

CHRIST ^{AND} WAR :

THE RELATION OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE TO WAR—
THEIR PRESENT DUTY, AND FUTURE PROSPECT
OF WORLD-CONQUEST WITH HIM.

A LECTURE

BY

THE EDITOR OF "THE CHRISTADELPHIAN."

In which the Christadelphian attitude of the past sixty years is proved to be right, and its maintenance is urged in view of the coming of the Lord,

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."—JESUS.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."—PAUL.



"Take the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."—PAUL.

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SYNOPSIS.

The Peace Congress of 1899 and afterwards—"A Bitter Comment"—"A Time of War"—Ought Christ's Brethren to Fight?—The Root of the matter, THE WILL OF GOD—Israel commanded to smite the Canaanites—Saul's sin in sparing Amalek—Obedience required, whatever the command of God may be—God's commands through Christ—His precepts—His example—The Apostles: their precepts and examples—After the Apostles, a time of corruption sets in, which results at last in "all nations deceived"—The War with Rome: the directions of Jesus in view of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem—"A way to escape"—How the Jewish Christians would not take the sword, and how they were hated for it—A word from Tertullian—Objections—Strangers and sojourners, but not unprotected—Christ and the "sharp sword" hereafter, and the advancement of his people to power—Retrospect of the past sixty years: Resolutions and Petitions, 1849, 1865, 1878, 1915—The same attitude now.

CHRIST AND WAR.

THE RELATION OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE TO WAR :
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CONQUEST WITH HIM.

A Lecture by the Editor of "THE CHRISTADELPHIAN."

IT was well understood by the friends of Christ throughout the world that the Peace Conference of the Powers at the Hague in 1899 would not only prove abortive, but that it would be the prelude to "wars and rumours of wars" on a larger scale than ever before. Many years have now elapsed since this lecture was first written, and the views then expressed have been only too well justified. And still without surprise, but rather with anticipation of redemption drawing nigh, they view the prospect of the rising storm.

The world's outlook from a merely human point of view was well represented some years ago in a Berlin cartoon. The globe was overarched with the darkness of night, illuminated only by bursting shells; while its under surface was dripping with tears and blood. Europe, Asia, and Africa were dotted with armed men, illustrating the military operations of the Great Powers; and the legend was: "PEACE ON EARTH"—*A Bitter Comment*. The great war of 1914 and onwards has already illustrated the picture only too well.

There is "a time of peace," but it is not yet. This is the "time of war," the true nature and end of which cannot be appreciated

without reference to Christ's claims and revelations. When we come to understand that the nations are his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession (Psa. ii.) ; and that he is to take possession of them by conquest, and divide the spoil with his people, current developments appear in a new and practical light, and problems present themselves of the very existence of which we once were ignorant.

OUGHT CHRIST'S BRETHREN TO FIGHT ?

Among these is the relation of Christ's people to war. Ought they to fight, or ought they not to fight ? When, as in the present Titanic struggle, so-called "Christian nations" meet on the battlefield, is it consistent with faithful service to Christ that his friends (if they be his friends), on one side should with bullet and bayonet seek to destroy his friends similarly active on the other ? Is it according to his mind and expressed principles and recorded example that his ministers (if they be his ministers) on both sides should simultaneously pray the Father in heaven to bless their efforts at mutual destruction ? Seeing that the facts are there, what is the explanation and divine philosophy (if any be available) of the whole sanguinary matter ?

THE ROOT OF THE MATTER.

No answer worth having is obtainable from merely human sources. "There be higher than they." The will of God expressed in the Bible is the only standard of right and wrong, the only final explanation of all phenomena, and is not in the least degree altered by human inattention, forgetfulness, or antagonism. The first principle of divine dealings with men is that God's will has been set aside by man, and that death reigns in consequence. All the evil in the world is finally traceable to one man's sin;

and all the wars and commotions of times past and present and to come upon earth, are ultimately referable to that "enmity" which God at the beginning put between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed, and which, in the shedding of the blood of Abel by Cain, opened the reign of war which now, waxing to its zenith, causes men's hearts to fail them for fear, as Christ has said.

Evil is of the Lord, though sin is not. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, *and create evil*: I, the Lord, do all these things" (Isa. xlv. 7). "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6). Sin and evil are as cause and effect. Man is the author of sin ("By one man sin entered into the world"), and God visits sin with evil: war, famine, pestilence, and death. The Flood is a terrible example for all time, and is specially pointed to by Christ (Luke xvii. 26). Only realise that God saw fit to save only "eight souls" out of a population developed during 1,656 years, and the true value of human life begins to dawn on us.

"THOU SHALT SMITE THEM."

After the Flood, in the time of Abraham whom God called, and with whom He covenanted to bless all nations in his seed, the nations of Canaan were divinely appointed to destruction by God on account of their iniquities before Him. There was to be 400 years of ripening iniquity on their part, and of preparation upon God's part of a purified nation to execute upon them the judgment written (Gen. xv.). When the time appointed had expired, the question: "Ought God's people to fight?" was answerable in the affirmative by direct appeal to God. "Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them nor shew mercy unto them" (Deut. vii. 2). "Of the cities of these people . . . thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. xx. 16).

So afterwards, in the time of Saul, when God commanded, it was righteousness to slay and wickedness to abstain. The command was: "Go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. xv. 3). Saul transgressed, though he partially obeyed, and, in consequence, was rejected from being king over Israel. He had spared Agag, and reserved the best of the beasts for sacrifice. Samuel rebuked him, saying, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he also hath rejected thee from being king."

GOD'S COMMANDS MUST BE OBEYED.

When God commands thus, then as Jeremiah says (xlviii. 10), "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." And when God forbids the sword, then it is wickedness to slay, and cursed be he that imbrueth his sword in blood. The expressed will of God is the only guide: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. xii. 32). As Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged when he had been humbled among the beasts of the earth: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou" (Dan. iv. 35).

God, who spoke in time past by Moses and Samuel, and held Israel strictly to the obedience of His word, spoke finally by Christ, to whose words, argues the apostle, "we ought to give the more earnest heed." The command of God is "Hear him,"

and from the example of Saul we may be sure that partial obedience, dictated by fear of the people, will profit nothing in the day of reckoning. What then does Christ command his people concerning war? Must we fight, or must we not fight? And seeing he "has left us an example" what is that example?

GOD'S COMMANDS THROUGH CHRIST.

"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But *I* say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But *I* say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But *I* say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v.).

At the crisis of the Lord's arrest, Peter "drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 52).

Many years afterwards, the Scriptures concerning his death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father's right hand having been fulfilled, Jesus communicated to his servants, by the apostle John, the Revelation concerning things to come. It largely described beforehand their sufferings at the hands of the powers of darkness, during his absence. In the thirteenth chapter there is introduced a blasphemous Power, identifiable by the number 666, and the corresponding name LATEINOS, which was to prevail against Christ's people with the sword for "forty-two months," or 1,260 symbolic days, *i.e.*, literally, years. "It was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (verse 7). "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints*" (verse 10). In this 1,260 years that spanned the interval between the accession of Constantine and the massacre of Saint Bartholomew's, the saints were in this sword-stricken and unresisting condition. Swords, however, were freely used on their behalf, but not by those who "had ears to hear." Of this a word hereafter.

These are Christ's precepts. We have his example further illustrated in such incidents as the following:

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE.

He was going up to Jerusalem, and was therefore refused ordinary hospitality in a village of the Samaritans through which he passed. "And when his disciples, James and John (Boanerges—the sons of thunder), saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For *the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them*" (Luke ix. 54).

He was before Pilate declaring the truth of his Jewish Kingship. He said: "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 " (John xviii. 36).

He would not be made king on the " this world " basis ; but when his miracles subjected him to popular movement in that direction he withdrew himself : " When Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone " (John vi. 15).

He peremptorily refused to adjudicate, at the request of a certain man, in a dispute concerning an inheritance, and turned the occasion into a caution against covetousness amid the frailties of mortal life in a Godless world (Luke xii. 14). He rebuked the world, and was naturally hated for it (John vii. 7) ; and he said his disciples would share the same experience, which they did.

Though Lord and Master of the disciples, as he reminded them, he washed their feet, saying, " If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you. . . . If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them " (Jno. xiii. 14).

It had long been before Israel in the prophetic writings that Messiah should at the first be manifested in suffering. Who can miss the picture of Isaiah (ch. liii.) ? " He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as *a lamb to the slaughter*, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment : and who shall declare his generation ? for he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was he stricken : And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death ; although he had *done no violence*, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

To a " good and honest heart," argument is superfluous after the recitation of these things. The function of Christ's people is, like his, to save life, not to destroy it ; to forbid the

sword (among themselves), not to wield it ; to follow in the steps of the faithful who fell beneath it for their testimony in "faith and patience," knowing that God will avenge in due time, and give to "all His saints" the honour of executing the judgment written.

CHRIST SENDS FORTH THE APOSTLES.

After Christ the Apostles : the men of his divine choice after special prayer to the Lord of the harvest (Luke vi. 12), and whom he sent forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves," with the exhortation "Be ye wise as serpents, and *harmless as doves* ; but beware of men" (Matt. x. 16). Fortified with the Spirit of the Father they thus went forth. They did not belie their character by taking the sword or doing violence ; but obeyed the commands of their Royal Master and walked in his footsteps.

By some modern preachers who justify the taking of the sword, we are referred to the "maxims of Christian men" and "the whole past of the world." What "Christian men?" we ask. We must be careful over our definitions, or we shall confound Christ's people with "the world" to which they do not belong. He has given us the standard : "*Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother*" (Matt. xii. 50). Tried by this standard, the apostles are Christ's brethren—real "Christian men." And by this standard we are justified in refusing to recognise as such, or to heed or follow those who reject their precepts and do not follow their example. Such may call Christ "Lord," but if they do not the things that he says, they are not his, but "strangers" whom his sheep will not follow. They are of the world, and the world heareth them, and it is quite consistent that they should preach the sword, and pray to their "God of battles" to bless their hosts in the slaughter of their "Christian brethren" on the other side !

APOSTOLIC PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE.

Apostolic precept and example is like Christ's. They did the will of the Father, who bore them witness with signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit. They pointed to Christ as their example and followed him. Inculcating patience in suffering for righteousness sake, Peter said :

“ Even hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again : when he suffered, *he threatened not* ; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously ” (1 Pet. ii. 21).

James, encouraging his brethren by the example of the prophets, and apostrophising the rich oppressors, says : “ Ye have condemned and killed the just, and *he doth not resist you*. Be patient therefore brethren unto the coming of the Lord ” (Jas. v. 6).

Paul alludes to the Corinthian attitude on the question of non-resistance, and argues that since they submitted to so much from “ fools ” they might very well bear with him : “ For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face ” (2 Cor. xi. 20). To the same community, in his first epistle (ch. vi.), he puts to shame some who walked otherwise in going to law, and asks them how they dare do it ? He in effect asks them if it is seemly for the judges elect of the world to come to apply for judgment to the tribunals of the world-rulers of the darkness of this age ? “ There is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not *rather take wrong* ? Why do ye not *rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded* ? ”

To the Romans Paul wrote (ch. xii. 19), “ Dearly beloved, *avenge not yourselves*, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is

written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger feed him ; if he thirst give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil ; but overcome evil with good."

So to the Thessalonians : " See that none render evil for evil to any man ; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men " (1 Thess. v. 15).

The Hebrews were encouraged and exhorted to remember what they had already achieved. " Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly while ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions ; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and *took joyfully the spoiling of your goods*, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance " (Heb. x. 32).

These apostolic precepts, examples and allusions are the real reliable " maxims of Christian men," in perfect harmony with Christ, and absolutely irreconcilable with modern preaching and practice. As has been truly said of our time : " Take away the church, and where would be the world ? " The distinction has been lost : but it can be drawn sharply and painfully enough by the application of the commandments of Christ, and " It is a faithful saying : For if we be dead with him we shall also live with him. If we suffer we shall also reign with him ; if we deny him he also will deny us. If we believe not yet he abideth faithful : he cannot deny himself " (2 Tim. ii. 11).

AFTER THE APOSTLES.

" The maxims of Christian men " after the time of the apostles must be received with great caution. The apostles indicate this in no uncertain manner by recounting the corrupting influences already at work, and foretelling their increase and

ultimate triumph in the suppression of the truth, and the establishment of a system of fable which the Lord should "destroy with the brightness of his coming."

This is not the occasion for full demonstration of the fact that Christendom is astray from the truth; but the foregoing assertion may at least be briefly proved from such testimonies as the following: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts xx. 30). "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. . . . They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. iv. 3-4). "The mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. ii. 7). "Try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jno. iv. 1). "There shall be false teachers among you . . . and many shall follow their pernicious ways" (2 Pet. ii. 1-2). "Their word will eat as doth a canker" (2 Tim. ii. 17).

These apostolic allusions and prophecies show us the need of caution in a "Christendom" composed of scores of antagonistic sects, and a babel of conflicting voices. Such a spectacle, though unspeakably oppressive, only too faithfully attests the truth of Christ's own prophecy (Rev. xviii. 23), which denounces judgment on the parent Romish system with the crushing conclusion: "For by thy sorceries were ALL NATIONS DECEIVED."

THE DIRECTION OF JESUS, AND THE LIGHT OF PROPHECY ON THE WAR WITH ROME.

Concerning the next great impending war, by which his disciples would be vitally affected, Jesus counselled discernment by the study of the prophets, and flight when occasion offered: "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." In thinking

over this beforehand, such as were informed would doubtless recall Jeremiah's attempt to flee out of the city in the days of its impending overthrow at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xxxvii. 12). Similar endeavour might be similarly misinterpreted, and similarly frustrated, but with Daniel's writings at hand, and Christ's own words endorsing them as light on the current situation, they would be watchful, and confident in God, who had in time past delivered Jeremiah in the evil day.

The time came of which Jesus had forewarned them, and the Roman eagles gathered together against Jerusalem. The people of Christ did not join in the insane and hopeless war of independence that at length arose ; but watched their opportunity for flight. Many doubtless escaped at the first symptoms of trouble. The hesitating and dímighted had a last chance divinely given them in a remarkable and interesting manner.

" A WAY TO ESCAPE."

The Roman general, Cestius, at a certain crisis of the war besieged Jerusalem, and really had the city at his mercy. The besieged despaired of success, and an influential party strongly counselled capitulation. But by some unaccountable mistake (humanly speaking), Cestius "retired from the city without any reason in the world." So Josephus tells us. He goes further, for he continues : " Had he but continued the siege a little longer, he had certainly taken the city ; but it was, I suppose, owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day " (Wars, Book ii., ch. xix.).

The astounded citizens, gathering courage, took Cestius in the rear, and, defeating him, returned at length to Jerusalem to prepare for the inevitable siege. " After this calamity had befallen Cestius," says Josephus, " many of the most eminent

of the Jews *swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink.*" Among this "many" would doubtless be the last remnants of the friends of Christ. They fled across Jordan to the mountains of Peræa, and so escaped "the days of vengeance."

But, flight or no flight, they would not take the sword, and thus naturally became objects of detestation to those who could neither understand nor forgive so "unpatriotic" an attitude. A Jewish writer thus comments on their refusal to fight for their country :

JEWISH CHRISTIANS WOULD NOT TAKE THE SWORD.

"There was one wretched and long-lasting consequence of the war with Rome, which grew naturally out of the circumstances, but which cannot be laid directly to the charge of Rome. Thirty years has passed since the death of Jesus and the conversion of the zealous apostle Paul. The little following had become a sect, not very large, not very important, nor as yet very pronounced in their opinions. The members of the sect were known as Jewish Christians, and were perhaps at this time quite as much of the one as the other. The war with Rome made the division between Jews and Christians sharp and final. The struggle on the part of the Jews had been a fight for life, for national existence. So impassioned were they, and so much in earnest, that even the help of the Samaritans and the Idumeans, for the first time in their history, had been accepted by the Jews. In the great and pressing need for united action all differences seemed small, and to be overlooked in the face of the fact that their country was in mortal danger. *The one unforgivable sin in the eyes of the Judeans was that any Jew, for any reason whatever, should coldly stand aloof.* There was a peace party among the Jews ; a small minority who honestly and sadly believed in the impossibility of victory, and who

counselled conciliation on the principle of saving what could be saved. This party would have let the country go—provided their religion was left to them intact. They, even, were not too popular.

“ But the Jewish Christians were different from these. They hoped for the success of the Roman arms, and it was in the name of religion that they refused to help their countrymen. (1) They professed to see the fulfilment of prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem. (2) They declined to be on the other side to the prophets. They believed the temple was decreed to fall, (3) and they would not fight to avert its fate. All this they urged quite earnestly and quite religiously in the light of their new and latest interpretation of the Scriptures. At any other time their opinions would have provoked only a discussion in the schools; at this crisis of national history it *provoked a national resentment*. From the point of view of patriotic Jews, these others, Jews by race and by kinship, Jews who refused on religious grounds to strike a blow for Judea, were not only apostates, but traitors. (4) The precepts of Jesus, and the practice of these his earliest followers, came by degrees to be regarded as cause and effect. The whole movement grew hateful to the Jews, socially and religiously and politically hateful.”

This is an interesting testimony to the faithfulness of the Hebrew Christians in the first century; and furnishes an example for their brethren now. The Kingdom of God will doubtless witness many interesting recountings of the divine deliverances of those terrible days.

1.—Jesus had forbidden it.

2.—Jesus had said it would be destroyed, and it came to pass.

3.—And it fell.

4.—This explains much of the hatred.

A WORD FROM TERTULLIAN.

Leaving the first century, we come upon more doubtful times ; but even a hundred years further on, at the close of the second century, we see in the words of Tertullian's apology a recognition at any rate of the obligation of non-resistance of evil. Defending the Christians against the persecutors, he says :

“ Will ye kill the good subject who supplicates God for the Emperor ? Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that His people should vindicate themselves by human fire. . . . For what war should we not be ready and well prepared, even though unequal in numbers ; we, who die with so much pleasure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to suffer death than to inflict it.”

Tertullian's argument is forcible. It is harder to be “ faithful unto death ” in the quiet and obedient following of the commandments of Christ, than to face death, or the chance of it, in the enthusiasm and excitement of the battlefield. After Christ and the apostles, we really need not seek further example ; but these are adduced to show the maintenance for so long a time of the true Christian ideal. If “ the maxims of Christian men ” of subsequent centuries do not square with this, they must be decisively rejected.

 OBJECTIONS.

Many objections are urged against this plain and obvious application of Christ's precepts and example and those of his apostles. It is said that “ society could not be carried on ” upon the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. The answer is that these things do not concern “ society.” The Sermon on the Mount was spoken to “ his disciples,” and opened with the gracious proclamation of the blessedness of those who should truly take up

the position of faithful discipleship. Such were "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world," hearers and doers of the words of Jesus, wise men, who built on a rock foundation. Compare these with "society" as then manifested, even in the chosen nation, and listen to Christ's scathing denunciation of its leaders (Matt. xxiii.), and we see the matter in its true light. It was not the purpose of Christ to carry on Jewish society, which was filling up the measure of its wickedness, till, in his crucifixion, it should bring upon itself destruction in the outpouring of divine "wrath to the uttermost." His purpose was to take out from that "society," a remnant upon the principle of faith and obedience, who shall inherit the earth in blessedness in the kingdom of heaven which is theirs. When Christ returns and reigns in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem and before his ancients gloriously, then there will be seen the society that he aims at—but not before.

The modern situation, though perhaps not so easily discerned, is strictly analogous. Christendom is as reprobate as was Israel in Christ's day. In this matter of taking the sword it is strikingly manifest. Christ's precepts are as effectively ignored by Christendom's leaders as by the Scribes and Pharisees of old. Christ's judgment is on record against Christendom in the Revelation as severely as he denounced it against Jerusalem of old. And if there be any left who are at all answerable to the "blessed," "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world," among these, wherever they be, his word will be found respected, not only in the hearing, but the doing of it, and in their trial and preparation that word accomplishes its aim.

But, it is urged, Christ himself, on one occasion at least, commanded taking the sword: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Lu. xxii. 36). The answer is that this was a figurative injunction to the disciples to prepare for the more earnest prosecution of the truth's warfare (with other than carnal weapons) because their Lord was about to be taken away from them. If the objector insist upon a literal interpretation,

he will make Christ do violence to his own principles, for, *on the same occasion, he forbade the use of the sword by Peter* (verse 51, with Matt. xxvi. 52), saying, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for *all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*" Let the passage be honestly studied, and it will be seen that the disciples, in taking him literally and producing two swords, fell into a similar error to that in which they mistook "doctrine" for "leaven of bread" when he bade them "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. xvi. 6, 12). When, upon the production of these "two swords," Jesus said, "It is enough," he simply closed the episode as when we say, "Enough!" To suppose, as some do, that he literally meant *they* are enough is absurd, for two swords would not be literally "enough" even against a handful of Pilate's soldiery. Finally, any construction which sets one saying of Christ against another must be wrong.

But, say some, the apostle says, "Put them in mind to . . . obey magistrates" (Titus iii. 1). And if magistrates require us to take the sword we must "obey." This sounds well; but when it comes to a choice between obeying Christ or obeying magistrates, what then? Apostolic precedent settles the question for us at once. Magistrates "straitly commanded" that they should not preach Jesus. "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29). This is scripture and common sense, and yields clear and certain guidance where magistrates command the taking of the sword, which Christ forbids on pain of perishing with it. Old Testament history illustrates the same thing. Nebuchadnezzar commanded the worship of the golden image. Daniel's companions obeyed God rather than Nebuchadnezzar, and got into the fiery furnace in consequence. Their subsequent deliverance, which, however, they did not presumptuously anticipate, is an earnest to all succeeding times that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS ; BUT DIVINELY PROTECTED.

The present for Christ's people is only a term of probation for their real and permanent position in the Kingdom of God. They are "strangers and pilgrims" passing through a country and people to which they do not belong. In proportion as they are faithful to Him they say with the apostle "as he is, so are we in this world." But, as with their Lord and Master, so with them, God overrules their affairs so that existence is possible. And in respect of this particular trial of obedience, special provision has been divinely made to preserve them from utter extinction. Reference has been made to the saying of Christ in Rev. xiii. : "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." And it was remarked that the unresisting faithful friends of Christ had been championed by less scrupulous professors who had freely used swords on their behalf.

The fact is that God had specially provided help for the helpless in the providential control of the revolutionary elements of society, who were as much against the persecutors of Christ's people as they were themselves, and who were quite untrammelled by any conscientious objection to the use of physical force. This "help for the helpless" is thus symbolised in one place in the Revelation (ch. xii. 16) : "And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." The counterpart of this vision is found in history from the time of the Emperor Constantine and onwards. He turned the sword against Christ's persecuted and fugitive people in the extremities of the Roman Empire (particularly northern Africa). There they were championed by a very "earthy" multitude, who successfully withstood the Emperor's troops, and thus "swallowed up" his military "flood." The history of the time and how the Circumcellions, and afterwards the Vandals, under Genseric, interfered on behalf of the Christians, must be studied by "the servants of Christ"

who would understand. We notice that in Rev. xii. 17 the faithful are described as "the remnant of her seed *which kept the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"

The same element is found in the prophecy of the "two witnesses" in Rev. xi. The faithful who "keep the commandments of God," and, therefore, would not take the sword, represented one class (witness), whose only weapon of offence was the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The sympathetic revolutionaries who were to some extent leavened by the truth, and were by no means above the use of carnal weapons, was the other. There is no difficulty about the term "witnesses" covering such people when the true bearing of the prophecy is compared with Bible history. Nebuchadnezzar is called by God "my servant." The Jews, He styles "my witnesses"; and even the Medo-Persian destroyers of Babylon, though cruel and idolatrous, are prophetically styled "my sanctified ones" (Isa. xiii. 3, 17). Just as the Persian dynasty that destroyed Babylon was favourable to Israel, so the anti-Catholic revolutionaries of comparatively modern times have been favourable to God's people; and the very revival of the truth in modern times is largely owing to the sword of the revolution breaking up the power of the oppressor. These things, studied in history by the light of "Revelation," yield the conclusion that God does not suffer the extinction of the faithful, though they observe the attitude of non-resistance; but even employs the sword of the wicked to protect and deliver them.

"OUT OF HIS MOUTH GOETH A SHARP SWORD."—

Rev. xix. 15.

There is "a time of war" for Christ and his people. "In righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. xix. 11). Real Christianity is not the emasculate thing that it is supposed to be. God forbids His people to avenge themselves only that He may the more effectually avenge them. The men who, refusing to

disobediently take the sword, are "faithful unto death," are surely the most fitting hereafter to "execute the judgments written." It is to be so, for so God declares.

"Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints" (Psa. clxix.).

"The Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan. vii. 22).

"He that overcometh and *keepeth my works unto the end*, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my father" (Rev. ii. 26).

These and similar scriptures place the matter before us in its true light. By present "fiery trial" GOD prepares a people into whose hands He will at length commit the earth for their everlasting inheritance. The captain of their salvation was made perfect through suffering, and so must they be. From beyond the veil he says, "I have overcome," and holds out these great and precious promises "to him that overcometh." Those who keep their eyes upon him in faith and obedience will not fail in the "time of trouble." Those who neglect or forget him, and disregard his flesh-crucifying precepts, will curse their folly in the day of recompense.

A SIXTY-YEARS' RETROSPECT.

The attitude of Christ and the apostles as delineated in the foregoing pages has been the standard of the nineteenth century revival of the truth consistently held up during all the last half of that century. It is proposed briefly to exhibit that fact.

As far back as 1849, when Mr. Cobden was moving for arbitration instead of war, Dr. Thomas attended a meeting of the Peace Society in London, with the object of endeavouring to convince the assembly, or some among it, that war is appointed by God as the means by which His Kingdom shall subdue the world unto Himself; and that the coming years must of necessity be years of preparation for war upon a scale heretofore unexampled. He made some remarks illustrative of this, and moved the following amendment, for the reproduction of which no apology need be offered, and which proves its author to have singularly well appreciated from the Scriptures the true characteristics of the troublous years to come :

DR. THOMAS' RESOLUTION IN 1849.

“RESOLVED.—That war being an institution of Divine appointment for the bruising to death of the Serpent Power, though disastrous to the subjects of it, has proved of great benefit to the human race; that civil and religious liberty have been won by the war power in connection with the advocacy of truth, which it has often protected; that the rights of God in the earth, the vengeance due to the blood of His people poured out like water in past ages, the chastisement and overthrow of civil and spiritual tyrants, the defence of liberty, and the establishment of peace based upon the ascendancy of right over wrong, of knowledge and faith over ignorance and superstition, and of a well-ordered and enlightened liberty over despotism—are things of infinitely greater value than gold or human life; that those who rule the nations, being men who have been trained in the school of State superstition, arbitrary power, covetousness, and contempt of the laws of God, and the rights of humanity, are malprincipled, seared in conscience, and amenable only to fear; that national wars to avenge the injured, and defend liberty, are neither impious nor impolitic; that *while a Bible Christian must not fight in the absence of the captain of his salvation*, the Scrip-

tures leave the nations to do as they please, holding them, however, **NATIONALLY RESPONSIBLE** for the principles and manner in which they make war ; that the nations of Europe, being Papal, Protestant, Infidel, and Mahomedan, and not Christian, the question of international law, as compatible or incompatible with the spirit of Christianity, is extraneous ; that, while taxation to maintain an extravagant and luxurious regal establishment, to enrich a pampered and vicious aristocracy, official sinecurists in Church and State, to bribe religious sects with costly endowments, and to build royal and episcopal palaces in the midst of impoverished and almost breadless populations, is odious and abominable, taxation to maintain an efficient military and naval force in the present condition of the world is wise, prudent, and indispensable ; that an army and navy are as necessary to the body politic of nations as at present constituted, as the right and left arms to the body natural ; that, considering the known traditionary ambitious designs of the Court of Russia, and the threatening attitude of the Autocrat in relation to Schleswig-Holstein, Transylvania, Turkey, and Persia, in which countries its ascendancy would be to bring the Cossacks to the gates of Britain in Europe and India, a reduction in the army and navy of England is loudly to be deprecated by all the real friends of liberty and humanity in the two worlds ; that, these things being so, it is the enlightened and sober-minded conviction of this meeting that whatever may be the merit of Mr. Cobden's financial speculations in other respects, ' special treaties of arbitration instead of war ' is a visionary, utopian, and impracticable project, and that his ' motion ' to that effect ought not to be sustained by petitions in its favour."

The amendment was, of course, derisively rejected. Dr. Thomas returned to the United States, where, in about twelve years' time after this incident, the question : " Ought we to

fight?" seriously affected the people of Christ in the American Civil War. They were found in both the opposing camps, and resolutely refused to slay one another. Exemption was procured for some in the Confederate camp on the representation of Dr. Thomas, and the following petition was prepared for presentation to the United States Government, but its presentation was rendered unnecessary by the cessation of the war :

A PETITION IN THE UNITED STATES, 1865.

To the Senators and Republicans of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

GENTLEMEN.—Your petitioners respectfully submit that they belong to "a very small remnant" of that sect, which, in the days of the apostles, was "everywhere spoken against," because of its testimony "against the world-rulers of the darkness of that age, and the spirituals of the wickedness in the high places of the State" (Eph. vi. 12). This has been their testimony in all ages of their standing before the powers that be. Inheriting their principles, your petitioners are brought under the obligation of maintaining their testimony; although, as in the past experience of thousands of them, it may be necessary to seal it with the loss of goods, liberty, or life. During the last eighteen hundred years they have been distinguished from the multitude (which professes according to the dictates of clerical authority), by various names imposed upon them by their enemies. These names we repudiate, and, in accordance with apostolic teaching, that all the real children of the Deity are the brethren of Jesus, a relationship in which our brethren in all ages have glorified, your petitioners choose to be known as CHRISTADELPHIANS; or, Brethren of Christ.

As we have said, your petitioners belong to "a very small remnant," whose members are found in Britain, the British provinces, the United States, Virginia, and Mississippi. Wherever found, their principles are identical, having been taught by the Word, not of men, but of God. By this Teacher, whose

authority alone they recognise, they are commanded not only not to kill, but, not to be angry with their brethren without a cause, under penalty of the judgment ; “ not to resist evil ;” to “ love their enemies, bless them that curse them, to do good to them that hate them, pray for them who despitefully use them ;” not to be as the hypocrites, who profess one thing and practise the opposite ; and “ whatever they would that men should do unto them, even so they must do unto them ; for this is the law and the prophets.” These commands your petitioners are bound to obey, under whatever government they may happen to sojourn. Human Governments undertake to “ change the times and the laws ;” but there is no scope for change with Christadelphians, who, under pain of exclusion from eternal life, are bound to “ obey God rather than man.”

Now, your petitioners respectfully affirm that the current policy and laws of the United States are such as to prevent them yielding that obedience to the Word of the Deity necessary for their attainment of eternal life. The Enrolment Act recently passed provides no exemption for the brethren of Christ, who, owing allegiance only to him, positively refuse, under any circumstance whatever, to shed the blood of their fellow men in the service of any of the sin-powers of the world. The Divine Word teaches them, that wars and fighting come of men’s lusts. The brethren of Christ have no sympathy with such conflicts ; and ask of the world-rulers, to be kind enough to let them alone. They render to Cæsar that which is lawfully his ; but, when he undertakes to circumvent the principles which the Deity has enjoined, they, as a part of His own people, resist, even unto death.

In conclusion, as they study to be brief, your petitioners would add, that the brethren of Christ in Richmond, Lunenburg, and King William Counties, Virginia, and Jefferson County, Mississippi, have, under the influence of the principles herein avowed, refused to bear arms in the Confederate service, as we hereby do in that of the United States ; and that a law was passed by

the Confederate Congress recognising their refusal as lawful and right.

Your petitioners, therefore, respectfully request that your Honourable House will enact such a law on their behalf as will enable the administrator to respect the divine injunction, which says: "Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm." And, as in duty bound, they pray to the God of heaven, through Jesus Christ, their elder brother and high priest, that you may be directed to such an issue on our behalf as will be approved by Him.

The American Civil War terminated with the final success of the Northern arms in 1865. From that time onwards no fear of compulsion to take the sword much disturbed Christadelphians till the time of the Russo-Turkish war in 1877, when the success of the Russian arms and the threatened overflowing of Constantinople and Asia Minor roused the war spirit in Britain as a matter of necessity. At that time the following petition was prepared for presentation to Parliament, and the late Mr. W. E. Gladstone undertook to present it if necessary. It proved unnecessary; but the matter was at any rate put on record.

A PETITION TO THE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1878.

This Petition praying for the exemption of Petitioners (the Christadelphians) from Conscription for Military Service.

SHOWETH:—

1.—That your petitioners are a body of religious people known as CHRISTADELPHIANS; who are looking for the early personal advent of Christ to set up a divine government over all the earth and to give an immortal nature to his friends who will be associated with him in the government.

2.—That they are conscientiously opposed to the bearing of arms, on the ground that the Bible, which they believe to be

the word of God, commands them not to kill, nor even to be angry with their fellow men, without a cause, not to resist evil ; to love their enemies ; to bless them that curse them ; to do good to them that hate them ; to pray for those who despitefully use them and persecute them ; and to do to men as they would men should do to them. Consequently, your petitioners entertain the conviction that they are debarred from taking any part in the conflicts that arise between nations. They recognise and discharge the duty of submitting to the laws enacted by the governments, where these laws do not conflict with the laws delivered by the Deity to His servants in His Word ; but where human laws conflict with those that are divine, they feel themselves compelled to follow the example of their brother Peter, who, before a judicial tribunal in such a case, declared that he must obey God rather than man.

3.—That in view of the troubled state of foreign affairs, your petitioners apprehend a possible resort to conscription for military service in the country, subject to the jurisdiction of your Honourable House.

4.—That they, therefore, pray your Honourable House to grant them a legal exemption from military service, subject to such conditions as your Honourable House may think fit to impose.

5.—That conscientious objection to military service has been a peculiarity of your petitioners since the beginning of their existence as a body, and it is not an opinion professed to suit an apprehended emergency.

6.—That your petitioners have proof of this last allegation in their possession in the shape of writings current among them for many years, advocating these principles ; and, further, in the shape of documents, going to show that a similar petition was granted to their brethren in Richmond, Lunenburg, and King William Cos., Va., and Jefferson County, Miss., by the Confederate Congress during the American Civil War of 1860-64, and was

also presented by their brethren in the Northern States of the United States Congress at the close of that struggle, when conscription came into force.

7.—That your petitioners are few in number, and for various reasons are not likely to be rapidly increased. That the granting of their petition will therefore, in no degree, embarrass the military measures which your Honourable House may be called upon to take.

8.—That your petitioners humbly beseech your Honourable House to grant their prayer, that they may live quiet and peaceable lives in obedience to God, to whom they will pray for the guidance of your Honourable House in the conduct of public affairs.

The subjoined modification of the foregoing has been prepared for presentation to Parliament in connection with the present crisis :

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The humble Petition of the People called Christadelphians, praying for the exemption of Petitioners from compulsory Military Service.

SHOWETH AS FOLLOWS :—

1.—That your petitioners are an organised body of religious people known as Christadelphians ; who are looking for the early personal advent of Christ to set up a divine government over all the earth.

2.—That they are conscientiously opposed to the bearing of arms, on the ground that the Bible, which they believe to be the word of God, commands them not to kill. But they recognise and discharge the duty of submitting to the laws enacted by the Government, where these laws do not conflict with the laws of God.

3.—That in view of the public danger, your petitioners apprehend a possible resort to conscription for military service.

4.—That they, therefore, pray your Honourable House to grant them a legal exemption from military service.

5.—That the conscientious objection to military service has been a principle of your petitioners since the beginning of their existence as a body, and is not an opinion professed to suit an apprehended emergency.

6.—That your petitioners have proof of this last allegation in their literature of many years standing, and that they were granted exemption from military service in the American Civil War of 1860-4.

7.—That your petitioners humbly beseech your Honourable House to grant their prayer, that they may live quiet and peaceable lives in obedience to God, to whom they will pray for the guidance of your Honourable House in the conduct of public affairs.

THIS PRESENT REHEARSAL

Seeks only to uphold the unquestionably right attitude of the past seventy years. During all that time the duty of abstaining from taking the sword has been continually urged upon the Christadelphian body; and more than one discharge has been procured by those whom the truth found in the ranks of the army. It may be that another trial is before the brethren as in the former days. In any case our duty is as clear as ever. If we are to stand with Christ in victory we must follow him in suffering if needs be. A great cloud of witnesses encompasses us, of whom the world was not worthy. Considering them and the High Priest of our profession we shall be enabled to endure; knowing that God will in His own time and way deliver us if we put our trust in Him.