

This, I think, was the decisive consideration with Dr. Briggs. As a good historian he allowed weight to the facts just stated, but his heart was drawn toward the unity of Christendom, desiring above all else that the communities which bear the Christian name should become one great organization, one body of Christ, one army marching against the forces of evil and bringing the thoughts of men into obedience to the one Lord. If such an organization ever comes into existence it cannot take the Protestant position that the Bible alone is the source of authority, but must recognize that Christ still speaks through His living ministers, and that He speaks in the sanctified reason, the God-given organ of intelligence. It was therefore an ardent desire for the unity of Christendom which animated this book. And this same desire called forth those later publications which have brought the author's real conservatism more distinctively into view. These are: *The Incarnation of the Lord* (1902), and *The Fundamental Christian Faith*, which came from the press just before his death. The statement in the Preface of this last-named work may be cited here as his message to the Churches on the subject of unity. After

speaking of the reactionary and the radical tendencies of our times, he goes on to say:

'There is also the wholesome irenic tendency which seeks to reunite the separated Churches on the basis of the fundamental principles of historic Christianity, without intruding upon denominational preferences or private opinion in other matters. These principles of faith are to be found in the ancient creeds, the official expression of the faith of the ancient Church, to which all Churches which are legitimate descendants of historical Christianity adhere.'

It is not the purpose of this paper to enter upon a discussion of a host of questions which are suggested by such a statement as this. All I have tried to do is to present a just estimate of the man whose ardent desire inspired these words, and whom I was privileged to call my friend. Having served his generation by the will of God he has now fallen asleep, leaving us not only his written words as a rich legacy, but as a richer inheritance the memory of his courage, his patience, his warm sympathy, and his loyalty to the great Head of the Church, whose he was and whom he served.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF ROMANS AND I PETER.

#### ROMANS XIII. 1.

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God.

#### I PETER II. 13, 15.

Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Two practical questions of urgent importance forced themselves upon the converts to Christianity in the early centuries—their relation to the world, its practices and customs, and their relation to the State. It is the latter question that is briefly discussed by St. Paul and St. Peter in the two passages which have been taken for the text. Their words are few, and were designed to meet the particular circumstances of that age; but they contain

principles which apply to all times, and appeal to motives which can never be obsolete or outworn.

At the outset the texts obviously recognize the truth of Christian citizenship. While teaching that the citizenship of all who believe in Christ, as he elsewhere affirms, is in heaven, the Apostle Paul also lays stress upon their duties and obligations in the present life as members of a State, and discusses what is the true attitude and sphere of the Christian citizenship; and St. Peter follows the same lines. Their treatment of the subject may be comprehended under two ideas—that of loyalty, and that of free service.

#### I.

#### THE LOYALTY OF THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.

Christianity has been at times reproached with neglect of a large department of human duty. It

provides us with teaching as to our duty to God, our duty to ourselves, our duty to our friends and our enemies; but it has been said that it fails to guide us in the discharge of our duty to the State. That Christianity did not make good citizens was continually urged by the politicians of the Roman Empire in the early days before the Empire became Christian; and it has again and again been assumed, by those who form judgments without waiting for the verdict of experience, that a man cannot serve the State with entire loyalty if he tries to serve God as well. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God has always been regarded as a revolutionary precept.

And there is another charge, that of teaching a doctrine of passive submission. This charge is more plausible and has been brought against Christianity even by John Stuart Mill, who writes in his essay on Liberty: 'Christian morality has all the characters of a reaction; it is in great part a protest against Paganism. . . . It is essentially a doctrine of passive obedience; it inculcates submission to all authorities found established; who indeed are not to be actively obeyed when they command what religion forbids, but who are not to be resisted, far less rebelled against, for any amount of wrong to ourselves.'

The words of the text, however, contain an implicit refutation of both these charges.

1. The Apostles teach the Divine basis and authority of lawful governments. By laying down this principle they lift the subject into the higher moral sphere. It thereby ceases to be a merely legal or utilitarian question and is given ethical dignity and importance. This is the more remarkable when we consider the actual circumstances of Christianity at that time, and the character of the reigning Emperor.

This truth, that the powers that be are of God, needed to be clearly set forth and vindicated at the very beginning of Christianity. It was destined, in the course of centuries, to exert a dominating influence upon governments and the social order, but it must do so as a religion by its spiritual influence, and not as a political power. To have attacked prevailing laws and institutions would have done violence to its fundamental character and objects, and even have jeopardized its existence.

2. The Apostles enforce subjection to the powers that be, on the highest grounds: 'for the Lord's sake.' If we truly grasp what is implied by this motive we shall see that so far from inculcat-

ing a servile submission, it creates a spirit of noble independence. Men who think first of the honour of Christ and His Kingdom will not stoop to anything mean or cowardly. While acknowledging their obligation to the State, they will recognize the still higher allegiance which they owe to Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. The Apostles acted upon this principle. When the choice of obeying man or of obeying God was presented as an alternative, they never hesitated for a moment. 'We must obey God, rather than man,' was St. Peter's answer to the authorities in Jerusalem. If the ruling powers demanded things contrary to Christ, such as the observance of an idolatrous rite, or an act involving injustice, or indulgence in any vice, the Christian rule forbade it. The Christian must always act consistently with truth, and righteousness and purity.

One of the ancestors of Lyman Abbott, the noted American preacher and author, was 'Squire' Abbott who emigrated from England. He settled in the State of Maine, taking up a large tract of wild land in the township of Weld. Here he built an estate and lived for a short time. Even to-day, after almost a century, you will hear in that region many pleasant stories about the upright, sturdy old English squire. Through the influence of Squire Abbott and several other people of refinement and education a church was organized. In the same locality there had been going on for some time a backwoods camp-meeting revival. One of the converts who had great power over the natives as an exhorter said the Lord had called him to cross the mountains and preach the gospel on the other side, but he must first be ordained; and as the squire's church was the only real church in that district, a council was there called to examine the man. After hearing about his religious experience, one of the council asked him, who he thought God was. The backwoods exhorter had religion, was preaching the gospel, and saving sinners; but here was a question for which he had no answer. 'Who is God?' The kindly old Congregational fathers told him to think about it and they would wait for an answer; after several minutes he raised a face that was aglow with smiles: 'Why, I think I know, God is some one who is like Squire Abbott!'

## II.

### THE FREE SERVICE OF THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.

1. The Christians were opposed and oppressed, partly under the impression that they constituted a revolutionary sect. In the early times of Christianity there was no charge more perseveringly brought against Christians by their enemies than this, that they were turbulent persons, and dangerous to the ruling powers. 'These that have turned the world

upside down are come hither also' may be considered as the language generally used concerning them, wherever the gospel began to spread. This charge of disaffection and disobedience to earthly rulers had been brought against Christ Himself. We are told that when His enemies led Him unto Pilate, 'they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar.' And, when Pilate hesitated to condemn Him on other grounds, they had recourse to this again: 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.'

Some plausibility was given to this accusation by the fact that where the Law came into conflict with the claims and precepts of Christianity, Christians asserted their independence in Christ, and refused complicity with what was idolatrous and immoral. Nor did they submit to the authority of government when it commanded them not to teach or preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. In this the early Christians followed the example of the Apostles, and set an example to the Christians of all ages.

But it was soon demonstrated that Christians were not only loyal subjects, but that they were the better citizens because of their faith in Christ. For Christianity inspired men with new aims, and new sympathies, so that, while like salt they helped to check prevailing corruptions, they also inaugurated philanthropies and other movements which relieved distress and promoted the nation's well-being.

Christianity raised the feeling of humanity from being a feeble restraining power to be an inspiring passion. The Christian moral reformation may indeed be summed up in this—humanity changed from a restraint to a motive.<sup>1</sup>

2. Our duties as Christian citizens take various forms, and are associated with various departments of service.

(1) *We have a duty to the city in which we live.*—It is our duty to do what we can—be it much or little—to uphold the ideals of honour and of truth, which no city can neglect without disaster. It is our duty to see to it that our municipal representatives are first and above all men of honourable life, whose word is as good as their bond, whose fair fame cannot be impeached. Far more important are these things than any political opinions or political pledges; and we might all do much more

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Seeley, *Ecce Homo*; 175.

than we have done in the past to emphasize their importance. For the welfare of a city depends not so much upon the political creed of its chief citizens as upon the example which they set to the community of prudent administration, of honourable dealing, of unswerving fidelity to justice and truth. And we do not render to all their due if we do not endeavour by our personal effort, wherever and however we can, to encourage those of our civic leaders, whatever be their political creed, who place truth before expediency, and honour before personal advancement.

(2) *We owe duties to the State.*—The State is probably the medium through which Christians may best express themselves in their service of humanity. We say 'probably' because some will be inclined to give the Church pre-eminence in the opportunity it offers for service. It is not necessary to argue the question; certainly we shall not decry the Church as a medium for doing good. The point that needs emphasizing is that Christians have not yet apprehended the magnificent opportunity for service they have in the State. They have not yet heard, much less heeded, the call of God to carry their Christian ideals and Christian power into their life as citizens. They have been too ready to acquiesce in the dictum of worldlings, that religion has no place in politics. That is a worse than pagan sentiment, for religion has always been a powerful formative force in the making and government of States, and Christians will fall far short of their duty and their privilege if they do not make their religion the controlling force in the States of which they are citizens.

For the life of me I cannot understand how some people can treat politics as if they were merely worldly and altogether secular, and yet defend, as such people usually do, the verbal inspiration of the Apostle Paul. If his theory of the Church is inspired, then so must his theory of the State be, on their principles. And if this theory of the State is right, their theory and practice is wrong. St. Paul had a political ideal, and he not only had it but he gloried in it, and lost no opportunity of expounding and enforcing it. A Roman citizen, he had a high ideal of government; and a deep-rooted belief that the end of government was morality—'he is a minister of God to thee for good.' That is to say, the end of government is not necessarily to make you and me richer; indeed, at the present moment with steadily increasing taxation its end appears to be to make us all poorer; neither is the end of government limited to education, to make us mentally richer. The end of government is goodness—that is the Pauline principle. The ideal of High Statesmanship is the encouragement of virtue and the discouragement of vice in the State; the prevention of fraud and crime; the promo-

tion of decency, thrift, industry, and comfort. The ideal is to establish freedom—freedom to think, freedom to worship, freedom to teach, freedom to trade, freedom to make one's way in the world—always providing that such freedom does not include licence to corrupt and injure others. This is the ideal; it has to be worked out in practical fashion, and presents many difficulties, many points on which the best and most thoughtful minds will differ; but, I repeat, St. Paul held it demonstrably as an ideal, and believed that political power and executive was a high and sacred trust for the promotion of great moral ends.<sup>1</sup>

Christ's words were not a book for Sabbath days,  
But law of life, and judgment of the land;  
Not to be chosen, and pieced and dogmatised,  
But lived up to—the whole and not a part,  
Alive not dead, one spirit in new forms;  
And lived, as Christ lived, poor, despised, alone,  
Apart with God and working miracles,  
Not on the waves and winds, but on the wills  
Of men, upon the hearts of multitudes,

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Horne, *All Things are Yours*, 161.

The hidden germs of fresh humanities,  
Of live confederations yet unborn,  
The hidden founts of gathering river-floods,  
To hear one day the music of His name  
Through lands of harvest to the boundless sea.

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## The Composition of Mark iv. 21:25: A Study in the Synoptic Problem.

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THE chief peril which besets all discussions of the Synoptic Problem is the desire to arrive at large generalizations under which all the phenomena can be arranged. Up till now, all such generalizations have left unexplained a very considerable residuum of details. These details demand patient investigation. Yet many of the attempts to deal with them have been marred by a treatment which is the direct antithesis of that mentioned above. The tendency has arisen to read into the details, far more than they can possibly contain, and so the door is thrown open to a precarious subjectivity. Wendling's theory of the strata in the Gospel of Mark is a good illustration of failure to see the wood for the trees. There are many points at which we must be ready to confess ignorance, and others where we have to be satisfied with partial explanations.

The passage with which this study is concerned occurs immediately after the explanation of the Parable of the Sower, which is reported in all three Gospels. Many scholars regard that ex-

planation as revealing rather the influence of the early Church than the method of Jesus. Be that as it may, it certainly interrupts the connexion between Mk 4<sup>21-25</sup> (|| Lk 8<sup>16-18</sup>) and the somewhat obscure section on the purpose of parabolic teaching (Mk 4<sup>10-12</sup> with ||<sup>9</sup>) to which it is obviously related. It is not necessary for our purpose to dwell on that section. Its main significance seems to be that the new and unfamiliar message of the Kingdom which has to be presented through the educative medium of parables has found a response in the spiritual sensibilities of the disciples, while upon the majority of the hearers it has made no impression. Jesus' language, however, might foster in the minds of His followers the notion that His teaching concerning the Kingdom was meant to be esoteric, the special privilege of a select few. Hence our paragraph follows, explaining in its first part the fact that light is intended to illuminate, and that spiritual discoveries must be imparted, while in the second it urges upon the disciples the necessity of giving