


### A SERMON ON "POLITICS."

"There is no power but of God. The powers that be, are ordained of God."—Rom. 13: 1.

 **GENERAL** Election is in the future and as the Word of God is a rule of conduct in all circumstances, the present is a fitting time to inquire what it teaches regarding the duty of the Christian citizen. The verse at the head of this column is one of its many answers to that inquiry, and the truth it teaches, and the consequent lessons may not be unhelpful.

The truth taught, viz., that—

#### I. CIVIL GOVERNMENT IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION.

This is the direct statement of the text, "There is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God."

One of the grandest of all truths is that *God reigns*. He is King both in name and in reality. Not only is His title "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," but "He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."

In dealing with men, however, He is pleased to throw upon them in some measure the execution of that will. He gives to them commands, and though He has all power to compel direct obedience to these commands, and to inflict direct penalty for their violation; yet, as in the work of spreading the Gospel and saving the world, He is pleased to carry out His purposes by human agency; and to this end He has ordained Civil Government, as a means of enforcing upon men such of His commands especially as have to do with the persons and rights of their fellow-men.

The Great Ruler says, "Thou shalt not kill," but He does not inflict a penalty for the deed by striking dead the murderer; He has instituted human law for this purpose, and has laid down the principle that "he that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The law on the statute book against murder is not merely human law, it is a Divine ordinance, and the ruler who enforces it, is, according to Scripture, "a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to Him that doeth evil."

The same is true with regard to all laws referring to the rights, the property, the person, or the life, of our neighbor, all laws against profanity, or blasphemy, or Sabbath breaking; and the more fully the laws of any land are made and carried out after the model of the Divine law, the more completely do these laws answer the purpose for which God instituted civil government among men.

But a question arises here. Can a corrupt Government be a Divine institution? Can men who make and enforce unrighteous laws be called God's ministers or servants? Yes! the

Government is Divine, though human corruption may have crept into it.

There might be a wise and righteous Government at the head of the Empire, and under it, foolish and corrupt governments, at Ottawa, or Toronto, or Halifax, doing much of which the head government would disapprove. But the Government of the Empire has given these subordinate Governments certain privileges, and so long as they work within certain great constitutional principles, it leaves them largely to themselves, to make their own laws, and bear the consequences.

So, the King of Kings rules in righteousness, but He gives to men liberty, freedom of will in all things, gives them freedom in the work of making and carrying out laws, even though these laws are not such as He approves. Earth's rulers, whom in His Providence He appoints, may not be faithful to their trust; they may be corrupt; selfishness may be their supreme controlling power; yet He does not use His power to destroy them. They are still His ministers, though filling but poorly their office. When Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote in his letter to the Romans, "There is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God," Nero, the greatest monster that ever wielded sceptre, was on the throne of the Roman Empire.

Law is of God, and law among men is but its echo, sometimes faint, sometimes clear and strong. Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne; and justice and judgment, as commanded and enforced among men, are but the reflection of these great principles from that throne; sometimes very dim as reflected from corrupt rulers, sometimes clearer and brighter, as reflected from wise and righteous ones; but whether dim or bright, all law has its source in God, as all light, popularly speaking, has its source in the sun.

Three further thoughts are suggested in connection with the great truth of the text:—

1. That while "Civil Government is a Divine Institution" its true character is in many cases more or less overlaid by the errors and sins of those to whom it is entrusted. Earth's Governments too often reflect but dimly the Divine.

2. With all their wrongs, human governments, thanks to the efforts of men and women, good and true, are, as a whole, growing better, and this betterment shall go on until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and the laws of men, shall be the Law of God.

3. Upon men and women, according to their light, and knowledge, and position, and influence, rests the responsibility of refashioning, into the likeness of its Divine Ideal, this institution of Civil Government, which their selfishness and sin has so sadly marred. This last thought leads to