The Christian Citizen.

A FAST-DAY SERMON BY REV. B. F. SIMPSON, OF SOUTH BERWICK, ME.

Text—Rom. 13: 1-7.

The observance of a fast-day appointed by public proclamation, directs our thoughts to the relations which exist between the Christian citizen and the state. Of that relationship I will speak to-day. But I hear some one say: "The minister had better keep clear of such secular themes; he had better preach the gospel, and let politics alone." Just remember, please, that your criticism applies especially to the writer of my text, and he is generally considered a very good example for the preacher to follow.

It surely will be conceded by all that it is the minister's duty to preach whatever he finds in the Bible, even though it may treat of some things which men choose to call secular. The fact is, friends, the gospel is broader than many good people have supposed it was. It is as broad as the diversified needs of the human mind and heart. It is as broad as the thought of the Eternal. The Christian preacher stands on a broad platform. It is the platform of the universe when universal truths are to be applied to the particular needs of the human heart and mind. He must grasp the truth in its completeness, if his teaching is to be helpful and safe. Dangerous heresies do not consist in the acceptance or promulgation of pure error. Error can not stand alone. It is not a system as truth is. It has neither strength nor coherency. It is but the parasite which fastens itself upon a noble structure. It is but the poisoned ivy which coils itself around truth's oaken trunk. No heresy in philosophy or religion has ever wholly been false; but half truths, distorted truths, truths mixed with error—these are what makes dangerous doctrines. It is the truth in the false system which makes it harmful. It is the half-truth that is the worst falsehood. It is narrowness of view that is the worst heresy.

So when a man becomes a Christian his whole life is to be Christian. His business and his pastimes, his duties as a neighbor and a citizen are all to come under Christian control. We must not use the terms sacred and secular in such a way as to destroy the unity of the Christian citizen's life. We ought not to speak of a man's private character and his public character in such a way as to imply that the individual may have two separate characters and that in public life he may do what, in private life, he must not do. We must know that no man is a true Christian until his whole life has come into subjection to the mind of Christ. We must know that no preaching is true preaching which does not apply the truth to the totality of men's lives, and which does not help them to consecrate their whole lives to the service of Jesus Christ.

With this in view the thought of this text is of great practical interest. It is not secular as applied to Christian life, for nothing in that life is really secular. All work done in God's name is sacred; whether it be the tilling of the soil, the management of a commercial establishment, the commanding of an army, or the preaching of the gospel. All history ought to be sacred history. All but that which ignores God's hand in its movements is; and that means all that is worthy of being called history. Even the state must not be entirely secular; for men make up the state. It is of, and for, the individual. We repudiate the Greek's idea of the state as more sacred than the man. There is no institution on earth that is more sacred than the man. There is no institution, be it church or state, that is any value except as it exists for the benefit of the man and of manhood.

It is asked, then, if the church and the state both exist for man's benefit, and perform a similar mission, shall we not combine them into one? Is it wise to maintain two separate organizations in practically the same field? We American Christians have very strongly insisted that there must be no such combining of church and state. In the present order of things we should deem it an unholy alliance; and history tells us that, while such an union has often brought to the church wealth and worldly power, it has robbed it of its spiritual life, and unfitted it for its true work and mission.

Are we, then, to look upon these two institutions as antagonistic to each other, and destructive of each other's interests? By no means. They ought to be mutual helpers. "Separate as organizations, they meet in the Christian citizen. His duty to the church and to the state is one. It is as sacred in one direction as in the other. He cannot be entirely secular in the performance of his duties as a citizen, and he will find the church's legitimate work along some lines that run into so-called secular life.

We do, however, recognize a difference in the functions to be performed by the church and the state. The ends to be secured through the two organizations, though ultimately the same, are proximately different. For example:

The state is entrusted with the material interests of men. It views man in his relations to the world. It protects his property. It fosters the pursuit of worldly happiness. The state is a kingdom of this world. The church, on the contrary, as a kingdom not of this world, though operating therein, cares especially for the spiritual interests of man. It views him as related to his Creator, and seeks to conform him to that Creator's will and life. Its work is to develop character in the individual.

Again, it is the duty of the state to regulate the actions of men. It must not go beyond that. It dare not impeach or impute motives. If the citizen shows that he has done no wrong act, he stands acquitted of all blame in the eyes of the law. But the church values outward acts only as they are the fruits of an inward life. No man is a good member of a Christian church who merely conforms to the rule of a good exterior life. To be a Christian is to be at heart in love with truth and righteousness, and with Him who is truth and righteousness. That will do for a definition.

And yet it will be seen that here the state and the church meet in the performance of their separate functions. The state seeks reform in conduct. The church seeks reform in character. But each of these is only the reverse side of the other. Conduct is a transcript of character in all free beings. I think it is the state's duty in its attempt to secure good citizenship to cultivate the moral nature as well as to inform the intellect. But you say morality and religion go together, and the state must be very wary of religion or it will offend the adherents of some sect. Such is the folly of Christendom. Enlightened heathendom was wiser than this. The state, it is held, may educate all that is lowest in the child, but it must not touch what is highest. It must not touch the moral nature, although that is the very shibboleth of manhood. It must not teach man's duty to his neighbor, because that will involve a reference to his duty to his Maker, and that is heresy in secular education. And yet the state claims the right to impart such education as will secure good citizenship. I protest, in the name of common prudence, that this is an absurd position for an enlightened state to hold, and I believe that there is a broad ground-work of religious truth on which ethical instruction can be based which will be acceptable to Protestant and Catholic, Jew and Christian, and to any other class of men who recognize a supreme Being; and I hold that it is the state's duty on such a basis to give moral instruction in the schools. It is true I have left the infidel out of account here. But I have done so because so few men after all are consistently infidels? If they claim to be atheists, and yet accept the same moral truths which are based on the character of the Deity, then they can not complain at having these truths taught. But what if a few are by profession and practice infidels. Must not all law cross somebody's foil? As well away with laws against theft, and of consideration for the criminals in our prisons, as away with the moral culture of our rising citizens out of deference to a few infidels that you may find. Here the state in search of moral conduct finds a religion, and the church in the culture of its religious life is bound to foster the highest moral excellence in conduct. Brothers they are and helpers they should be.

Still further, the state is a temporary institution. Its duties pertain to the present, and with the present order of things it will come to an end. But the church when its earthly mission is accomplished is to be graduated into a higher branch of the same institution, the triumphant church, composed of all kindreds and nations that have existed in the world's course of history.

So, then, the church and the state, although differing in some respects in regard to the immediate objects before them, in many other ways have a common aim and a common interest. The character of the state, in all lands, is largely determined by the religion of the people. No state has been entirely secular. In our own land it recognizes the faith of the Christian community in administering the oath to those in positions of responsibility, in protecting the observance of the Sabbath, in appointing chaplains for legislative bodies and in the army, and in the observance of thanksgiving and fast days by public proclamation.

On the other hand, it is the duty of the Christian citizen to yield cheerful obedience to the claims which the state has upon him. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God." That statement some will not always accept with a very good grace. They readily believe that a Republican administration is God-ordained. But can a Democratic rule be so divinely sanctioned? How infamous the thought! The one who favors the democracy takes the reverse view. He is quite positive that democratic administrations are heaven born, but when the wheel turns around and a low-bred Republican sits in high place, he falters where he firmly trod. The text simply says, "the powers that be are ordained of God."

Again, some people can easily believe that a good righteous government is divinely sanctioned, but they would think it almost blasphemy to proclaim such sanction for an unrighteous one. Yet even here the text makes no distinction. It simply says "the powers that be," at any given time, are so sanctioned. That merely says that back of all parties and governments, good or bad, God is sovereign. He does as He wills, though those in power may not know it. The bad ruler may be ordained for the chastisement of those who allow him to occupy a position of power. (You may find some comfort in that when your party is out.) The fact is, men have and have always had rulers as good as they were worthy of. It is only such a condition of society as makes free government impossible that makes an opportunity for the tyrants. We make our rulers, and we had better not complain of them until we are ready to elect better ones. God's ordination never conflicts with man's free choice. I suppose it is always made in view of that free choice and action.

But now there comes a solemn warning in the statement that "whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." That statement is made without any qualification with respect to the character of the government or the party in power. It was written to Christians who were citizens of Rome and subjects of its heathen government. As citizens they were to be obedient and submissive. If they resisted they would "receive damnation," which literally means judgment according to desert. Government is a necessity everywhere, and at all times, and the way to be free from the "terror of rulers" is to obey. Oh that we all knew, even we of this land of liberty, what true freedom is, and how it is attained! It is not gained by exemption from law. It is gained by obedience to law. Law, and government of some kind we must have. Even tyranny is infinitely better than anarchy. To be free from the law is to possess the spirit of obedience. It is to obey from the heart. The fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, self-control," and against these things there is no law. This is the freedom of the truth, "the liberty wherewith Christ makes you free." It is not self-indulgence; it is self-control. It is not legal prohibition; it is moral prohibition. Already many of you are free from the commandments which prohibit the grosser forms of vice, because you have no desire to indulge in them; and the larger freedom from all outward laws is to come with the larger measure of Christian grace in the heart. Oh that it were so uttered in the ear of American society that it could never again be forgotten, that liberty is not license, but complete self-control. It is the inalienable heritage of an emancipated inward life. It has far less to do with outward conditions, and laws, than with inward conditions, and the law written on the heart. "If the Son make you free ye shall be free indeed."

But if your disposition leads you to violate law, the ruler becomes a minister of vengeance to you. This may be accepted as an axiom of governmental science,—all government must punish evil as long as evil exists. I suppose this to be true of human and divine government. I am willing to stake my orthodoxy on this, and I am pretty orthodox. If wrong ever shall cease to exist punishment will cease with it. God cannot be the arbitrary Being that such a good man as Edwards supposed he was, who elects a certain number to be saved and a certain number to be lost independent of any considerations as to their character or conduct, so that he could as easily have elected those whom he reprobated, and reprobated those whom he elected if he had seen fit to do so. I believe that the divine government places a penalty on willful transgression because it must do so;—because God would cease to be what He is if He did not give wrong-doing its just dues. But there is no place in the universe where a penitent man can be punished for a moment. Will wrong-doing ever cease? Will all men finally become penitent? I would like to think so. I believe that God infinitely desires that it should be so. But I have, as yet, found no indications of it in human history, and I find not even an intimation of it in Scripture.

The ruler must punish all wrong-doing. But, even here, he is "a minister of God to thee for good." Goodness as well as justice demands retribution for disobedience. Goodness in the ruler seeks the highest good in the subject. It is a very different thing from good-naturedness, though men are prone to confound the two together. If our government should unbar all its jails and prisons, and let the perjurer, the thief, the assassin roam at will over the land, it might be an indication of good nature, but not by any means of goodness. If God were to yield up the restraints by which he holds iniquity in check, and allow the criminal to go unpunished, it would abolish hell by making a hell of the whole universe. His goodness compels Him to seek the highest good of His creation. It is not good-nature which overlooks offences to the injury of both the offender and the innocent.

"He is the minister of God to thee for good." Oh, that those in power, and those who want to be there realized the responsibility here indicated! Perhaps it would diminish the army of office-seekers, and cool the ardor of some political aspirant. Perhaps it would lead to different conduct on the part of some now in office. The promotion of goodness is the object of all right laws. To this touch-stone they must be brought. Do they minister to that which is true, honorable, pure, of good report in the individual? If not they had better be abolished. Is it the aim of those in authority to promote good living? If not they had better be dispensed with as soon as opportunity is afforded. But for the present be patient, and respect them for the sake of their position, if you can. Do not hastily decide, as some do, that because law and government have not always promoted the highest ends, therefore law and government are only instruments of oppression. That social heresy, born of the pit, is the great menace of our civilization to-day.

And yet this calls up the question as to whether this command to submit to "the powers that be" has not some limitations. I know that we stand on much disputed ground here; and that such questions of casuistry are hard to decide. But there is surely a sense in which the man is above the state. If was made for him, and not he for it. If it commands him to degrade his manhood he must respectfully decline. I have not said that the state shall in no case require a man to violate his conscience, because conscience may be deluded. I am sure, too, that the judgment of the individual when opposed to the judgment of the multitude ought not to be pressed without the gravest consideration. There is always presumption that the one as opposed to the many is wrong. But if the individual really knows that he is right, then he may claim that right is the highest law, and that the living unit of society stands on moral grounds above the soulless mass, and that he must do right though the heavens fall. He may know, too, that to do right will not make the heavens fall, for they are established in justice. So although the Israelites were to obey the laws of the land where they were captives, and to pray for its peace, Daniel and his associates will not bow down to the idolatrous image whatever the mandate may be. So the martyrs choose the stake rather than obey an unholy edict. So every true man does the right like a hero and takes the consequences of his action. Whatever socialism, or anarchism, or heathenism may say, the individual has some rights which society is bound to respect.

But, then, there are some rights that are alienable. No moral principle is sacrificed when they are given up. In the social relations of life these may give place to duties. Indeed, the very existence of society depends on the yielding up of what might be claimed as personal rights. An individual in a world by himself might do many things which you and I must not do in society of our fellows. He might load a repeating rifle, and, turning on his heel, fire a charge towards every point of the compass. But he must not do that on the crowded thoroughfare. The existence of society takes away some individual rights, but it more than makes up for that by the benefits which it confers. We stand not alone in this human brotherhood. The individual is as far astray as the socialist. They each utter half-truths. As social beings, "we are members one of another." I wish that all rulers and subjects, all capitalists and laborers, knew the truth of that scripture. Duty, is literally and really that which is due. What we ought to have done for our fellow man is, in truth, what we owed to have done for him. Benevolence is really no more than justice, because we owe more than we can tell to our fellow-men. What would your business, or your lands, or your profession be worth to you if it were not for the existence of your fellows with whom, and for whom, your business is done? I am not willing to accept the dicta of the socialist that all property is theft, but I am strongly of the opinion that property is a trust to be used for the good of men, and that property hoarded up or wrongly used is not one whit better than theft. When men come to see this, and they must under the teaching of Jesus Christ come to see it, the anarchist and the labor agitator will be disarmed. We have large duties to society and to government, and I am persuaded that in our coming as individuals to freely recognize them is the only hope for society. I have no faith in the ultimate success of any mechanical renovation of society, whether proposed by Plato or by Bellamy. But I do believe that when the angels sang "peace on earth" over the cradle of Him who was a working-man and a true Master, they had struck the key-note of the true harmony which is yet to be in our social life.

It ought to be remembered that as citizens we are individually responsible for the state of society, and the conduct of the government under which we live. That may mean a good deal even in this humane and Christian land. There have been great wrongs committed here. Do I say there have been? There are wrongs committed and they are winked at by those in authority, and shared in by us all. The name of our fair land of liberty suffers on account of our treatment of the black man, and the yellow man, and the red man, our brothers within our borders. And yet some say to me, "I am a Christian. I am a citizen of a higher community. I don't feel much responsibility in this matter of worldly politics. And, moreover, politics are so corrupt that I deem it my duty to stand aloof from them." I have really heard Christian men talk in that way. But I have invariably said, "Your duty to yourself, your fellowman, and your God is to go into politics, and don't forget to take your Christianity with you."

When the millennium comes the saints are to rule the world. Perhaps it would help the millennium along if the saints would exercise themselves a little more in that way, and be sure to do it as saints, and not merely as partisans. A political millennium is a desideratum as well as a moral or religious one. We might almost have that in this land to-day. Why haven't we? Why are cities, and even states, ruled by petty tyrants, known as bosses? Why are ballots bought for boodle? Why this desecration of the Sabbath, and this ignoring of sacred institutions for which our fathers suffered? Is it because the American people are outnumbered here? Is it because Lincoln was wrong when he declared that the *heart* of the American people was right? It is not from either of these causes. It is simply because so many good people have been content to stand aloof and say "politics are corrupt," and so many more *fairly* good people are too intent on managing their personal affairs to show any public spirit.

This leads me to say that the citizen has not done his whole political duty when he cast his vote for a good man. There is this evil in our political life today, that at certain times the interest therein runs to the extent of wild excitement, and then it dies out to revive with the next campaign. It would be more wholesome to sustain a moderate interest at the time. That would facilitate, that would render possible the enforcements of good laws. We may as well know that our representatives in the different branches of government will do no better than we compel them to do; and they can do no better than we permit them to do, and assist them in doing. We say, "The people rule here." But that must mean more than that they freely cast their votes on election day. It means that the state of society determines what the rule will be, and must be. If your vote for a good man says to him, "This is to put you in a responsible position where you will be watched, and where you will be punished if you do wrong," then you greatly wrong him by voting for him. But if your vote says, "This pledges me to stand by you, and hold up your hands for righteous rule," then you are in the line of duty.

Once more, let us not forget that nations suffer for national sins. The nation has no future life, and must take its punishment in the present, and each of its citizens must have his proportion thereof. How clearly does history proclaim this fact. From ancient Israel to modern Europe it has been true. From the captivity which humbled the Jewish nation to the revolution which left France almost a corpse, this law of retribution has manifested itself. How has it been with us? Were not the horrors of our civil war the expression of a divine retribution upon an evil in which the nation shared? Is this history to be repeated? There seems to be real danger that it may. Already the strife which is carried on under the name of competition assumes the form of real conflict, and not unfrequently results in bloodshed. "When wealth came as a result of war," says a French writer, "then war was business; but now that wealth is acquired through business, business is war." Human greed stands back of this internecine strife, and keeps the sword unsheathed. While we sit in our churches Sabbath after Sabbath, there are hundreds of men in our large cities who meet for a very different purpose. They are taking lessons in the use of the sword and the rifle. What does it all mean? It simply means that this strife between the classes and the masses is a despotic one, and men are preparing for the worst. When I hear the temperance orator talking so glibly, and recommending heroic measures for the suppression of the liquor traffic, I wonder if he really thinks that this mighty evil, supported by human greed and backed by millions, almost billions of capital, is going to quit the field at the tooting of horns, or the rattling of tin pans? Much smaller causes have bathed continents in blood in times not very far in the past. It is just possible that there may be a repetition of these scenes. The price of all reforms has been and is sacrifice. The Scriptures attest the application of this principle to religious life; and the fields of carnage which mark the path of human history declare its political significance. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" of society's sins.

And yet in the face of these facts our great and wise men, the ministers of God for the accomplishment of this nation's mission, sit in legislative halls and gravely discuss questions as to whether a black man is a human being or not, as to whether each Mongolian in our land of liberty and equality ought not to wear a tag with a number on it, like the settle on the prairies, as to whether or not it can be right to admit blueberries from the wilds of New Brunswick free of duty. And we look on wonder how such small heads can contain so much wisdom. Brethren "this kind goeth not out except by prayer and fasting." But if we are to fulfill our grand mission as a nation out it must go, and its place must be taken by honest, intelligent men,—perhaps men and women who will stand heroically for God, and home, and native land, until this nation becomes the beacon light to which the kingdoms of the world will look for guidance and success.

At home and abroad to-day, among our native aborigines, and in far distant China, our distinctively Christian work suffers on account of the blunders and crimes of our politicians. To stand aloof and ignore this fact is to court failure in all our efforts for the good of men. Jesus Christ did not pray that His followers should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil. He believed in Christian citizenship, and it is high time we had come to His way of thinking.

One Mightier Than the Mightiest.

The existence of sin in God's universe is a mystery absolutely impenetrable to our present powers. It is not only a moral mystery how the holy, all-wise, all-powerful God could allow its presence, but it is no less a philosophical mystery. That sin should continue and spread, after it had come into existence, is nothing surprising, any more than it is surprising that disease should propagate itself. But how, in a world of perfectly pure and angelic beings, without any temptation from without, and without any evil impulse within, sin should come into existence, and sinful angels should begin their baleful career,—before this mystery we bow, confessing our absolute ignorance and helplessness.

The existence of sin and of sinful beings being granted, it is not at all surprising that the mightiest efforts of the powers of evil should be put forth when Christ our Lord came to destroy the works of the devil, and to put an end to the dominion of sin. And it was not unnatural that God should allow the powers of evil to array themselves in the presence of the world, against the Messiah. Accordingly, there was granted to the demons, apparently for that period only, a peculiar power over the bodies and minds of men. Evidently, Satan, at the present time, has much power over men; but this power seems, in our day, to be the result of a voluntary yielding on the part of the human victim. As a man more and more surrenders himself to the influence of a good spirit or a bad spirit, more and more the spirit takes possession of him. But the possession in the time of our Lord seems to have been independent of the voluntary choice of the person possessed. Persons were the victims of the demons from innocent youth.

Was not this peculiar and unparalleled opportunity granted to the demons, in order that there might be plainly demonstrated the supremacy of our Lord Jesus! He came face to face with the great adversary and with his emissaries. In the desert, He met the tempter and repelled him; in the garden and on the Cross, the prince of this world came and had nothing in Him and returned discomfited.

And now He meets in a more public way, and under the eye of men, the emissaries of Satan who have entrenched themselves within the bodies and souls of unhappy men and women. As He looks them in the face, they cry out in agony, "What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to torment us before our time?" At His word of power, often after a struggle which convulses the unhappy demoniac, they are compelled to release their hold and the released mind and body of the once possessed remains at once the field of conflict and the trophy of victory.

In all this, there is a profound significance. We fully believe in the existence and personality and the activity of Satan and his angels. It is in accordance with analogy. That there should be bad spirits, is not more strange than that there should be bad men. Good spirits are sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation. It is but natural for bad spirits to go out to lead men astray.

The existence of evil spirits seems to us a matter certified by experience. Many of us find springing up in our own minds bad thoughts, malevolent thoughts, which we are sure did not arise from within ourselves, which we do not welcome, and which we do not cherish. Suppose we are trying to do what is right; suppose we are trying to cultivate what is good and holy within ourselves, at once we find aroused a most active opposition, which certainly does not spring from within our own hearts. Suppose we set out to labor for the religious advancement of others and for the salvation of souls, at once there spring up obstacles, difficulties, obstructions, allurements, unknown before. If we are trying to lead men to wrong, the ways are smooth and easy; there are few obstacles; but if we are trying to do them good, it seems as though everything was against us.

But the conflict of our Lord with Satan and with his evil angels, reminds us that Christ is mightier than all, that He is the Captain of our Salvation. He is victor in many battles; on His head are many crowns; He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written which is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is mightier than Satan, in whatever guise Satan may manifest himself. Our Lord is mightier than unbelief, than the saloon, than love of gain, than impurity, than worldliness, than hate, than all the powers and forms of evil combined. If we do not believe this, we may as well give up the battle. If we do believe this,—really believe it—then our hearts should be brave and our hands should be strong, and we should go on in our efforts for the salvation of men, absolutely confident of success in God's way and in God's time.

This is the great lesson of the demoniacal possessions and of our Lord's conflict and victory.—*National Baptist.*

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