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## ACCORDING TO SOME BRETHREN, THEY SINNED (PART 2)

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Late last year, an 11-year-old son of a Houston police officer fatally wounded an armed intruder in their home in a neighborhood recently plagued by a rash of burglaries. The boy was home from school because he was ill when the incident occurred about 1:15 in the afternoon. The boy fired a single shot from a 20-gauge shotgun at the burglar, who died at the scene despite efforts of a Life-Flight helicopter crew. After he was declared dead, detectives searched his body and found a .25 caliber pistol underneath it. Did the boy sin? SOME OF MY BRETHREN ANSWER: "YES, HE SINNED IF HE IS A YOUNG CHRISTIAN, BUT HE DID NOT SIN IF EITHER (1) HE HAD NOT YET REACHED THE AGE OF BEING ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD OR (2) HE WAS ACCOUNTABLE BUT NOT YET BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST!" Believe it, who can?? Does God really have two laws in such moral matters, or is the gospel applicable to both Christian and non-Christian alike?

According to the Bible, it makes no difference so far as ethical actions are concerned if the person involved is an alien sinner or a Christian! The matter is really very simple, in fact, it is as:

### EASY AS A B C

- I. If (A) the Bible teaches that all men are amenable to the law of Christ, and (B) the law of Christ teaches that it is possible for a NON-CHRISTIAN to punish (without sin) evil-doers up to and including the taking of human life as a policeman or soldier or citizen authorized by the state or civil government, then (C) the law of Christ teaches that it is possible for a CHRISTIAN to punish (without sin) evil-doers up to and including the taking of human life as a policeman or soldier or citizen authorized by the state or civil government. (Major Prem.)

### BIBLE PROOF OF A AND B

- II. (A) the Bible teaches that all men are amenable to the law of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19) and (B) the law of Christ teaches that it is at least possible for a NON-CHRISTIAN to punish (without sin) evil-doers up to and including the taking of human life as a policeman or soldier or citizen authorized by the state or civil government. (Minor Prem.)

### CONCLUSION C PROPERLY DRAWN

- III. Therefore (C) the law of Christ teaches that it is possible for a CHRISTIAN to punish (without sin) evil-doers up to and including the taking of human life as a policeman or soldier or citizen authorized by the state or civil government. (Concl.)

Since there are also pacifists of the persuasion that they can “get out of the problem” set forth here by claiming that “Non-Christians are lost and going to hell anyway, so God uses them in protecting the Christian and in keeping an orderly society—since they cannot be any more lost than they already are”, I am obligated to respond. Why not take this same approach to other moral obligations and issues? Why not say: “Well, non-Christians are lost and going to hell anyway, so it does not matter if they have an abortion, rape people, gamble, dress lewdly, practice mercy killing, or drink booze. In fact, God perhaps uses such people to lie or to steal or to murder to get food so that Christians can stay alive without having to do such awful actions.” Can you imagine such a “pacifist” in a room with an alien sinner holding a 357 magnum pistol to his (the Christian’s) head saying: “Go ahead and shoot, you are lost and going to hell anyway, you cannot be any more lost than you already are!”?? Such thinking (?) is to obliterate moral/ethical distinctions for those outside of Christ!!

Please open your Bible and read Romans 13:1-7, which is proof of part B of our previously stated minor premise: “the law of Christ teaches that it is possible for a non-Christian to punish (without sin) evil-doers up to and including the taking of human life as a policeman or soldier or citizen authorized by the state or civil government.” One should also study the proof of 1 Peter 2:13-14 and Acts 23:12-33.

Romans 13:1-7 plainly teaches (1) that civil government is an ordinance of God—that it is God’s will that communities of men shall be governed by laws set up by each respective community, city, state, nation, and so forth. (2) That rulers have a work to do which is authorized by God, and (3) that the use of force by a government agent in the execution of just (good) laws is sanctioned by God. In fact, be sinful for the civil ruler and his agents to refrain from such appointed functions!! The universality of the duty of every citizen to be in subjection to the higher powers is stressed by Paul’s “every soul” (Rom. 13:1a). It is the duty of man to obey (as far as is possible without violating God’s will—Acts 5:29) this government.

Paul next states two reasons as justification for his command: (1) abstractly, the ultimate source of government is God, and (2) actually, present civil powers are providentially ordained. The powers “that be” in the specific context refer obviously to the Roman Empire, with all its grades of officials from the Emperor down, but he is making clear that any civil authority derives its origin, right, and power from God. Paul does not enter into the question of types of government, but includes the President of the United States, the Soviet Union’s premier, the mayor of Memphis, and the Queen of England!! This is not to claim that divine origin guarantees perfection of operation here, any more than it guarantees perfection of operation for the home or the eldership. Rulers are not infallible agents of a perfect dispensing of justice any more than parents or elders or husbands, and therefore it is very foolish to attempt (as some persons do attempt) to put non-pacifists in the position of affirming an “all-or-nothing” position relative to the civil state!

Since governments are such by divine appointment, then it follows that anyone who resists or refuses to subject himself (when subjection does not involve the violation of God’s law) resists not merely man, or an abstract institution, but “the ordinance of God” (Rom. 13:2). Those who resist, are in actuality resisting the law or will of God, receiving unto themselves judgment by a righteous and just God (perhaps a fine, imprisonment, beating, or death in this life and condemnation in the life to come). “There is no inherent conflict between the claims of God and those of the government as shown by Jesus’ statement: ‘Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s’” (Matt. 22:21).<sup>1</sup> One surely can and must render what is due to each as the Lord says.

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<sup>1</sup> J.W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, The Standard Bible Commentary: Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1916), p. 507.

Remote texts such as Acts 4:18-20 and Acts 5:29, along with Romans 13:2, make clear that Paul had in mind a government that functions as God would have it to function. The rulers about which Paul was speaking “are not a terror to the good work, but to evil” (13:3). If a government is a terror to good works, then it is not functioning as God would have it to function. Paul makes it clear that a government is ordained for the function of vengeance upon a man that does evil (13:4). If one will do that which is good, he will be praised by the just ruler, because “he is a minister of God to thee for good” (13:4). The Apostle went on to say that if one did that which was evil, he would be justified in being afraid of the ruler who rules justly, because “he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil” (13:4).