

1940

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Jessie W. Gibbs

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## Recommended Citation

Gibbs, Jessie W., "Jesus Christ and War" (1940). *Stone-Campbell Books*. 267.  
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# JESUS CHRIST AND WAR

Jessie W. Gibbs

## THE TEMPTATION

Matthew 4:8-10. Luke 4:5-8.

**A**FTER being confirmed at His baptism as the Son of God, and filled with the Spirit of God in preparation for His Messianic career, Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He was subjected to "every temptation," but the climax of His testing came when the devil showed Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" and said to Him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

The devil's deceit was very spacious. "All this authority and . . . glory . . . hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine." There was a show of truth in this. The world was clearly under the power of the destroyer. Its rulers ruled by the sword. It was even true that authority to rule had been delivered to the destroyer. Men's hearts were evil; they hoped in the power of evil, and were subject to the evil power in which they hoped, by the judgment of God. The sword of the world-ruler was the instrument of the wrath of God's law. But it was not true that the devil could give the government of the world to whom he would. There was a limit set to his depredations. God was forever setting aside his chosen and most puissant representatives. They accomplished God's judgments in the earth and then came to naught.

Jesus saw through the tempter's deceit and repelled him with the words, "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." He saw beyond the temporal destroyer to the eternal God, beyond the wrath of the law to the love of God. He saw that the destroyer was subject to God, that the world-ruler was the instrument of God's judgment on an erring race, that the rule of the destroyer came to naught because it was out of harmony with God's supreme law of love. He saw that God, Who had created men in love, desired to redeem them from the judgment of the law and restore them to fellowship with Himself. He gave His worship to the God of love, and offered Himself a sacrifice to reveal God's love to men and redeem them out of the power of the destroyer and the judgment of the law into the lost Kingdom of God, the heavenly reign of love.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matt. 5:1-10; 17, 20; 21-48. Luke 6:27-35. Matt. 6:12, 14, 15. Matt. 7:1-5. Luke 6:37, 38. Matt. 7:24-27.

In offering men the love of the heavenly Kingdom, Jesus took pains to make clear to them that He was not releasing them from obedience to law. On the contrary He was exacting of them obedience to a far higher law than

that of the old order, a law not of external commandments, but of inner motives, a law of absolute righteousness, springing from the heart. They were not only forbidden to kill; they were not to hate or despise one another. They were not only forbidden to commit adultery; they were not to have impure thoughts. They were not only forbidden to dishonor their oaths; they were not to use oaths at all, because their simple statement ought to be sufficient, and the very fact that they swore to the truth of some statements implied the unreliability of their ordinary speech.

This righteousness could not be enforced by external power. It could be realized only in the power of an overflowing love in the heart. Though men were evil and suffering the just punishment of their sins, they could see that the Creator was not giving them up to utter punishment, but was still sustaining them in love, sending His sun and rain on the just and the unjust, and if they wished to claim His love and forgiveness, they must themselves learn to love and forgive one another. Just and unjust were only relative terms among men. In the sight of God they were all sinners, and all must humble themselves to receive His law of love in their hearts.

The blessings of the Kingdom were for those who felt their need, for the sad, the meek, the spiritually aspiring, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who suffered for righteousness' sake. The Kingdom offered no blessings to the proud, the selfrighteous, the censorious, those moved with a spirit of retaliation. The higher law of the Kingdom required that its citizens should love when others hated, should bless and pray for those who persecuted them, and shame the grasping spirit of the world with a lavish liberality of giving and forgiving. In so doing they would be the children of their heavenly Father, Whose love is the supreme power of the universe, and He would vindicate them. He would see to it that the love they gave came back to them, that as they measured it would be measured to them again.

This is not immediately true. The immediate truth is that if men love, in this evil world, they will be crucified. But the cross is the supreme power of the Kingdom, that leads men to repent of their sins and accept the new law of love.

The Lord Jesus was Himself the living embodiment of the new law of the Kingdom, the law of overflowing, self-sacrificing love. His life was a living sacrifice to reveal to men the redeeming love of God. But they never understood or appreciated it in any adequate sense until He had finished it on the cross. It was the cross that revealed to men the supreme love of God and begot in them the love which enabled them to fulfill the Lord's commandment of love. Christ Himself could not make men understand this love until He had poured out His soul unto death and made intercession for those who slew Him. The Sermon on the Mount can never be divorced from Calvary. Only in the power of Calvary's cross can the Sermon on the Mount be fulfilled. All the love Christ gave there is coming back to Him. He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied in the final realization of His Kingdom on the earth.

Yet we still hear people say that it is impossible to practice the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. We even hear Christians say that it is not intended that we should practice the teaching of non-resistance of evil until Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom and Satan is cast out of the world.

It is true that it is impossible for the world to practice the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. They are contrary to the law of the world.

They state the law of the Heavenly Kingdom. They are given to the citizens of that Kingdom, by Christ, Who practiced them Himself, and proved their higher power. It is true that if we follow Him we will suffer persecution, as He suffered it; we will have to bear the cross. But if we bear the cross with Him, we will find its supreme power. And through faith in Him we are able to bear the cross.

Christ did not make any distinction among the laws enunciated in His Sermon. He did not say, "Certain of these laws are to be obeyed now, and certain are to be obeyed when my Kingdom has fully come in the earth." He did not say, "You are to be pure and truthful, and loving now, but you are allowed to judge sinners and make war on enemies until I come again." No, purity and truth and love are incompatible with condemnation and war. The whole law hangs together and we must accept or reject the whole. When Satan has been cast out and Christ's Kingdom has fully come, there will be no trespasses to forgive and no enemies to love. The time to forgive trespasses and to love enemies is here and now, while we are in conflict with the evil world. Only through this conflict can we prove the superior power of the heavenly Kingdom.

The Lord foresaw all the excuses by which men would seek to evade the cross, and closed His Sermon with a warning that the laws of the Kingdom were to be obeyed, and not merely heard. The man who heard them and did them had built his house upon the unshakable rock of absolute righteousness and could never be moved. The man who heard them and did them not had built his house upon the sands of time and would be brought to confusion.

#### NOT TO DESTROY, BUT TO SAVE

Luke 6:9; Luke 9:51-56.

Luke 6:9 is interesting because it furnishes a definition of doing good as saving a life, and of doing harm as destroying a life.

Related to this is the saying in Luke 9:55, "For the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." The Sons of Thunder would have called down fire from Heaven upon the Samaritan village that would not receive Christ. But He rebuked them, saying that they did not know what manner of spirit they were of (as His disciples); that He had not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The Lord did not come to force Himself or His Kingdom on the world by destroying men. The object of His coming was to save the men. And this could not be accomplished in the power of destruction. He renounced the evil power and hoped in good alone.

Though this saying is relegated to the margin in the Revised Version, the text states that the Lord rebuked the Sons of Thunder, and the saying is undoubtedly authentic, for it is characteristic of His great spirit, as the ignorance of the disciples which called it forth is characteristic of them, as seen throughout the Gospels. Comp. Luke 19:10; Jno. 3:17; 12:47.

#### WISE AS SERPENTS, HARMLESS AS DOVES

Matt. 10:16; Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4, 5.

In sending out His twelve apostles to announce the coming of His Kingdom, Jesus required them to follow the same method which He Himself employed. He did not say, "I will bear the cross, but you can bear the sword." He gave them no military equipment,— only His saving gifts of truth and healing. He did not promise them any easy victory. He sent them out as sheep in the midst of wolves, and warned them to beware of the enmity of men. They were to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. They were not

needlessly to throw their lives away, but they are not to resort to killing others in order to save themselves. They were not to fear men, who kill the body, lest they themselves be led into killing, but they were to fear God, Who requires men to love one another, and Whose judgment would fall on both soul and body, if they broke His law of love.

### NOT TO SEND PEACE, BUT A SWORD

Matt. 10:35-38; Luke 12:49-53.

The fire which Jesus came to cast on the earth is clearly not a destructive fire, though it may rouse His enemies to kindle such a fire. He refused to call down a destructive fire upon His enemies. (Luke 9:55). The fire which He came to cast upon the earth was the fire of ultimate, absolute truth, which roused the hatred of worldly minded rulers and brought upon Him the baptism of blood in which He died. The sword He came to send on the earth was not a material sword, for He consistently repudiated the sword throughout His public career and in the last crucial hour of His conflict with His enemies bade Peter put up the sword. And in the resurrection He sent His apostles out to found His Kingdom in the spiritual power of His truth alone.

It is clear from the passages cited that Jesus was not talking about a material sword. No one could accuse Him of inciting a son to take a sword and slay his father, a daughter to take a sword and slay her mother, a daughter-in-law to take a sword and slay her mother-in-law. How is it, then, that He sets the persons of a household at variance with each other? It is by His word of truth, which makes a division between those who accept it and those who reject it. And His demand upon men and women is such that even at the cost of breaking with loved ones in the home, they must accept His truth and take up its spiritual warfare. He bears the cross of absolute love for them, and if they are not willing to bear the cross with Him, they are not worthy of Him.

It is precisely among friends that Christ's warfare becomes most severe. His truth is universal, and men's natural loves are partial. They want us to love them, but not to love their enemies. And he who loves enemies is bound to be cast out by friends. This is why Jesus was rejected by the self-righteous and by His own nation.

### TAKING THE KINGDOM BY FORCE

Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16; Jno. 6:15, 26 ff.

The first two of these passages are obscure, but are cited because they speak of violence. Both appear to deprecate it. When John the Baptist sent messengers from prison to Jesus, the Lord took occasion to eulogize him and then remarked, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force." The saying was inspired by John's imprisonment and seems to refer to violence done to the Kingdom in the persons of its representatives. This interpretation is borne out by the later saying of Jesus, referring to the death of John, "Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them."

The saying in Luke 16:16, somewhat similar, but uttered in an altogether different connection, is thought to refer to the vehemence with which multitudes rushed to enter the offered Kingdom, desiring its material benefits, but not appreciating its spiritual character. This is in line with the attempt of the multitude, at the climax of the Lord's popularity, when He fed the five thousand, to take Him by force to make Him a King. He withdrew from them, and when they found Him the next day on the other side of

the Lake, He told them that they sought Him, not because they recognized His divine power, but because they ate of the loaves and were filled. He presented Himself to them as the true Bread from Heaven, the sacrifice of God, Who was to give His life for the life of the world, and they turned away from Him, not desiring a King with a cross, but a king with a sword.

### GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN

Matt. 16:21-26; Mark 8:31-36; Luke 9:22-25; Luke 14:27.

When Jesus pressed home the spiritual truth of His Kingdom on the multitudes in Galilee, many turned away from Him, but the apostles still remained loyal. Peter had just made his great confession of the Lord as the Messiah, preceding the incident before us. The Lord had mentioned the cross to the disciples before, and they must have had some idea that it symbolized a heroic self-sacrifice, but they had never grasped its terrible reality or its supreme power. When He announced to them plainly that He was going up to Jerusalem to be killed, Peter, who loved Him ardently, began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall never be unto thee."

It was the old voice of the tempter seeking again to turn Him away from the cross, and the Lord recognized it and replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." In an evil world men must either kill or be killed. Jesus chose to be killed, in order to reveal to men the absolute love of God, to condemn the self-righteousness of the world which hopes in the power of destruction, to pay the penalty of God's broken law for an erring race, to prove God's absolute vindication of love and the absolute power of love.

As He approached the cross He tried to prepare the disciples for its grim reality, to press home on them its necessity, not only for Him, but for them. If they would follow Him, they must deny themselves, must die to self, and take up the cross of utter love. Only so could they find the eternal life He had promised them. Trying to save their lives by the sword, they would break God's law of love and so come under His judgment and lose their lives more hopelessly. The cross was the very core of His mission and power of His Kingdom, and they could not be His disciples without taking up the cross and bearing it with Him.

But the disciples were never able to grasp this teaching until after the anguish of the cross was swallowed up in the glory of the resurrection. It was too high, too difficult, too far beyond human experience. They were confused and bewildered by it and failed the Lord miserably in His long, steadfast, lonely march to the cross.

### NOT WITH OBSERVATION

Luke 17:20, 21.

The Pharisees came to Jesus with the question, "When the kingdom of God cometh?" They did not see any evidences of the coming Kingdom He preached. Where were the armies, the navies, the palaces, the courts, the custom houses, the prisons,—the officers wielding authority over and through all of these things? Only a poor young Rabbi, with a group of humble disciples, talking to the populace about the love of God and healing their diseases!

Jesus answered them, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." The love of God which He preached and practiced was already

kindling in the hearts of many. It was the invisible but supreme power of the Heavenly Kingdom. It was already in the midst of them, but the Pharisees did not discern it, because they were looking for an external, material power.

### CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Matt. 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45, 46; John 2:13-16.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry He entered the temple and made a dramatic assertion of His Messianic authority by calling it His Father's House, and casting out those who were profaning it by selling animals for sacrifice and changing the money of the worshippers. John records this incident. The synoptists record a similar incident at the close of His ministry. John's account says He used a scourge of cords, and this is quoted as authority for using violence in His Name. But John says, "He \_\_\_\_\_ cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen." (R.V.) The scourge was doubtless made of cords that had been used in leading animals and had fallen on the pavement. The Lord hastily gathered some of these up and platted them into a scourge for driving the animals. There is nothing to indicate that He used violence upon the person of any man. When He came to those that sold doves, he commanded them, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." He would not use the scourge upon the doves, and His simple command was sufficient for the men. He did show His contempt for what they were doing by pouring out the changers' money and overthrowing their tables and the seats of those that sold doves. But there is no mention of any struggle. The men fled before Him. And His victory was not a victory of force. The force of one man armed only with a handful of cords against all the animals and men whom He drove out was wholly insufficient for the result obtained. It is evident that His victory over the men was moral and that it was complete. He cast them out because they knew they were desecrating the sacred premises; they were convicted by their own consciences of sin and were not able to stand before Him. It was such a victory as He won when He said to the accusers of the woman taken in adultery, "Let Him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her," and every man went out from His presence, unable to defend himself or to condemn the woman.

### TRIBUTE TO CAESAR

Matt. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26.

Christ did not concern Himself with world politics. He was about for higher business,—laying the foundations of a Heavenly Kingdom. But the politicians found it necessary to concern themselves about Him. When He rode into Jerusalem acclaimed as the Son of David by throngs of enthusiastic pilgrims, the leaders of all parties in the city united in an attempt to ensnare Him to His ruin. The Pharisees (the patriotic-religious party) and the Herodians (the non-patriotic, worldly, court party of Galilee) laid aside their irreconcilable differences and joined in framing a question which they believed would impale Him on one horn or the other of a hopeless dilemma. The utter baseness of this plot is seen in the fact that both parties were willing to surrender their positions in order to destroy Christ, for the horns of the dilemma were the very points at issue between the parties. Each was willing to betray Him into the hands of its enemy. They came to Him as He taught in the temple, and after a blasphemously reverential preamble propounded their question: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" If He said "Yes," it would discredit Him with the patriotic party and the people. If He said "No," it would furnish grounds for accusing Him of sedition before the Roman Governor.

Jesus saw through their plot and the "wickedness of their hearts," but the horns of their dilemma did not pierce to the realm of His serene thinking. He answered them, "Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought him a denarius. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matthew says that "when they heard it, they marvelled, and left him, and went away."

Those who quote this passage to prove Christ's support of armed force overlook the circumstances. Caesar was not the king whom Israel had raised up to reign over her. He was a hated foreign conqueror and oppressor. Any natural patriotism would inspire the people to resist Caesar, as the military Messiahs did resist him, and as the people wished their Messiah to resist him. It was because Christ would not make this resistance that He was rejected by the patriotic party. In bidding them pay the tribute, He was bidding them submit to their enemy.

This is simply a practical application of Christ's teaching of non-resistance of evil. The divine Kingdom which He was preaching was not coming in competition with Caesar. It lay on an entirely different plane. Its treasure was not in silver and gold. Caesar had minted the money and had the power to exact it. Let him have it. It was infinitely better to sacrifice the tribute than to commit the sin of killing which would be necessary in order to resist the tribute. There were some things over which Caesar was permitted to have power,—men's possessions, even their bodies. There were other things over which he could have no power,—their consciences and their immortal souls. He could take their money; he could cast them into prison, or even put them to death; but he could not compel them to disobey God. If they rendered to God the things that are God's,—faith, and obedience to God's law of love,—if they acknowledged His supreme authority speaking in their consciences, God would save them from Caesar; God would vindicate them with eternal life, which Caesar could neither give nor take away.

The legalist is never heard to enlarge upon the second half of this saying. He quotes "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and forgets all about "rendering to God the things that are God's." God is Governor of the world. Caesar is subject to God. Christ said that he could have no power, except it were given him by God. The evil power of the world-king was the chastisement of God upon men for their sins. The way to be delivered from the curse of world kings was to be delivered from the wrath of God. And the way to be delivered from the wrath of God was to be delivered from sin. The nation that was delivered from the sin of war would be delivered from its chastisement. And the way to be delivered from sin was to believe on the divine King, who came in the perfect righteousness of love and the power of an endless life. Men were not able to deliver themselves from sin, because their best righteousness was to try to overcome evil with evil. Christ was able to deliver from sin, because He was, Himself, sinless, and had the perfect righteousness of God and its vindication of eternal life.

If Christ had meant to identify Caesar with God, He would not have distinguished between them. Caesar is man, and not God, and when there is a conflict between the command of God and the command of man, we are obliged to obey God rather than man. If man says "Fight," and God says "Do not fight," we can do nothing but obey God and trust in Him to save us.

## TWO SWORDS

Luke 22:35-38.

Jesus had tried again and again to prepare the disciples for the ordeal that lay before Him and before them as His followers. He had explained to them in the plainest language the literal fact of the cross to which He had dedicated Himself, and which He required them to take in following Him. Like modern men, they understood something of its symbolism, but failed utterly to grasp its real issue. They did not comprehend the extremity to which the Lord had come, nor their own inability to meet it with Him. How could He Who had such power to save others Himself be subject to death? How could He Who was the Son of God be put to shame by world rulers?—He Who was the divinely promised deliverer of Israel be overcome by His enemies and the enemies of Israel? He had rejoiced in their confession of Him as the Messiah. It was impossible that He should intend to throw away His life and with it the hope of Israel. As for rising from the dead, that was inexplicable. How could even He rise from the dead, after He had been conquered by death? No, He was unconquerable. He was talking in dark sayings. There was to be some bitter struggle through which they must pass, and then He would vanquish His enemies and set up His kingdom and they would be its chief officers, next to the throne.

Jesus knew their inability to comprehend or meet the cross. He had sought in every way to prepare them for it and test them by it in advance. When they confessed Him as the Messiah, He had told them that they must take up the cross, if they would follow Him, and that that meant giving their lives without seeking to save them. When they wrangled about the chief honors of the Kingdom, He had asked them if they could drink the cup that He must drink? He had warned them of their weakness. The very night of their communion with Him in the upper room they would all be offended in Him. The bold and self-confident Peter would deny Him, and when they saw Him smitten they would all be scattered and leave Him alone.

The supreme event to which he had been pointing them was at hand, and the Lord was making a last effort to prepare the disciples for it, to test them by it. This was no time of easy victory, such as they had known in the past. It was an hour of extreme peril, when life itself was at stake. He was going to the long expected cross, going to be numbered with the transgressors, to be despised and rejected and slain. Let them look out for themselves. Let them take money and provisions and swords and save their own lives!

It is impossible, in view of His repeated and ever more urgent demand that they take the cross and bear it with Him, to think that the Lord intended them to act upon this suggestion. He was trying to make them realize the situation; testing them with the suggestion that if they found the cross too hard, they could take the sword; bringing them face to face with the question whether they would forsake Him at the last ditch and save their own skins whole.

Again they failed utterly to comprehend His meaning or His test, as men still fail to comprehend them. They thought He was giving His sanction, in the present necessity, to the use of the sword, and they produced two swords for His inspection. He answered them laconically and enigmatically, "It is enough!" As the verb is in the singular, this expression would not seem to refer to the swords, but if taken literally to refer to them, it would be pointless. Two swords would not be enough to found a kingdom, nor even to defend the person of the Lord, or those of the disciples. If He had wished them to defend even themselves with the sword, He would have sent each

man out to provide himself with one. If He really said that two swords were enough, He was speaking ironically, and meant that the disciples were not to rely on the sword at all. A little of any bad thing is enough. It seems more probable that, realizing their utter inability to comprehend Him, He simply dismissed the subject with the words, "It is enough!"

The cross was too hard for flesh and blood. It was divine. Men never could comprehend its meaning, nor bear it, until the Son of God had first borne it for them and demonstrated its absolute vindication by God in the resurrection and its supreme power in the re-created lives of men. And so He went to the cross alone, unsupported even by the understanding of His most intimate friends. And knowing their present inability to bear the cross, He shielded them from it in the moment of His arrest, offering Himself to His captors and saying, "If ye seek me, let these go their way."

If any proof were needed that the disciples had misinterpreted the Lord's saying about procuring swords, it was given the same night in the moment of His arrest in the garden. Peter drew the sword in His defense, and Jesus commanded him, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It is clear that Peter had wholly misunderstood the Lord.

#### PUT UP THY SWORD

Matt. 26:51-54; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:49-51; Jno. 18:10, 11.

When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, the eleven were all eager to fight. Peter, always the representative and most aggressive of them, drew a sword and had already cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, when Jesus commanded him, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

The first of these sayings was quoted during the war in support of our entrance into the war, being interpreted to mean that those who take the sword for the purpose of conquest are to be resisted with the sword. But the saying is not a command; it is a statement of fact, referring to human history. And the militaristic interpretation overlooks the little word "all." The statement is absolutely unqualified, and as emphatic as it is possible to make it. Moreover the circumstances do not bear out this interpretation. Peter was not in the act of aggression, nor even of self-defense, when Jesus commanded him to put up his sword, but of defense of Another, who was innocent and defenseless and suffering the foulest wrong this world has ever seen. If it was not right to defend Christ with the sword, whom is it right to defend with the sword?

The true interpretation is the plain, obvious one. Jesus saw that nothing rises above its source. Those who hoped in the world's sword would themselves be subject to it. The history of the world was a hopeless muddle of killing and being killed.

If Jesus had wished to escape the cross, He would not have been without resources to assist Him. Being Himself sinless, He would have been justified, under the law, in invoking wrath upon His enemies, but He refused to do so. He had not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He asked no power, but the power to do good. And so, in the midst of armed enemies, instead of calling twelve legions of angels to His defense, He put forth His hand and healed the man whom Peter had wounded. He had come to reveal the absolute love of God,—a love that extended to all men, even enemies and

sinners,—to demonstrate its supreme power,—the power of endless life, of redemption, of regeneration, of justification before God, of absolute vindication by God,—the power of a universal, indestructible Kingdom. In doing this He could not save Himself from the evil power of the world. He knew that the price He must pay was the giving of His life; that it was God's will that He should give His life; and He gave His life freely, trusting in God to save Him and to glorify Him, setting Him far above all principality and power of this world, and giving Him the souls of men for His hire and a universal, eternal Kingdom.

The disciples could not follow Him in all this. They were not physical cowards. Speaking after the manner of men, Peter's boast that he would die with the Lord was utterly sincere, and the eleven were sincere in echoing it. But they did not know what it meant to die with Jesus. Peter attacked the enemies of the Lord single handed, with the sword. He would have died for his King, if he had been allowed to fight. It was because he was not allowed to fight, and because he had not the spiritual understanding to foresee the final issue of the cross,—its ultimate glory and power,—that he failed. None of the disciples could see beyond the defeat and humiliation of the cross until after the resurrection. And they could not understand its necessity until Jesus explained it to them from all the Scriptures, after He had risen from the dead. Even then, a special endowment of spiritual power was necessary to enable them to stand before unbelieving men and witness to the divine King and to bear the spiritual travail of His cross.

It is common to speak of Peter's denial of the Lord as very cowardly. It would be truer to speak of it as very human. An intensely ardent and active man, ready to defend his Lord's life with his own, was commanded to do nothing but submit to the will of God,—a will that looked to him like utter folly and shame. His faith failed. It is little wonder that he denied in the presence of warlike men that he had believed the apparently helpless and defeated Jesus of Nazareth to be the deliverer of Israel. So all men deny Him who take the sword and turn away from His cross. But they are less excusable than Peter, because they have seen the triumph and the supreme power of the cross.

### MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

Jno. 18:36-38

When Christ stood before Pilate, the Heavenly King before the world-ruler, Pilate questioned Him about His Kingship and His Kingdom. Acknowledging His Kingship, Jesus declared that His Kingdom was not of this world. If it were, the officers of His Kingdom would fight, that He should not be delivered to the hatred of the Jews. Language could not be plainer. Christ's Kingdom was not a world-power and did not use the world's power of force.

"Art thou a king, then?" asked Pilate, unable to conceive of a Kingdom without a sword.

Jesus justified His claim to Kingship by saying that He had come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Right minded men, sincere men, heard His voice. Truth was the weapon of His Kingdom. Truth did not need a sword. It was, itself, a higher power. It placed His Kingdom on a higher plane than Caesar's, beyond the reach of Caesar's sword.

Pilate, unable to follow his majestic Prisoner, but feeling His power, asked wistfully, "What is truth?" What is this power that does not need a sword? That is beyond my reach?

It is clear that when men fight, whatever they are fighting for, they are not fighting for Christ's Kingdom, and that they have never any authority from Him to fight, nor any right to fight in His Name.

## HE SAVED OTHERS, HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE

Matt. 27:41-43; Mark 15:31, 32; Luke 23:35.

Ignorantly the chief priests and elders paid Jesus the highest tribute when they mocked Him on the cross, saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." He had tried to make it clear to His disciples that those who would save others cannot save themselves; that the bloody cross is inevitable to those who would follow Him and the necessary price of His Kingdom. In a world where men live by killing each other, he who will not kill will himself be killed, and a sacrifice must be made to atone for the sin of the world. In order to make this sacrifice one must believe in the God of love and trust in the almighty power of the God of love to save him.

The chief priests and elders recalled such sayings of His with the taunt, "He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God." What a testimony to the faith of Jesus, and what a challenge to the Omnipotent God! And how God delivered His Son, bringing Him alive from the dead in the demonstrated power of endless life and giving Him a Name above every name! How He glorified His supreme valor of the cross with the power to bring men to repentance and faith, to justify them before God, to reconcile them to God, to draw men everywhere and redeem them in the universal, eternal Kingdom of His Son!

### THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8.

After His resurrection Christ gave His final commission to His disciples. He made no reference to the sword, but pointed out the absolute necessity of His cross, and the supreme authority and power which it gave Him. They were to go out in this authority and power, witnessing to the truth of His spiritual, universal Kingdom before the whole world. And so they went, and so they witnessed, bearing the cross with Christ, and the blood of the martyr proved to be the seed of the Church. She triumphed with Him in her sufferings, proving that faith and love are more than the madness and force of the world. The Church of Christ is in the world as a visible witness to this triumph.

Force is the power of men. The cross is the power of God. Force is repellent, divisive. The cross is attractive, unifying. Force is destructive, and the universal witness to the evil of the world. The cross is the witness to the redeeming love of God, and the power of God unto salvation.

Since the first three centuries the cross has been preached for the personal salvation of individuals, but its social aspect has been almost forgotten. Men have wished to be saved by Christ's cross from the damnation of Hell, but have had little thought of taking it up and bearing it with Him for the bringing of His Kingdom in this world. Instead, they have taken the sword and fought the world's battles. But the inconsistency of this has become apparent. The world itself is weary of its beastly warfare, and longing to escape from it. But the world will never be able to renounce the sword, because it has not the vision or courage to take the cross. Only men who believe in Christ and acknowledge His divine Kingship can bear His cross, and the time has come when men who do so believe in Him must renounce the sword and take His cross for the redemption of the warring world in His universal, eternal Kingdom.

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This pamphlet is the sixth in a series published by the author and addressed to the Church. Those receiving it are invited to share in its distribution among earnest and thoughtful Church men and women. Additional copies will be sent upon request. "Freely ye have received; freely give." In writing, please give the title of the pamphlet and state the number of copies desired. Jessie W. Gibbs, 819 S. Lauderdale St., Memphis, Tenn., Apt. 12.

