

# EXEMPTION

Conscientious Objection to Military and  
National Service – the part played by  
Brother Viner Hall illustrated in his  
letters and writings, 1912–1945



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# BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

## BROTHER VINER HALL

BROTHER VINER HALL was born at Perry Barr, Birmingham on 30th June 1877 and given the name, James Viner Ockford Hall, the first son of brother Phillip Hall by his second wife, Mary Hannah Ockford. His father, formerly a Primitive Methodist preacher, was immersed in May 1870. He had attended a lecture by brother Robert Roberts and had been so excited by the way he had put “all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle” of the truth in place, that he could not understand why all those around him were sitting so quietly. He was immediately convinced of the truth and wished to be baptised without delay. His first wife died in 1876 and the same year he married Mary Hannah Ockford. She had been immersed only in July 1876 at the age of 34, and so brother Viner was her first child after embracing the truth. Like Hannah of old, she prayed earnestly that she would have a man-child from the Lord who would be dedicated to His work.

Viner, as a young man, like his father, was deeply influenced by brother Roberts and was baptised into Christ at Birmingham on 26th May 1894, when he was nearly 17. He often recalled with gratitude that at 18 he was one of the “stewards” at the tea meeting held to say goodbye to brother and sister Roberts on their proposed removal to Australia. The postcard brother Roberts sent to brother Viner inviting him to a “stewards” preparatory meeting is reproduced at Annex 1. I do not think that even his enemies (and his fearless testimony earned him some) would deny that his mother’s prayer was amply rewarded in the fervent, fearless and unstinting manner in which he fought for and advocated the truth as he saw it, especially in its practical outcome. Many, including those who have never heard of him, owe much to him, as will appear.

Brother Viner Hall married sister Miriam Coleman on 29th July 1901, and she proved a “help-meet” in a very special way. She was a highly intelligent, but retiring, woman of great charm who stood by him (at times anticipating him) in all his work and through the “trials” of divisions.

As perhaps was common at that time, he did not enter the “public” phase of the truth until after his marriage at the age of 24. In fact it was not until 1909, when he was 32, that he was appointed a 10 minute speaker for Thursday evenings in the Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia. At this time he was living at 40 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield where he was carrying

on business as an antique furniture dealer, cabinet maker, upholsterer and piano tuner, in partnership with his brother Philip Hall.

He had a commanding bearded appearance and was an effective and forceful speaker and was in demand in the Midlands. From the beginning of his public testimony, he submitted reports of his lectures to the local newspapers, “the house-tops of the present day”, as he used to say (Matt. 10:27) or as in a letter of 25th July 1914 he affirmed, “I have come to regard the Press as the modern School of Tyrannus – where the Truth may be discussed in the light of day, without fear or favour.” He admitted that this practice had been suggested to him by an old West Bromwich brother. Among the papers he left are reports in the *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucester Graphic*, *Hereford Journal*, *Leamington*, *Warwick*, *Rugby and Coventry Chronicle*, *Midland Chronicle* and the *Monmouthshire Weekly Post* for example. These newspapers are dated 1911-1915 and cover the following subjects: The Approaching End of the World, The Bible Doctrine of God, Science and the Soul, The Future of Palestine, and Christ’s Answer to Nicodemus, and many others not often tackled by the brethren.

Concurrent with these activities, and even earlier, he frequently wrote letters to the papers on topical subjects of the day, or in disputation with local clergy and laymen. Copies of local papers, in my possession, containing these letters are dated from 1906 to 1914 (no doubt they continued beyond this date). Some of these letters were of considerable length and carried on over a number of days and weeks. Of particular interest was the correspondence in *The Echo* (published in Cheltenham) in June and July 1906 on “Prayers for the Dead”. When the Editor closed the correspondence brother Hall inserted a paid advertisement in the Public Notices Column, extending to 36 single column inches! At the same time and in the same paper he entered into correspondence on “The Education Act and Bible Teaching”. This was spread over four editions and occupied in total 44 column inches!! This was distinctively his field of operation over a period of 50 years and which inspired others to follow his example.

In 1917 he became the prime-mover in the controversy over service in the Special Constabulary (usually referred to as “The Birmingham Trouble” – see “One Master” by brother Viner Hall) and the formation of the “John Bright Street, Birmingham Ecclesia with 23 other brethren and sisters including sister Hall. The Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia finally disfellowshipped this ecclesia on “constitutional grounds” (see *The Christadelphian*, December, 1917). After their case had been critically examined in depth by the South London (Clapham) Ecclesia, worldwide division was effected by the end of 1926, resulting in the formation of what became known as the “Berean Fellowship”.

He became known to the wider field of Christadelphians (in all fellowships) throughout the world through his forthright contentions, and the lead he gave to brethren, on the question of military and national service,

which form the substance of this book. He continued his frequent contributions to local newspapers, and in the distribution of reprints of these reports, especially at major religious and other public meetings, throughout Great Britain. He was pre-deceased by sister Hall and died August 1962.

In 1926 brother Viner Hall took over, from brother A. T. Abbotts, *The Bible Searcher* magazine and combined it with *The Witness*, which he had just started, and he became the sole Editor of *The Bible Searcher and Witness*.

In 1926 the "divorce and remarriage" issue was agitated by some of the Clapham Ecclesia, and a further division was effected in 1927, resulting in the formation of the "Berean" and "Family Journal" fellowships: brother Hall taking the stand, advocated by Dr. Thomas and brother Roberts, that divorce and remarriage are permitted by the law of Christ, for the cause of marital unfaithfulness.

At this critical time, and while on holiday in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, he saw for sale, a private assembly hall which, in due course, he acquired and which he renamed "The Institute". On the 25th November 1927 he and sister Hall took up residence in "The Institute", and held their first meeting there, as the Intelligence in *The Bible Searcher and Witness* for December 1927 records:

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE.** THE INSTITUTE, NEVA ROAD. On Sunday afternoon (December 4th, 1927) we held our first Meeting for the breaking of bread in our new abode. There were five present. We had a very edifying Meeting, our readings for the day and an exhortation of Brother Roberts' on "The Psalms of David" (from *The Christadelphian* for April, 1890, pp.175), furnishing the strong meat of the Word for the occasion. It was only a small beginning, but we were of one heart and one soul, and where there is unity of spirit in the bond of peace and love, there is the strength of God against which not even the powers of darkness can prevail. So that we rejoice in the sure and certain hope that out of weakness God will bring forth strength as it is testified: "God hath chosen the '*foolish*' things of the world to confound the '*wise*'; and God hath chosen the '*weak*' things of the world to confound the mighty; and the '*base*' things of the world, and the things which are despised, had God chosen, Yea, and the things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: **That no flesh should glory in His presence**" (1 Cor. 1:26). Circumstances may delay the beginning our public exposition of the Truth for about a fortnight, as far as we can tell, but our Meetings for the breaking of bread will take place on Sunday afternoons at 3-30 or thereabouts, until further notice.—V. H.

After his move to Weston-super-Mare, he established a good relationship with the Editors of the local papers, and submitted reports of his lectures which they printed in full. The publishers of these papers were also general

printers and no doubt their favourable attitude was influenced by bro Hall ordering, in their hundreds of thousands, reprints in leaflet form. These leaflets were distributed at important public gatherings of thinking people, especially in London, where he was assisted by a few dedicated assistants. He reasoned that our mission lay beyond our immediate neighbourhood, although that was not neglected, but with our limited resources it would not be possible to reach all the people of, say, a large city like London. He therefore deliberately targetted gatherings where people were concerned with the political and religious problems of the day. These gatherings included, "Peace Pledge" meetings, religious assemblies, Jewish and Zionist meetings, anti-evolution demonstrations etc. These included meetings in Scotland, Belgium and Holland.

One notable occasion was the opening of the first Roman Catholic Abbey in England since the Reformation, viz Buckfastleigh Abbey in Devon. For this event he prepared a four-page broadsheet "newspaper", which he called *The Buckfastleigh Record*. Five thousand copies of which were distributed on the dedication day, August 24th, 1932; the 360th anniversary of the massacre of the Huguenots on "St. Bartholomews" day, 1572! A second edition of this paper, suitably overprinted, was also circulated at the "Cardinal Fisher" celebrations at Rochester, Kent, 1935. A copy of the first edition was sent to, and accepted, by the British Museum.

In October 1941 he resurrected *The Bible Searcher and Witness* which he had suspended in 1928. He wrote, "Circumstances have now arisen which demand the resumption of the two-edged sword of its Scriptural witness. The outbreak and progress of a second world war has created a state of spiritual emergency unparalleled in the history of the brotherhood – a crisis which has given rise to an association of misguided teachers who are inculcating erroneous doctrines so plausibly as to endanger the very elect." This booklet traces some of the issues he had in mind. He ceased publication of the magazine in 1943: it was again resurrected in 1984 by his Executors, and continues as a witness. He died in March 1962, aged 85, pre-deceased by his sister wife, who had been a "help-meet" indeed.

PMR



1918, returned from farm work



*Photomaton*

Circa, 1930

# **The Coronation.** MAY 12TH 1957.



Banner displayed by the brethren of Christ at their place of meeting, The Institute, New St, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.





*Brother and sister Hall, circa 1957*

# CHAPTER I

## BEFORE WORLD WAR I

IT HAS LONG been our desire and intention to publish a digest of his vital contributions on the subject of our conscientious objection to military and national service in the two world wars of this century. All previous accounts of the British brethren's position and experiences have, so far as I am aware, ignored his contribution (e.g. "Without the Camp", by brother F. G. Jannaway and "Christ and the State" by brother Graham Pearce). Brother Frank Walker, however, in "Cloud and Sunshine", chapter 10 (1926) extensively quotes from the circulars issued by brother Viner Hall, but this was in the context of the "Birmingham Constabulary" controversy, and in any case this book is not widely available.

As is well-known our conscientious objection to military service has been a characteristic of our community since the days of brother Dr. Thomas and the American Civil War. Our distinctive name, Christadelphians (or brethren of Christ), was adapted for the purpose of petitioning the American authorities for exception from service in both the Confederate and Union forces.

The British brethren had several times considered the advisability of a petition to the British Parliament seeking exemption in the event of conscription being introduced. Draft petitions had been formulated but shelved as premature, but pre-1914 saw a renewed interest in view of growing German belligerency. Perhaps, however, the introduction of conscription in New Zealand in 1912 can be instanced as the start of brother Viner Hall's concern.

### **BROTHER C. C. WALKER AND RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corp)**

In the June, 1912 *Christadelphian*, p.279, under the heading "Conscription in New Zealand: A Way of Escape", brother Walker reproduced an extract from the *Dunedin Evening Star* in which it was reported that the two sons of brother Patten had accepted service in an ambulance corps as a condition of exemption from military service. The report included the following exchange of words:

"The Sub-inspector offered to withdraw the charges if the boys would register on the understanding that they would be posted to an ambulance corps. The Bench added: 'I think you can't say Christ would be against ambulance work'. 'No sir, I think He would not,'

replied the father, who thereupon put the offer to his sons. They stated their willingness to register under these conditions.”

In response to this insertion in *The Christadelphian*, brother Viner Hall wrote to brother C. C. Walker in June 1912 (actual day not noted on the copy of his letter which I have) as follows:

“My dear brother Walker,

Greeting and love in the Lord,

I have been considerably exercised of late over our position in relation to the decrees of the State. My anxiety was quickened and increased by the paragraph you inserted in your last issue on ‘Conscription in New Zealand: A Way of Escape’ – in which you evidently approved of one form of military service, viz. the RAMC for the friends of Christ when required by the State to enter the army. Now I, in common with many others, have always regarded service in the armies of the alien in any capacity to be utterly wrong in the sight of God – a compromising of our position as the servants of Christ and the household of God. Under these circumstances would it not be well for a question so vitally affecting the brotherhood throughout the world to be freely discussed in order that the duty of the brethren may be made plain and such concerted measures as may be deemed advisable be taken by representatives of the whole brotherhood before it is too late to influence the Governments under which we live?

As a Christadelphian I have always taken it for granted that military service in the devil’s army in any capacity whatever, to be wrong. Here are the reasons that have compelled and justified our position hitherto. All are agreed that the principles of Christ prevent a brother from associating and identifying himself with the State or municipality because (1) Having become a citizen of the kingdom of heaven he has renounced – abjured – his natural political rights – his citizenship in the present evil world. Thenceforth he lives under a human government, but only as an alien or a pilgrim; and as such he has no political rights whatever. (2) That as a foreigner passing through or temporally sojourning in the country, by all the rules of civilization, ancient and modern, no government has the right to require, much less compel, such a one to serve in the army, and help fight her battles in any capacity whatsoever.

In harmony then with the principles we profess, we even refuse the peaceful and otherwise good and useful office of a local town councillor or even to nominate one (or vote for one when nominated) because we have no right to do so – we should compromise our principles by doing so – we therefore refuse to take any part and were the government to endeavour to compel us to do so, we should refuse to obey them; and if need be we should resist them – even unto prison

and death – rather than be compelled to compromise our principles even in such a small matter as the municipal franchise. For to offend in one such point would, in principle, be to offend against all. We therefore consistently stand apart altogether in faithfulness to Christ.

Seeing this is so, upon what principle would you justify our serving in the army of the devil even as a member of the RAMC? A brother could not choose this service as a profession. Why not? It would not be legitimate because of its associations. You would not voluntarily serve in the RAMC, because it would be wrong to do so; but you would accept the same service at the bidding of a human government. Why? Out of fear of punishment? You would do wrong to save your life? You would ‘do evil that good might come’ – Would this be right in the sight of God? How could it be? It is no argument to the point to say the service does not require you to actually slay your fellow man – you are an essential and integral part of an organisation which ‘exists for the express purpose of fighting.’ You don’t slay yourself but you help others to do the bloody work.

It is beside the mark to urge the fact that brethren help to manufacture arms and ammunition for the government. There is no principle involved in such work as this. You are no part of their organisation and are not under their control. I would work for a Mayor but not for a Town Councillor. I would help a Roman Catholic, but would not join one of their benevolent organisations to do so. I would succour a wounded soldier, but would not join a military organisation to do so. Affectionally your brother, VINER HALL.”

Brother Hall followed up this letter with a speech at the Temperance Hall, Birmingham, Thursday night Class on 6th June, 1912, and although it covered the same ground as his letter to brother Walker I reproduce it in full:

“Dear brethren, The question that is exercising my mind is not due to the fear of conscription, but to the desire that in such an eventuality we should be prepared to meet it with a united front. If we are not to be taken unawares we must settle the question now. This is a question which should not be left to individual choice, as it appears to have done in Australia and New Zealand. It is a question of intense doctrinal significance which admits of as definite a settlement as the doctrine of non-resistance of evil. The question I refer to is the question of our duty and position as the body of Christ in relation to the State and its subsidiary institutions. Hitherto we have maintained a strict disavowal from all worldly organisations – beneficent or otherwise – we have been in the world, but not of the world.

Have we done right in this voluntarily renouncing our political rights and in resolutely refusing all – even informally – connection with any of its institutions? If so, then upon what consideration shall we allow

ourselves to become ‘an integral part of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting’ – even as a unit of the RAM Corps? For considerations of personal safety? To save our own skins? For fear lest ‘the reproach of Christ should fall upon us?’ If not, for what other reason? We would not voluntarily do it.

Now if our position as members of Christ would be compromised by voluntary association, would our association under compulsion (by the devil, even for a good purpose) render the connection any less defiling, or displeasing to God? No! How could it? Would not our duty be to resist the subtle devil – even unto prison and to death – if we would escape by flight, or by means of a united appeal to Parliament to grant us exemption on conscientious grounds, as we have done in the past? What brother would hesitate in such a course! If we thus resist the devil, would he not flee from us? But if he cast us into prison would not the spirit and glory of God rest upon us? And would He not, after we had suffered a while for well-doing, speedily send us the deliverance we needed, as he did on behalf of His children in the past?

Yet this is not the course our distressed brethren in Australia and New Zealand are taking? They are escaping by allowing themselves to be entangled in the web of the devil by allowing themselves to become an integral part of the organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting, in accepting service therein as units of the RAMC! This is what distresses me; I feel certain they do it ignorantly, for want of a proper lead. It is years since this matter was discussed, and as compulsory military service was sprung upon them, they were taken unawares, and like all people in such circumstances they wavered and so gave way. Now unless they can be rallied by God through us, or by some other ecclesia, it will be too late and the mischief done will be irreparable. Would it not therefore be well for us to address them ecclesially by a letter suitably embodying the facts and exhorting them to unite as one body in an appeal by a petition to their respective Parliaments, as we and their brethren have done under similar circumstances in the past? We might also ask our brother Walker if he would kindly publish the same or similar letter in the excellent medium of *The Christadelphian*. Taking all the circumstances into account do not you think the thing requires to be done with speed?”

I regret that I have been unable to trace, either in brother Hall’s papers or *The Christadelphian* for 1912/3 any response to these approaches by brother Hall, and I have been denied access to minutes of the old Temperance Hall Ecclesia (as an aside, one may compare this denial to the 30 year rule applied to State Papers in Great Britain, especial since all the brethren concerned have long since been dead). However, if we may for the

moment jump four years to 1916 (i.e. two years after war had been declared!) and to an article by brother C. C. Walker entitled "Conscience". At the conclusion of this article we find:

"Again, recurring to the higher powers (and the military is but the right arm of the State in the last resort), may we 'resist' *all* military commands? We *must* for Christ's sake resist many, we know, but shall we of necessity include non-combatant service? We do not really know at present what the term implies. We are more or less in the dark in this 'time of trouble,' including 'the higher powers' themselves. The foregoing is written only to counsel moderation and forbearance in this unprecedented time." (*The Christadelphian*, 1916, p.170).

It would appear from the above that brother Viner Hall's protest (and possibly others) had no effect upon brother Walker and subsequent events connected with the "Birmingham Petition" and the "Constabulary" controversy in 1917-23, would seem to confirm the view that many in Birmingham, at that time, agreed with brother Walker that service in the RAMC could be acceptable to the brethren.

# CHAPTER II

## THE BIRMINGHAM PETITION AND “CHRIST OR CAESAR”

ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13th 1914, a special meeting of the Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia approved the following Petition for presentation, in due course if necessary, to the British Parliament.

### A PETITION TO THE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1914

This Petition praying for the exemption of Petitioners (the Christadelphians) from Conscription for Bearing Arms

Showeth:

1. That your Petitioners are an organised religious body known as Christadelphians.
2. That they are conscientiously opposed to the bearing of arms, basing this opposition upon the commands of Christ.
3. That the conscientious objection to bearing arms has been a distinctive characteristic of your petitioners from the beginning of their existence as a body, and it is not being now professed on account of an apprehended emergency.
4. That your petitioners have proof of this last in their literature of many years standing.
5. That your petitioners were granted exemption from military service in the American Civil War.
6. That in view of the public danger your petitioners apprehend a possible resort to conscription for military service.
7. That the conscientious objection of your petitioners does not extend to strictly non-combatant branches of National Service, but only to those which involve the bearing of arms or resort to force.
8. That they therefore pray your Honourable House to grant them a legal exemption from the Bearing of Arms, subject to such conditions as your Honourable House shall think fit to impose.

(*The Christadelphian*, September, 1914, p.422)

It is affirmed that nearly 1,000 persons attended this meeting, and that the resolution adopting the Petition was “passed with practical unanimity”.

It was however admitted “that some objection has been taken to clause 7 for reasons which need not now be stated. But on the main issue of taking the sword it is hoped and believed that all must be agreed; and it ought not to be difficult hereafter to agree, if necessary on a brief form of words somewhat on the lines suggested. We shall probably do well to say no more than this at present.” (ibid)

In the Editorial for September brother Walker, under the heading “The Duty of Brethren in the Crisis”, wrote, *inter alia*,

“The main thing in the present crisis is that we prepare to do our duty: the question of consequences is subordinate. We are at once British subjects and Christadelphians and have to discharge the duties of both in the sight of God and man . . . As British subjects (by birth or otherwise) we owe allegiance to the King . . . If that of necessity involves taking the sword, then allegiance to Christ must override the other; but short of that it would appear that the widest liberty of conscience should be allowed.”

A supporting article in the same issue, entitled “Our Plain Duty” from the pen of brother W. J. Young of Cambridge included the following comments:

“Of one thing there can be no doubt, no dispute; we may neither bear arms nor use violence. Hence, our plain duty, if conscription is imposed, is to refuse at all costs to enter any branch of national service which involves the bearing of arms or resorts to force . . . But we may also be sure that Parliament will not allow ‘total exemption’ from compulsory service of every kind if conscription is passed; we cannot expect ease and prosperity while others are distressed. Most probably it would be decided that those exempted from bearing arms should serve in some non-combatant capacity. If this is done, what is to be the attitude of the brethren? Are they to insist on total exemption? Are they to meet the demand for service with a flat refusal, and take the consequences in a spirit of martyrdom, or are they to adopt some other course?

The language of Dr. Thomas’ petition of 1865 is instructive: ‘. . . positively refuse . . . to shed blood of their fellow men . . . refused to bear arms.’ Brother Walker’s pamphlet, ‘Christ and War’, speaks in the same strain, and I believe this is as far as we can honourably go . . . if Parliament passes conscription . . . it does not seem right that we should . . . refuse to undertake any and every duty that may be required. For example, there is medical service, protected under the Geneva Convention, which employs very large numbers of



men as bearers, nurses, orderlies, dispensers, etc; there are other non-combatant branches which require men skilled in all sorts of trades, handicrafts and sciences.

In free civil life brethren may be found employed about munitions of war, for in this century nearly everything can be, and is put to military use: therefore, to work in a non-combatant capacity under conscription cannot rightly be called an outrage on our faith and practice. There are already those of us, from good Samaritan motives, are now volunteering medical, and nursing, and other kindred service, feeling that as children of God we are called upon to save life, to follow that which is good toward all, to relieve suffering, and show ourselves lovers of our fellow-men. To do the same under conscription would be difference in status only not in deed . . . It is for us to do what we can . . .” (p. 395/6)

(Note: Brother W. J. Young was a Doctor of Medicine.)

The September 1914 *Christadelphian* would have been available in Birmingham by Thursday 27th August and on the 28th, brother Viner Hall wrote to the Editor (C. C. Walker) asking him to “permit me to reply to Dr. Young’s article”. Brother C. C. Walker replied on 31st August as follows:

Dear brother Hall,

In reply to yours of the 28th inst. I regret exceedingly that there is any divergence of view between us over the matter of the Petition; but am sure you are labouring under many misapprehensions. I could not possibly publish your reply, which would only provoke a flood of angry disclaimers from other brethren. You have made your protest and delivered your soul whatever happens; and the only thing for you now to do is to await developments. In the event of compulsory service of some kind, which I pray God may not come upon us, I sincerely hope you will not insist upon treating all forms of service as equally offensive in the sight of the Lord, and thereby incurring unnecessary imprisonment or what not. I would come and see you only I am too much pressed as you will readily understand.

With love in Christ, Your brother Chas. C. Walker.”

Although the Editor refused brother Hall’s offer to reply to brother Young, he nevertheless, in the October issue, published “a brief reply” (brother C. C. W.’s words) from brother G. F. Lake of London dated 5th September. While agreeing with some of brother Young’s sentiments, he makes the valid comment:

“But the question arises – is it equally commendable or even permissible to offer services to a national political organisation, and in connection with the armed forces of the Empire? With much respect to the author of the article in the September *Christadelphian*, the

answer is NO. To tell us to render tribute to Caesar is one thing. To ask us to co-operate with Caesar is an entirely different thing. If we are to unite with the children of this world in their organisations – controlled and directed by the rulers of this world – where is the line to be drawn in other matters? . . . Is it true that *‘all that is in the world . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world’*, and is doomed to pass away? It is for reasons such as these that very many brethren do not endorse clause 7 of the form of petition which was adopted by the Birmingham Ecclesia . . .”

When brother W. J. Young used the phrase, “difference in status not on deed” he was stating an important fact but, I believe, giving it a wrong application. It is true that we can do many things as free individuals which we could not undertake as “an integral part of an organisation formed for the specific purpose of anticipating and mitigating the attacks of the enemy”, to use the language of the official Acts, especially when, as a member of the organisation, one was implicitly required to obey every instruction given. It is this which is the essential difference which makes all the difference. The “Good Samaritan” did what he could as an individual who happened to be on the spot, and not as a member of an organisation specially designed to “frustrating the attacks of an enemy”. How essential it is to have the wisdom to discern between things, which may appear the same, but are in reality different.

It was in these circumstances and as one of those who objected to the terms of clause 7, brother Viner Hall wrote, had printed and distributed to all members of the Temperance Hall Ecclesia a twelve page pamphlet entitled, “Christ or Caesar? – Analysis and Criticism”. This pamphlet is dated September 10th, 1914 and a reprint, with additions, was distributed to all ecclesias worldwide in December 1914. A facsimile of this pamphlet follows at the end of this chapter.

On pages 7 and 8 I quote brother Hall’s response to brother C. C. Walker’s reference to “Conscription in New Zealand” and it is therefore noteworthy that he received the following letter from the Recording Brother of the Dunedin meeting:

“May 17th, 1917

58 Highgate, Maori Hill, Dunedin

Dear brother Hall,

I am writing because I think your timely action in issuing ‘Christ or Caesar?’ deserves the highest thanks we can give you. There is no doubt in my mind, or indeed in our ecclesia’s (Dunedin), that your splendid stand for the Truth saved the situation, because evidently your prominent brethren were all astray – brother C. C. Walker and brother F. G. Jannaway included. Here in New Zealand your pamphlet was discussed at Mutual Improvement Classes many times,

and I can say that your book shed a light upon the matter that was the direct cause of our ecclesia taking a firm stand re Military question. Thanks to our stand we in NZ are now granted the right to Civil work on State Farms, and we get exactly the same pay as though on Military Service, that is 5/- a day and 9d a day for wife and each child for 7 days in the week. Although not directly instructed to write to you as the ecclesia's secretary, yet I can convey to you the whole-hearted thanks of our ecclesia here, recognising of course, that God is at the back of the whole matter and has, according to our faith, mercifully delivered us from this cursed system.

H. Davies (Sec. Dunedin Ecclesia)"

Brother Hall annotated this letter, "Brother F. G. J. did not change his mind until the issue of 'Christ or Caesar?', in September, 1914," as the following letter to him, dated 5.9.1916, seems to confirm:

"My dear brother,

I rejoice to learn from our brother J. M. Evans that you are now heart and soul with the brethren who are striving to maintain an uncompromising stand in regard to Military Service. Brother Evans took me to see you, but unfortunately you were out. I might tell you that it would appear that our brother C. C. Walker does not want complete exemption from Military Service; for in answer to a question from me on Monday last at the meeting of the Arranging Brethren he actually said it was 'not right for us to sit still and do nothing while they – the soldiers – were fighting for us?' he asked with warmth. To my mind, here you have the true state of his mind on the question, which furnishes the reason for his opposition. I was shocked to hear such worldly sentiments from the lips of a brother of Christ. 'Fighting for us'? The idea is absurd and unscriptural in the extreme. They are fighting for themselves! The quarrel is not ours; for we are 'strangers and pilgrims' on the earth as all our fathers were. Stand firm, dear brother, for the present is a very critical time for the body of Christ. I welcome the discussion of this question because it will enable the brethren to discern clearly their position, as members of Christ's body, in relation to the world in which we sojourn. If our position is made clear, then faith will be strengthened and we shall escape the vile that threatens. It will be well to write brother Challinor (Rec. Brother Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia) and the managing brethren individually, and I doubt not our position will be won. I discern on Monday considerable wavering; many of them confessed that the question had been decided too hurriedly and that had not properly considered it. May God be with you and yours in the good fight is the prayer of your, Affectionate brother in the Master's Service, Viner Hall."

Brother F. G. Jannaway sent a postcard, dated 9th September, in acknowledgement, "Dear brother H. – Found your letter etc. on my return from Special Efforts at Cambridge and Leicester – I see you would have been interested in a word duel I had with someone [brother Dr. W. J. Young] at Cambridge till midnight. Shall read your letter with interest. Have only had a cursory glance so far. This matter is proceeding. Love to both, Yours always, F.G.J."

I have not been able to find a fuller answer.

# Christ or Caesar?

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The proposed Birmingham Petition and Circular on "The Duty of Brethren with regard to Military Service," August, 1914, reprinted in the "Christadelphian" for September, together with several articles in its support.

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## *ANALYSIS and CRITICISM*

BY

A BIRMINGHAM BROTHER.

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*"Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?"*

# Christ or Caesar ?

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*"Shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord" (2 Chron. ix. 1, 2).*

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*Let the dead bury THEIR Dead ; But go thou and preach the Kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 60).*

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DEAR BRETHREN,—We cannot approve or support the Birmingham Petition and circular for the following reasons :—

- 1.—Because it approves the principle of military service.
- 2.—Because it embodies a mis-statement of fact.
- 3.—Because it would deliver the brethren into the hands of the military authorities as conscript soldiers.
- 4.—Because it makes an offer to the Government binding the brethren to submit to "such conditions as they think fit to impose," in ignorance of what those "conditions" might be.
- 5.—Because "military service" is no part of the "Duty" of a soldier of Christ.

## COMMENTS.

1.—It approves the principle of conscription in that it accepts one form of military service as legitimate for brethren to enter as conscript soldiers.

2.—It embodies a mis-statement of fact in that it says, in effect, that Christadelphians do not conscientiously object to service in the army as conscript soldiers, when we do and always have conscientiously objected to any and every form of service in the army as soldiers.

3.—In clause seven it would deliver the brethren into the hands of a military despotism in the so-called "non-combatant" ranks of the army from which there would be no appeal or escape, in exchange for the grace of the Government in granting them exemption from "the bearing of arms." In other words

being interpreted, we are asked, or expected, and are told, it is our "duty" to barter away the birthright of our "liberty in Christ Jesus" for this "mess of Gentile pottage!"

4.—"National Service" does not mean "*Civil Service under the control of the military authorities as ordinary civilians*" as some brethren have understood. "National Service" means service in the Army of the Nation or King as their conscript soldiers; otherwise there would be no meaning in the petition.

5.—This petition would make soldiers of us which would involve our becoming *an integral part of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting (R.A.M.C., Manual)* in direct disobedience to the commands of Christ that His brethren are not to identify themselves with the world, not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers;" but to "come out from among them and be separate" as men "alive from the dead"—"touching not the unclean thing" much less becoming an "integral part of it."

6.—The brethren having voluntarily renounced and abjured their natural political rights in the present evil world and become "citizens of a heavenly country" are now in the position of strangers and foreigners and "aliens" in relation to the nation and kingdom to which they formerly belonged: As strangers passing through, or temporarily sojourning in the Gentile's country, by all the rules of civilization, ancient or modern, no Government has any right to ask, much less to attempt to compel "strangers" to help fight her battles in any capacity whatever.

7.—Is not this the reason why we have always consistently refrained from taking any part in the Government of the country; even to the extent of refusing the otherwise good and useful office of a local Town Councillor? We refuse to nominate them or vote for them; because "as strangers" we have no right to, but we may "work for them," "minister to their relief," or "make guns for their armies" as *private individuals not belonging to their organisation or society*: As their employees we are not responsible for the use to which our services are put any more than I am responsible for gambling, because I make a bridge table for a gaming house; but my position would be altered altogether if I allowed myself to become a member of the club or countenanced their nefarious trade by my presence in their midst, I should then be responsible and should have to take the consequences when the police raided the establishment. By voting for the Government, or joining their organisation as a soldier, we should identify ourselves as "*one of their fraternity*," which

is forbidden by God : because it would mar our separateness or Nazariteship in Christ, on the principle that we cannot "take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot." It has been argued that "compulsion" would relieve us of "responsibility!" If we had *no power* to refuse and there was no alternative, yes, but we *have* power to refuse, and to resist, "even unto prison and to death!" True sons of God know *no compulsion* : neither will they *ask* or *accept* any quarter from the enemy when divine principles are at stake. But strangely enough, it is admitted by these same brethren that voluntary association with the army as soldiers, even in the R.A.M.C., etc., would be defiling, and therefore displeasing to God. But because they think that such service would "not so directly contravene the commandments of Christ as the bearing of arms" they are willing to "join under compulsion!" How illogical and foolish! For surely if voluntary association would be "displeasing to God," association under "compulsion" would not render the connection any less defiling, and displeasing to God?

8.—Think, brethren : a man cannot become a soldier without becoming a "part of the fighting body ;" but because he is not the finger that pulls the trigger, is he not therefore of the body? If all were fingers where were the body? As a "member of the body" he is aiding in the work of bloodshed, he is helping the body to fight, he is countenancing their nefarious trade by his presence in their midst ; when he should be "preaching the Gospel" and "witnessing against them" from "outside" instead of co-operating with them from "inside!" "*Let the dead bury THEIR dead ; but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God.*"

9.—A man cannot become a soldier without sacrificing his liberty and freedom of action and choice and selling himself body and soul—swearing or affirming allegiance and fealty to a human king, "his heirs and successors," and becoming his bond slave for a period of years. Could a slave and soldier of Christ sell himself to be the slave of another king—one Cæsar?

10.—Conscription is not an "emergency service under military control for a 'good' purpose in the nature of civil service" as some brethren have been led to think. Conscription is the name of that merciless device of modern militarism by which an implacable military despotism would carry our young men into abject slavery for two years, in times of peace at least ; to say nothing of the annual training they would be called upon to submit to afterwards for a term of years. Conscription would mean that we should have to relinquish our rights, liberties and freedom as private individuals ; to say nothing of the sacrifice



of the birthright of our freedom in Christ Jesus, which would be far more disastrous. Could the "Israel of God" allow themselves to become the "conscript appendages" of a Gentile army? God forbid.

11.—Could we allow our sons and younger brethren to be isolated from the influences and work of the Truth, during two of their most susceptible and impressionable years; and fling them into the rapacious jaws of this modern Moloch; in fear he should "roar" or in order to placate his wrath and obtain his good graces; and be acclaimed by him, "patriotic citizens;" for the craven fear "lest the reproach of Christ should fall upon us"—for fear lest "the offence of the cross" should inconveniently obtrude itself at times like the present when everybody has gone mad on their idol? Are these the "Roots of bitterness" springing up to trouble us to the "defiling of many"? If we heed the popular clamour, and yield to his threats, shall we not merit the eternal reprobation of God Himself, as Israel did, for sacrificing the fruit of their body to the flaming idol in "the valley of slaughter"?

12.—If we allowed our young men to become conscripts and subjected them to the notoriously evil influences of barrack life, would not their Scriptural growth be arrested; and their work for the truth seriously curtailed, if not stopped altogether; and would not the body of Christ be disjointed and dismembered and its work defiled and frustrated in consequence?

13.—But in spite of these indisputable facts certain prominent brethren are telling us, in their defence of this petition, that, "*it is not right* that we should get exemption from military service—was it right for us to sit at home and do nothing while the soldiers were *fighting for us*?" And that service as soldiers, Royal Army Medical Corps, Army Service Corps, and Ordnance Corps, etc., is "*the way to escape*" opened by God! In the light of these and many similar admissions, are we not justified in coming to the conclusion that this petition would bring the brethren of Christ into the accursed bondage of militarism? And that it would open the door to other worldly alliances by which the body of Christ would be defiled and corrupted—well meant disclaimers to the contrary, notwithstanding? Is it right that these brethren should bind our consciences as they are attempting to do in this petition? If they wish to make themselves "galley slaves" they can do so, but they have no right to attempt to "compel us to the galley!" That is not their business but Cæsar's; who, *himself*, can have "no power against us except it be given him from on high."

Yet these well-intentioned but misguided brethren are usurping the task of the tyrant in clauses 7 and 8; in fact the whole tenor and spirit of the petition bears this obvious interpretation. The Gentile army is "fighting for us," forsooth! They are no more fighting for us than they are for the Chinese! They are fighting for themselves. The quarrel is theirs, not ours. We have nothing to do with them or their affairs, "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." Our position in this and every other country is that of "strangers," not "citizens." This is why we abstain from voting. Nevertheless we are absolutely loyal and obedient strangers as our beloved Master was. We pay their tribute cheerfully, and abide by the laws of their land, consistently with our allegiance to the higher law of Christ. This is the extent of the "duty" we owe to the powers that be. We are not "sitting at home and doing nothing." We are "helping" the Government very materially (although not in a direct and palpable sense) in paying their rates and taxes; and in being their servants in a civil capacity. We pay for all we have, and more; we support our own; and last, but not least, we render invaluable assistance to the Government in keeping order by our example and presence; which is likened by Christ to "salt." Are not the brethren "worth their salt"? We cannot help being natural born Englishmen, any more than Paul could help being a free born Roman Citizen; but this fact, while it has its advantages, does not bring with it the obligation to serve the country as a Town Councillor, M.P., or soldier; for the simple reason that the brethren have, so to speak, de-naturalized themselves, and become the "naturalised" citizens of another country, and the "adopted" people of another nation; and are now "the people of God." In this position they are dead to the world, "but alive to God through Christ" who is their Head. As the "Bride of Christ" they have "hearkened to His voice"—to "forget thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

14. —In conclusion, then, in the words of our late beloved Dr. Thomas, at just such a crisis as the present, "let not Jehovah's kings and priests be found marshalled with the sinners of the world whose 'dearest interests' for which they fight are the things which perish. . . . Our conviction is that Christian should leave the devil to fight his own battles, and that if he compelled them to his ranks they ought to refuse" and to go to prison or pay his fines rather than disobey God. "As Christians, therefore, we are Christ's slaves, for He has bought us and all

we possess with His life blood. We have no love, zeal, or loyalty for any other country than His. . . . Therefore let our sentence be, refuse all soldiering in the devil's ranks, and leave the consequences to God" (*Herald of the Kingdom*, 1860-1); unless we take the wise course, as he did later on, of petitioning Parliament in the full confidence that God will grant us the relief we seek in obedience to His commands. In view of all the facts to which I have called attention we cannot approve the proposed Birmingham Petition unless clause 7 is dropped entirely, and "military service" substituted for "bearing of arms," in the address, and in clauses 2, 3, and 8. Clause 8 is also open to serious objection because it would bind the brethren to submit to "such conditions as the Government shall think fit to impose," which might be impossible. These words should be deleted, and the clause remodelled. It would be unwise to suggest "conditions" to the Government, or to make any offer at all. Let us confine ourselves to a simple and direct appeal for "complete exemption from military service," and shew that nothing short of that will satisfy us. "Conditions" and "pains and penalties" (*if any*) is their business not ours. I firmly believe that if we go the right way about it, in boldness and without a tinge of fear, that God in His mercy and loving-kindness will influence them to grant us all we ask, and that, free from "pains," "penalties," or objectionable "conditions," according to our faith be it unto us. Do not let us forget that we are not cringing serfs asking for something we have no moral right to, but are the Free Sons of the Living God, asking only for that which we have a perfect right to as His children.

15.—Surely after we have been bravely singing,

"Will ye flee in danger's hour,  
Know ye not your Captain's power?"

we are not going to burn our flag, and deliberately prepare for ignominious retreat, directly we scent the possibility of danger. Surely after boldly chanting,

"Fight the fight, maintain the strife,  
Strengthened with the bread of life,"

we are not going to meet this uncircumcised Philistine with outstretched arms, and an offer in our hands to become his soldier cooks, bottle-washers, armour-bearers, and dispensers of medicines, directly we hear of his possible descent into the valley of Elah; instead of boldly opposing the giant, and confounding the bully in the name of the Lord, and then

dispatching him with his own trusty blade of the "Nonconformist conscience,"

Surely the "armies of the Living God" are not now going to "turn their backs," or play the part of arrant cowards and traitors in sending to tell the king of Assyria that if and when he should invade their land they would "not conscientiously object" to defile the Temple of God on his behalf to the extent of stripping the gold from its doors, and giving him the vessels of the sanctuary, if he, in the exercise of his clemency, would graciously permit them to live and enter his army in some "strictly non-combatant" capacity as his vassals and soldier serfs. Is not this what the petition, circular, and articles in the September *Christadelphian*, being interpreted, would really involve? Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

Faithfully your brother in Christ,

VINER HALL.

40, Parade,  
Sutton Coldfield,  
Near Birmingham.

September 10th, 1914.

## Extract from an Ecclesial Protest.

" Clause 7 should be struck out. We consider that this clause is in direct opposition to the commandments of Christ, and affords a loophole for the entering in of many evils which we as a body have always stood against.

We have been informed that you have publicly stated that you see no objection (that is in view of Clause 7) to the brethren enlisting in the Army Medical Corps (under conscription) which is (we are prepared to admit) nominally, a 'non-combatant corps.' We feel that you cannot have seriously gone into the matter before making this statement. We in ———, which is a garrison city, can speak emphatically on the great evils to which the brethren of Christ would be exposed if they were associated with this or any other branch of the Army. The

social life of the barrack room is beyond description. Foul language, unholy jests, licentiousness, and drunkenness, are the rule and not the exception. There are those in this Ecclesia who know these things from personal experience. Outside the barrack gates are the public houses and degraded women to add to the ungodly environment of the soldier, non-combatant or otherwise. And let us be quite sure that if we enlist we shall be 'strictly non-combatants.' The Army is a cruel master. Once we have become a unit in King George's Army we are not our own, we cannot do as we like—we have bartered away our personal freedom.

" We desire to draw your attention to an article entitled, 'The Army Service Staff Corps and their Work,' by Robert Machray, in the course of which he says, 'The Medical Officers of the Army are responsible for the instruction, drill, discipline, pay, clothing, and messing of the corps. They are enlisted in the usual way, but if they are found to be incompetent for their medical duties as bearers, dressers, compounders of drugs, skilled cooks, and the like, *they are transferred to some other branch of the Army.*' . . . . .

" In conclusion, we suggest that it appears to us that the attempt to compromise the matter by adopting Clause 7 shows a lamentable want of faith in the promise that 'I will never leave thee or forsake thee.' It has been truly said, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' If we continue to trust in Him, and do not endeavour to compromise the situation by making friendly overtures to the world, He will deliver us we may be assured. The argument that enlistment would give the brethren a chance of carrying out the Good Samaritan policy,

can be easily met by asking what Christ would do under the circumstances. Can we imagine Him clad in a Khaki uniform, with a scarlet cross (the mark of the beast) on His arm; in the midst of the battlefield, where two opposing forces are busily engaged breaking His commandments? The idea is unthinkable: to use His own words, 'Let them alone.' The disciples were not told to remain in Jerusalem and join the ambulance work during the siege, but to flee to the mountains—which they did."

## Addendum.

This pamphlet, having served the pressing local need for which it was printed, is now sent forth abroad (with additional matter) as a witness against the false doctrine that brethren may legitimately engage in military service; and incidentally to make plain the "duty of brethren in the present crisis." It has been objected that my criticism deals with "elementary principles already well known." So it does; but in this controversy it is the elementary principle of our "separateness in Christ" which is the most vital principle of the doctrine of Christ—literally the key stone of the arch of our position in Christ—that has been questioned and obscured, by the false doctrine promulgated. It is said, "no one proposes to join the Army," and "we have never advocated joining the Army": of course not, not in so many words; but they have publicly advocated a doctrine that legitimatises the idea, and approves the principle, which amounts to the same thing; and surely, if brethren may lawfully join the Army under compulsion in a "non-combatant corps," they may lawfully join voluntarily now; and if we may legitimately "join the Army for a good purpose" then there is *no worldly institution that we may not join on the same plea!* and there is an end to our "separateness in Christ"—we are re-absorbed by the world; or, in the words of the Spirit, we have become "again entangled therein, and overcome," and our "latter end" is "worse than the beginning." This is where the false doctrine of the "legitimacy of military service" would finally land us.

And here let me answer another criticism which has come to my notice on "caution in speech," in which a brother publishes "An Order In Council," which appeared in *The London Gazette*, containing "regulations with regard to the *prevention of recruiting*": That "*no person shall by word of mouth,*

or in writing, or in any newspaper, book, circular, or other printed publication, spread . . . reports or statements likely to prejudice recruiting," etc., etc. Upon which the brother remarks, "It is not only the gentlemen named (Messrs. Keir Hardie and G. B. Shaw) who will do well to note this order, *our own speakers and writers may well take warning,*" and refrain from making statements likely to "prejudice recruiting." Why, brethren, if we obeyed such an "order" as this we should have to close our meetings to-morrow, and "cease to speak and teach in the name of Christ"; for there is no more potent "*prevention of recruiting*" in the world than the gospel of Christ which we preach. 'To obey such "an order in council" would be traitorous to God Himself, to which our answer should be, "*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.*" It is our especial business as the ministers of the gospel, and the preachers of righteousness, to show unto men the way of salvation by word of mouth, in the newspapers, or by any other lawful means, "*in season, out of season,*" with "*voice like a trumpet,*" whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," with the object of *rescuing* as many men from the recruiting sergeant, and *recruiting them for Christ*, as possible. We own no master but Christ: so do not be "*put in fear,*" brethren: but let us boldly "*confess Christ before men,*" recognising that with them is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God; "so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

"Soldiering in the devil's ranks," which was *written to the brethren privately*, and to which exception is taken on the score of its not being "*representative Christadelphian language,*" is Dr. Thomas' expression, and is perfectly scriptural and consonant with truth and righteousness, as is the other "*indiscreet*" language complained of, and is therefore *truly* "*representative Christadelphian language.*" If we do not look well to our goings we shall lose our "saltiness," and our testimony will become so halting, and uncertain, and so nicely accommodating to the merely fleshy respectibilities, prejudices, and false standards of this godless age, that it will "*cease to hit,*" and nobody will be roused or effected by it. If brethren had been guilty of "*sedition speech,*" or had "*made false statements likely to cause disaffection to his Majesty,*" *a la* Keir Hardie, there might be something in such a "*warning*"; but in view of the fact that no brother has been guilty of anything of the kind, either in speech or in writing, a "*warning*" such as this is altogether misleading, uncalled for, and out of place.

### **"Strictly Non-Combatant National Service."**

It has been asked whether "one would not be required to train as any other soldier, that is, in the use of arms"? And •"be sworn in to defend the king and country"? Yes, you would. Whatever corps you entered you would be *compelled* to submit to training in the use of arms, and to *take an oath of allegiance involving an undertaking to fight for king and country.*

### **What Dr. Thomas wrote.**

" 'Jehovah has called us to His kingdom and glory,' to which our allegiance is due primarily and absolutely. All that is not of this kingdom belongs to 'the old Serpent' the Devil, and Satan.' God and Satan are rival potentates, claiming the allegiance of mankind. They are 'TWO MASTERS' who cannot be served acceptably in concert. God will not divide His authority with Satan, nor will Satan consent to the supremacy of God. Satan is the god or power of this world. Shall the devil draft me into his United States armies, and Bro. Lithgow into his British force, and we, brethren in Christ, meet in deadly conflict to slay one another in the devil's interest? Perish the thought! Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Papists, can slaughter one another for their country's good, but Chistians? No, never! Our love, zeal, and loyalty for the British daughter of the Italian Jezebel found expression some twenty-five years ago in a solemn renunciation of her authority; and, in obeying the gospel of the kingdom in 1847, we gave in all the love, zeal, and loyalty we had at command to Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

[See Eureka vol. i. pp. 240-252, and vol. iii. pp. 48-67. And compare James iv. 4-7, 1 Peter v. 6-7, and Rev. ii. 10.]

V. H., Dec., 1914.



# CHAPTER III

## THE CASE FOR ABSOLUTE EXEMPTION

The *Christadelphian Mutual Magazine*, edited by brother Frank Walker of Bristol (no relation to brother C. C. Walker) for 1914 and 1915, contain some important correspondence from brother Viner Hall, setting forth principles which he consistently followed throughout his life, and which found special application during the Second World War in the question of “Civil Defence” duties (which we will deal with in due course).

In October 1914, under the heading, “Should we join any section of the Army?”, a brother Britten wrote, “If under ‘compulsion’ the option to join the ‘Hospital Section’ be given, it would appear to me to be the way to escape”, and cited the case of the “Good Samaritan”. The December issue contains brother Viner Hall’s response:

Dear brother Walker, I feel sure our brother Britten has not sufficiently realised what joining the Royal Army Medical Corps would mean for a brother of Christ.

For a brother to join any section of the army, non-combatant or otherwise, would involve his denial of Christ. First, he would be required to sell himself body and soul to the military authority, and sacrifice his liberty and life in Christ Jesus in the behalf of a human king, his heirs and successors, to whom he would be obliged to swear or affirm allegiance and agree to “observe and obey all the generals and officers set over him”. Second, after having entered into covenant relationship with a worldly monarch in the manner described above, according to law, the brother enters upon his active service, which involves the sacrifice of his service of Christ, and work in the Truth. Thenceforward, instead of being separated unto the Gospel of Christ, he becomes reunited to the world, and a slave of the devil! He becomes, in fact, an integral part of a great instrument of destruction – a set-pin which helps to hold the giant striking cam in position, and keeps it to its work. To say nothing about the evil associations of the army – its unnatural life, and the preoccupations incidental to the service, which would render spiritual life a practical impossibility, how could a brother who has “given himself to Christ give himself to rival organisations (like the army and legion) which ignore Christ?” Surely not on the plea of “*doing good*”. On this plea we might unite ourselves to nearly every worldly organisation under the sun.

The Good Samaritan was a private individual who casually came across a stranger in need of succour, and he freely gave it to him at his own expense, and of his own free will; but service in the RAMC under compulsion is not of this nature as I have shown, and as a little reflection will prove.

In view of the facts to which I have called attention, a brother could not join any section of the army even if refusal involved imprisonment or death. It would be far better to die in Christ's service, if die we must, than to sacrifice our lives (which belong to Christ) in the service of a worldly power. I am told that no less than 13 RAMC men lost their lives in the first engagement of this war.

"Compulsion" cannot in any way affect or alter the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and Christ's brethren know no "compulsion" in matters of principle. Now if it were legitimate for brethren to join the army "under compulsion" for a "laudable" object, it cannot be wrong for them to 'join voluntarily now' for the same object, if they feel so disposed.

Here is where the evil of the Birmingham petition of August last becomes apparent. For if, as it says in clause 7, that the "conscientious objection of your petitioners does not extend to strictly non-combatant branches of National Service (of which service in the RAMC and other non-combatant regiments are examples) but only to those which involve the bearing of arms or resort to force"; does not this amount to the acceptance of military service as a form of legitimate service for a brother of Christ? Well-meant disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding: such as, "we don't advocate joining the army"; (no, but clause 7 inculcates a doctrine that does). "We have never advocated, 'offering ourselves'," and "no one proposes to join the army": of course not – not in so many words, but clause 7 approves the principle and legitimatises the practice which amounts to the same thing, as a little study of the petition will prove. I regard conscription as a wholesome difficulty which will purge and try the faith of the brethren.

Under no circumstances can a brother of Christ join any section of a Gentile army. "*Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God*", is the course prescribed by Christ for all those whom he has exempted from the bondage of the world (Luke 9:6). Faithfully your brother, J. V. O. H."

### THE LONDON PETITION

The London Petition for exemption from military service was presented to Parliament on the 12th February 1915, by the Quaker M.P., Arnold S. Rowntree, but it should be noted that it had not been signed by the Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia. In response to a note by brother C. C. Walker in the July 1915 *Christadelphian* brother Hall wrote again to the *Mutual Magazine* (by then renamed *The Young Worker's Advocate and Mutual Magazine*):

“Dear brother Walker. – In *The Christadelphian* for this month our brother C. C. Walker suggests a form of affidavit which he thinks might be well for young brethren to make in the event of their being called upon to bear arms. The form of affidavit is as follows: – ‘I, AB, of so and so, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I belong to an organised body of people called Christadelphians, or Brethren of Christ, one of whose tenets is that they are forbidden to kill, or to use the sword, and this tenet has been held by these people from the beginning of their establishment as a body for some 70 years. That these people do not object to serving their country in any way that does not conflict with the law of God, as expressed by Christ, and trust some consideration may be shown them by the Government of this country.’

At first glance this affidavit appears to cover the ground. It sounds alright, as it is conciliatory and moderate in tone; but upon closer examination it is seen to be open to very grave objection. Its statements are weak, i.e. they are not sufficiently precise or definite – especially the one relating to the offer to ‘serve their country in any way not in conflict with the law of God’. A statement of this kind would open the door for shrewd magistrates and lawyers to quibble and argue as to what constituted the ‘law of God’, and what was not in ‘conflict’ with it; and in the confusion our young brother would in all probability be bluffed or cajoled into some branch of non-combatant army service. Even brethren differ as to what ‘does not conflict with the law of God’ on this question; for in the ‘Wayside Letter’, appearing in *The Christadelphian* for April, we have the account of an imaginary claim for exemption on the part of a brother who having just averred his conscientious objection to bear arms, his interrogator replies, ‘So you refuse to flout your Master by smiting with the sword, then you must follow him by healing those who are smitten. Have you any objection?’ To whom the brother replies, ‘No conscientious objection whatever, only such objections as can be raised against business every day I live’. To which the judge may be expected to reply, ‘Very good; we are wanting men in the RAMC’ (or some other branch of Army service), and our young brother would be hurried below to be enrolled in one of the numerous ‘non-combatant’ branches of the Army, to his spiritual undoing – made subject to the iron law of a soulless military despotism, and bound body and soul, on pain of death to obey all generals and officers set over him; and to ‘defend the king’, in whatever way those officers may deem the exigences of any situation or emergency may require.

An affidavit, if any, in a vital matter of this kind, should be made as precise and definite as possible. It should definitely state that for conscientious reasons we cannot under any circumstances ‘join the ranks of those who make war’, as our brother G. F. Lake showed in his article on ‘The Military Oath’ in *The Christadelphian* for February. And if it is thought desirable to offer alternative service (which is a question for discussion), then the precise nature of the service we are prepared to undertake should be clearly stated,

and the declaration so fenced about as to leave no loophole for legal quibbling. To my mind, a declaration on the following lines would be more in harmony with the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and would properly protect and shield the brethren from the evils I have mentioned:

‘I, John Jones, do conscientiously believe all wars, fightings, and fleshly strivings, to be contrary to the law of Christ. As a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ, I cannot, therefore, under any circumstances, join the ranks of those that make war; neither can I conscientiously engage in any form or branch of military service; nor in any form of public service which would prevent or interfere with my service of Christ in the gospel; nor in any service whatsoever which might possibly involve the use of force or resort to arms. On these grounds, and under these circumstances, I ask you to grant me a legal exemption from military service according to the statute, etc.’ whatever that might be.

If the offer of alternative service is thought to be desirable, which would altogether depend upon circumstances, a brother could say:

‘If you demand other service, in lieu of military service, I am willing to take any purely civil post, or post of public service for which I may be qualified, or may qualify, providing always that such service does not involve the use of force, or necessitate taking the oath, or affirmation of allegiance.’

Nothing more than service of this kind should be offered, under any circumstances, if we are to preserve our liberty in Christ Jesus, and freedom to attend to his business (as ‘the ministers of God’, upon which our very life depends. We must be firm, resolute, and absolutely unyielding in a matter of this kind. More anon. Yours fraternally, Viner Hall.”

# CHAPTER IV

## COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE, 1915

In July 1915 the British Parliament passed the National Registration Act, requiring all men between the ages of 15 and 65 to register by the 31st August. With characteristic promptness brother Viner Hall circulated all ecclesias in the U.K., including those in the Suffolk Street and "Advocate" fellowships. A reduced facsimile copy of this circular follows.

### The National Register and Compulsory Military Service.

DEAR BROTHER OR SISTER,

The Government has now passed its National Registration Bill; but the Premier assures us that neither forced labour nor compulsory military service is contemplated. But unless the Bill is a "prelude to such proposals it can have no adequate purpose at all." The Cabinet fear to introduce Conscription direct, or immediately, from motives of expediency, but consider "the need for Conscription may arise later" when they would introduce it, and would then "use the information which the National Register would provide," as a basis. Even before the need for Conscription has arisen, Lord Kitchener openly avows his intention of approaching the men between the ages of 19 and 40 "with a view to enlistment, when the National Register is complete."

This information should be quite sufficient to put us on our guard. Brethren, do not trust Government "assurances." In the majority of cases they are not worth the paper they are written on.

Now, how shall we act? Fill up the Register truthfully, as the brethren of Christ, by all means, but *promise nothing!* In space nine, question (a) we are asked what work we can do, and then in question (b) whether we "are able and willing to undertake such work." To which we may reply, "NO," or "I cannot say," or "It would depend entirely upon conditions and circumstances as to whether I could conscientiously undertake such work or not. I cannot therefore say." But to my mind it would be far better for us to clearly and emphatically state our position and avow our principles. We might well say, "*Whilst registering in conformity with the Government's demand, as a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ (or Sister) I could not, for conscientious reasons, take any part in ANY FORM OR BRANCH OF MILITARY SERVICE, or in any public service which might involve resort to force, or in any employment necessitating the taking of the military oath or the affirmation, or in any employment necessitating Sunday work.*" This should be written on the Registration Form in or near or across space 9, or across the form underneath. It is not at all necessary that it should be actually in the space as long as attention is called to it by an "as the answer to the question."

Brethren, let us all avail ourselves of this God-given, and therefore glorious opportunity of confessing Christ before Kings and governors. Let us embrace this chance of a generation to prove to the Lord Himself that we are "not ashamed of Him or of His words," even in *this* "sinful and adulterous generation." Let us take the firm and uncompromising stand as we are commanded "resisting the devil" that he may "flee from us." Let us all make the same declaration, stand together, be of one mind, and thus present a bold and united front to the enemy. If we do this in the full assurance of faith and confidence in God what have we to fear? May we not in these circumstances "boldly say," and that without any presumption, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me?"

It is interesting and instructive to note that many other people besides ourselves have already undertaken to make very similar declarations. Notably the No Conscription Fellowship, The Young Men's Service Committee of the Society of Friends, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, etc. Commenting upon this the Editor of the Labour Leader says: "if all men and women who conscientiously object to participation in the prosecution of the war make their views clear on the Registration Forms in this way, the Government will be effectively enlightened and something will have been done to stave off Conscription." As brethren of Christ let us be guided by Him and observe a bold and fearless attitude of passive resistance such as Peter and the Apostles manifested in the presence of the Authorities blended as it was with the quiet dignity of modest demeanour coupled with steadfastness of faith in God, and unswerving allegiance to Christ, regardless of consequences.

Faithfully your brother in Christ,

VINER HALL.

40, PARADE, SUTTON COLDFIELD.

JULY 29TH, 1915.

P.S. - Kindly pass round to our Brethren and Sisters.

In reply to enquiries regarding questions 9A and 9B of the Registration form (see para. 3 of previous letter), he further circulated ecclesias on 12th August 1915. This is again reproduced, because it states principles which are true irrespective of the immediate circumstances which may apply from time to time:

40 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield  
August 12th, 1915

“Dear brethren and sisters,

I find that certain brethren are under the false impression that the Government will refuse to take notice of any answer to Questions 9A and 9B other than an unqualified ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

The following letter from the Registrar General, in answer to my enquiry on the point, proves that this is not the case by any means. On the contrary, it not only shows the Government is willing to consider any statements to conditions but that they have made due provision for the tabulation of all information of this nature on a special form. As was stated in the press this morning, ‘Local authorities will copy out onto a special pink form all registration details relating to men between the ages of 18 and 41 . . . and will reserve them for use of the officer commanding the regimental depot of the district in which the local registration authority is situated.’

In these circumstances, no Christadelphian could possibly give an unconditional ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ or ‘None’ to the questions in space nine, in view of the object and nature of this ‘War Registration’ and census! A brother should add the declaration I suggested in my previous letter, or he might answer ‘Yes, providing the work would not necessitate my taking the Military Oath or affirmation, or necessitate constant Sunday work. As a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ, I could not for conscientious reasons take part in any form or branch of military service.’ If not skilled in any particular work he might reply ‘none’ adding, ‘but as a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ, I could not for conscientious reasons take part in any form or branch of military service, or in any employment necessitating my taking the Military Oath or Affirmation.’

It is vitally necessary that a declaration of this kind should be added to any answer given but it is not necessary that any offer should be made. In the event of some form of service being demanded by the law, in lieu of Military Service, (which is not yet) the only service a brother of Christ could legitimately undertake would be some purely civil service, or post of public service, or some employment for which he may be qualified or may qualify, providing always that such service or work did not involve resort to force or necessitate his taking the Military Oath or Affirmation. Nothing more than restricted service of this kind could be accepted under any circumstances, if we are to preserve our liberty in Christ Jesus, and be free to attend to His business (as the ministers of God) upon which our very life depends. We must be firm, resolute, and absolutely unyielding in a matter of this kind.

Below is a suggested form of affidavit for the use of brethren in the event of their being called upon to engage in Military Service:

'I, A. B., do conscientiously believe all wars, fightings, and fleshly strivings, to be contrary to the letter and spirit of the law of Christ. As a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ, I cannot therefore under any circumstances join the ranks of those that make war; neither can I conscientiously engage in any form or branch of the military service; nor in any employment or form of service necessitating constant Sunday work which would prevent or interfere with my service of Christ in the Gospel; nor in any service whatsoever, which might involve the use of force or resort to arms, or necessitate me taking the Military Oath or Affirmation. On these grounds I ask you to grant me a legal exemption from Military Service according to the statute etc.'

In a vital matter of this nature it is absolutely necessary to be precise and definite. We must leave no loophole for legal quibbling, if we are to avoid trouble.

### THE RIGHT IS BEST

'Whatever is right is best. That is the first axiom of faith in God. Best now and best hereafter, best from the point of view of expediency and tactics as well as best from the point of ultimate results, if only we could see far enough and clearly enough'; and surely brethren we who have had the eyes of our understanding opened by God can see far enough and clearly enough! Brethren, 'the path of safety, of sanity, of salvation, is faith in God! Believe and obey. Do His will and take the consequences. Be sure that those consequences will be the best for you and the world.' He that would save his life shall certainly lose it, but 'he that will lose his life for my sake shall save it.'

Faithfully your brother in Christ,  
Viner Hall"

It is, of course, not possible for me at this distance in time to judge the influence that these circulars had, but in a letter to the Editor of *The Young Worker's Advocate and Mutual Magazine* for October 1915, p.317, a brother J.W. Bland referred to "the excellent and timely lead that brother Viner Hall has given to the Household of Faith during this time of trial." I have however seen other letters in this strain. (See also the letter from the Dunedin Ecclesia reproduced on page 15.

### **THE MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1916**

As anticipated by brother Hall, compulsory military service became a fact with the introduction of "The Military Service Act, 1916" on January 27th, 1916.

This provided for every unmarried male subject between the ages of 18 and 41 to be duly enlisted in His Majesty's regular forces for the period of the war. However, it provided for application to the Local Tribunal for exemption from the Act "On the ground of conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service" (para. 2(1)(d)). It also provided that "Any certificate of exemption may be absolute, conditional, or temporary, as the authority by whom it is granted think best suited to the case, and also in the case of an application on conscientious grounds, may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work which in the opinion of the Tribunal dealing with the case is of national importance." (para. 3)

With his usual promptness brother Viner Hall wrote, had printed and widely circulated a four page letter dated February 9th, 1916. It is here reproduced because of its comprehensive and unchangeable nature, whatever may be the verbal changes of any subsequent Act.

40 The Parade,  
Sutton Coldfield,  
February 9th, 1916.

"Dear Brother,

The time has now come to make your application to the local tribunal for a certificate of exemption from Military Service.

Your application must be made on a printed form provided for the purpose, to be had from the Town Clerk.

Get this form at once and set out concisely the basis of your objection.

Never mind if the form prescribes for exemption from 'Combatant Service only,' run your pen through it and write in place underneath *complete and unconditional exemption from Military Service, on conscientious grounds.*

Nominally the Bill provides for exemption from 'Combatant Service only,' but in reality the Act provides that in 'exceptional cases' like ours, 'every consideration shall be given to the man whose objection genuinely rests on religious convictions'; and that 'whatever may be the views of the members of the tribunal, they must interpret the Act in a broad and tolerant spirit.' In the exceptional cases 'in which the genuine convictions and circumstances of the man are such that neither exemption from combatant service nor a conditional exemption adequately meet the case, *absolute exemption can be granted in these cases* if the tribunal are fully satisfied of the facts.'

The business of the tribunal is not to hinder the genuine conscientious objector from getting exemption, but to see that 'the man who shirks his duty to his country does not find unworthy shelter behind this provision' (Extracts from the Local Government Board Instructions to the various Town Councils, Metropolitan Borough Councils, and Urban and Rural District Councils, explaining the application and effect of the Act published on February 4th, 1916).



In his speech, reported on January 6th, 1916, Mr. Asquith said that they had taken care to 'secure that no one shall come under the obligation created by this Bill, unless it is manifest he has *no reasonable ground* for not responding to his Country's Call!' We ought to rejoice at this, thank God, and take courage; for here is our deliverance already secured! We *have* 'reasonable grounds for not responding to the Country's Call,' therefore, we do *not* 'come under the obligations of this Bill.'

It only remains for us to satisfy the tribunal that our objection to Military Service rests upon the solid rock of 'deep religious conviction' generated by the Word of the Living God, and they will have no alternative but to accede to our request for absolute exemption.

But BEWARE you do not base your claim for exemption on *any other ground* than that you are genuinely opposed to Military Service from '*deep religious convictions*.'

You may be engaged in work of 'National importance'; or may have a widowed mother dependent upon, etc; but do not mention this as a reason for claiming exemption. *Do not mention the fact at all unless they ask you*; it is unnecessary. But should the tribunal question you about it, and suggest making it a reason for granting you temporary or conditional exemption, tell them plainly you do not base your claim for exemption on these grounds, but on religious and moral grounds *only*.

That this is a *very important point to observe* will occur to you on reflection.

If not already engaged in work of National importance, they may ask you whether you would be agreeable to engage in such work.

Answer: *Not as a condition of exemption*. I claim absolute exemption on the religious grounds already stated.

On these grounds and on *these grounds alone* are you legally entitled to an unconditional exemption. Hold to this position and you are absolutely sure of victory. They will have no alternative but to grant you what you ask. On these grounds total exemption is your legal right.

Bear well in mind that the tribunal are 'men and not God'; and that they have *no legal power or authority to say you must* or you *shall* enter service of National importance, much less to impose it as a condition of exemption. Only if you are *already engaged* in work of this nature, have they power to make it a reason for granting exemption?; but even then they can only make it the ground for a 'temporary' or 'conditional' exemption, *if you allow them to do so*; but firmly refuse to alter your grounds for claiming complete exemption, as I have advised, they are legally bound to grant your claim.

In the case of temporary or conditional exemption granted to a conscientious objector on the grounds that it is expedient in the National interest that the man should, instead of being employed in Military Service, be engaged in other work, the Authorities have the right to apply to the local tribunal at any time and claim his service for the Army as a non-combatant,

if in their opinion it is no longer necessary in the National interests that he should continue in Civil employment.

This information is sufficient to convince you of the importance of basing your claim on *Religious grounds only*. This is a matter of life and death so be 'STEADFAST and IMMOVABLE,' coupled with the modest dignity of perfect faith in God and unswerving allegiance to that noble man who gave His life for us!

If the tribunal goes beyond their legal powers, or if you are not satisfied with any decision of the Local Tribunal, you have absolute right to appeal to the Appeal Tribunal. 'You should ask the reason for the decision of the Local Tribunal (in writing), and should preserve any document handed to you for the guidance of the higher Tribunal. The appeal should be sent in to the Local Tribunal immediately (three days only are allowed), by registered post, or by hand, on a form to be obtained from the Clerk of the Local Tribunal, who will forward the appeal to the Appeal Tribunal. In sending your appeal you should re-state your case, and add, with the greatest care, the reasons why you could not accept the decision of the Local Tribunal.'

'If for any reason you fail before the Appeal Tribunal, or cannot accept the exemption they offer, you can ask leave to appeal to the Central Tribunal in London,' but they have the right to refuse your application to appeal if they choose.

'Should you ultimately be arrested, you will be brought before a civil court and can claim the right of legal advice before your case is heard.'

I merely record this information for reference, not that I for *one moment anticipate* it will be necessary to go to these lengths, but one never knows.

It would be far better to be arrested and imprisoned, or even lose your life, than to risk displeasing God for a moment.

Any number of brethren can accompany you when you go before the Local Tribunal. You may even depute a capable brother to represent you and state your case; but it is best you should state your own case and defend yourself.

As a SON OF GOD you have nothing whatever to fear. I advise you to write out what you have to say – a written statement is quite in order – and either read it before the Tribunal or keep it in hand for reference in case your memory fails.

I enclose herewith a suggested form of statement, to help those who stand in need. I also suggest answers to stock questions likely to be asked by the tribunals [for the present I am omitting these and may include them later as a separate item].

Do not be afraid to explain our position in Christ. It will stand scrutiny. Our position in Him is unassailable. Insist upon the absolute supremacy of Christ's authority in all matters. The authorities cannot successfully resist it, however much they might be disposed; especially is this so in view of their

professed subjection to Christ's authority as nominal Christians. Therefore answer them in the words of Scripture as much as possible. You need not fear; for if the 'word of Christ dwells in you richly' as it ought to, the appropriate passages and arguments will 'fly to your lips unsought' – the Lord Himself will be at your side! Therefore freely confess Him before men. This is a unique privilege which has fallen to the young brethren of our generation. To bear His name and confess His faith before Kings and Governors, and to suffer reproach for His sake is the highest honour that God can count us worthy of in these our days of pilgrimage. It is declared, 'if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.' 'Stand fast therefore brethren in the LIBERTY WHEREWITH CHRIST HATH MADE US FREE and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.'

'Ye are bought with a price: (soldier is one sold or bought) be ye not the servants (slaves) of men.' Soldiers count it an honour to suffer and die for King and country, and shall we regard it as any less an honour to suffer and die in the service of that holy man who gave His life for us if called upon to do so? 'If we hate not our life' we cannot be His disciples, so He Himself declared.

Faithfully your brother in Christ.  
Viner Hall

P.S. Young men who have not yet obeyed the truth, but who are conscientiously bound by the teaching of Christ in this matter are entitled to complete exemption. It is not exacted as a condition of exemption that the conscientious objector should actually be a member of a religious body. He may use the enclosed statement, but should describe himself as a 'follower of Christ'.

### **A FINAL WORD**

Do not say too much, let the tribunal do the talking while you do the thinking, and confine yourself to the simplest answers and explanations and stick to your original statements. You are safely entrenched here. If they draw you away and say they cannot accept your views, go back again like the blind man did (John 9:25). Say, 'I am sorry my views are not acceptable to you gentlemen, but I am fully convinced that all wars, fightings, and carnal strivings, are utterly opposed to the letter and spirit of the law of Christ by which I am bound,' or 'war is the absolute negation of every principle of the doctrine of Christ. Therefore all participation in war is impossible to me.' If they cavil and suggest granting you an exemption on other grounds firmly and politely say, 'I am sorry, but I cannot accept an exemption on these grounds, because an exemption granted on the grounds you suggest can only be a temporary or conditional exemption from 'combatant service only',

whereas I claim exemption from every form of Military Service on religious and moral grounds. The relief you suggest I should accept is therefore not the minimum necessary to meet my conscientious scruples. My case is exceptional. I therefore press my claim for a certificate of complete and unconditional exemption from Military Service.

Bear well in mind the man who ‘attests’ is no longer a brother – he is a soldier. He has severed all connection with Christ. He has entered another covenant which neutralises the covenant of Christ, in all particulars.” V. H.

## **SUGGESTED STATEMENT**

### **“CONSCIENTIOUS REASONS FORMING THE GROUNDS OF MY APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ABSOLUTE EXEMPTION FROM MILITARY SERVICE”**

“The Servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men”.

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal”

(2 Tim. 2:24; 2 Cor. 10:3-5)

### **TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TRIBUNAL**

GENTLEMEN,

In obedience to the command of the Government, I am here before you to state the grounds of my conscientious objection to Military Service.

By Military Service I mean Military Service in the widest sense of the term; that is to say, every form of service involving the taking of the Military Oath, or Affirmation, or Attestation, or its equivalent, under the Military Authorities in connection with war, or war work.

My conscientious objection to Military Service is the result of a deep religious conviction that wars, fightings, and fleshly strivings, are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Law of Christ, as expressed in the “Sermon on the Mount”, and amplified in the writings of the Apostles, by which I, as a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ, am bound.

To me, war is the absolute negation of every principle of the doctrine of Christ. Under no circumstances therefore, could I join the ranks of those who make war – BE THE CONSEQUENCES WHAT THEY MAY – not even as a so-called “non-combatant”, because there is no difference morally speaking between the man who strikes and the one who helps him to strike.

The combatant and non-combatant are both alike “integral parts of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting”. they are essential to one another; in fact, one is the complement of the other. They belong to the same body, are subject to the same law, and are under the same oath, which involves a solemn undertaking to fight for King and Country.

The combatant slays while the non-combatant is under obligation to do so in virtue of the oath he has taken, and if necessity arises may be transferred to a combatant regiment.

My conscientious objection to combatant service therefore, equally holds good in regard to so-called non-combatant service.

On these grounds, and under these special and exceptional circumstances, I respectfully beg to claim a complete and unconditional certificate of exemption from Military Service, which you have the power to grant, and to which I am entitled in virtue of the provisions of the Act relating to conscientious objectors, as interpreted and explained by Mr. Long in the Local Government Board instructions issued on February 4th, 1916, explaining the application and effect of the Act, where it expressly states that "in exceptional cases in which the genuine convictions and circumstances of the man are such that neither exemption from combatant service nor a conditional exemption will adequately meet the case, absolute exemption may be granted in these cases if the tribunal are fully satisfied of the facts" – a provision which gives effect to the assurance of Mr. Asquith, in his speech reported on January 6th, that the Government had taken every care to "secure that no one shall come under the obligation created by the Bill unless it is manifest he has no reasonable ground for not responding to his Country's Call".

9th February, 1916

It should be noted that it was this Statement which was used by brother Gordon Ramsden in the Test Case (no. R77 in April 1916) (see page 43), although "Without the Camp" is silent in this respect.

With the Postal Service then operating a letter posted late on the 9th would have been received in London, and widely elsewhere, by the following morning. It should be noted that the London Standing Committee also issued letters of advice on the 9th and 16th February 1916. Brother F. G. Jannaway, in "Without the Camp", chapter 15 reproduces these letters. In introducing these letters he wrote, "... we insisted upon being entirely outside the Army, and taking no part therein, combatant or non-combatant, for the simple and unanswerable reason that, as one brother put it, 'the combatant and non-combatant branches are both alike, integral parts of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting. They are essential to one another; in fact, one is the complement of the other. They belong to the same body, are subject to the same law, and are under the same oath, which involves a solemn undertaking to fight for King and Country.'". The unidentified brother in this extract was in fact brother Viner Hall, and the quotation, as will be seen, is from the suggested statement.

Brother Hall followed up his letter and suggested statement of 9th February 1916 by the following letter of 23rd February 1916:

*"Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus on thy face?"  
"Be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,  
walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.  
Whom RESIST, STEADFAST IN THE FAITH."*

Dear Brethren,

There is now good reason to believe the Local Tribunals will everywhere pre-emptorily refuse the exemptions we are asking for. In the event of refusal lodge your appeal at once. Our cases being “exceptional” will have to come before the Appeal Tribunal and possibly from them finally to the Civil Court before we shall get the only exemption we can accept, namely, “total exemption from every branch of Military Service”.

There is nothing whatever to be alarmed about in these “refusals”, nor even if we are arrested prior to our appearance before the Civil Court.

If we are True Men – Sons of the Living God – these “refusals” will serve rather to harden our resolves and quicken our determination to continue our resistance to the end whatever that may be.

We are about to enter upon a strenuous fight for our liberty and life in Christ Jesus.

Having decided upon the path of duty let us pursue it to the end regardless of consequences.

Now is the time for action. If we draw back now, or hesitate, we are lost. We must go forward without flinching. Let us therefore gird up the loins of our mind and cast fear to the winds! Let us stand together as one man in Christ Jesus and help one another in the battle. Only by a courageous, settled, firm, and determined resistance of this kind from court to court, inch by inch, shall we be able to prove to the Authorities (and incidentally to God Himself, that we are worthy of His name, which is far more important) that our conscientious religious convictions are “deep” and “genuine”, and our position in Christ such as to leave them no alternative but to grant us a certificate of complete and unconditional exemption from Military Service, which is our legal right as I have shown.

This is the only course open to us in view of the fact that no industrial or civil service has been appointed in lieu of Military Service as I pointed out in my letter of instructions of the 9th inst; but instead of this circumstance being a hardship or an evil I feel confident it is a gracious provision designed by God to free His obedient children from every form of bond-service.

If we take the hard but right course our final and complete deliverance is certain.

*“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”.*

Faithfully your brother in Christ, Viner Hall.

Despite the good beginning by the London Standing Committee, referred to on page 40, it is disturbing to read that on 24th March 1916 they sent a letter to the President of the Local Government Board with an offer of what amounts to the readiness to accept conditional exemption. This letter

said, inter alia, "WE ARE WILLING to place our services at the disposal of the State in any direction needed, but NOT AS PART OF THE ARMY, OR IN ANY COMBATANT OR NON-COMBATANT CAPACITY. We would have it clearly to be understood that we do not wish for any preferential treatment above other men, except so far as is necessary to meet our conscientious scruples; and have no desire, under the existing circumstances, both to follow our usual vocations or to make no sacrifices. We are willing as a matter of duty that our powers should be used for the good of the country in any work not involving violation of conscience; and are ready to consider, with the utmost reason of which we are capable, any suggestions which may be offered." (p.120: the emphases are brother F.G. J.'s). I will have occasion to point out other omissions and make comment generally on "Without the Camp".

### **THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TEST CASE (R77) 1916**

In "Without the Camp" chapter 30, brother F. G. Jannaway relates the appearance of brother Gordon Ramsden before the Central Appeal Tribunal on April 4th, 1916, that was to be regarded as a "Test Case" for the Christadelphians. The Tribunal consisted of the Marquis of Salisbury, Lord Sydenham of Coombe, Mr. George Nicholl Barnes, M.P., Sir Algernon Freeman Firth, Bart., Sir Osmond Williams, Bart., Sir George Younger, Bart., Sir Robert Warrand Carlyle, Mr. Cyril Jackson, and Mr. George John Talbot, K.C. brother F. G. Jannaway and brother G. Ramsden's father, separately were called as "witnesses". As already indicated (page 40), brother Gordon Ramsden had already submitted brother Hall's suggested statement to the Tribunal. In amplification of what is reported in "Without the Camp" I reproduced a letter written by brother Hall in answer to an enquiry, together with details of the Test Case and other correspondence:

"Dear brother G. Greetings in the Lord. As promised, herewith are copies of official accounts of the 'Test Case'. In a letter that I have mislaid, sent me in March or April, 1916, brother H. C. Ramsden informed me that brother F. G. Jannaway of the London Standing Committee 'wrote to the Government over our heads', when they knew that the Test Case was pending, and sought to influence them to cancel it and accept a brother in their fellowship – in place of brother Ramsden – who was not in their fellowship. But the Government refused to heed their representations; so that the L.S.C. were thus compelled to accept the case of brother Charles Gordon Ramsden as the official Christadelphian Test Case. In addition to this attempt to prejudice the case of brother Ramsden you will see from 'Without the Camp', pp.120-3, that the L.S.C. approached the Government on 24-3-16, while the Test Case was being heard (but without any mandate from the brotherhood and without their knowledge) offering to place the services OF THE BRETHREN 'at the disposal of the State in any direction needed, but not as part of the Army. . .'

and stating that they 'would have it clearly to be understood that we do not wish for any preferential treatment above other men . . . '

The letter which the L.S.C. wrote to the Government is in the following terms:

"On behalf of the religious body called Christadelphians it is desired to submit the following statement of their position. . . We are willing to place our services at the disposal of the State in any direction needed, but not as part of the Army . . . We would have it clearly to be understood that we do not wish for any preferential treatment above other men . . . and have no desire, under the existing circumstances, both to follow our usual vocations or to make no sacrifices. We are willing as a matter of duty that our powers should be used for the good of the country in any work not involving the violation of conscience; and are ready to consider . . . any suggestions which may be offered . . ."

This letter was signed by the members of the L.S.C. and five "representatives" from the Birmingham Ecclesia. The brethren from Birmingham are spoken of as "representatives" but they had no mandate from the Ecclesia and certainly not from the brotherhood.

These facts are of very serious import and doubtless account for the garbled wording of the official decision referred to by me on another page. I strongly and constantly protested to brother Jannaway and to the L.S.C. against these and such like concessions to a human government, which, to brethren of Christ, were unlawful to make. This is all I need say at the moment, except that the L.S.C. were not allowed any share in the conduct of the Test Case upon which the whole of the exemptions were based. I am sure that in these circumstances you will discern the hand of God in not allowing an organisation to take to itself the credit of the brethren's deliverance. As in ages past, God's strength was "*made perfect in weakness*" – "*out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*" – by an unofficial agency – by one despised – and also through the brother of the Test Case who was not in our fellowship and who belonged to the smallest fellowship (the "Andrew" fellowship, since united to the Suffolk Street fellowship) – was the deliverance achieved.

V. H. 9.1.41

## APPEAL PROCEDURES

There were three Courts of Appeal:

1. The Local Tribunal
2. The Appeal Tribunal
3. The Central Tribunal

You might appeal from the Local to the Appeal Tribunal, but you could not appeal to the Central Tribunal unless the Appeal Tribunal allowed it.



## BEFORE THE APPEAL TRIBUNAL

### STATEMENT AND CIRCULAR OF ADVICE, 9th FEBRUARY 1916

72 Oakhurst Grove, East Dulwich, S.E.

10.3.16

Dear brother Hall, I have just received two of your leaflets from brother J. Owler which I can truly say are a "Godsend" to me. I have to appear with my son at the House of Commons on Monday, where the decisions then given will be a guide to Tribunals all over the country. Although feeling weak and unequal to the task, I am yet full of confidence and will continue – God helping us – to take the strong straight line in opposition to Military Service in any form. Let me say how helpful your leaflets are and that I should be glad of a few more of them as I am appealing in a dozen cases. Your straight line is very acceptable in face of C. C. W.'s apparent weak evidence at Birmingham vide papers. I trust the outcome of the present distress will be the uniting of the true friends of Jesus.

Your brother in Christ, H. C. Ramsden.

### THE APPEAL TRIBUNAL'S DECISION, 13th MARCH 1916

#### Copy of Telegram

Handed in at Parliament Street, London at 7.30pm.

Received at Sutton Coldfield, 7.50pm 13th March 1916.

To Viner Hall, 40 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield.

Conditional only. Appeal allowed. Thank you. Ramsden

My Dear brother Hall – We had a very gratifying time at the House of Commons on Monday owing largely to the help we received from your leaflet. When my son finished reading "The Statement" there was a marked hush and the Chairman, Donald McLean, M.P., said our case was most "ably and clearly stated". It was a splendid Tribunal, about 35 members and no silly questions. I had the opportunity to declare "our separateness from the world" and how we are looking for the return of Christ and hoping to be found of Him in peace, etc. After much deliberation in private they gave us "conditional exemption" which might mean that you are left to follow your own present occupation. To this we replied that we could not accept this as a condition of exemption and asked leave to appeal. The Chamber was then cleared for private discussion. After which we were again informed that leave to Appeal was given.

We have received the Green Form and have stated:

"I could not accept Conditional Exemption because 'National Service' is such an elastic term and might be made to mean some kind of employment which my conscience as a Christadelphian would not permit me to accept. If you grant absolute exemption which I desire,

I will undertake to do any kind of Civil Work of which I am capable, providing that I am free to leave it at any time, thus helping the land that has given us such religious liberty.”

We have now to prepare our defence for the Central Tribunal. Can you help us with thoughts, ideas or arguments which will help us to define why we cannot accept National Service. We realise here in London that ours is the Test Case, and we were the only ones given leave to appeal to the Central Tribunal. Therefore we have to bear in mind its effect upon the brethren all over the country. Thanking you again for your kind and brotherly help.

Yours in Christ Jesus, H. C. Ramsden. 17.3.16.

**Note:** I did not agree with the last sentence in brother Ramsden’s statement to the Central Tribunal: “Thus helping the land that has given us such religious liberty”; because it was open to the interpretation that brethren of Christ were under a debt of gratitude to a Gentile Government for the liberty they enjoyed (placing them under an obligation to render some service in return) which the Government were likely to seize upon and demand as a legal right – when we owe no such debt as I have shown at length in *The Bible Searcher and Witness*, November 1941, p.11-13. Our appeal to a Tribunal is not an appeal as generally understood, such as would concede the right of a human Tribunal to grant or deny, or to grant on some condition: no, our appeal is simply for the Tribunal to see and acknowledge on the Scriptural evidence submitted that, having been freed by the Supreme Authority of Christ, we are entitled to exemption from Military and National Service without any condition.

The following was the statement read to the Tribunal:

To the Members of the Appeal Tribunal,  
“Gentlemen – In obedience to the requirements of the Government, I come before you to state the grounds of my conscientious objection to Military Service. By Military Service I mean Military Service in the widest sense of the term; that is to say, every form of service involving the taking of the oath, or affirmation, or attestation, or its equivalent, under the Military Authorities in connection with war or war work. My conscientious objection to Military Service is the result of a deep religious conviction that wars, fightings, and fleshly strivings are contrary to the latter and spirit of the laws of Christ, as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, and amplified in the writings of the Apostles, by which I, as a Christadelphian, or brother of Christ, am bound. To me, war is opposed to every principle of the doctrine of Christ. Under no circumstances therefore could I join the ranks of those who make war – be the consequences what they may – not even as a so-called non-combatant; because I agree with your law which holds a man responsible who helps another man to strike, he is an

accessory to the deed. The combatant and non-combatant are both alike, integral parts of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting. They are essential to one another; in fact the one is the complement of the other. They belong to the same body, are subject to the same law, and are under the same oath, which involves a solemn undertaking to fight for king and country. My conscientious objection to combatant service therefore, equally holds good in regard to the so-called non-combatant service. On these grounds and under these special and exceptional circumstances, I respectfully beg to claim a complete and unconditional exemption from Military Service, which you have in your power to grant, and which is my right under the provision of the Act relating to conscientious objectors, as interpreted and explained by Mr. Walter Long in the Local Government Board instructions issued on February 4th, 1916, explaining the application and effect of the Act where it expressly states that:

‘in exceptional cases in which the genuine conviction and circumstances of the man are such that neither exemption from combatant service nor a conditional exemption will adequately meet the case, absolute exemption may be granted in these cases if the Tribunal are fully satisfied of the facts.’

This provision gives effect to the assurance of Mr. Asquith in a speech reported on January 6th:

‘That the Government had taken every care to secure that no one shall come under the obligation created by this Bill unless it is manifest he has no reasonable ground for not responding to his country’s call.’

Gentlemen, believing as I do that the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to establish his kingdom will soon be a literal fact, and wishing to be *‘found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless’*, I affirm that I cannot – I dare not – I will not – take any part in the war.”

The statement was read by brother Gordon Ramsden with marked effect. The Tribunal were evidently impressed by it, and after a few questions had been asked and answered, the Chairman intimated that he would be exempted from military service “on condition that he is engaged in some work of National importance”. Although in a certified occupation, brother Ramsden had, of course, refused to claim exemption on this ground, basing his appeal wholly on grounds of conscience. He, therefore, courteously but firmly declined to accept the finding, and asked for leave to appeal to the Central Tribunal. After the Committee Room had been cleared for a private conference, brother Ramsden was re-called and it is satisfactory to be able to report that leave to appeal was granted.

**Note:** The foregoing statement to the Appeal Tribunal was taken from brother Hall’s circular and letter of advice, of 9th February 1916.

## APPEAL TO THE CENTRAL TRIBUNAL

Supplementing his brief communication of 17th March 1916, brother Ramsden wrote to me on 9th April as follows:

"I am now able to write you at greater length regarding our case before the Tribunal. After our success at the House of Commons on March 13th we received 'leave to appeal' to the Central Tribunal, which we did within the specified three days. Our Appeal was on the following grounds:

'I could not accept Conditional Exemption because I should still be under the Military Service Act and I might be called upon to do some work, which as a Christadelphian, I could not perform. If absolute exemption be given me, as I desire, I would be prepared to do some Civil Work for the Country which has given us such great religious liberty, so long as my conscience is free'.

This was on March 15th. On March 24th I received a letter from the Tribunal asking me to make 'some further representations' before they decided to have a hearing of the case. I judged from this advance on their part that they wanted to find a way out of their difficulties and I immediately approached the London Standing Committee. I must tell you first of all that we are what is stigmatised 'the Andrew's party', 'the William's party' and are regarded as 'unclean' by some whom the London Committee represent. However, I do not regard them as anything but Brethren of Christ, and I asked them to co-operate with me, in placing further representations before the Authorities. They coldly replied that 'if I could arrange an interview they would accompany me'. This I endeavoured to do and wrote a letter accordingly, requesting that two others might accompany me to put our case unitedly before the Tribunal. But the London Committee wrote over my head to Mr. W. Long direct. (See their letter of March 24th). This was rather bad treatment in view of my invitation to them. However, the Tribunal declined to receive brother Jannaway and brother Simper with me and informed me that my son's case would be decided on April 4th at the Local Government Board Offices and that I (his father) could appear with him. April 4th arrived and my son was first called before the Tribunal consisting of K.C.'s, Lords and Privy Councillors, 10 in number (see page 43), and for 45 minutes they plied him with questions – what he would do and what he would not do, etc. etc., and I am delighted to say, they never found a weak spot in his armour. After the first five minutes they made him feel quite at home and he enjoyed the experience. I next went into the Chamber for 15 minutes and they (the Marquis of Salisbury) expressed their satisfaction with my son's replies. (Brother Jannaway followed me for five minutes before the Tribunal). I was then asked whom I represented and I gave them the 'Fellow Labourer' showing on the back the meetings I represented. I also handed in a 'Fraternal Visitor' showing their list of meetings. (I had promised to do this on Sunday

last, when a deputation from them came to me and said that they could not get a reply from the London Standing Committee to whom they had written a month before, so I told them of my case coming on Tuesday and promised to do what I could for the brethren as a whole and not for any so-called Committee . . . although I informed the Tribunal I only represented my own group. Brother Jannaway had already informed the Military of our differences, which I hoped could be avoided. Everything that transpired was overruled by our God, and although we may be regarded by our brethren as 'unclean' etc., yet with God's help we, the weaker ones, have had the place of honour and I feel certain that we have been the means of doing good work on behalf and for the benefit of our stronger brethren.

As you are probably aware no decision is given yet in this Test Case. Meanwhile no Christadelphians are to be called up pending the decision. This is from the War Office . . . This will give you a fair outline of the progress made and for which we are heartily thankful; as I have said, it is truly marvellous how things have worked out. My son's case is a clean one, quite free from the 'ammunition stain', which subject is a serious one to argue to the satisfaction of the Tribunals . . ."

H. C. Ramsden

## THE CENTRAL TRIBUNAL'S DECISION

The Tribunal eventually gave their decision in writing as follows:

"The Tribunal having satisfied themselves that the appellant is a bona fide Christadelphian who joined that body before the outbreak of the war, and that the basis of faith common to Christadelphians forbids them to take service under military authority, grant him exemption from combatant service only, subject to the proviso that if within 21 days he undertakes work which, not being under military control, is nevertheless useful for the prosecution of the war, under conditions approved by the Tribunal, he shall be exempt from non-combatant service so long as he continues to carry out such work under such conditions. The work proposed to be reported to the Tribunal for approval. Power is reserved to the Tribunal to extend the period of 21 days or to vary this order if the appellant establishes to their satisfaction that he has done his best but has failed to comply with the condition."

Although on the face of it this was a 'conditional exemption' brother Ramsden's father immediately telegraphed brother Viner Hall: "Central Tribunal – Absolute exemption safe so long as we volunteer Civil work. Result of hearing will be sent to us, but everthing favourable. Faithfully, your brother H. C. R., London SW1, 4th April 1916."

[There are two possible explanations of this apparent contradiction; either that the Tribunal had verbally granted "absolute exemption" but their written decision was couched in more cautious terms, or that brother Ramsden senior used the term "absolute exemption" to mean exemption from both "combatant and non-combatant service"; probably the latter is the true explanation. P.M.R.]

These statements were so important that they should have been published as the most vital part of the report: and on my asking brother H. C. Ramsden the reason for their suppression he gave the reason in a letter dated 23rd May 1916, a copy of which follows:

Dear brother Hall – "Fellow labourer" herewith. We omitted lengthy reference to Military matters in May issue. I was asked by the Chairman of the House of Commons to keep our cases from the public. They do not want the public to know we are having exemption. H. C. R., 23.5.16

**Note:** It is clear from the foregoing that our claim to Absolute Exemption was freely granted by the Central Tribunal: for this was the sole condition on which we volunteered to engage in work of Civil Importance. Our doing work of Civil Importance was volunteered – offered – but only "If the claim of the Christadelphian body to absolute exemption were allowed"; and that the Central Tribunal formally agreed to this is proved by their subsequent letter "inviting us to state what Civil work we were prepared to undertake". The Civil work we were agreeable to do was duly submitted and accepted. But in the printed decision the lawyers of the Central Tribunal worded it so as to make it read as if we had accepted a Conditional Exemption – which was what one might have expected the Government to do for "Reasons of State" in the National Emergency (as indicated in brother H. C. Ramsden's letter of 23.5.16); and especially in view of the compromising and apparently representative "Memorial" by the "London Standing Committee of Christadelphians" committing the brotherhood to the Service of the State in any direction needed and without any preferential treatment above the men in the Forces – see "Without the Camp". In these circumstances what were the brethren to do? They were obliged to accept the position in which the offer of the unrepresentative L.S.C. had involved them and endure the apparent and surface inconsistency of an exemption in the terms of the garbled official version: and engage in work of Civil importance which they had offered to do if their scriptural claim to unconditional exemption were officially acknowledged – which it had been as the evidence shows.

Writing to brother Viner Hall on 12th December 1918 at the end of the War, brother H. C. Ramsden said: "I am so thankful that we have you to stiffen our attitude at the present time. You were a Godsend to us at the first and the brethren do not know what they owe to you. Believe me, dear brother, although the London Standing Committee are taking the credit for the Exemption (see *The Christadelphian*) they do not even know how it came about! The correspondence between myself and the Central Tribunal before the case was heard, also the proceedings at the House of Commons (the Minutes of which were sent on to me). At the time it was your Circulars which were so helpful in closing the mouths of the Tribunal of 25, (the Appeal Tribunal) that you should be encouraged to go your own way in the strength of the Lord . . ."

(Cited *Bible Searcher and Witness*, March 1942, p.9-16)

This "test case" established our objection to all forms of "military service", combatant and non-combatant, and paved the way for all subsequent cases before local tribunals – and was therefore a most important watershed.

# CHAPTER V

## WORLD WAR I – OTHER PROBLEMS

THE ONSET of war, conscription and the imposition of conditions to exemption from military service, forced upon the brotherhood, with the force of immediacy, two questions which, perhaps, had not before been seriously addressed. These were those of the “baptism” of men or women who were already enlisted in the armed services, and secondly, the legitimacy of work in munition factories, or allied organisations. Brother Hall’s contributions to these discussions are represented in the following selections from his letters and pamphlets.

### **“BAPTISM” OF MEN IN THE ARMED FORCES – 1917**

In the 1917 *Christadelphian*, a disturbing number of cases were reported of the baptism of men in the armed forces. In the February issue, the Croydon Ecclesia reported the baptism of J. Rathbone, and then, in April, to report that he had been severely wounded by a shell exploding close by a trench (a later report indicated he was conveying food to the trench) and that he was in the War Hospital near St. Albans, Herts. In the July issue of the magazine, three ecclesias, Birkenhead, Crewe and Doncaster, all reported cases of baptism of serving men: one in the Navy employed on “convoy duties,” and another in H.M. Submarine G11. In August, the Ilford Ecclesia reported the baptism of “N. W. Boyce . . . our brother is in the Navy.”

These reports so alarmed brother Viner Hall that he wrote, and circulated to all ecclesias throughout the world, the pamphlet “Two Masters.” This was a 12 page pamphlet, and is reproduced in facsimile, not only for its treatment of the question itself, but on account of its sterling worth as a general exhortation.



# TWO MASTERS

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH.

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought." 2 John 8.

### AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BRETHREN.

*The following letter, which originally appeared in pamphlet form in August 1917, is reprinted in response to earnest requests from brethren in different fellowships — in view of the pressing necessity in the Household to-day of the same exhortations and warnings.*

### BELOVED BRETHREN IN CHRIST. GREETING.

Three years ago the issue before us was "Christ or Caesar?" The standard was raised, and at the blast of the trumpet, to the unspeakable joy of all the lovers of Christ, our young brethren rose to a man and repudiated all forms of Military Service as subversive of the work and service of Christ to which they had been called by the Gospel. Victory followed their faith and obedience, and to-day they are rejoicing in a "God-given freedom of body and conscience."

"The fire has had no power upon their bodies, nor has an hair of their head been singed, neither have their coats been changed, nor the smell of fire has passed upon them," although the burning fiery furnace has been raging for three years, "heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated." The reason is not far to seek and even Nebuchadnezzar and his courtiers have discerned the Holy Presence. We have stood by the Son of God and He has stood by us !

This is a cause for great rejoicing, and abounding thanksgiving to Him whose "eyes are over the righteous," and whose "ears are open unto their prayers ;" who "giveth deliverance unto His servants, and sheweth mercy unto His Anointed, to David and to his seed for evermore."

### A NOTE OF WARNING.

"But," adds the Spirit, "*let them not turn again to folly.*" We have been delivered from the Egyptians, passed through the waters of the Red Sea as on dry ground, and are now entering the wilderness, where dangers and pitfalls abound—

"Foes on every side beset us,

Snares through all our way are strewed,"

as we often sing. Adversaries beset us within and without, ceaselessly alert, and for ever presenting the same temptations in new and subtle guise. True, the Holy Presence is with us, who "will not suffer our foot to be taken : " but "like mariners who sail through a sea of dangers," God has ordained that we shall "find safety *only in unceasing vigilance*. So long as the ship is 'out,' so long must this Argus-visioned watch be kept, nor ever be relaxed by so much as the droop of an eyelid. Death may reach out to grip us at any moment, may seek us in we know not what guise : quick we must be to see, prompt to act, if we would elude its clammy grasp."

"Watch! " commanded our Captain and Lord, "and what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch !" and the beloved Apostle John, "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have gained : " and Paul, "Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample : for many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ : " and again, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

In taking stock of our present position, we first note with joy that the whole brotherhood have at last with one consent refused to compromise with evil. They have taken the right and only true course in repudiating every form of Military Service and in refusing all participation in war in obedience to the letter and Spirit of the law of Christ.

### **LOSING THOSE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE GAINED.**

But surely, after having taken this faithful stand we are not now going to "join ourselves to Baal-peor and eat the sacrifices of the dead," in compromising with evil to the extent of believing, and teaching that "a man in the military profession who embraces the Truth may still fulfil his duties as a soldier!" Yet this is precisely what we have begun to do. For we have noted with apprehension and alarm, the account of the "baptism" of a man engaged in working one of H.M. Submarines, reported in THE CHRISTADELPHIAN for July ; also the case of the "baptism" of a soldier in the same issue and the account of two other cases in the August number. There is also an account to hand of a Christadelphian Sunday School scholar who became an officer in the army and went to France on active service. " He came home on leave, was baptised, and *immediately returned to the trenches !*" There are many similar cases just coming to light—cases where sailors from warships have been baptised, and immediately gone back to their duties. How can we, as faithful brethren of Christ tolerate such an

alarming state of things as that which is reflected in the cases cited above? Can we tolerate for one moment such a flagrant departure from the Truth as the baptism of an individual engaged in helping to work one of the most diabolical and deadly engines of war extant?

### **BAPTISM OF NO VALUE.**

Can we believe that the immersion of a man in this position is of any avail in the sight of God?

Here is a man already under a solemn covenant the provisions of which are diametrically opposed to the law of Christ, and who is now engaged in the work of destruction and death demanded of him in virtue of that covenant.

"No servant can serve two masters"—no man can be faithful to two covenants which are mutually antagonistic; and baptism is of no avail whatever, and is entirely inefficacious, unless the covenant to which it introduces the subject is faithfully carried out. In view of these facts, for us to speak of "introducing" any man in this position "into the saving name of Christ" is little short of blasphemy.

These facts were brought to the notice of the two Ecclesias concerned, who accepted the protest in the spirit of Christ, but said they thought their action was justifiable in view of the case of Cornelius, and the bond-servants mentioned in 1 Cor. 7, and elsewhere.

### **"CAN ANY MAN FORBID WATER?"**

What follows is the substance of the reply to their defence. It was asked whether it was right to baptise a soldier? It would depend entirely upon the circumstances of the case.

Baptism of itself cannot save a man any more than could circumcision. Baptism merely introduced the subject into a saving relationship, where there had been an intelligent and affectionate reception of the engrafted Word. But however much a person might desire to be baptised, and however much we may wish to baptise him, yet we rightly refuse to baptise him (however "unkind" or "uncharitable" our refusal might appear to be) where the candidate's knowledge of any of the first principles of revealed truth was found to be defective, or if he refused for any reason to subscribe to the doctrine which is according to Godliness. He was forced to remain outside the body of Christ until he had remedied his defective knowledge, or until he could honestly subscribe to the whole truth.

We should rightly "forbid water" also in a case even where there was a perfect knowledge of the Truth, if the candidate refused to give up some evil practice, or where he refused to sever his connection with some compromising association; just as we now withdraw ourselves from any brother who "walketh disorderly," or who unlawfully absents himself from the table of

the Lord : because we recognise the *utter impossibility of any man obtaining God's favour unto salvation* who does not *faithfully conform to the precepts of Christ*. He must become "a new creature" and "Christ be formed in him," if he is to be saved.

**"WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP." Gal. 6, 7.**

If this is so, and it cannot be disputed, is it not the very height of folly to speak of "baptising a man into the saving name of Christ" at a time when he is *not in a position to obey Christ* ; at a time when he was about to enter upon, or had already entered upon, a special kind of bond-service involving, yea, necessitating work and service, and demanding obedience to principles diametrically opposed to the principles of the doctrine of Christ ? To "baptise" a man who was under a solemn oath or obligation to slay and to destroy in defence of king and country—a man who has entered and become "an integral part of an organisation kept for the *special purpose of fighting*," involving these evil things, and where to disobey would involve his death, or to his acting the part of a deceiver, and therefore as a traitor to his country, is to mock God and mislead the man.

### **ARMY NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD.**

"Does military necessity know no law?" ejaculated Mr. Chancellor.

Mr. Tennant : "Military necessity has *never known any law*. I am not aware of any case in which military necessity has been guided by conscientious objection."—House of Commons, 10th February, 1915.

The army is essentially a fleshly institution—the *very embodiment of the carnal mind*—and warfare, its offspring, is of the flesh, fleshly—"is *wholly of the flesh*"—even as Dr. Clifford said in his *Sixty Years Retrospect*, October 16th, 1916.

It has been admitted to me by orthodox Christians, and soldiers, and is freely admitted on all hands, that "*spiritual life is impossible in the army*." "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." So, then, they that are in this fleshly institution, and form part of it, "cannot please God" (Rom. 8). This was the reason Christ said, "I pray not for the world."

But when speaking of his disciples he said, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me *out of the world* : . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world . . . I pray for them : I pray not for the world" (John 15 and 17). "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (1 John 2, 15-17 ; James 4, 4), a statement which is confirmed by one of their own statesmen, in the person of Lord Hugh Cecil, when he "denounced war as *anti-*

*Christian*, and *nationalism* as a sentiment that was *immoral*, and which *we ought to combat*. It implied the *abandonment of moral law*, and we must get the people to feel that there was something greater than loyalty to one's country, namely, loyalty to the interests of Humanity."—At Caxton Hall, Westminster, May 14th, 1917.

**"NO SERVANT CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS."**—Luke 16,13.

No servant can serve two masters illustrates a principle of universal application which holds good in every relation of life where divine principles are involved. Its application cannot therefore be limited to "the attempted service of God and Mammon." It means, there can be "no compromise with evil" (which is just what Army Service would involve in its perfection) on the part of one who aspires to become "a bond-servant of Christ"—

No unequal yoking with unbelievers—

No fellowship with unrighteousness—

No communion with darkness—

No concord with Belial—

No agreement with idols—

No *touching* the unclean thing—2 Cor. 6

### CONDITIONS OF DIVINE SONSHIP.

A final and complete disavowance must take place before any man can become a servant of God.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, *saith the Lord*, and *touch not* the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons, . . . *saith The Lord Almighty*" (2 Cor. 6 : 14-18.

These are the indispensable and irrevocable conditions of divine service and sonship. Cannot we see this ? If so, then how can we legitimately immerse a man who is just plunging into the very midst of the evil I have mentioned ? And how can a man who is supposed to be dead to sin, by reason of his baptism, go on living in sin ?

To merely ask these questions is sufficient to show how completely this false doctrine would involve the subversion of those conditions of divine sonship above mentioned.

### THE CASE OF CORNELIUS.

The case of Cornelius gives no countenance to our acceptance of soldiers unless they are willing and *able* to disassociate themselves from their present master, in order to be "married to Christ" (see Rom. 7). In view of the stringent law of Christ, as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, the acceptance of the Truth by Cornelius, and others in a similar position, would necessitate their immediate disavowance from the Roman Army ; for not otherwise could they have become the disciples and followers of Christ (Matt. 5, 6, 7).

In the light of Christ's teaching it is absolutely necessary that we should understand (although it is not expressly stated) that Cornelius, like Paul and the others in the first century, "immediately conferred not with flesh and blood," but "forsook all and followed Him."

It is legitimate to baptise a soldier if he is prepared and able to "go and do likewise ;" but if there is no prospect of his being free from the special bond-service of the army, which involves the denial of Christ as I have shown, the law of Christ being thus and so, there is no alternative but for him to remain outside until he is able to release himself, or until God in His providence sees fit to open a way of escape for him. As in the case of the man whose knowledge of the Truth is defective, he must wait in patience until he is able to rectify his position. We "must not do evil that good may come" by receiving a man into the body of Christ at the time when he is not in a position to obey Christ, otherwise "our condemnation will be just" and swift and sure.

We must not forget that we are handling God's matters, not our own. If we take liberties with Divine matters we shall merit the severest retribution in the day of Christ. Let us well remember the case of Nadab and Abihu.

Baptism into Christ makes a man a debtor to keep the law of Christ. For baptism verily profiteth if we keep Christ's law : but if we fail to keep his law, or if we are not in a position to keep it, our baptism is made unbaptism ; and that which should have been a birth becomes an abortion.

### THE BOND SERVICE OF 1 COR. 7.

Paul's exhortation, "let every man, wherein he is called, *therein abide with God*," cannot apply to Military Service for the scriptural reasons already adduced—because *the principles and work and service* of the army "are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The service is opposed to the law of God. God is not therefore in the service. If God is not in the Service, no man who remains in the service can "*therein abide with God*." It is for this reason that we have repeatedly "bought soldiers off" when they came to the knowledge of the Truth. The bond-service to which Paul referred was the ordinary slavery such as was universally practiced in those days—a bond service from which the slave might redeem himself, or be redeemed by others.

If a man were called being a highwayman, or a bandit, or a thief, or a "man-slayer," nobody would think of excusing him from giving up his evil calling, because Paul said "let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called ;" rather would the brethren *demand* that he should first repudiate and abandon his nefarious calling before they should dream of baptising him. Of all such Paul spake when he said, "and such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.

How could a soldier (Cornelius if you like) after he had united himself to Christ, lawfully and dutifully fulfil the obligation he had undertaken as a soldier, and still retain the favour of God ? Could he have ordered his cohort to storm an enemy position ? Could he have *co-operated in any military enterprise* which had for its object the defeat or destruction of the enemy, and still have remained a disciple of Christ ? *He could not.* Therefore he must have thrown up his commission on his acceptance of the Truth. If it is argued otherwise it would result in the entire subversion of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and would legitimise the very worst form of disobedience and lawlessness : the law of love which "*worketh no ill to his neighbour*" or enemy, would be displaced and the law of force would be established ; and the brethren would be led to excuse their disobedience like apostate Israel of old, saying before God, "we are delivered to do all these abominations "" (Rom. 12, 13 ; and Jer. 7, 9-11.

### THE LEAVEN AT WORK.

If this unscriptural practice of receiving soldiers and sailors into our body and fellowship is not seen in its true character, and stopped in time, the logical outworking will spell apostasy—this "little leaven will leaven the whole lump"—our separateness in Christ will be at an end, and we shall become involved, like the apostate Churches of Anti-Christendom, in a fellowship with man-slayers and worse—"making no difference between the clean and the unclean—calling evil good, and good evil—putting darkness for light and light for darkness—putting bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter—saying to the evil and disobedient, thou art righteous, and no evil shall come upon you ! Thus strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not turn from his wicked way by promising him ~~life~~ life." (Isa. 5 : 20 ; Ezek. 13 : 22.)

### OUR PLAIN DUTY.

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened," Our duty is therefore as clear as it is imperative. If we are to survive "as a chaste virgin espoused to one husband—Christ," we must "purge out the old leaven." We must repudiate those "baptisms" where the divine conditions have not been observed or fulfilled, and refuse to fellowship all those called "brethren" who in disobedience to the commands of Christ, are engaged in Naval or Military Service.

Let us "awake to righteousness, and sin not ; for some have not the knowledge of God." Let not this be spoken to our "shame" but to a "clearing of ourselves." "Remembering therefore from whence we are fallen," let us "be zealous and repent, and do the first works," and thus regain our "first love," that our "candlestick be not removed out of its place."

"Consider it, take advice, and speak your minds ;" for this is a matter which affects you as much as me. The Truth belongs to

one as much as to another. The Truth belongs to God and to us as "workers together with Him"—His Children. Christ is our master in all spiritual matters, and *we recognise no other*. It is therefore the bounden and *individual duty* of every enlightened son and daughter of God to use their utmost exertion to maintain the truth in its original purity ; and to the fullest extent of their ability to insist that their "Father's business" shall be carried on in accordance with His authoritative instructions which we have in His written word.

### THE POSITION OF ATTESTED BRETHREN AND BRETHREN WHO HAVE JOINED THE FORCES.

In regard to this question I cannot do better than reproduce in substance a letter written in January, 1916.

It has been asked "whether in the event of an ex-brother soldier (or an attested brother) acknowledging his mistake, and admitting the falsity of his present position, and desiring to partake of the table of the Lord, and to renew his fellowship with the brethren, should we be justified in refusing to fellowship such an one ?

Emphatically, Yes ! In his present position, *as a soldier*, we could not receive him back. Here is a brother who has sold himself to another master—one Caesar—to whom he is sworn to obey whatever his behests may be. His conscience and body are no longer Christ's ; they are the property of Caesar. A brother in this state is severed from the body of Christ, and is joined to another ; and is now "an integral part of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting." He is in the position of one who is "not fit for the Kingdom of God;" because he has put his hand to the plough and has looked back. This is the Lord's judgment ; not our's (Luke 9, 26). In this position he has cut himself off from God in "counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing . . ." But the ex-brother may regret the step he has taken, and may desire re-union with Christ : and even if special circumstances exist which, in the grace and mercy of God, permit of his return, he cannot be united with God until he severs his connection with the Army. In other words, he can have no communion with Christ while he is in the Army. So that while he is in the Army he cannot break bread ; for consider what the breaking of bread signifies : "Is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?" Is it not identifying ourselves with Christ, by which we become "one bread"—one body ? Is it not a renewal of our covenant with God ? If so, it could not benefit a man who had not only broken it, but who was not in a position to render that obedience to it by which alone it can be ratified, and made efficacious ; and not only so, but who is held in another covenant which neutralises God's covenant in all particulars. A man in these circumstances could not "*partake*" of Christ's table, even if he were invited, however much he might desire. He might eat



the bread mechanically and physically: but partake of it spiritually he could not. It would condemn him. Before he could attempt to re-enter Christ's covenant, (if that be possible), it would be necessary absolutely for him to disunite himself from his present master. *This is what Christ requires of all who would embrace the Truth*; not otherwise can he receive them. But if a soldier cannot release himself, he must remain outside until he is able: we are very sorry for his lamentable condition, but we cannot help it. We must not allow our natural sympathies to blurr our spiritual judgment. God's law is *thus* and *so*: and it is more than our life is worth to presume to "add to, or take from it."

For us to receive a soldier, (or a soldier who has been a brother) into our fellowship, and permit him to break bread, would *defile the table of the Lord*. It would endorse and legitimise the worst form of disobedience: our separateness in Christ would be at an end; the floodgates of apostasy would be flung wide open; and the logical sequel would find us on the battlefield "administering the sacrament" to manslayers, like the apostate Churches of "Christendom" are doing at the present moment. We are entering a very serious crisis in the history of the Truth. It behoves us therefore to be on the alert—to be "vigilant"—ceaselessly vigilant—lest we be deceived by the plausible popular doctrines which are floating about in the guise of "Christian charity," and lose the simplicity, purity, and vigour of the primitive Christian faith which has been entrusted to our care under Divine providence in these closing days of the Gentile times.

### THE CONSTABULARY.

On the question of the admissibility or otherwise of Service in the Civil Police Force, we are agreed that it would be wrong for a brother to join the Police Force in any capacity, for the same reason that it would be wrong for him to join the Military Forces in any capacity. There are, however, those who think that "if the Truth found a man in 'The Force' it would not be wrong for him to remain in it." It seems strange to me that there should be any difference of opinion on this point, when the conditions of Service in "The Force" are understood. Have we forgotten the nature of the oath which is obligatory for every Constable and Special Constable to take according to the law?

### THE FORM OF OATH.

The Form of Oath:

"We the undersigned do hereby solemnly and sincerely declare that we will well and truly serve Our Sovereign Lord The King in the office of Special Constables for the Borough of B—without favour or affection, malice or ill will, and that we will to the best of our powers *cause peace to be kept and observed and prevent all offences* against the persons and properties of His Majesty's subjects, and that while we continue to hold the said office, we will to the best of our skill and knowledge discharge

all duties thereof faithfully according to law." The constable is provided with a *Truncheon*, *Handcuffs*, a whistle and a note book. He comes under the Police Act, and is required "to *obey all orders* from Superior Officers."

It will be seen upon reflection that no brother could continue to faithfully discharge the duties devolving upon him in virtue of this comprehensive Oath, and at the same time faithfully carry out the commandments of Christ ; because the two Services are mutually antagonistic and incompatible (as in the case of Service in the Army).

### AN EX-CONSTABLE BROTHER'S TESTIMONY.

An ex-constable brother of my acquaintance saw this directly the truth began to dawn upon him, (before I said a word to him about it) and he severed his connection with "The Force" entirely on his own initiative months before he applied for baptism. He recognised that no brother with his eyes open to the true nature of the service of Christ, and who knew as he did from practical experience the inner working and nature of Police Service, could remain in "The Force" one hour after he had received the call of "The Gospel of Peace."

The foregoing was submitted to the ex-constable brother for his confirmation before it was printed. He replied as follows :— "Your MS. submitted is quite correct in every particular, brother. I think it is absolutely absurd that any brother with common sense should think of joining any Police organisation. Ask him one question. What position would he take up if he were given orders to execute a warrant for a man who was an absentee or a deserter ? Or in the case of Martial Law being proclaimed, what would he do then ? No, brother, use all your influence to keep brethren out of the meshes of the Law in any capacity : it is no job for . . . a humble brother of Christ . . ." T.B.

The foregoing facts and arguments may be brought to a focus as follows :

(1) Military Service and Police Service are diametrically opposed to the letter and spirit of the Law of Christ. A brother of Christ is under Law to Christ. Therefore a Christadelphian cannot engage in any branch of Military Service, or Police Service. Upon this we are all agreed.

(2) A man becomes a Christadelphian while in Military Service or Police Service. In becoming a brother of Christ he comes under law to Christ. Being under law to Christ it is impossible for him to remain in Military Service or in Police Service, because such service is contrary to Christ's law.

(3) If after coming under Law to Christ, a brother *remains* in Military Service, or in Police Service, which is contrary to the Law of Christ, he makes himself a transgressor, and must be withdrawn from ; for such an one "is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

(4) A man comes to a knowledge of the Truth while in Mili-

tary Service, from which he cannot release himself. If he cannot honourably release himself from his obligations to this Service, or is unwilling to take the consequences of throwing it up, it is *impossible* for him to obey the Law of Christ. If he cannot obey Christ's law he cannot be baptised. We cannot bury a living man ! A man must first die to a Service which is admitted (even by men of this world) to be *in direct opposition* to the principles of the doctrine of Christ, before he can "be buried by baptism into Christ's death, and rise again to newness of life," as a man "alive from the dead."

(5) If we baptise a man who cannot obey the Commandments of Christ we "become partakers of his sins," and are guilty of the heinous offence of defiling the Temple of the Lord by introducing an unwashed sinner into "The Ecclesia of the Living God." If we thus defile God's Temple, "which is Holy," destruction awaits us ! "If any man defile the Temple of God him shall God destroy."

The door of faith is fast being closed to the Gentiles, and the day of privilege and opportunity has vanished for the majority (for the time at least), and who shall say it has not gone for ever ? Under these circumstances woe betide us if we presume to "open" (as some of us are trying to do) that which God has closed ! We may rest perfectly assured that if God "calls" a soldier He will make it possible for the man to obey the Truth by releasing him from the army. The nature of the principles of the doctrine of Christ demand that we should take this view.

### THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

The doctrine of Christ bears no relation or analogy to "orthodox Christianity." The doctrine of Christ is not a doctrine for flabby sentimentalists and triflers, philosophic or otherwise—is not the emasculating doctrine of popular representation. The doctrine of Christ is a stern matter of Divine Principles which brook no compromise—a doctrine demanding the entire, absolute, whole hearted, unquestioning, intelligent, willing, affectionate, and unqualified surrender of the whole man, in every fibre and atom of his being, to the Service of Christ—"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, (like soldiers have to do) he *cannot be my disciple*. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he *cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14 : 25-35).

No easy road to the Kingdom here ; no divided Service here ; no "*only* believe" and be baptised and then go as you please ; no joining yourself to Christ when "on leave," and then, back to the army again; no "special licence" for soldiers and policemen here ! "*Whosoever he be* that forsaketh not all that he hath (if the call of God or the service of Christ requires it) he *cannot be my disciple*!"

"Ye are my friends if ye do *whatsoever* I command you." No two sets of principles here—mutually antagonistic and incompatible—one set for "soldier brothers," and another set for civilian brothers—"one law for the soldier and another for the civilian—in the calling of God, and the service of Christ.

In the light of these indisputable facts let us "examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and prove our own selves"—"proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," and in "deepest reverence for God"—"esteeming the words of His mouth more than our necessary food"—let us aim at "perfect holiness" and "straining every nerve for that which lies in front, press on to the goal." May "our love grow yet stronger and stronger, with increasing knowledge and all discernment, until we are able to appreciate all moral distinctions . . . that we may be kept pure and blameless against the Day of Christ, bearing a rich harvest of that righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1 : 9-11 ; 3 : 13-14).

Faithfully and affectionately, Your brother in Christ

VINER HALL

40, Parade, Sutton Coldfield, August 21st, 1917

## MUNITION MAKING

No comprehensive review of our relationship to Military Service would be complete without considering the work which brethren could undertake when the nation is on a “war-footing”, and in particular whether the making of “munitions” is compatible with our position as conscientious objectors to service in the armed forces. There is a dichotomy inherent in our unique stand: we acknowledge that war is of God, that the “powers that be” are specifically ordained by God as “*a revenger . . . upon him that doeth evil*” (Rom. 13:4), that we are not pacifists in the total connotation of that word; we only affirm that, in the absence of the “*Captain of our salvation*”, we are personally unable to “*take the sword*”.

Being a member of the Birmingham Temperance Hall Ecclesia it was inevitable that brother Viner Hall should be involved in the consideration of the issue, since the Midland towns were particularly heavy engineering orientated. Perhaps many now living do not appreciate that the initials “B.S.A.” – linked in their minds with motorbikes – really stood for “Birmingham Small Arms”, indicating the original purpose of the company. It cannot be ignored that some brethren were employed in such firms directly concerned in making munitions of various kinds (including motorised units). This became clear when brethren appeared before Conscientious Objector Tribunals, and newspapers highlighted what seemed to them an inconsistency. In response to one such letter in the *Dudley Herald*, brother Hall wrote a letter which appeared in the issue dated 25th March 1916: the substance of which follows:

“Sir, In your issue of the 18th instant you report the cases of a number of Christadelphians who were refused exemption, some of the members remarking on the ‘inconsistency’ of the applicants who were engaged, whether directly or indirectly on ‘war work’, while seeking absolute exemption from even ‘non-combatant’ service . . . If these Christadelphians ‘agreed with fighting’ and engaged in war work in order to ‘defeat and destroy the enemy’, then ‘war work’ would be the same to them as military service, and they would not refuse to join the Army. But they – one and all – disagree with fighting, as brethren of Christ, and if they could even reduce the evil of warfare by refusing war work they would do no war work while the world stood! Their position may be illustrated by the fact that in all the ordinary occupations of life the private workman is not held responsible for the use to which his work is put. For instance, the Christian seamstress is never charged with countenancing and fostering dancing because she helps to make ball dresses, nor the Christian cabinet maker for gambling because he makes bridge tables for a gambling club, nor a Christian wood-turner for violence because he makes truncheons for the police force, used to crack men’s skulls in time of rioting. But if

the seamstress associated herself with the dancing society, or the cabinet maker became a member of the gaming club, or countenanced their nefarious doings by his presence in their midst, or the wood-turner became a special constable or joined the police force and helped to quell the riot, or the Christadelphian munition maker joined His Majesty's Forces, the case would be very different. But the seamstress regards dancing as an unpardonable sin, the cabinet maker repudiates gambling as a vice, the wood-turner is opposed to violence on principle, while the Christadelphian, although fully recognising war as a necessary evil, permitted and regulated by God in the hands of the State for the punishment of evil-doers, and as a divine agency in the preservation of law and order, and a measure of liberty during the absence of Christ, apart from which anarchy or serfdom would everywhere prevail, cannot co-operate with the State in any form of military service because the **PRINCIPLES AND AIMS IN WARFARE ARE OPPOSED TO THE LAW OF CHRIST TO WHICH HE IS PLEDGED**. But while this is so, he does not object to work for the State in a purely civil capacity."

It should be noted that at that time a similar situation existed in other parts of the country. For example, at the Ilford Local Tribunal on 29th March 1916 the following dialogue took place between W. H. Trapp and Councillor Philpot:

**"W.H.T.** We expel anyone from our body if we find they are deliberately disobeying the Commands of Christ.

**Coun. P.** Do you include making of munitions?

**W.H.T.** No, because there is nothing laid down in the scriptures about munitions. There is no obligation in the scriptures laid upon anyone to attempt to hinder the efforts of the country. They simply see their labour to those who will buy it so as to provide things honest in the sight of all men. They are not responsible for the results of their labour. Christ paid taxes, but he was not responsible for the wars prosecuted by the Romans.

**Coun. P.** They may make munitions?

**W.H.T.** They would not do it because of an appeal to their patriotism. Many of these men have been making them as part of their work before the war broke out. Some who were thrown out of employment have gone to munition factories, and there is nothing whatever in the scriptures to forbid them so-doing."

I should make it clear that personally brother Hall would not have worked in a munition factory, and was in fact employed on various farms consequent upon his recognition as a conscientious objector.

In October 1917 a closer liaison between the Secretary for War and the Minister of Munitions was established, a Major General becoming a member of the Munitions Council. Brother Viner Hall was alarmed by the possible implications for brethren, and he drafted a letter, which I have before me, to the brethren. This letter is important as a balance set against his "defence" of brethren who were working in munitions establishments. I reproduce such parts of it as necessary to this end.

"Dear Brethren, MUNITIONS OF WAR

That this question is assuming a serious aspect is evident to all of us. That it is likely to affect the brotherhood more seriously in the future than in the past, is also evident; especially should the war continue necessitating the re-organisation of the entire country on war basis, which at the moment seems more than likely. To say the least of it the situation is menacing . . . the department of munitions is tending to coalesce with the War Department – to pass out of the region of private enterprise altogether into the hands of the Military authorities themselves: and who shall say it will not eventually become an integral part of Army Service – 'an integral part of an organisation which is kept for the special purpose of fighting' – to which it is already veering? In which case we could not conscientiously enter the service or remain in it to make a thread to a shoe latchet.

This question is persistent and must be settled, and now is the time to settle it once and for all while the door is still ajar. First and foremost we have the honour of the Truth to uphold and the service of Christ to fulfil diligently and with our whole heart. To provide for our own honestly in the sight of all men comes second. '*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*' commanded our beloved Lord and Master, who in his teaching and by his example showed that every consideration of our natural life must be subordinated to, and controlled by, the Right-wiseness of God as expressed in His word. In other words that our lives – comprising all our thoughts and actions – must be subordinated to and controlled by the revealed will of God – '*Not my will, but thine be done*' – is the only consistent attitude for us to observe being brethren of Christ and children of God.

'*Doubtful disputations*' cannot long exist where this is fully recognised and acted upon. As far as we are concerned the morality and therefore the legitimacy of any particular work, or service, is not to be determined by the fact that such work or service is legitimate abstractly considered, nor because such work is lawful under some considerations. No, the moral law by which our actions must be regulated and controlled, if we are to obtain God's favour unto eternal life, is on a higher plane altogether. The question, 'does such and such an occupation, or service, uphold the honour and dignity and holiness

of our Divine profession?' is the true touchstone by which the legitimacy of our work or service is to be determined.

If our occupation does not enable us to uphold the honour and dignity of our profession; if our occupation becomes 'a cause of reproach'; if our work has developed an 'appearance of evil' – in the altered circumstances and conditions of the present crisis; if our work is now regarded by the Gentiles as inconsistent with our profession; if our present occupation in consequence 'gives the adversary occasion to speak reproachfully'; if our work gives offence to the brethren, and is 'a cause of suffering to the innocent'; if it is likely to jeopardise our future freedom and liberty in Christ Jesus, in compromising our position 'in the eyes of the authorities' (who would not scruple to seize upon any apparent inconsistency in our attitude, or fail to use to the uttermost any precedent afforded by a few of our brethren's present occupation on high explosives or instruments of destruction – should opportunity offer or the exigencies of an evil situation make it possible for them to bring us or our brethren elsewhere into bondage); if our present work is so exacting in its demands as to jeopardise spiritual growth, or cause us to neglect our work and service of Christ in the Gospel as his accredited representatives in the present evil world; no matter if the work be only farm work or food raising the law of Christ and therefore the highest reason demands – yea, God Himself demands, does He not – that we should change our occupation without regard to the consequences of temporary loss and inconvenience? *'The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment'.*

Faithfully and affectionately, your brother in Christ, Viner Hall."

For some reason, not stated, brother Hall did not in fact circulate this proposed letter except "privately, here and there" (letter to brother F. G. Jannaway, 4.3.1925).



# CHAPTER VI

## RELEASE FROM "WAR WORK", 1918

IT MAY not be generally known that brother F. G. Jannaway entered into a personal bond in the sum of £10,000 pledging Christadelphians to engage in Work of National Importance. As a result the Army Council was persuaded by brother Jannaway to issue a "Certificate" which he counter-signed, virtually as an agent of the War Office. A copy of this Certificate (extracted from "Without the Camp") follows.

G.D. 7927 500 6.16 H.W.V.P. 370. B 16/014  
W 4941-7959 1500 7/16

ISSUED BY AUTHORITY  
OF THE ARMY COUNCIL

*W. Jannaway*  
*Brig.-Gen.*

20 SEP 1916

Director of Recruiting.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT *Albert Horton*  
residing at *49 Spring Garden Rd Hill Staffs*  
a Christadelphian and a recognized Conscientious objector to Military Service will not be called upon to join the Army provided he is engaged in work of National Importance such as Agriculture, Forestry, Mining, Transport, Education, Public Utility, or such other work as may be approved of by the Committee on work of National Importance, 26, Abingdon Street, Westminster; and that he notifies in writing that he is so engaged, on the first of every month to the undersigned, at the undermentioned address.

If the holder of this certificate cease to be engaged on work such as stated above, this certificate will not be valid, and he will then be called up for Military Service.

Signature *Frank G. Jannaway*  
Address "THORNCLIFFE"  
89, STOCKWELL PARK ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W.

Date 22 SEP 1916

Brother F. G. Jannaway wrote: "The next problem was to devise the machinery wherewith to carry out the pledge I had given to the War Office Authorities that every exempted Christadelphian should engage in Work of National Importance, and that, too under conditions approved of by the Committee on Work of National Importance" ("Without the Camp", p.200). The holders of these certificates were required to immediately advise him of any change of address, so that the "Register" could be amended. It is the last sentence of these Certificates which was particularly alarming.

So wrong was this pledge and the consequences, that brother Hall wrote:

"For any brother to make himself personally responsible to the State in a sum of money for the good behaviour of the entire brotherhood of military age, and that without their knowledge or consent is illegal and wrong on every ground. It is almost unthinkable – unbelievable. By this bond brother Jannaway placed himself in the position of a dictator; a position which virtually committed him to act as the agent of the State towards the brethren, as the sequel shows.

At the end of the Great War, and apparently under the obsession that the 'pledge' he had 'given to the War Office Authorities' required it at his hands, brother Jannaway did his best to compel the brethren to remain at their work. It would seem that he tried to influence the War Office and the Pelham Committee<sup>1</sup> to give a ruling, or sanction a measure forbidding brethren to leave their work of National Importance 'unless specialy released'; and this at a time when the brethren were absolutely free to leave in common with all other conditionally exempted religious objectors, as the Secretary of the Local Government Board officially informed me in a letter dated November 19th, 1918 – eight days after the signing of the Armistice.

This action of brother Jannaway and the LSC shows that in their view, and in virtue of their bond and bargain with the War Office, brethren who held Army Council Certificates were virtually in the position of non-combatant soldiers (or as those unfortunate Army Reserve Conscientious Objectors employed under the 'Home Office Scheme' – otherwise known as the 'Brace Committee'), as the following hitherto unpublished letter of November 13th, 1918 shows. This letter is of such importance that I have had it reproduced in facsimile. It is not my copy but the one sent by brother Jannaway to brother Ramsden, the London Secretary of the Suffolk Street Fellowship Military Service Committee, on which brother Jannaway had written in red ink that 'the Secretary of State had written expressing his appreciation of the tone of this letter' (that is, THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR!). This proves that brother Jannaway consulted the highest Military Authority in the land and sought his approval of this private letter to the brethren of Christ: in which he coldly gives them to understand that, being of 'the same class and grade' as men in military service, they were

TELEGRAPH OR  
TELEPHONE } 626 Brixton.

F. G. JANNAWAY.

*Return to 422*  
"THORNCLIFFE."

99, STOCKWELL PARK ROAD.  
LONDON, S.W.9.

13th November, 1918.

Dear Brother,

You will remember that the Army Council  
Certificates were obtained by me from the War Office  
on the distinct understanding that Christadelphians  
would engage in work of National Importance, and  
it is the mind of the members of the "London  
Standing Committee" that the work sanctioned should  
not be left without first having obtained written  
permission from either Mr. Pritchard or the Clerk  
to the Tribunal which granted the Certificate.

It is obviously unreasonable to expect to be  
released from National Service while men of the  
same class and grade are kept in military service  
with all its obligations and disabilities.

Faithfully your brother,

*Frank G. Janaway*

P.S.—Please communicate the above to other brethren.

*The Secretary of State has written me expressing  
his appreciation of the tone of this letter.*

in the position of soldiers and must not therefore expect to be released till they were demobilised! It was no wonder that the Secretary of State for War wrote expressing his appreciation of such a letter.

This letter filled me with burning indignation and I wrote at once to brother F. G. Jannaway, and then later to the L.S.C. protesting against its issue, pointing out the dangerous implications of their unlawful admissions and concessions, and repudiating their advice (for reasons that will transpire). I reminded them that the brethren had faithfully fulfilled the conditions of their exemptions; and that as the emergency need for their work had passed away, and as the brethren were civilians and 'not under Military Control' they were perfectly free to leave, as I had been officially informed by several authorities. I said further, that what so alarmed me was that they (the L.S.C.) and brother Jannaway, who were now regarded as the authorities in the matter of our exemptions, should concede to the Government the right to hold the brethren in servitude (as they had done in this letter) at a time when the Government had released all other conditionally exempted religious objectors: and so discriminate against the brethren as if they were not civilians, but under Military Control. After the lapse of three weeks the L.S.C. sent me the following reply:

"Mr. Viner Hall  
40 The Parade, Sutton Coldfield

The Clapham Public Hall, London SW  
20.12.18

Dear brother Hall, Your letter of the 28th ultimo has been carefully considered by the London Standing Committee who are of the opinion that you are labouring under a serious misapprehension of the position. The Military Service Acts were passed whereby all men in specified age groups were deemed to have joined the Forces, with certain specified exceptions. The application of these Acts, in the case of the brethren was that they were placed outside the provision of the Acts conditional upon their undertaking work of National Importance. So long as these Acts remain in force, the application of them to the brethren remains in force; and until they are repealed it is the duty of every brother to remain under the conditions imposed upon him unless specially released. To attempt to escape would be dishonourable. As regards any hardship brethren may be subjected to, it is immeasurably less, in almost every case, than is experienced by men who have had to join up. The circular mentioned by you as being issued by the Ministry of Munitions has no reference to brethren holding conscience certificates. We think most strongly that it is not right for brethren to attempt to escape from their obligations in this matter, but that they should set an example to others in that they are prepared to '*swear to their own hurt and change not*'.

Faithfully your brother (for the London Standing Committee)  
Henry E. Purser

The London Standing Committee

22.12.18

Dear brethren, After a lapse of three weeks I received your reply to my urgent protest dated November 28th. In reply I would say I am not labouring under any misapprehension whatsoever, and further I may say your letter is in no sense a reply to mine. The most important part of the letter you entirely ignore:

1. The proclamation of the Minister of Munitions under Royal Warrant issued on November 12th concerned all men working in controlled establishments who could be spared. Many to my personal knowledge having certificates of conditional exemption of all ages left at once and returned to their own jobs.
2. But if there was any doubt about our liberty to leave under the above proclamation it was finally dissipated on November 14th by Mr. Beck's answer on behalf of the Ministry of National Service that men on work of National Importance who held certificates of Conditional Exemption (as we all do) were free to leave their work with the right to apply anew for exemption only when their class or classes were called up. **IF RECRUITING WAS RESUMED.** We were not mentioned by name for obvious reasons and because it was not necessary – we being men ‘holding an exemption to which a condition was attached’. Our cases were thus specifically provided for in this answer. I have this stated in writing dated December 3rd from no less an authority than that of H. Gibbon Pritchard Esq. This letter was accompanied with a typed copy of Mr. Beck's answer referred to above. On November 19th I had received a reply regarding my own case from the Local Government Board enclosing me the new regulations governing all exemptions, which embodied the previous Government pronouncements I have mentioned. This Circular was R244, the President of the L.G.B. instructing his Secretary in reply to my enquiries to refer me to para. 3 of the said regulations, while in his letter to me of December 3rd Mr. Pritchard had expressly stated that my case was subject to these new regulations. Therefore, if they govern my case, **AS THEY DO,** (and I have it on authority of the Clerk to the Tribunal, November 15th, the Committee on Work of National Importance, December 3rd, and the President of the L.G.B. on November 19th) then they govern **ALL** our cases. Therefore as I am free in virtue of these regulations and authoritative Government pronouncements, so are our brethren.”

"In view of these notorious facts it is highly reprehensible for you to sanction brother F. G. Jannaway's circulating the very opposite impression as if the brethren were in the position of those poor ill-advised Army Reserve W, Home Office brethren – the men referred to who are working under the (HO) 'Committee for the employment of Conscientious Objectors' who were NOT to benefit under the aforesaid regulations, these being the Conscientious Objectors who were threatened with arrest and a re-call to the Colours should they leave their work without first having obtained sanction in writing from the Committee.

"Again I protest against the last paragraph of the circular letter dated November 13th issued with your sanction. To my mind it is **POSITIVELY WRONG** and calculated to jeopardise the safety of the brethren of Military age, should the military Authorities choose to make the use they could of such an admission coming from such a quarter. In this admission brother F. G. Jannaway veritably plays into the hands of the Military power. He abuses his position of confidence and trust imposed in him by the whole brotherhood to the extent of practically offering the brethren of military age to the Government. The whole thing is incredible – unthinkable! Yet this is what he does in conceding the right of the Military power to treat us and hold us during their own arbitrary pleasure, just the same as if we had accepted Military Service, instead of utterly repudiating it root and branch as we all did when our infeasible right to absolute exemption from all Military Service and control was recognised by the Government and upon which our exemptions were granted. But what distresses my soul to such an extent is that I believe this compromising letter was sent to the highest Military Authority in the land for his cognisance and sanction. The war is over. All recruiting has stopped. The Military Service Acts are suspended. The National Service Ministry no longer controls recruiting or exemptions. The conditions imposed on men doing work of National Importance are no longer binding. The Government have released us from obligation to fulfil those conditions, as I have proved, it is no longer the duty of brethren to continue to remain under the conditions imposed upon them, and it is therefore not dishonourable for brethren to avail themselves of this God-given way of escape. In view of these notorious facts I cannot for the life of me understand the policy of brethren who have done their level best to keep their own brethren in a servitude from which the Government themselves have released us.

"I trust you will take immediate steps to rectify our position and repudiate the wrong impression which has got abroad, and call attention to the relief to which they are now legally entitled as I have shown: otherwise I shall, if God permit, take steps to inform them myself. Kindly answer my letter in the course of a week, and much oblige.

Your affectionate brother Viner Hall

“Receiving no reply to the above letter, I mentioned these facts to brethren of my acquaintance, advising them to verify them by enquiry, as I had done, before leaving their work; and they all found that what I had told them was true: that it was unnecessary to ask anybody’s permission before leaving one’s work (except in the cases of men serving in the Special Constabulary, in the Fire Brigade and workers in the Red Cross. These were asked to continue to serve unless there were adequate reasons to the contrary). So that neither the Committee on Work of National Importance nor the Tribunal had any authority to forbid a brother to leave his work, and therefore had no power to grant ‘permission’. All that these Committees could say when their permission WAS asked, and all that they did say was, ‘We raise no objection’ – which showed that they had no legal ground on which they could object. Yet in spite of these facts brother F. G. Jannaway persisted in writing and acting as if he had some legal authority over the brethren to bind or to loose, saying, ‘In no case which I have represented has consent been refused’!

“But having protested against brother Jannaway’s (and the L.S.C.’s) unscriptural and illegal assumption of authority over the brethren, and having exposed the illegal character of their contentions in the foregoing and previous letters and assuming that all the brethren would free themselves as soon as the facts became known, I let the matter drop. But a year or two later when on a lecturing visit to Newport (Monmouthshire), brother David M. Williams, with whom I stayed, informed me that he had received his release from brother F. G. Jannaway, and showed me his Certificate of Discharge dated 15th May 1919 – seven months after the signing of the Armistice. I could hardly believe my eyes – the thing seemed so incredible. Here was a brother who had been kept in servitude by brother Jannaway for seven months after he was legally free to leave!

“This document was so important that I asked him if I might have it with a view to its publication in the interests of the brotherhood at some future time, and he gave it to me, and it is reproduced in facsimile on page 77.

“The sole reason I am publishing this Certificate and the Circular Letter of 13th November 1918 is purely for the scriptural object and purpose of showing how power corrupts, and to what lengths even brethren will go when they enter into covenant relationship with the State, as we have seen in the cases of two otherwise good Kings of Judah: giving away the treasures of the House of the Lord to secure the help of the King of Syria in one case, and in giving gold stripped from the doors of the Temple to conciliate the King of Assyria in the other – occasioning disaster in both cases (2 Chron. 16; 2 Kings 18).

“This Certificate of Discharge is the ‘Demobilisation Certificate’ mentioned in ‘Caesar and God’. The ‘Sequel’ to brother Jannaway’s unscriptural and illegal £10,000 bond with the War Office Authorities was: a brother of Christ acting as an Agent of the State under its MILITARY SERVICE ACTS in order to keep brethren of Christ at work ‘useful to the prosecution of the war’ (in this case for seven months after the Armistice) and then issuing a Certificate of Release freeing him to engage in other work. I need say no more except that these happenings show in what extreme danger the brethren were and to what an extent they might have been involved if it had not been for the interposition of divine providence in circumstances which averted such a catastrophe. These things also show how fatal it is to compromise: to give way when principle is at stake; and how wise and faithful the Apostle Paul was when he openly exposed and publicly resisted a false move on the part of the Apostle Peter; and why he refused to give way by subjection to others (whose doctrine and actions would have brought the brethren into bondage) in order to preserve our liberty in Christ – that the truth of the Gospel might continue with us. These facts suggest profound reflections.

“And now in order to complete the testimony to the truth and to preclude the possibility of any misapprehension or misunderstanding . . . while I was so strongly opposed to what these brethren did and said in certain directions I recognise nevertheless that the situation was doubtless over-ruled by God, and that for the relief and protection of the brotherhood – in a very desperate state of affairs. As a true brother enlightened in the things of God, I am obliged to acknowledge that God in times of crisis sometimes uses men whose actions and policy are not fully in accord with His principles – as certain men were used in the days of David – whose actions were disapproved and repudiated by David. And so in our own day in accord with the declaration of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:28 and elsewhere. Not that these facts excuse or exonerate brethren in the sight of God for acting on worldly-wise principles, I know; but no scribe instructed unto the kingdom of the heavens can doubt for one moment that God allows such men to have their way and that for an ultimately beneficent object – paradoxical as this may appear to some who have not yet fully apprehended the principle of divine providence”.

<sup>1</sup> The Committee responsible for “Work of National Importance”.

*The Bible Searcher and Witness*  
December 1942, p.25 et. seq.



MILITARY SERVICE ACTS, 1916—1919.

TELEGRAPH OR }  
TELEPHONE } 525 Brixton.

F. G. JANNAWAY.

THORNCLIFFE,  
99, STOCKWELL PARK ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W.9

To David M. Williams,  
of 3 Constance St., Newport, Mon  
P. 158 L. 4 War Office Register of Christadelphians.

I am authorised by the Ministry of National Service to inform you  
that there is no objection to your undertaking employment with  
the British Tube Co Newport, Mon.  
and therefore you are free so to engage.

Date 15 MAY 19

Signed F. G. Jannaway  
Keeper of War Office Register of Christadelphians.

# CHAPTER VII

## TOWARDS WORLD WAR II

IN THE MID 1930's the prospect of another European war was looming larger and the minds of the brethren were again directed to the possible need of once more informing the British Government of our position as Conscientious Objectors.

In 1935, the Birmingham Central Ecclesia took the initiative to set up, within the Temperance Hall/Central Fellowship, a national Military Service Committee and issued to brethren in their fellowship a statement of advice which included such statements as:

“We must recognise that we have no right to exemption: we can claim nothing” and “we are willing to place our services at the disposal of the State in any direction needed . . .”

Concern was felt by brethren in other fellowships but nothing was done until the gathering clouds of 1938 and the Munich Crisis, when it was felt that war with Germany would inevitably come. The British Government itself started preparations for introducing compulsory “National Service”. The changed nature of warfare meant that a future war would not be confined to the “battle-fronts” on “foreign fields”.

In the light of these developments brother Viner Hall, as an individual responsibility, once more felt impelled to advise the brethren in a circular dated 8th February 1939, as follows:

“The reason we have nothing to do with war, and the reason we cannot enrol in any organisation which exists for the purpose of offensive or defensive warfare is because the Law of Christ prohibits every form of retaliation”.

### NATIONAL SERVICE

“IT IS A SCHEME TO MAKE US READY FOR WAR” –

The Prime Minister, January 23rd 1939

“Once a man signs, he is a conscript. Do not forget that fact. This scheme is only partially voluntary. It is only voluntary until he has signed, and once he has signed he is a conscript . . .

What we are discussing here is war and how to face it. Dodge it as you can, twist it as you care, but face the facts. This voluntary scheme is not to be for A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) alone; that is a minor part of it. It is to get Territorials, the Regular Army, the Gunners, the ordinary men of the human race, to share these things. Follow your flag. Once we agree to this Motion, the next demand will inevitably come along. 'You must train your soldier. He is now a gunner, he is no longer an ordinary man who slogs along through life. He is a first class mechanic, and he is to be brought in before war starts and trained'."

Mr. Buchanan in Debate on National Service, December 20th, 1938  
("Parliamentary Debates", Vol. 342, No. 31, p.2782-3)

### **FACING THE FACTS**

Dear brethren, – Greeting in the Lord. The foregoing is quite sufficient to indicate the extreme gravity of the present crisis. It shows that National Service is not the innocent thing of popular representation. And now that we have the National Service Guide in our hands we are quite sure what it means. It means ENROLMENT FOR CIVIL DEFENCE: to make the country strong in order to "ensure peace" as Mr. Chamberlain says in his personal message on page 2 of the Guide, which "points the way" in which you can best "play your part" in the service of the country to that end.

National Service is therefore only another name for Military Service. A study of the Guide makes this perfectly clear. So that those who enrol under this scheme become an integral part of a Great National Force, which is being organised and trained for the express purpose of Defensive Warfare. In other words, when you enrol you join an Army Reserve – An Auxiliary Army – which, as you will see, embraces Army Reserves and the Auxiliary Services – all of which are united in the National Service Organisation.

### **OUR PLAIN DUTY**

If this is true, must we not decline the National Service scheme, and refuse to be enrolled as we did during the Great War? This is the position required of us (no matter what the consequences of refusal may entail) because the doctrine and commandments of Christ prohibit the resistance of evil or resort to force – making criminal the thought that might lead to retaliation or revenge – a doctrine which cuts up by the roots every excuse for offensive or defensive warfare. For this reason, under no circumstances can we join the ranks of those who make war. So that to us – the brethren of Christ – all forms of conscription or compulsory registration and training for Military purposes whether in time of war or peace are wrong. And what to us is forbidden under conscription we cannot undertake voluntarily. The teaching of Christ requires our steadfast adherence to the fundamental principle of our individual freedom in Him; and His doctrine knows no frontiers and is strictly NON-NATIONAL. This as you know is the reason we have never

voted or taken any part in the government of the country of our birth. But we dutifully pay all the imposts of the Government as the Lord himself enjoined (Matt. 17:27); and so likewise do we obey their laws (so long as their laws do not conflict with the higher law of Christ) as the Apostles command. And being in the world but not of the world (politically speaking) our position is that of "*Strangers and sojourners*" in our native country; for "*here*", as the Apostle Paul declared, "*we have no continuing city, but seek one to come*" (Heb. 13:12-14). In these circumstances and having been "*made free*" by the Lord of heaven and earth we (His children) possess an indisputable and indefeasable divine right to Absolute Exemption from Military Service – a right which the Government acknowledged and honoured during the Great War in giving us exemption from all forms of Military Service, as the records of the "Test Case" through all its stages – from the Local up to the Central Tribunal (which are in our possession) prove.

So that in our position we have nothing to do with the State and never have had anything to do with the State as I have shown, and as all our records prove. For these reasons the State has no right to conscript our service. But while this is true we are quite at liberty to work for the State in a purely civil capacity (as we do for a private employer of labour) which leaves us free as the teaching and service of Christ requires. Freely explain your position to the representative of any Committee who may call on you, as I have done; for our position in Christ is unassailable.

Finally, bear well in mind the apostolic injunctions which are applicable in all cases of enquiry, namely, 1 Peter 3:15 and 2 Tim. 2:24 – "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*" (Gal. 5:1, 1 Cor. 7:23).

With fervent love in the truth, I am, faithfully your brother and fellow-servant in Christ,  
Viner Hall."

He followed this up with a letter to the Birmingham Military Service Committee dated 23rd February 1939, and this is also reproduced in extenso:

"Dear Brethren, Some months ago I promised brother Carter to send you my criticism of certain statements in your Military Service pamphlet of March 1936, and on the new petition which has been prepared for presentation to Parliament in the event of the refusal of the Government to negotiate. Brother Carter is acquainted with my views, but in order that there shall be no misapprehension I wish first to state our position as I have always viewed it:

'We steadfastly adhere to the fundamental principle of our individual freedom in Christ; and as the doctrine and commandments of Christ forbid the resistance of evil or resort to force – prohibiting the thought that might lead to retaliation or revenge – under no circumstances can we join the ranks of those who make war. So that to us, the brethren of Christ, all forms of conscription or compulsory registration and

training for Military purposes, whether in time of war or peace are wrong. But that while we, the children of God are 'free', as the Lord himself declared (Matt. 17:26-27) and while it is true that the doctrine of Christ knows no frontiers and is strictly non-National, yet notwithstanding we dutifully and cheerfully pay the imposts of the Government as the Lord enjoined – "*Lest we offend them*" and so likewise do we obey the laws of the State (so long as those laws do not conflict with the higher law of Christ) as the Apostles command. And being in the world, but not of the world, we cannot vote or take part in the government of the country of our birth. So that, politically speaking, our position is that of voteless '*strangers and sojourners*' in our native country; for '*here*' as the Apostle Paul declared, '*have we no continuing city, but seek one to come.*' (Heb. 13:12-14).

In these circumstances and having been '*made free*' by the Lord of heaven and earth, we possess an indisputable and indefeasible DIVINE RIGHT to absolute exemption from Military Service – a RIGHT which the Government acknowledged and honoured during the Great War in granting us unconditional exemption from Military Service. Some useful work was VOLUNTEERED, but NOT as a condition of exemption – as the Records of the Test Case through all the stages of the hearing from the Local through the Appeal to the Central Tribunal (which are in my possession) prove.

I therefore deplore and repudiate your recently published statement that 'we must recognise that we have no RIGHT to exemption; we can claim – nothing. We are suppliants . . .' (p.4) I also deplore your further statement (p.8) where you say 'We are willing to place our services at the DISPOSAL OF THE STATE in ANY direction needed . . .' And 'that as a body we are prepared to offer our services wholeheartedly in ANY DIRECTION demanded by National Emergency' (p.9). I repudiate these statements because, as Citizens of the Kingdom of the Heavens, we have nothing to do with the State; and must not therefore enter into covenant relationship with a human Government, as you are proposing to do, if the statements I object to mean anything at all. All we are required by God to do is to pay the taxes of the Gentile State and obey its laws, except when its laws run counter to the higher law of Christ – and NOTHING more. Here our DUTIES begin and end. But, if and when the State chooses to IMPOSE some form of compulsory service, and we accept civil work UNDER COMPULSION, it is always to be understood and formally stated that we only conform (if not opposed to our conscience) as an act of grace or as a concession – as the Lord commanded Peter in reference to the tribute money saying, '*We the children of God, are free; notwithstanding, lest we offend them, pay the money for me and thee.*' (Matt. 17:24-27)

This important incident of the tribute money illustrates the principle I am contending for. It shows that if and when circumstances make it possible

for the brethren of the Lord to yield, it is not because they acknowledge that the Government has any RIGHT to their service as of DEBT (as the statements I complain of concede, and as a number of admissions made by the late brother F. G. Jannaway imply – as if we were conscripts and the State had some authority over our bodies). The State has no authority over our bodies. But the State may by its power IMPOSE service, and many imprison those who refuse the service; but this power gives them no moral or spiritual right to conscript the servants of Christ in their interest; and if they in their ignorance or perversity presume to do so, then they offend.

Now if and when we agree to engage in civil work for the Government we must reserve the RIGHT (as the young brother of our Test Case told the Tribunal) to change our employment – the reason being that, as a servant of Christ it was essential in his spiritual interests that he should be free (and this very important declaration was not questioned or disputed by the Tribunal); and accordingly, when in course of time he found his situation was militating against his work in the truth, he changed his employment, and thus retained that freedom of body and conscience which is our inalienable right in Christ. So that if and when our young brethren engage in any work of National Importance they must do so as free men; and UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MUST WORK BE OTHERWISE UNDERTAKEN; for the brethren of Christ cannot become a ‘battalion of non-combatant soliders in mufti.’

During the Great War the nominal Christian Government recognised our freedom which, in the Grace of God, we retained in spite of the efforts of certain well-meaning brethren whose statements, concessions and admissions were likely to have brought us into bondage – one brother in his over-anxiety and desire to placate the War Office voluntarily entering into a ‘covenant’ with them and BINDING himself in the sum of £10,000 as a guarantee that the brethren of Christ who were to be granted Army Council certificates would not abscond!!! And then at the end of the War, his gratuitous efforts with the War Office and the Pelham Committee strove might and main (but all to no purpose) to get those departments to promulgate a law to prevent the brethren from leaving their work (just as if they had been and still were conscripts) at a time when they were absolutely free to leave, as the Home Office informed me direct in November, 1918, – evidently thinking that this ‘bond’ – ‘my bond with the War Office’ – justified him in endeavouring to keep us at our work of National Importance, as if we were a ‘battalion of non-combatants’ who ought not to be released till the combatant soldiers were demobilised. He therefore presumed to issue a kind of demobilisation certificate of his own! – a copy of which I have in my possession together with other documentary evidence substantiating what I have said. I mention these things to show how unlawful and dangerous such bonds and covenants are, for your warning that you may avoid a mistake so

unscriptural and so fraught with danger. At the end of the war I determined (God permitting) to make these facts known to the brotherhood that in any future crisis their position might not be jeopardised as it was by these covenants and bonds and compromising statements and admissions made during, and at the end of the Great War.

(In these criticisms of brother F. G. Jannaway – criticisms I first made to him personally and at the time, as also to the London Standing Committee – I wish it to be clearly understood that I am not in any way minimising the good work which, in the Grace of God, he did on behalf of the brotherhood from 1916-1918).

Now there is an aspect of our position which to my mind has not been sufficiently taken into account. It is our position as 'Preachers of Righteousness' in the country. We are not parasites, asking something for nothing; we are CONSTRUCTIVE workers on the highest plane as well as on the lower commercial plane. We are ratepayers without complaining, and tax payers without representation. So that in EVERY sense we are of service to the State, in that we publicly uphold the Authority and Name of God in the Country, and teach the truth; and that at our own expenses and without any material payment or reward. This is very important and must be kept to the fore; because those who engaged in work of this kind – the official clergy – the Government not only pay them for their work, but unconditionally exempt them from Military Service. The State recognises that those who profess and teach the Gospel in their own Church must not be entangled with the affairs of a Military or secular occupation; that their spiritual teachers must be free; and so must the true servants of Christ be free; and free not only to teach and preach the truth, but free also to prepare to teach and preach. So that on all grounds the Government is bound to recognise and honour our right to exemption from Military and National Service. They have no argument to offer against it; and they are committed by their own principles to allow and grant it.

Coming now to your proposed Petition; clause 5 of this Petition is open to the same objection as the other statements I have criticised. In the second part of this clause you say 'They are willing as a matter of duty that their services should be used for the benefit of the Country in any work not involving violation of conscience'; when, as I have shown, it is not lawful for us as the servants of Christ to pledge our services or the services of our brethren to the State. Brethren of Christ have nothing to do with the State and never have had anything to do with the State. For this reason it is NOT our duty to 'PLACE' our services at the disposal of the State in a National Emergency'. I do hope and trust you will realise before it is too late that such a statement as this, to say the very least, would commit us to National Defence Service – to defensive War Service – as set out in the National Service Guide of last month. It would give the Government the false impression that we are British National Patriots who endorse their Military

measures and approve war. We cannot appear as War-approving National Patriots aiding and abetting that which the Lord condemned in letter and spirit. I know you make certain provisos, but these do not nullify the implication of the facts I have called attention to – which the new situation that has arisen since the introduction of the re-armament programme and the establishment of National Service for DEFENSIVE FIGHTING serves to emphasise and bring out into clear light – I would urge upon you the necessity of an immediate review of the Christadelphian position as set forth particularly in your Military Service pamphlet of March, 1936, and that with a view to a re-statement of our position – which should be one of strict disassociation from all Government measures of a Military nature; and not only so, but which in faithfulness to Christ should be a ‘separation witness’ against War as arising from man’s disregard of divine precepts; and because of which the retributive judgments of God are shortly to descend upon the world.

Enclosed herewith please find copy of a recent letter to a brother on ‘Our Freedom’, which I wish you to consider with the foregoing. With love in the Truth and praying for your guidance and blessing I am your brother and fellow-servant faithfully in Christ unto the Kingdom of God, Viner Hall”.

This elicited the following correspondence:

Dear brother Hall, I drew your letter of February 23rd to the notice of the Military Service Committee at their meeting on Saturday last, and its contents were noted by them.

With kind regards, Sincerely your brother, John Carter. 22nd March 1939”

“Dear brother John Carter, Thank you for your brief letter of the 22nd duly received. But cannot you tell me anything more than you have said? Am I to understand the letter is under consideration and that you intend to do something about it; that you are going to reply to my criticisms and suggestions; or you are convinced that what I have written is true and considering a restatement of our position? Or am I to understand your Committee have decided to ignore the letter? Please let me know definitely and per return if convenient and keep nothing back from me as I have kept nothing back from you, as these things vitally concern us all.

Herewith is a copy of brother A. H. Jannaway’s pamphlet which the Secretary sent to me the other day. Please return it when read. You will note that item 1914 September is incorrect. The T. H. Ecclesia never signed the Petition and at the adjourned meeting 2nd December 1914 at Priory Rooms, Old Square, Birmingham, at a special meeting of the Temperance Hall Ecclesia they formally refused to accept the London ‘Amended Petition’ in place of their own Petition of August 13th 1914 – which only petitioned for exemption from the ‘bearing of Arms’. This was the Petition which they decided to ‘place on record and reserve for possible presentation in the



future', and not the 'Amended Petition' which asked for exemption from Military Service. I cannot excuse the paragraph (1914 – September) on page 16 of 'Christadelphians and the World' in view of these facts. This paragraph is a reprint from 'Evidence' (pages 8 and 9) issued by the Mornington Hall Ecclesia in October 1915, but without the somewhat explanatory footnote. I object to this paragraph because it is inaccurate and misleading and because it appears to have been written to make it appear that there had been continuity and unbroken repudiation of Military Service from the very beginning – like the inaccurate statement in 'Without the Camp', on page 33, where it is said the Birmingham Ecclesia agreed to and signed the Amended Petition. I am only mentioning these facts incidentally and for your information as the reason I object to the statement and statements complained of.

With love in the Truth, I am your brother and fellow-servant faithfully in Christ, Viner Hall, 29th March 1939.

P.S. Please note correction in date above and that the Birmingham Petitions of August 13th 1914 was unrescinded and still on the 'Ecclesial Statute Book' so to speak, when we were disfellowshipped in 1919."

To this brother Carter replied:

"Dear brother Hall, I cannot say much further to my previous letter. The statement to which you raised objection was read and approved by brethren from all over the country before it was sent out and while we have noted your criticisms, we do not think it would serve a profitable purpose to enter into discussion of them at the present time.

I thank you for the sight of the pamphlet and for your comments on previous mis-statements in connection with the same matter.  
Faithfully your brother, John Carter."

On 20th May 1939 the Military Training Act, 1939 became law, providing for every male British subject between 20 and 21 years of age to be registered for Military Training. Section 3 of the Act provided for Conscientious Objectors:

- (a) to being registered in the military training register, or
- (b) to undergoing military training, or
- (c) to performing combat duties.

The first cases affecting brethren were heard in Birmingham in July 1939, but the Act had hardly become operative when it was superceded by the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939, which became law on 3rd September 1939.

This Act, similarly, provided, under Section 5, for conscientious objection, and gave Tribunals authority to direct either:

- (a) that the appellant shall, without conditions, be registered in the register of conscientious objectors; or
- (b) that he shall be conditionally registered in that register until the end of the present emergency, the condition being that he must until that event undertake work specified by the tribunal, of a civil character and under civilian control and, if directed by the Minister, undergo training provided or approved by the Minister to fit him for such work; or
- (c) that he shall be registered as a person liable under this Act to be called up for service but to be employed only in non-combatant duties.

Britain declared war on Germany, 30th September 1939.

By a proclamation of 1st October 1939, men of 21 were required to be enrolled.

# CHAPTER VIII

## WORLD WAR II

In April 1940 in an Editorial in *The Christadelphian* headed, "Caesar and God", brother John Carter wrote:

"In the present circumstances, when the law allows exemption from military service without any conditions, or with the condition that civil work under civilian control be done, brethren have been advised not to ask for the former. Why, some have asked; when others get unconditional exemption, cannot we? The answer is:

- (1) that 25 years ago an offer of alternative service was made by the London Standing Committee;
- (2) the present Military Service Committee have informed the authorities that we are today in the same position as then, both regarding our inability to accept any military service and also our willingness to do civil work if required;
- (3) that we cannot honourably ask for something on grounds of conscience which is only a matter of convenience; and
- (4) (and most important, for the statements of the Military Service Committee would have no binding force if contrary to the word of God), such service is involved in the apostle's counsel . . ."

And then quoted Romans 13:5-8.

In response to this brother Viner Hall printed and circulated to brethren in all fellowships, the following letter dated 17th April 1940:

### "CAESAR AND GOD"

"Ye are bought with a price; be not yet the servants of men."

"Ye are bought with a price; become not bondservants of men."

(1 Cor. 7:23 AV and RV)

"For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

(1 Cor. 3:21-23)

Dear brethren – Greeting in the Lord. After reading the Editorial in *The Christadelphian* for this month I am strongly moved to write you again; for in this article entitled “Caesar and God”, the writer seeks to show that a Gentile Government is scripturally justified in making bondservants of the brethren of Christ: and says in effect, that if we refuse such bondservice we make ourselves transgressors in resisting an ordinance of God! In support of this contention he wrests the statements of Apostles (which have nothing to do with the bondservice of forced labour) and sets the Apostle Paul against himself; for the Apostle says, “*become not bondservants of men.*”

Brother Carter goes even further and contends that we are under a divine obligation to accept such bondservice, even when the law says we may be free; because, he alleges, “most important . . . such service is involved in the Apostle’s counsel!”. He therefore advises you not to ask for unconditional exemption from military service. Now if the Central Committee offered to accept alternative bondservice of forced labour; and if after their mistake has been pointed out to them they still feel they cannot honourably avail themselves of release from their bond which is open to them as scripturally enunciated in Proverbs 6:1-5, then let them engage in the service purely and solely as a human arrangement, which it is, (for there was not the slightest scriptural justification for their offer of alternative service); but do not allow them to impose such bondservice as a doctrine of divine obligation, as brother Carter is endeavouring to do in the article in question; for it was by arrangements such as these that the union of Church and State was brought about. I need say no more at present. The letter printed below<sup>1</sup> which was sent to the Christadelphian Committees in February 1939, is the Scriptural answer to the Editorial “Caesar and God”.

Faithfully your brother in Christ, Viner Hall, 17th April 1940.

<sup>1</sup> See letter of 23rd February 1939, ante.

## **CIVIL DEFENCE AND REGISTRATION OF WOMEN FOR WAR WORK**

Early in 1941, two new measures were before the British Parliament to mobilise all in the War Effort – these were:

1. A National Service Bill – Compulsory Recruitment for Civil Defence and
2. The Compulsory Registration of Women for War Work.

While these measures were still under discussion, brother Viner Hall wrote a number of letters to the various “Military Service Committees” of the brethren then existing, as well as to individuals who sought his guidance. The most important of these are reproduced (principally from *The Bible Searcher and Witness* for 1941/2) for their timeless relevance and guidance for a generation that “*has not seen war*”.

27.2.41 To the Birmingham Military Service Committee

*"Whom resist steadfast in the faith . . ."* (1 Peter 5:8-11).

"Dear brethren, in view of recent developments:

1. The Government measure for the Compulsory Registration of Women for War Work and
2. The National Service Bill – Compulsory Recruitment for Civil Defence services – which was given a second reading in Parliament last night.

I am deeply concerned, and am moved to press upon you the necessity of an uncompromising stand against both these measures.

In one of your pamphlets or circulars you visualised the likelihood of your making mistakes in these matters: and serious mistakes have already been made; but that is no reason why they should proceed any further; but rather now that the red light has suddenly shown itself it is time to jam on the brakes and so avert the disaster which now so obviously threatens.

So do let me prevail upon you to give your VERY serious attention to an aspect of the British Government as scripturally set forth in my letter of 6th instant, enclosed herewith, in answer to "Three questions on our attitude to the Authorities". This aspect of the Gentile State, which bears so vitally upon the attitude which the servants of Christ are required to observe in regard to its enactments, appears hitherto either to have been ignored or forgotten with lamentable results in certain directions. And for this reason I urge you to reconsider the whole question of our relation to the State that the brotherhood be not ensnared to their spiritual undoing – in the loss of their Separateness in Christ, which is now being so seriously threatened.

And I beseech you not to allow any desire to appear consistent, or any fleshly desire to conciliate the enemies of the Cross of Christ, deter you from taking a firm stand. Say:

"No! We have already gone to the utmost limits of concession in our engaging in work of Civil Importance outside all war organisations and outside Civil Defence Services and for the good and sufficient reason that Warfare in all its aspects and branches is diametrically opposed to the letter and spirit of the doctrine and law of Christ enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount and amplified in the Apostolic writings. And we as the brethren of Christ cannot therefore be enrolled in any Government service in connection with war whether for Offence against the enemy, or in Civil Defence which is also against the enemy. The principles of Christ demand our standing aloof altogether that we do not even appear to approve or endorse warfare. And this is the reason why we denaturalise ourselves in the land of our birth; is the reason we do not vote; is the reason we stand entirely aside; for not otherwise could we maintain our separateness in Christ. For these reasons, then, we shall refuse to be enrolled in any of the Government Defence Services – Civil or otherwise."

This must now be your position, brethren, and that with a face of flint if, in the grace of God, the brotherhood are to be saved – as Dr. Thomas exhorted “Be not enrolled; go to prison rather”. The other letters enclosed are to further strengthen the position advocated in this letter. May God guide, strengthen and bless you in the true stand. With love in the Truth, and with prayers for your protection and deliverance . . .”

### 6.3.1941 To an individual brother

*“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness . . .”* (2 Cor. 11:14-15)

“My Dear Brother, Affectionate greeting in the Lord. Regretting delay in replying to your valued letter of February 26th, duly received.

1. I agree with Dr. Thomas that the Powers that be are the “Sin Powers of the World” – as the apostle Peter teaches in his first epistle, 5:8-9 where he commands the servants of Christ to RESIST as an “*adversary*” the Pagan Government, whom he likens to a predatory lion in one aspect of things – in the things pertaining to the teaching and faith of Christ; but to whom in another aspect, as “*governors*”, he commands obedience (1 Peter 2:13-14). So that in political matters – in the ordinances of tribute for the maintenance of the State and for the regulation and good order of society – to all laws that do not conflict with our work and service of Christ – we are to be obedient: and so the apostle Paul in Rom. 13:1-7. This limits the extent of our obedience to the State to that of the citizens of another State who are “*strangers and pilgrims*” (1 Peter 2:11-12) – passing through and therefore under no obligation to render any “*service*” whatsoever. And in no other way can the different statements concerning our obligations of obedience to magistrates and governors (Titus 3:1-2 and others already cited) be otherwise reconciled with the command to “*Resist steadfast in the Faith*” – the very same principalities, powers and magistrates – which in other places we are commanded to obey.
2. The Powers that be are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; and are therefore “*the devil*” who cast some of the servants of Christ into prison in the first and subsequent centuries and right down to the 20th – to 1914-18 – as we so well know (Revelation 2:10).
3. And had he not have been RESISTED – as the true servants of Christ have always resisted his attempts to deprive them of their rights and privileges as the free citizens of an independent and superior and more powerful state – the Heavenly Jerusalem – of whom they are the accredited ambassadors – they would have been subverted and sacrificed

their position as the representatives of Christ. If this is true, then the scriptural answer to your first question is: There is no sense in which it is our 'duty' to offer any 'service' to the State in return for benefits received".

So likewise the scriptural answer to your second question is: "No – emphatically, No! for we dare not as servants of Christ make any concession to the enemy: we cannot do evil that good may come. But we can do good that good may come; and the form of good that WE are under a divine obligation to practice is general well-doing to ALL and SUNDRY and at ALL times; and to the evil-disposed as well as to the well-disposed; and this well-doing is prescribed and defined in 1 Peter 2:11-12:

*"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

*If this is true, then the answer to your question No. 3 is: "No, if such work necessitated the neglect of the work of Christ. But IF the occasional fire-watching can be carried out without obligation and as a private individual doing good unto all men as opportunity offers, then such work in the special circumstances now existent would be doing good as the Lord prescribed – spontaneous, free and unconstrained – as all our work is required to be: "heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:23-24; Eph. 6:5-8).*

And now having said so much I would just add by way of conclusion that the brotherhood are in great danger by reason of the fact that one of the Powers that be is fighting a just war (from a human point of view) and because the Government is more friendly disposed towards the servants of Christ than in the past; but this fact does not in any way alter its status as one of the Powers of the present Constitution of Sin with whom it is unlawful for brethren of Christ to enter into covenant relationship – as if we belonged to the State and owed our liberty in Christ to their good graces. We hold our Patent of Freedom from Christ – the Lord of Heaven and Earth. But, alas, many brethren are now acting as if the State were our Master and benefactor and patron – a plausible but false doctrine which inculcates reciprocity of "service" and would make such service obligatory – as in the past – when prevalence of this false doctrine resulted in the Union of Church and State.

These brethren have lost sight of the declaration of Paul that the government of his day was a beast of prey (see 2 Tim. 4:17) and that of Peter that this same government was "*your adversary the devil – a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8-9) and of the Lord's declaration that the Powers that be were "*The devil who shall cast some of you into prison*" (Rev. 2:10) and of the "*The Kings of the earth and their armies*" who

shall exist at the epoch of his coming and therefore the present governments of the world whom he calls "*the Beast*" – "That Old Serpent which is the Devil and Satan" – whose government he is coming to bind or suppress for a thousand years (Rev. 19 and 20).

It is high time the brethren were roused to realise their true position in relation to the "*Powers that be*" that they be not involved and compromised to their condemnation. I am enclosing copies of correspondence – three letters as supplementary to what I have written. Please return them soon as I may need them. I must close now – having written much more than I intended – and reciprocating your love in the truth and remembering you in all my prayers, I am, your brother faithfully in Christ, unto the Kingdom of God, in His grace, Viner Hall."

### **CIVIL DEFENCE BILL**

A Bill was presented to the House of Commons on 19th March, 1941, "To make provision for calling up men for civil defence and to amend the National Service (Armed Forces) Acts, 1939."

In order that the issue before the brotherhood might be fully understood, I quote critical extracts. The explanatory Note introducing the Bill stated:

The purpose (Clause (1)) of the Bill is to enable men liable for military service under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act 1939, and conditionally registered conscientious objectors to be called up for civil defence on broadly the same lines as for the Armed Forces. . . . Men so called up for civil defence will be taken into service of the Crown (Clause 2(4)) and will ordinarily be posted to a civil defence force controlled by a local authority or to the police war reserve."

The important aspect or implication to note is that, by this Act, Civil Defence became, as it was subsequently described, "an integral part of an organisation designed to forestall or frustrate the efforts of the enemy" – and as such an organisation which brethren and sisters could not endorse, and therefore necessitating their opposition to service in this Force.

Further Clauses of the Act underlined the essential character of Civil Defence, and the "open-ended" nature of the duties involved. Clause 3(1) included:

"A person . . . taken into the service of the Crown shall be deemed to have been taken into such service on the following terms:

(a) he shall continue in the service of the Crown until the end of the present emergency . . . ;

(b) he shall serve with the civil defence force specified . . . or with such other civil defence force as may from time to time be notified . . . ;



(e) he shall . . . perform the duties of a member of the civil defence force . . . and may . . . exercise . . . the powers of a member of that force, or, if that force is the police war reserve, of a constable;

(f) he shall perform such further duties as may . . . be required of him . . . being duties of a member of any other civil defence force . . . or if that other force is the police war reserve, of a constable;

(g) he shall be subject to the provisions of any regulations or orders for the time being in force under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts, 1939 and 1940, which create offences by members of the civil defence force with which he is for the time being serving;

(h) while serving with any civil defence force for which the rules are for the time being in force . . . as to the government and discipline of the force, he shall be subject to those rules, and, while not serving with such a force, he shall be subject to such provisions as to government and discipline as may be prescribed."

[underlining is mine, PMR]

It will be quite clear that these conditions made a member of a Civil Defence Force a "bondservant" of the State, and on the same status as any "soldier", or one sold, in opposition to the specific command, "*Ye are bought with a price; become not bondservants of men*" (1 Cor. 7:23 RV).

On the issue of the Bill, before it became law, brother Viner Hall sent a telegram, dated 3rd April, 1941, to Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour:

"Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour,

#### Re NATIONAL SERVICE BILL

Brethren of Christ cannot join the ranks of them that make war because the doctrine and law of Christ forbids even the thought that would lead to retaliation or revenge: and thereby cuts up by the roots for us every excuse for offensive or defensive warfare. For this reason under no circumstances will the brethren of Christ submit to enrolment in any Service of the State under the Crown in connection with War. Signed VINER HALL, Secretary. The Institute, Neva Road, Weston-super-Mare."

The next day he supplemented this telegram with the following letter:

The Right Honourable Ernest Bevin.

#### Re NATIONAL SERVICE BILL

Sir,

Confirming and supplementing my telegram of yesterday addressed to you at the House of Commons (a signed copy of which is enclosed herewith) I would say:

- (1) That brethren of Christ claim unconditional exemption from Military Service because the service and work of Christ requires them to be free as He and His disciples were free.
- (2) That they have renounced their citizenship in the present world – a position necessitated by the doctrine of Christ which knows no frontiers and is strictly non-national.
- (3) This is the reason we take no part in politics and never vote. And this also is the reason we cannot enrol in any National Force, Civil or otherwise.
- (4) We have always conscientiously objected to every form of Military Service. We are purely civilians: and any essential work we may have done or may be doing has been accepted or undertaken solely on account of its being entirely outside organisations which exist for the purpose of offensive or defensive warfare.
- (5) So that in cases where any of our brethren are engaged on work of National Importance, or where they may have changed their non-essential work under one civil employer for essential work under another civil employer they have not compromised their principles and incurred the liability for enrolment for Non-Combatant duties or service in a National Defence Force under the Crown, as the provisions of the National Service Bill implies.
- (6) So that not having compromised our principles as I have shown, are not the provisions of the National Service Bill requiring brethren of Christ to enrol in the Royal Civil Defence Force illegal and therefore without force?
- (7) Our position in Christ is unassailable and unalterable. Our case admits of no negotiation or compromise whatsoever. So that if your interpretation of the provision of the Bill, which I have questioned, should be upheld, and if you make no provision in the Bill to meet our conscientious scruples against enrolment in *any* Civil Defence Force, or in any State Service under the Crown in connection with warfare, then brethren of Christ will suffer imprisonment rather than submit to enrolment in any Government Force, Civil or otherwise.
- (8) Finally, I would remind you that the Government is formally committed to respect the conscientious religious scruples of the servant of Christ. For this reason in any Act of Parliament passed by a professedly Christian government they are bound to take into account and make adequate provision for the preservation of the religious liberties of the people over whom under God, and for the time being, they politically preside – and by all means in their power to maintain those liberties which are at once both the root and the flowering of true civilisation.

I am, Yours very truly, Viner Hall  
P.S. Two documents enclosed herewith confirming the foregoing.

The Bill was passed by Parliament, and became law on 10th April, 1941 as “Chapter 15 of The National Service Act 1941.”

In parallel with this approach to the Government, brother Hall wrote to all Military Service Committees as follows:

31.3.1941. To all Military Service Committees, Re the National Service Bill

**SUGGESTED LINE OF APPROACH TO THE GOVERNMENT**

Concerning the proposed Enrolment of Conscientious Objectors  
in the Civil Defence Forces of the Crown

“Sir, On behalf of Christadelphians, who hold what is called a ‘Conditional Exemption’ from Military Service and who, by reason of their holding such exemption, will now be liable to service in a ‘Civil Defence Force under the Crown’, I wish to say that no Christadelphian could under any circumstances consent to enrolment in any Civil Defence Force; because any Civil Defence Force in the Service of the Crown is in its very nature a Non-Combatant section of the Royal Army. And if there is one thing more plain than another in the Christadelphian objection to Military Service it is the fact that they have always been as conscientiously opposed to Non-Combatant Service as they have been to Combatant Service.

So that this being their unalterable position, and if you make no provision in the Bill to meet their conscientious scruples against enrolment in any Civil Defence Force or in any Service under the Crown in connection with warfare, then all Christadelphians will cheerfully suffer imprisonment rather than submit to enrolment in any Government Force, Civil or otherwise.

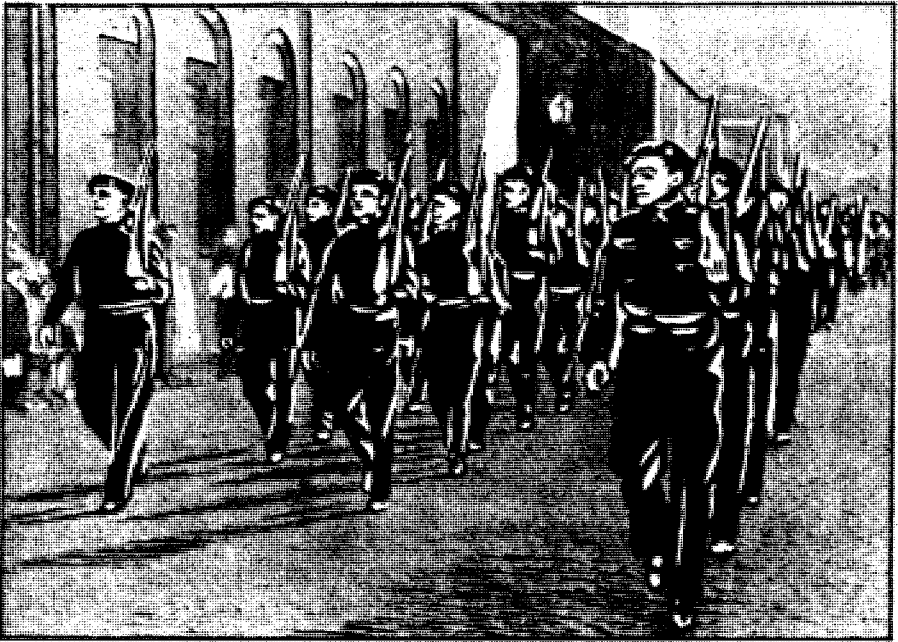
And here I may explain that what is called “conditional exemption” in the case of a Christadelphian, is Civil Work, voluntarily offered and freely undertaken, and that without obligation and because such Civil Work is entirely outside and separate from any Military Organisation or Government Scheme of Defence in connection with War. The conditional exemption WE have accepted cannot in these circumstances be interpreted as the equivalent of Non-Combatant Military Duties or Service; for only if our exemption could be so interpreted would it be lawful for you to seek to enrol Christadelphians for Non-Combatant duties in a defence force. But the work we have volunteered to do is private work under a civilian employer; and Christadelphians where they have changed their non-essential work under a civilian employer for essential work under another civilian employer have not thereby compromised their principles and incurred the liability to some form of Non-Combatant Military Service – as the provisions of the National Service Bill implies: and by such an unwarrantable interpretation proposes to deem all conditionally exempted conscientious objectors as enrolled in a Civil Defence Force so soon as the Bill becomes law.

*"Men called up for Civil Defence will become servants of the Crown, and thereby the whole status of the Home Defence Service will be raised to equality with the Forces of the Field."—News Chronicle, 1/3/41.*

## The Militant Nature of Civil Defence

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1942

### BIRMINGHAM'S ARMED WARDENS



The first parade of armed Civil Defence wardens in Birmingham was held by members of the Moseley Street and Billesley sub-divisions yesterday. Our photograph shows the men who have been trained by the City Transport Battalion Home Guard passing the base where Col. A. E. Jarrett took the salute.

*Reproduced from the Birmingham Mail by Permission, 30th Oct. 1947*

Christadelphians are Civilians, and as such they are outside the Army and have always conscientiously objected to enrolment in any Social, Political or Military Organisation whatsoever, and this is the reason they never vote; for Christadelphians are not Citizens of this world – a position necessitated by the doctrine of Christ which is strictly non-national.

This being our unalterable position in Christ you will see that our case admits of no compromise – that our religious position is unique – and for this reason our case should be taken into account and adequately provided for in any Act of Parliament passed by a professedly Christian Government which is formally committed to respect and provide for the conscientious religious liberties and scruples of the people over whom under God, and for the time being, they POLITICALLY rule. VINER HALL, 31.4.41.”

That Civil Defence Force was an integral part of the war effort, designed to “forestall and frustrate the attempts of the enemy” is vividly illustrated in the photograph which appeared in the *Birmingham Mail*, September 14th, 1942 which was reproduced, by permission, in another circular published by brother Hall (see the preceding page).

## REGISTRATION EMPLOYMENT ORDER FOR WOMEN

A generation conditioned by the “feminist” movement, “Equal Opportunity”, and anti-discrimination legislation may find it difficult to appreciate the shock experienced when, for the first time, women became the subjection of conscription for War Work, but are we to take the standards of the world as our guide as to what is right? I think not, and so I have no hesitation in reprinting brother Hall’s responses to the impositions of 1941 and beyond.

On April 10th, 1941 brother Hall wrote to Mr. Ernest Bevin:

“Sir,

In sending you the enclosed Declaration against the Registration Employment Order for Women, which is to come into force on April 19th, 1941, I am moved to say that this Government Order conscripting Christian Women for War Service is an outrage – in that should it be enforced, it will result in the establishment of a Political Inquisition and lead directly to religious persecution – as in the first century – when emissaries of the law entered the homes of Christians and “hailing men and *women* committed them to prison”! (Acts 8:3).

Have you thought of this? Are you prepared to invade the sacred precincts of the Christian home and lay hands upon our wives and daughters because, on religious grounds, they conscientiously object to enrolment in a State Service which exists for the publicly declared and specific purpose of war?

I can hardly believe that you have thought of the grave implications of this most sinister Government Order conscripting Christian wives and mothers for War Service. But if you have sanctioned the

institution of this Order in the full realisation of what it will mean for women professing the name of Christ, as our Sisters do, and who, in obedience to His commands, are voluntarily and faithfully engaging in the vitally essential duties of house and home or in useful civil work for their daily bread, as the teaching of Christ enjoins, then in faithfulness to Christ I would remind you that all those who presume so to afflict, persecute or oppress the defenceless friends of Christ render themselves liable to the judgment of God, as it is written: "*It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them which trouble you.*" And again, "*Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.*" (2 Thess. 1:6; Rom. 12:19).

I therefore hope and trust that in the grace of God you will follow my advice, as the Jewish Council followed the advice of Gamaliel, and "*refrain from these Christians, and let them alone*" in cancelling the Compulsory Clause of your Anti-Christian Order – "*lest ye be found fighting against God!*" (Acts 5:33-40).

I am, yours truly,  
VINER HALL"

The Declaration:

RE COMPULSORY REGISTRATION EMPLOYMENT ORDER  
CONSCRIPTING WOMEN FOR WAR WORK

Sir,

On behalf of Women in the Religious Communion Fellowship of the Brethren of Christ I beg to declare and say that the principles of our association in Christ, being what they are, under no circumstances can our Sisters conscientiously register for National Service – which is War service because such bondservice would be inimical to the Apostically enjoined duties of Christian women.

Our Sisters, equally with our Brethren, regard all carnal warfare as diametrically apposed to the letter and spirit of the doctrine and law of Christ – whose we are and whom we serve.

This being our position, and being called out and separated from the world (and for this reason we none of us ever vote or take part in any worldly organisation, social or political) we cannot consent to be enrolled in any War Work Organisation, or be registered in any Scheme of National Defence or in any movement connected with the War effort.

I am, yours faithfully,  
Viner Hall.  
(Ecclesial Secretary, Brethren of Christ)

Copies of the above documents were also sent to His Majesty the King with a covering telegram. "The Order conscripting women is an outrageous subversion of the principles of Christ. We appeal to you to order its cancellation." A copy was also sent to Winston Churchill, Prime Minister. The Minister of Labour, in reply to the last two communications, merely "noted" the attitude of "the Brethren of Christ", but their letter of 16th April 1941, signed by L. Beng, included the sentence:

"It is not the intention of the Department to ask persons to perform services against which they have genuine conscientious objections"

This latter statement of policy is worth noting for future use.

The associated letters to Military Service Committees are also reproduced.

31.3.1941 A further letter to the M.S.C.'s re National Registration of Women, included the suggested letter of protest to the Ministry of Labour as above 'Declaration'.

#### 21.4.1941 Letter to the London Advisory and Watching Committee

"Dear brother. Yours of the 18th received this morning. I regret your Committee has missed the point of our reason for objecting to the Registration for Employment Order for Women. If sisters register they are thereby recruited for a War Service; they thereby respond to a 'Call-up of Women', as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Labour has stated. In other words, their signing the Register makes – constitutes – them soldiers of the King for the publicly declared purpose of War Service; for once they sign they are no longer their own: they cannot henceforth please themselves; they are bound to engage in one or other of the branches of "War Service" appointed for women under a Government Scheme. In other words they become an integral part of a State organisation which exists for the special purpose of waging war! Cannot you see this? And cannot you see that even if women are allowed to choose land work or nursing instead of munitions it makes no difference to the position? For it is not a question of the KIND of work one is ordered to do in connection with the War effort but the fact that any work undertaken by a Sister of Christ under a Government Scheme for War purposes is wrong. You see this in the case of brethren and rightly contend and hold that Non-Combatant duties in the Army are just as wrong as is Combatant Service. But why is this? Because Non-Combatant Service is an integral part of an organisation which exists for the special purpose of warfare. So that it is not a question of the legitimacy of the work abstractly considered, but of the fact that the work for which a Sister is conscripted is work in a State organisation established for the special purpose of War – a State Service which is referred to as "Women hitting back"!

The contention and commandment of the apostle Paul prohibiting the eating of meats "*offered in sacrifice to idols*" (1 Cor. 10:27-29) illustrates the principle. Sisters may undertake nursing or work on a farm etc., etc., even in War-time; and even if their effort strengthens the Country in its War-effort, but only so long as they undertake and engage in such work as private employees – and outside any War organisation or Government Scheme established for, or which exists for, the specific object of assisting in the War-effort; because no one in such circumstances could charge Sisters with approving or helping in the War, which is contrary to their profession of the doctrine of Christ. But once a Sister accepts enrolment (which is conscription) and thereby joins the Non-Combatant "Civil Forces" of the Crown – for it makes no difference by what name you call the War Service – a Sister of Christ has thereby compromised her principles in that she is giving the impression that her sacrifice is to the idol of War – which in fact it really is in that she has become a unit in a State Organisation or Government Scheme which exists for the special purpose of National Defence. This is the reason Sisters cannot register, any more than brethren can register for Military Service, Non-Combatant or otherwise . . . V. H. 21.4.41."

**Note:** "Generally speaking, the girls who are called on to register would be given four branches of work which they can choose to take up. These include: Munitions-manual work, Munitions-clerical work; Women's Land Army; ATS; WAAF; Nursing etc. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS AS SUCH, WILL NOT HAVE ANY PROVISION MADE FOR THEM UNDER THE SCHEME".

### **REGISTRATION OF BOYS AND GIRLS 16-18**

Perhaps nothing more demonstrated the nature of modern war, than the attempt to involve every young person in the war effort. The reason for the "Registration of Boys and Girls Order, 1941" was officially defined as, "You are anxious to do what you can for the country at this time and the Government have required you to register, so that they may help you to find the best way of fitting yourself to do your duty as a citizen and of assisting the present national effort." The explanatory leaflet went on to say, "But it is the 'extra bit' that counts, and everyone in these days wants to do his utmost. If then you have some spare time, but have not up to the present signed on for some sort of useful training or service, now that you have registered you will get a letter from your Education Authority asking you to come along for a talk with someone who can tell you the various ways in which you can lend a hand. It will be your duty to respond to that invitation . . . No one indeed is going to compel you to join anything. There is no need for that, because the Government knows that, given the chance you will want to do anything you can, both to help now and to prepare for the future."



It should have been clear from the above definition of the objects of the Registration that young brethren and sisters in this age group could not conscientiously register, and since it is a duty of parents to bring up their children "in the way that they should go", we should have encouraged our children not to register. It was therefore sad to note the lack of forthright advice from *The Christadelphian* magazine (January 1942) which merely said, "Young people in their teens, whether members of the Household or Senior Sunday School scholars who have not yet taken upon themselves the cause of Christ, will have a new responsibility in exercising thought and care in what course they take. A like responsibility falls on those who are called upon to guide and help them." (p.43). The tacit implication was that all should register and be prepared to offer some kind of service.

Any doubt was removed by the "Meditation" in the February issue over the initials F. W. T. At the end of a page and a half of discussing the issues he concluded: "They will need help, too, on the question of what service they can legitimately render in these anxious days. Some channels are definitely closed by the obligations of the Truth; but it would be unwise to condemn all calls to service as outside the scope of the disciple of Christ. A wholly negative policy would be ineffective and harmful." In a further comment in the August issue, p.265, L.G.S. wrote: "The registration of boys and girls of 'teen ages have created a new problem. After registration interviews are arranged to guide young people into various organisations. There is no compulsion; and if there is a evidence that the spare time is wisely spent the interviewers are satisfied. In Birmingham a Youth Circle has been started . . ." Again, the September issue reported, "A modest beginning has been made with a scheme of training for adolescents which is called the Christadelphian Youth Circle. While the subject has been brought to a head by the Government registration of boys and girls of 16-18, the movement gives shape to the thoughts of those who for some years have felt that in modern conditions the ecclesias could no longer adequately fulfil their duty to youth by an hour's Sunday School a week." After a long disquisition on the changing climate which today faces youth, L.G.S. concluded, "We have no guarantee that this movement will be accepted officially, but there is reason to hope that any active movement doing useful work will be allowed to continue." Whatever may be said later, it is clear that the C.Y.C. movement was formed to satisfy the demands of a gentile government!

In reply to an enquiry brother Viner Hall (20.10.42) wrote:

#### ENLISTING CHRISTIAN CHILDREN FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE

"Our Duty to resist the stealthy encroachments of arbitrary power".

"Christadelphian Youth Movements" unscriptural and fraught  
with extreme danger.

“20.10.42 Dear Brother. Answering your question on the suggested establishment of a “Christadelphian Youth Movement” – hoping the authorities will accept it in lieu of directing the children to Cadet Corps and as a measure of expediency for the children’s sake” – I would say that any such movement regimenting children to fit them for some form of National Service is wrong in principle, because it would concede to the State a right to take hold of our children with the object of fitting them for National Service in the cause of National Defence: a service which the State is now claiming as a matter of “duty” on the ground of citizenship – a citizenship which we abjured and renounced when we became the citizens elect of the Kingdom of God at our baptism into Christ, whose Doctrine and Law is opposed to any service for National Defence – a Law in subjection to which we are under Divine obligation to bring our children up in the fear of the Lord (Ezek. 16:21; Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1-4).

On no ground therefore, has the Government any right to require the subjection of the children of the brethren of Christ to after-school training and education. For our children stand in the same relation to God as the children of the sons of Israel did; as it is written, they are “*My children*”: that is, **THEY BELONG TO GOD** through their parents, who are God’s sons. In view of this divine relationship any government suggestion, scheme, or requirement of Registration, for the purpose or organising the children, or for the purpose of interview with the object of persuading them to join one or other of the various youth organisations or study groups, established for the purpose of training and discipline to fit them for service in the interests of the State, and **PRIMARILY** for the **PATRIOTIC** purpose of National Defence; in other words, for a service opposed to the teaching of Christ; I say, are not faithful brethren and sisters bound to deny and therefore to resist this new claim of the State to take over the control of their children, to whom they have appealed direct over the heads of their parents, as if the children were adults and had the right to decide for themselves? – as witness the Form EDL 91: **REGISTRATION – Boys and Girls 16-18**. Can there be a moment’s hesitation as to our duty touching these scripturally unlawful demands of a human government? If not, then what should we say to the authorities? What we should say and declare is indicated in the *Bible Searcher and Witness* for December 1941, p.20 (see below). Now, in confirmation of what I have written, here is the opening paragraph of Form “EDL 91 (Ministry of Labour and National Service):

“**REGISTRATION – Why?** You are anxious to do what you can for the country at this time and the Government have required you to register, so that they may help you to find the best way of fitting yourself to do your duty as a citizen and of assisting the present national effort.”

“I suggest you get the form and study it yourself. You may well say ‘I don’t like the idea, because it is the first step in copying the world’. I must close now and will do so in the words of the Spirit through the Apostle Peter:

*“. . . Be vigilant; because your adversary . . . walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom RESIST, STEADFAST in the faith.’*  
V. H.”

Extract from the *Bible Searcher and Witness* December 1941, p.20.

### SUGGESTED LETTER

The Secretary, Board of Education, London, S.W.1.

Sir, GOVERNMENT ORDER FOR THE REGISTRATION OF BOYS  
AND GIRLS OF 16-18, 1941.

I cannot register under the above-named Order because it is a Scheme for the purpose of inducing boys and girls to submit to training with a view to National Service – as a preparation for National Service – for the purposes of war – which is contrary to the principles of my religious belief.

My parents are members (or my father – or my mother – is a member) of the Society of the brethren of Christ. (If you have obeyed the truth in baptism, then you would say: I am a member of the Society of the Brethren of Christ) [or Christadelphian, if preferred. Or, if appropriate, “I have been a member of the . . . Sunday School for the past . . . years”]

# CHAPTER IX

## INDIVIDUAL CASES 1939-45: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

THROUGHOUT the war years (1939-45) brother Viner Hall was tireless in his activities on behalf of the brethren and sisters of all fellowships in the U.K. and overseas (especially Australia and New Zealand). His advice was constantly being sought, his correspondence was considerable, and he was often in demand to support the brethren before the Tribunals. Being resident in Weston-super-Mare he had particular contact with the Bristol Tribunal, the Chairman of which was Judge E. H. C. Wethered to whom he thoroughly and persuasively explained our case for unconditional exemption from all forms of National Service.

The contacts bore fruit as illustrated in two cases he represented in July 1941:

### **1. CASE OF BROTHER C. S. ASH HEARD AT THE BRISTOL TRIBUNAL ON 1.7.41**

"The applicant is a member of the Society now known as the Brethren of Christ. The Brethren of Christ are not prepared to undertake any service under the Crown or indeed to undertake any form of service as a condition of exemption from Military Service. If the applicant was registered as a C.O. conditionally on his undertaking Civilian work under Civil control specified by the Tribunal, he would be liable to be called up for service in a Civil Defence Force under the National Service Act, 1941, and if so called up would enter the service of the Crown. To this the applicant objects as contrary to his religious belief. We are satisfied that this objection is bona-fide and in our opinion the applicant has shown a well-founded objection to undertaking Civilian work under Civil control as an alternative to Military Service. He will accordingly be registered in the Register of C.O. without condition.

(Signed) E. H. C. Wethered, Chairman; J. A. Nixon 2.7.41."

### **2. CASE OF BROTHER GEORGE YOUNG OF MIDSOMER NORTON, BATH, AGED 34, SALESMAN AND PART-TIME GARDENER**

"Report of Proceedings of Bristol Local Tribunal held on 4.7.41.

Constitution of Tribunal – Judge Wethered, Ald. Shepherd and Prof. Field.

The Applicant did not attend.

Further Evidence obtained at the hearing . . . Letters considered.

Findings of the Tribunal on questions of fact material to the decision.

We do not consider that the applicant need attend. We are fully conversant with the views of members of the Society known as Brethren of Christ. This case is covered by that of C. S. Ash, decided by us on July 2nd, 1941.

Order of the Tribunal – That the Applicant shall, without conditions, be registered in the Register of Conscientious Objectors. The decision of the Tribunal was unanimous.”

“The foregoing established the right of our Society on religious grounds to unconditional exemption from service in the Civil Defence Forces of the Crown under the National Service Act, 1941”. (V. H.)

#### **AN EARLIER CASE**

It should be noted, however, that our position was recognised by the Bristol Tribunal in the case of brother William George Pearce on the 13th August, 1940. Judge Wethered read aloud Brother Pearce’s statement (including the extract from *The Weston-super-Mare Weekly Mail* for 22.10.30 (see below) and commented: “A VERY SUCCINCT PRESENTATION OF THE CHRISTADELPHIAN CASE.” He was obviously impressed and was particular in taking down the replies and observations of Brother Hall (who represented Brother Pearce) and made comments to the effect that he regarded our first case as of special interest. The Judge knew that they were Christadelphians although not a word had been said, observing that our position differed from the ‘orthodox Christadelphian body,’ and then went on to some trouble to find a recent letter from the Secretary of the Bristol (Midland Road) Ecclesia, which he read to brother Hall. This letter had been written to the Tribunal concerning five of their own brethren whose claims were pending (they were asking for unconditional exemption) and the letter stated that as their claims for unconditional exemption were not in accord with the position of the Christadelphian body the Committee ‘refused to sponsor the claims’ which they suggested should be dealt with on their own merits, or words to that effect – thus repudiating the true position and prejudicing (or attempting to prejudice) any future claims by Christadelphians for unconditional exemption. In spite of all this, however, the truth prevailed and it made this Order: “That the Applicant shall without condition be registered in the Register of Conscientious Objectors.” This illustrated that our case, when properly understood and argued, commends itself and does not offend, as some contended.

The letter from *The Weston-super-Mare Weekly Mail*, referred to above was as follows:

## THE ECCLESIA OF CHRIST IN THE PRESENT DISPENSATION

Sir, In order to make the truth of this matter scripturally clear, I should like to supplement your brief report of our lecture by saying that a true ecclesia of Christ under the present dispensation is not a "church" with a visible head and official representatives, or clerical ministry like the churches of Christendom. The true church is a *brotherhood in Christ* whose bond of fraternal union and fellowship is their acceptance and profession of the Doctrines and Precepts of Christ, in opposition to the paganised dogmas and unscriptural practices of Papal and Protestant Christendom.

Their acceptance of the doctrine of Christ necessitates the renunciation of their citizenship in the present world, and therefore debars them from association with those who refuse to accept the same doctrines and precepts. For those reasons they are debarred as brethren of Christ, from all political associations, and by consequence, from the exercise of the Franchise, Municipal as well as Parliamentary. Their work under the present dispensation is not to "rule" or "manage" the world (which is shortly to be subverted by Christ, because of its incorrigible wickedness) but to testify against it, and to save men out of it by teaching the truth, with a view to their moral preparation for the New World or Order of things which the Lord is to inaugurate at His coming . . .

Viner Hall, The Institute, Neva Road, Weston-super-Mare,  
21st October, 1930.

Although I cannot be certain I believe it was after this first case that brother Hall had his face to face discussions with Judge Wethered.

It will be noted that brother Hall, and the brethren concerned, presented their case under the description "Brethren of Christ" rather than "Christadelphian". He did this for two reasons:

1. The main Christadelphian Military Service Committees had already committed their brethren to "conditional exemption" and indeed had strongly advised their brethren not to apply for "unconditional exemption" saying, "The Committee are of the opinion that you should in no circumstances ask for absolute exemption, in view of the declaration which has been made to the Prime Minister on behalf of the brethren, that we are willing to undertake work of national importance" (signed by John Carter).
2. Because the name Christadelphian had become a "denominational" title (indeed their applications for exemption to Military Service stated that it was a "denominational characteristic of the Christadelphians". On the other hand the plain English "Brethren of Christ" correctly described our position as "brethren" without any "ecclesiastical organisation", and that the brother concerned was applying for absolute exemption because he personally "accepts and professes the doctrines and precepts of Christ, and not because our conscientious objection to Military Service is a

“Denominational characteristic of the Christadelphians”. This may seem a minor point, but it is a distinction with a difference which, indeed, was recognised by Tribunal members who were concerned to establish that an applicant was not merely following a “party line”.

The position established at Bristol, and the consequent “unconditional” exemptions, was only rarely conceded by other Tribunals.

### **“THE CHRISTADELPHIAN CIVIL DEFENCE COMMITTEE”**

A number of brethren in the “Central Fellowship” who were concerned about the “official” position on Civil Defence, formed, in October 1941 the above-named Committee. Eight months before its formation one of the principal founder members wrote to brother Hall, and referring to the Petition drawn up by Dr. Thomas for exemption from military service, presented to the United States in 1865 (see “Christ and War” by C. C. Walker, p.27), asked three questions.

### **THREE QUESTIONS ON OUR ATTITUDE TO THE AUTHORITIES**

“This attitude [Dr. Thomas’] is admittedly scriptural, and we note two ideas. First that as, say Paul, witnessed against and “wrestled with” the Pagan and Jewish Rulers of his day, so the bearers of the Truth in this day should be in a similar position – for the “Powers that be” all belong to Satan or Sin. Second, that from the divine viewpoint, these “Powers that be” ought to “let us alone.”

#### **Questions**

1. If Dr. Thomas’ attitude is right is there any sense in which we have a “duty to the country in its time of need in return for benefits received,” and any sense in which we should “offer our services to the State.” Please answer in the affirmative if it is scripturally possible to do so. Note also that it is readily admitted we submit to the rulers in paying taxes and as maintainers of internal law and order.
2. If it is likely that to maintain before the Tribunals such an attitude as Dr. Thomas outlines would bring us into prison, does God expect us to steer our course more in harmony with the minds of the Tribunals, keeping only to the ground that it is wrong for us to fight and kill – so that we may obtain a little freedom and time to work for His name.
3. Supposing the answer to question 1. is in a general way negative, but admitting we should always be ready to help our neighbour, should we be willing to obey the State and spend our time in Fire-watching etc., although we ourselves think we should spend that time in a better way for the “good of our neighbours” – in attending to the things that relate to the ministering of His Word.

## APPENDIX

If the answer “yes” were given to Question 3, the idea might be taken a step further and the question put: should we, although boldly maintaining Dr. Thomas’ attitude before the Tribunal, nevertheless offer to do Fire-watching as a concession to them, thus making exemption more likely. This would be definitely sacrificing some of the time we have spent in the things of the Word, with the idea of getting conditional exemption and some freedom. In order that the concession should be without compromise to our stand, we could only do Fire-watching as a private individual co-operating in a “good neighbourly association” and not as a member of an official organisation. G.

### BROTHER VINER HALL’S REPLY, DATED 6.3.1941

*“AND NO MARVEL; FOR SATAN HIMSELF IS TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT. THEREFORE IT IS NO GREAT THING IF HIS MINISTERS ALSO BE TRANSFORMED AS THE MINISTERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS . . .”* (2 Cor. 11:14-15)

My dear brother, Affectionate greeting in the Lord.

Regretting delay in replying to your valued letter of February 26th, duly received.

(1) I agree with Dr. Thomas that the Powers that be are the “Powers of the World” – as the Apostle Peter teaches in his first epistle, chapter 5, v. 8-9, where he commands the servants of Christ to resist as an “adversary” the Pagan Government, whom he likens to a predatory lion, in one aspect of things – in the things pertaining to the teaching and faith of Christ; but to whom in another aspect – as “*governors*” – he commands obedience (1 Peter 2:133-14). So that in political matters – in the ordinances of tribute for the maintenance of the State and for the good order and regulation of society – to all laws that do not conflict with our work and service of Christ – we are to be obedient; and so the Apostle Paul in Romans 13:1-7. This limits the extent of our obedience to the State to that of citizens of another State who are “*strangers and pilgrims*” (1 Peter 2:11-12) – passing through and therefore under no obligation to render any “service” whatsoever. And in no other way can the different statements concerning our obligations of obedience to magistrates and governors (Titus 3:1-2 and others already cited) be otherwise reconciled with the command to “*Resist steadfast in the Faith*” – the very same principalities, powers and magistrates – which in other places we are commanded to obey.

(2) The Powers that be are the enemies of the Cross of Christ and are therefore “the devil” who cast the servants into prison in the first and subsequent centuries and that right down to the 20th – to 1914-1918 [and 1939-45 and beyond, P. M. R.] – as we so well know (Rev. 2:10).



(3) And had he not been resisted – as the true servants of Christ have always resisted his attempts to deprive them of their rights and privileges as the free citizens of an independent and superior and more powerful State – the Heavenly Jerusalem – of whom they are accredited ambassadors – they would have been subverted and sacrificed their position as the representatives of Christ. If this is true, then the scriptural answer to your first question is: “There is no sense in which it is our ‘duty’ to offer any ‘service to the State in return for benefits received.’”

So likewise the scriptural answer to your second question is: No – emphatically, No! For we dare not as servants of Christ make any concession to the enemy: we cannot do evil that good may come. But we can do good, that good may come! And the form of good that we are under divine obligation to practice always is general well-doing to all and sundry and at all times; and to the evil-disposed as well as to the well-disposed: and this well-doing is prescribed and defined in 1 Peter 2:11-12: “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*”

If this is true, then the answer to your question No. 3 is: “No, if such work necessitated the neglect of the work of Christ. But if the occasional fire-watching can be carried out without obligation and as a private individual doing good unto all men as opportunity offers, then such work in the special circumstances now existent would be doing good as the Lord prescribed – spontaneous, free and unconstrained – as all our work is required to be: “*heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.*” (Col. 3:23-24; Eph. 6:5-8).

And now having said so much I would just add by way of conclusion that the brotherhood is in great danger by reason of the fact that one of the “Powers that be” is fighting a just war (from a human point of view) and because the Government is more friendly disposed towards the servants of Christ than in the past; but this fact does not in any way alter its status as one of the Powers in the present constitution of Sin with whom it would be lawful for brethren of Christ to enter into covenant relationship – as if we belonged to the State, and owed our liberty in Christ to their good graces. We hold our Patent of Freedom from Christ – the Lord of Heaven and Earth. But, alas, many brethren are now acting as if the State were our Master and benefactor and patron – a plausible but false doctrine which inculcates reciprocity of “service” and would make such service obligatory – as in the past – when the prevalence of this false doctrine resulted in the Union of Church and State.

These brethren have lost sight of the declaration of Paul that the government of his day was “*a beast of prey*” (see 2 Tim. 4:17) and that of Peter that this same government was “*your adversary the devil – a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8-9), and of the Lord’s

declaration that the “Powers that be” were “*the devil who shall cast some of you into prison,*” and of “*the Kings of the earth and their armies*” who shall exist at the epoch of His coming, and therefore the present governments of the world whom He calls “*the beast*”– the “*old serpent, the devil and satan*” – whose government He is coming to bind and suppress for a thousand years (Rev. 19 and 20).

It is high time the brethren were roused to realise their true position in relation to the “Powers that be” – that they be not involved and compromised to their condemnation.

I am, faithfully, your brother in Christ unto the Kingdom of God,  
in His grace, Viner Hall.

I have no doubt that his attitude, and others of the Committee, was greatly influenced by the above and subsequent correspondence which passed between them and brother Hall.

## CONCLUDING COMMENT

Much more could, and perhaps should, be written (I have two boxes full of unused material) but no doubt it would be too repetitious. It is impossible to say to what degree brother Viner Hall influenced brethren, and therefore Tribunals, everywhere – in Britain and overseas. I have confidence that he inspired and influenced many for good. Some who should admit the instruction, or correction, they received. Brother Hall often told me that some “first opposed what he had to say, then realised that he was right, and then assumed control, as though they had always taught the right thing.”

I trust that sufficient has been written for another generation, if it has to face the challenge of compulsory National Service, as surely it must, to discern the course it should take. In this we discharge the divine obligation to pass on to another generation, the things we have learnt (Psalm 78:5-6; 1 Tim. 4:16). This more permanent account of the things we have received, we pass on. May God prosper and bless.

P. M. R.