradict the principle of force in human government. Jesus said, “Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39). Some thinkers have magnified these words of Jesus to the status of a total ethic, using them as a basis for international relationships and political action. Others have suggested that if America’s national policy would literally follow this line of complete pacifism and nonresistance, if we should liquidate all of our armaments and military prowess and turn toward our enemies in a spirit of love and nonresistance, good would conquer evil and a reign of peace would be established in the world.

CONTRADICTION

How are we to harmonize Jesus’ teachings about
nonresistance with Paul’s teaching of a political order resting upon physical force? Three alternatives are possible. The first would be to recognize a flat and irreconcilable contradiction between Jesus and Paul: Jesus taught nonresistance both as a personal and a political ethic, whereas Paul taught the principle of force to support law and order. Such a solution would be a desperate expedient; all the more so because in the verses which precede Paul’s instructions about the state, he expresses a different ethic for personal conduct. In Romans 12:19ff, Paul teaches essentially what Jesus taught. Christians are never to avenge themselves. They are to return kindness and love for hostility; they are not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. Thus Paul makes it clear that a Christian’s personal conduct embodies a different ethic than that for the ordering of the state. The Christian lives by the law of love, returning good for evil; the state has the responsibility of preserving law and order by the use of the sword as an instrument of the wrath of God upon evildoers.

ISOLATIONISM

Does this mean that the Christian must then pursue his life detached from his social order? A second solution to the problem would be to seek complete detachment from society. As a Christian living by the law of nonresistance in all relationships, both personal and social, it is impossible for me to bear arms as a soldier, to function as a police officer, to sit upon the bench as a judge, or even to participate in protecting my neighborhood and community from the violence of lawbreakers, thieves, or looters. Furthermore, logic would seem to require that I must desist from paying taxes since a substantial portion of the taxes paid to the federal government is used to support our military machine.

A third alternative is suggested by Paul himself when he speaks of the Christian ethic in Romans 12 and the political ethic of Romans 13. This is the same principle embodied in our Lord’s words when
He speaks of two different realms of responsibility: Caesar's and God's. As a matter of fact, the Christian is a citizen of two worlds. In Philippians 3:20 Paul writes, “Our commonwealth is in heaven.” This statement was particularly relevant for Philippi, which although a city in Greece, was a Roman colony which was proud that its citizens were first of all Romans. Philippi was a colony of Rome implanted in the midst of Greece. In a similar way, Christians are of the colony of heaven implanted in the midst of this world. Therefore we have a dual citizenship and responsibility. We are responsible to fulfill God's demands; we are also responsible to our society and culture.

That this responsibility extends to my conduct as a citizen is clearly illustrated by Paul's own conduct in Philippi. Paul was beaten and imprisoned for what was apparently interpreted as a breach of peace. When he was released after a night in prison, Paul demanded that his right as a Roman citizen be recognized. “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now cast us out secretly? No! let them come themselves and take us out” (Acts 16:37). Paul was not expressing any spirit of vengeance and attempting to get even with those who had punished him; he was merely demanding that good law and order be fulfilled.

On another occasion, Paul claimed his Roman citizenship in a way that formally violated the principle of nonresistance. During his last visit in Jerusalem, when the tribune of the Roman guard was about to have Paul examined by scourging, Paul responded with the words, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen, and uncondemned?” (Acts 22:25). Paul did not submit in passive nonresistance to this severe punishment but demanded that his rights as a Roman citizen be recognized.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

This suggests that there is no simplistic ethic which can be applied universally in all situations. The ethic by which I live in my personal reaction
to people is not the same ethic that sustains the social order and governs my participation in it. In my individual contacts with other people, I must always react with love. When I experience violence in personal relationships, particularly when it is caused by my Christian witness, I will respond with literal nonresistance in love.

However, there will be many situations when I must conduct myself as a member of an ordered society. Then I must conduct myself as a citizen in supporting law and order. In personal relationships, I do not even seek for just treatment but react to injustice with love. However, as a citizen, it is my duty to do all that I can to uphold justice in the social order. The theological reason for this is that God has ordained that justice be supported by the principle of force. Someone has said, “If justice is man’s creation, then man may destroy what he has made.” However, justice is a divinely ordained principle and the sword, wherever and however employed in support of justice, is in the will of God for all His creatures, whether they are pagans or Christians.

CONCLUSIONS

This leads to several concrete conclusions for the modern Christian in his relationship to the state. First, it is the will of God that I give my support to the state so far as it is an instrument of justice and the medium of law and order. The only alternative to this is anarchy. This means that on the local level I support the police, militia, judicial system; and on the international level, it means that I am obligated to support my country in war if such a war is necessary for the preservation of law and order and justice.

Second, I may not use force in any form as a way of righting personal wrongs. My reaction to those who harm me must be one of love. I must return good for evil, love for hatred.

Third, while the state is a divinely ordained institution and demands my obedience and submission,
if at any point the demand of the state violates the will of God, I must obey God rather than man. This principle is enunciated when the Jewish state exceeded its proper authority by commanding Jesus' disciples not to preach and teach in the name of Jesus. Peter's answer was, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). The state may never demand my total obedience. It may never infringe on my freedom to worship and serve God. Loyalty to the state is always conditioned by the higher loyalty to God.

A fourth principle is implicit. If the state has the divinely appointed authority to enforce law and order, it follows that the state has a right to claim my support even to the extent of war when such war is necessary in carrying out justice and enforcing international law and order.

It follows logically that if the state in its international policy exceeds the divinely appointed bounds of its authority, then it does not merit my support. If a state in its international policy becomes an instrument of injustice, if it pursues war for the sake of self-aggrandizement, if its demand for my support has the objective of self-glorification and the mere extension of its sphere of power, rather than self-preservation against aggressive, destructive forces, then I am not obligated to give my support for such demonic ends.

One additional fact must be emphasized. If for conscience' sake I feel I must engage in civil disobedience, I should recognize that the state has a right to punish me. I may be subjected to serious fines and imprisonment for my disobedience, but such a price should willingly be paid, again for conscience' sake.

We must not forget that the Scriptures teach that the state has authority over its subjects and disobedience involves rightful punishment. Therefore, if my conscience makes me feel that I must disobey the laws of my state, including the laws requiring me to support it in military matters, I should be willing to accept the punishment that the state metes out for my disobedience.
One important factor which does not appear in the New Testament must be taken into consideration in this total problem. This is the difference between the political structure in a democratic state and a totalitarian state of New Testament times. The Roman emperors held their position by virtue of the support of the army. The governors sent out by Rome to rule the various provinces, such as Pontius Pilate, held absolute authority over their citizens within the laws of the Roman state. The citizens of Rome and of Roman colonies had no voice and shared no responsibility for the nature of their government or the selection of those who ruled over them. This is one of the reasons why Revelation 13 admonishes Christians to pursue no course of action but remain passive in a demonic state.

A democratic state places the matter of responsibility in a different light. Here the citizens of local communities and of the nation are the responsible parties for the selection of those who rule over them and therefore ultimately for the laws which the legislative bodies pass. Therefore, I as an individual citizen share a real measure of responsibility for the nature of my government and the laws under which justice is executed.

For this reason, the Christian citizen who accepts Romans 13 as a divine revelation for the character of the state must assume a particular sense of responsibility for the character of the state of which he is a citizen. Justice must be supported, injustice must be opposed; just rulers approved, and unjust rulers deposed. The idea that the Christian Church is to be concerned only about the preaching of the gospel and spiritual matters would appear at this point to be a clear violation of the principles embodied in the Word of God.
As a Christian accepting the Biblical revelation of the nature of the state, I am responsible to use my influence, my voice, and my vote to promote principles of right-doing and justice in the state of which I am a part.

This is a principle which demands more attention than evangelical Christians have given it.

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