

The Left 3

Woe to us when our history is written by an enemy. The Sadducees had that misfortune. Their sworn political enemies wrote the only history we possess. Josephus was sympathetic to the Pharisaic persuasion and was not very gracious when it came to painting their virtues. Winners write history. Losers suffer at their hand (or we should say, at their pens). For this reason, we should attempt to understand more than judge. The people of the first century were just like us.

Sadducees were the product of Hellenistic influences. It has often been purported that they were the “liberals” of their day while the Pharisees were the “fundamentalists.” It was not so simple.

A large population of Jews thrived in Egypt’s Alexandria in the third century BC. While they faithfully held to certain traditions, as did their forefathers in the Babylonian captivity, they were influenced by the world around them. By the time they migrated back to Palestine they were considered by other Jews to be “worldly” and by themselves “sophisticated.” The Sadducees adopted the comfortable lifestyle and dress of the times. They considered themselves progressive and men of the world.

To label them “liberal” is to press them into a modern mold to which they are not suited. A liberal today, does not accept the Books of Moses. The Torah which means “Instruction” is hardly respected today as life’s instruction manual by liberals. Liberals today are more likely to be found encouraging the masses to change the status quo, than to be satisfied with it.

In many ways, the Sadducees were the conservatives and the reactionaries. They were among the wealthier, more aristocratic and privileged class, and as are such classes today, they resisted any change that might threaten their advantageous position. The rich are always quite satisfied with being rich, and the powerful and influential have no inclination to share their status or give up their privilege. It is the underclass that always wants change. It is the poor who question the “status quo.” It is fair to say that the Sadducees were the economically advantaged. They were the Jewish upper class.

The name of this party most probably came from the word “Zaddikim which meant “the righteous.” They accepted the written Old Testament Law but rejected the Oral Law of traditional rabbinism. In this regard they were not religious liberals as we would define them today. The majority of the priesthood would naturally fall in harmony with this party since every priest could appreciate the significance and importance of birth and pedigree. The only way to become an aristocrat was by birth. The position of the Sadducee was one of social standing and that standing was upon the highest ground.

The Sadducees did not believe in miracles. They did not believe in fate. They enjoyed their status, they believed, because of wise actions and investments. They prospered as the result of choices they made. They were the masters of their own ships and the captains of their own fate. The poor, on the other hand were poor because of their own doings and were inferior in character. It is not hard to find their social equivalent in our age. Talk to some about grace, and divine mercy and benevolence and they will either smirk with scorn or flush with anger as they insist that they are wealthy and successful because of hard work and wise choices that they made and owed nothing to invisible spirits or superstitions. Those who have financial and social advantage have little interest in giving up their status or trading places with the underprivileged. In this regard, the Sadducees were very conservative politically.

It is easy to see why the wealthy think little of the idea of heaven. This world is heaven enough for them. The poor look forward to a place where the playing field will be leveled and wealth will be redistributed. The rich man in Luke sixteen was most probably a Sadducee. It is also more than likely the rich young ruler who refused to give up his wealth and position was also a member of this privileged class (Luke 18).

Religiously, we would not call them conservative, although in the best classical sense they were. They accepted only the Torah as the Bible. Our Bible contains sixty-six books, theirs only five. The Pentateuch was their only Bible. They did not recognize the prophets, nor the wisdom literature, nor the historical books as Bible.

It is commonly held that they were practical pragmatists who believed that this world was all there is. But remember, this was a picture painted by the Pharisees. We can only speculate as to how they historically lost their hope of heaven. Edersheim makes an interesting supposition. He suggests that the teachings of Antigonus of Socho were misunderstood by later pupils and their error carried to its logical extreme. It seems that Antigonus was making an argument that men should serve God without any regard of future rewards. Just how much religious service is rendered in hope of heavenly restitution is impossible to measure, but if the ancients were like the moderns, much "good" is done in hope of gain, if not here, in the after-life. In other words, the Sadducee was saying "good" should be done for "goods" sake. It may be that this was never intended to teach that this world was the only life and that there was to be no "here-after."

The Sadducees were probably not so much challenging Jesus and the idea of heaven as they were the Pharisaic teaching about marriage in Matthew 22. They brought to the Master a ridiculous scenario about seven childless brothers who die leaving the same surviving widow to each succeeding brother. Whose wife will she be in heaven? This seems like an attempt to place Jesus for or against one party or another. The Sadducees taught that a man might marry his brother's espoused wife should that brother die before fulfilling his legal contract, but not his actual wife.

A third great difference that divided the Pharisee and the Sadducee was the question of free-will and pre-ordination. This has been a bone of contention not just for the Jew, but it has long divided Christianity into two antagonistic camps. The Sadducees held to the position of free will. The Pharisee would admit to only a minimal human influence upon the affairs of life and only in as much as man co-operated with the divine order of things.

It is not hard to understand their reticence to accept seek those things which are above, when their life was so good right here. For the rich, this world is heaven. Jesus understood the difficulties the privileged had in looking for a world to come. Why should they become enthusiastic about a new and "other" world in which the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. They wanted the first to stay first. Jesus pointed out how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

The masses which were poor found talk of a life to come, where tables will be turned, to be very appealing. Remember it was in the sun scorched cotton fields of the pre-Civil War America that one could hear singing about Bullah land. While faith might have been found in the slave owners mansion as well, the longing for heaven was not as intense as it was in the slaves quarters.

The Sadducees must have found much of Jesus' teaching offensive. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus had to make any Sadducee uncomfortable. A story about a rich man reduced to painful poverty, suffering, and anguish in Hades must have offended the privileged class, especially when they did not believe in a Hades or a hereafter.

Talk about an after-life and judgment is still very offensive to the wealthy of this world. The rich are convinced that they enjoy their status only because of hard work and superior intelligence, or dedication.

It should be pointed out that many of the priests were Sadducees and during the reign of Herod, made up a majority of the Sanhedrin. Why, one might ask would a priest be most likely to be of this persuasion? Being a priest was a class or cast position. A person had to be of the tribe of Levi, in order to be a priest. They had no sympathy for the other tribes. They certainly did not see themselves as sinners. Their profession was one of listening to the confessions of others and offering sacrifices for their sins. The very idea of the veil of the temple being rent was unimaginable to them. The "priesthood of believers" was likewise inconceivable. They could not possibly have comprehended

Jesus being the “Lamb of God” who would take away the sin of the world. Yet there must have been something unsettling about the message of Jesus and the power he possessed. Imagine their horror when they heard that this itinerant preacher from Nazareth was claiming the power to forgive sins.

A priest could live without fear of starvation. They were Jewish government employees with a guaranteed position for life. The closest thing we have seen in our lifetime to such a social cast or class of people is the professional bureaucrat. The priest lived by the five books of Moses. All their standard operational procedures were contained in Leviticus. If a Messiah did come he would certainly seek their council, for they were the ruling class and were in charge.

False messiahs and political aspirants were ever arising as a nuisance and a threat to the status quo, which in their mind must be protected at all costs. This attitude was reflected in the words of the Sadducee Caiaphas when he said, “It is expedient that one should die for the people” (John 18:14). Christ would be their sacrifice, not for their sins but for the salvation of the Jewish state (John 11:50). The Sadducees were political realists.

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee the word of God came unto John... in the wilderness.” So described Luke (3:1,2) the political world when Jesus began his ministry and proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Politics is all about power. Ever since the “father of lies” first held out the prospect of self-government, man has desired fruit from that tree. From that first temptation until the “dark one” again attempted to bribe Jesus in the wilderness, Satan has often played the political card. “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me”(Mt. 4:8-9).

Herod was king when the magi stood before him asking to see the one new born. Imagine Hitler for Herod and you can begin to appreciate the awkwardness of the moment of strange dignitaries making enquires about the “King of the Jews.” Herod’s history was already dripping in blood, and his mental stability had many fissures of paranoia that were like faults awaiting the next emotional earthquake. His unstable character might shake the earth around him at any moment.

Herod had ten wives. He had his only love, Mariamme, executed at his command during a jealous rage. Since that day he would have no peace. It was as if her spirit haunted him till his dying day. His marriage to Mariamme had legitimized the Idumean (Edomite) reign by providing heirs in the Hasmonian line. Jealous of Mariamme’s brother, he first named him High priest and then had his servants drown him in his bath. Although this death was officially listed as an unfortunate accident, Mariamme knew better, and never forgave the King. To make matters worse, Cleopatra of Egypt coveted the fertile lands of Galilee and through intrigue was a constant threat to Herod’s power and position. On several trips abroad to reinforce his kingdom, Herod left word that should he die, Mariamme was to follow him to his grave quickly. When Mariamme discovered this secret order, she was infuriated. Convinced by his enemies that the queen was conspiring against him and had romantic ambitions that went beyond him, Herod had her executed, and regretted it for the rest of his life.

In an attempt to undo his awful deed he named his third wife Mariamme also, but it did little good. Mariamme’s two sons Aristobolus and Alexander were raised in Rome until they were of age at which time they returned to Jerusalem, but the enthusiasm with which the crowds greeted the young men who were descendants in the priestly line only made the king more jealous. His suspicions were fueled by Antipater, the son of his first wife Doris until they reached their peak and he had them executed by strangulation in 7BC. Three years later he also had his first son executed.

Augustus said he would rather be Herod’s pig than his son. Because he ate no pork his pig was safer. The remains of his family inherited his kingdom. Archelaus inherited Judea and Samaria, Antipas Galilee, and Philip (son of Cleopatra of Jerusalem) Perea.

Herod’s court was rife with petty jealousy, deadly intrigues, and seething suspicions. Herod employed spies everywhere who kept him informed of all dissent. It was into this swirling political weather system that the wise men came inquiring about “he who is born king of the Jews.” Such a man was quite capable of what history calls the “slaughter of the innocents” when Herod ordered the murder of all babies in Bethlehem under the age of two.

Imagine life in Stalin’s Russia with its atmosphere of fear, suspicion and its ever listening secret police. Consider the constant threat of the Russian gulag, or German gestapo. Imagine life in a police state and you begin to appreciate the world as Jesus found it in the first century.

The failed policies of Archelaus caused him to be deposed and his territories to be taken over and directly administered by Roman governors, the most famous being Pontius Pilate who was the sixth

Procurator.

The language of the masses was Aramaic which was of Syrian influence. Hebrew was spoken by the religious, Greek by the intellectual, and Latin by the politically astute. The streets of Jerusalem were filled with the Babel-like confusion of voices, tongues and dialects. Even the superscription placed on the cross was a testimony to the troubled world that crucified Jesus. His alleged title and crime was written in three languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. These three world collided in Palestine. These were troubled times.

Palestine was the link between Rome and its Egyptian and Syrian colonies. It was all too often a troubled way station on the way to greater interests. God in his infinite wisdom and exactitude of timing chose the time and place of the incarnation. He chose first century Israel. Relatively obscure, the home of the children of Abraham, caught in the vice like grip of circumstance, God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. From the silent night and the manger, to the the violent night at Masada the wheels of providence rolled over Jewish roads built by Roman engineers, as people spoke in Greek about the Kingdom of God.

God uses the chemistry of a thousand circumstances to bring forth a new creation. It was out of a primeval darkness that Genesis tells us the Words of God where we hear Omniscience call for a light. Then in the darkness of another age light again comes into the world and we are told by John that the darkness overcame it not. Let us find comfort in the fact that the darker the world the more glorious the light. The world in which we live is not much different from the world into which Immanuel entered. And upon the ruins of many failed governments and civilizations God offers us a Kingdom.

Some resign to accept the world as it is, others are determined to change it. When we have had our fill of troubled news coming from our media and we are tempted to despair, let us remember that God still has a plan, God still has a way back home to paradise.

By all outward appearances the life of those who lived in Israel during the first century seemed to be ordered, controlled, and decided by political, religious, and economic forces. Many write or interpret history by those very standards. Some insist that economic influences more than anything else direct the course of events. Others suggest that militarist or science actually governs the steps of man. While each of these may play a part they are not the driving force at all. The greatest variable in the equation of life is a spiritual one. Life is not ultimately a struggle of commerce, or captains, or countries. Life is a struggle of Good and Evil. The greatest battles are those unseen. The greatest treasures are those invisible. The greatest power is spiritual. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2Cor 10:5).

During the time of Christ the world was locked in the iron grip of Roman domination. The legions of Rome imposed their will on the world and created what has come to be called the Pax Romana: the peace of Rome. It was an artificial peace. It was the quiet of fear and the peace of tyranny. Any misbehavior was subject to a vicious and brutal response from those who held the sword. Jesus came speaking about another kind of peace. It was a peace that was unaffected by outward events and circumstances was a peace of the heart. "My peace I give you, not as the world giveth give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn. 14:27).

What is going on around you is not nearly as important as what is going on within you. When Jesus stood before the Procurator of Judea, Pontus Pilate, he was at perfect peace although a thunderstorm of intrigue, betrayal, and struggle for dominance broke above his head. "...Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." (Jn. 19:10-11). For those who labor so hard to remove one Caesar from the throne in order to seat another, let them consider the internal climate of man being the most important. Let them compare their day to the days of Jesus and realize that politics at best can place a sinner on a man-made throne while faith puts even the strongest of men in proper perspective. The wise men were looking for one far greater than Herod when they enquired as to where they might find the "King of the Jews."

No world was more unstable, seemingly uncertain, or out of control than the tinder box called Palestine during the days of Christ, and yet, God had everything under control. Pilate only had the illusion of power, the High Priest only appeared to be in control. Remember, history is merely His Story. The story of the New Testament Times is the one of God walking through the world he created. Jesus is the central figure of all man kind and the cross is the axis around which the real world rotates.

Before leaving this life, Jesus did not say, "I have enjoyed the world." He did not even say, "I have changed the world." He said, "I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33).

Men often fight to enforce their will or agenda. Many, like Peter unsheathe the sword, when things seem to spin out of control and turn the course of history. To them Jesus says, "Peter, put up your sword. Those who live by the sword, die by the sword." Even the religious leaders did not appreciate that they were players on divine stage. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." (Jn. 11:47-48). Politics is merely man's way of imposing his will.

There is a physical world and there is a political world. Most political boundary lines are drawn with blood. Nations rise and fall, governments form and evaporate, generals fight, soldiers die, and the winners determine where some particular line is placed on a map. That line will remain until another general decides it is time to correct that error. The crossfire of politics is often thick and battlefield so furious that some have vowed to never speak of it nor of religion; and who can blame them? Yet if we talk of the world of Jesus, we must enter the fray. But rest assured, he who lives in the Spirit and walks in the spirit may pass through the battle unscathed.

Man was made to fly. No not physically like a bird, but he was made to soar high in faith and spirit far above the rest of creation for he was made in the image of God. God gave man a free will. Man was As the image of God on earth, man was to represent He who is invisible, rule and reign over creation (have dominion) as the viceroy of the Almighty. When man sinned, he left the kingdom of God and flew into the territory of his worst enemy, the devil. It has been rough flying ever since. Ever since that first moral failure of our grandfather Adam, mankind has struggled to stay aloft and has been flying on one engine. Sin has so damaged man that he has difficulty controlling the gift of life and has almost zero spiritual visibility. With Christianity, the plane (so to speak) has turned around and has pointed its nose back towards paradise. As we take up the issue of politics we must put it in a biblical perspective; and for that let us continue this modern metaphor. If our airliner has been hijacked it makes little difference which of the hijackers gets to fly the plane. For me, it makes little difference who is flying the fancy jet if he is going the wrong way or if he is taking me somewhere I don't want to go. Jesus never engaged in the debate or politics of a world on its way to hell. Instead he offered another new and living way.

When a ship is sinking it is no time to argue about the next port of call, or the shuffle board schedule. It is time to man the life boats.

To use another metaphor, politics is a boiling cauldron of passion and emotion. Some cannot resist the call of this chaotic kitchen. Although some insist their ideas are the carrots and onions that will make life better and more delicious, others dice and slice serving up their own favorite recipes. President Truman understood this world of politics when he said "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen." If everyone knows how hot the kitchen can get, or how dangerous a battlefield it is, why are men so given to politics? Politics is not about free trade or tariffs, nor is it really about the gold standard or silver. Politics can really be boiled down to a simple single question: Who is in charge? Ever since men decided that God would no longer be in charge they have been fighting among themselves. Life outside of paradise has always been raucous.

It is from this perspective that I approach the world of politics and their most impassioned participants, the extremists. We humans are caught between anarchy and tyranny. In our world as well as the world of Jesus there are the militant zealots. We cannot understand New Testament times without understanding them.

While some will trade some or all of their freedom for peace, security, or prosperity others refuse surrender without a fight. Some temperaments live better under tyranny than others. Some find it impossible to wear unwanted yokes. The Pax Romana afforded a semblance of peace, but the sea of an oppressed people is always somewhat choppy, and white capped with the winds of civil unrest. The zealots traveled about in the unseen undercurrents of resentment that moved just beneath the surface of this occupied nation. The presence of Roman legions caused great pain to many in Palestine who felt violated and ashamed at their loss of freedom. While the masses made the most of it, others found the situation intolerable and would have fully agreed with our own Patrick Henry who said, "Give me liberty, or give me death." Life in first century Jerusalem was lived out beneath the sword of Domiciles.

We all have heard the story of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem at the decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. This edict in 6BC

provoked an angry reaction among some. A man named Judas the Galilean formed a revolt deeming it sacrilege to pay tribute to pagan Rome when God was the only king of Israel. Although Judas was killed by the Romans, his three sons survived and with them the spirit of resistance.

Assassins called sicarii or “dagger-men” were known to dispatch a Roman collaborator with a quick thrust of a concealed knife in a crowded market place. Guarded and hushed conversations spoke of the “resistance” careful of traitors and collaborators. Theirs was a holy war.

Two sons of Judas were crucified in the year 46AD and a third son was prominent in the uprising of 66 AD which exhausted the patience of Rome and caused the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. A group of zealots escaped to the south and occupied the fortress known as Masada. This remnant held out for two years until May 73 when ramps constructed by the armies of the tenth Roman legion reached the battlements and breached them. Josephus tells a tale, difficult to imagine, of a mass suicide of the 960 defenders, who by their own hand denied pagans the privilege of taking their lives. While it may be hard to fathom a Jew committing suicide, it is not difficult to imagine such an act by a fanatic. Religious history is strewn with monuments to such madness. Life is God’s most precious gift. Suicide throws that gift back in God’s face. While even a Christian has been known to take his own life, we can be assured that when he did so, he was not in his right mind.

Every age has its zealots, intafadas, extremists. Jesus made it abundantly clear that his servants would not fight to advance his cause. His message of “turn the other cheek” was the opposite of what Zealots taught. Jesus taught us that the evils of the world can not be destroyed from without, but only from within. Abortion clinics, red light districts, and drug pushers are all symptoms of spiritual sickness. The “axe must be laid to the root of the tree.” It is a waste of time to attempt to remove the fruit of the tree from society. Every righteous person wants the scourge of abortion to cease, but blowing up the pagan altars where these horrible sacrifices take place is not God’s way. James said it well: the “wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

Although it might seem scandalous or un-patriotic to say so, the fact is God cares little for earthly politics. An up-surge or advance by the “religious right” in no way advances the cause of God’s Kingdom. God’s Kingdom comes not with observation (Lk. 17:20-21). Picket lines around factories set up by the “left” or around clinics by the “right” do not enter into the parallel universe of the spirit world. Jesus said, “that which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spirit is spirit.”

This is not to say that choices and decisions are not important; they are. What it means is, the kingdom of God is not advanced by human efforts. Zealots are prone to die on the wrong battlefields. Christianity however, is an army dedicated to non-violence, and its weapons are love and its armor is truth.

Before believers attempt to storm worldly garrisons, occupy political thrones and wield earthly power they should read the sad legacy of history that shows the end of such endeavors. The modern Zionist movement is exciting to see as we are sure God still has plans for Israel, but there will be no real Zion until the foot of Messiah touches down on the crest of the Mount of Olives, until Jesus comes again.

The Jewish revolt began in Caesarea when a gentile opened a shop next door to a synagogue which ignited a confrontation. Someone sacrificed a bird on the steps of the holy place which led to a riot. The Jews abandoned the building and retreated to Jerusalem. Pursued by the army, the temple treasury was violated and rebellion erupted. The small, unsuspecting garrison at Masada was overrun and it was war. The Zealots of Israel, like zealots everywhere were convinced that “God was on their side.” No one is more dangerous, unreasonable, or presumptuous than one so persuaded.

Nationalism, like every other “ism” comes from below and is earthy. We are to seek those things which are above. Politics is at best a temporary solution to problems and difficulties and throwing out the Romans, Democrats, or Liberals will change little. The church has many Zealots today who pray for political change and even the coming of a Christian government. To such, I pose a question. If the Church has failed to agree and form a single party in two thousand years devoid of factions, divisions, hostilities, and persecutions among themselves, what is to make one believe that given the

keys to the city, the saints will not fight over who control the jails, or where goes the army? The fact of the matter is the righteous will always be a minority party of pilgrims on our way to a better world. If we are passionate about anything may it be only about Jesus. And if our Church be an army may it's only force be love and its only weapon truth and may its only strategy be one of gentle persuasion.

For some, life is a Jihad, a holy war. Some have taken to the streets with rocks and fire bombs. Some have are on a crusade waving banners of what they believe to be a holy cause.

Do we not owe a debt of gratitude to the militia that returned fire at Concord and Lexington. Was not our great nation born with a Declaration of Liberty and a violent overthrow of tyranny? Is not the Old Testament filled with blood and battle? Are not the zealots the holy heros of freedom? If there were no zealots, would blacks still be in slavery? would women be denied the vote? would the Third Reich rule the world?

Like everything else in the spiritual economy of the Christian life, the truth is found in balance. He who finds Christ finds the center. He who finds the center finds the balance. Economics, politics, and real religion call for balance. Those who have not discovered the place for the fulcrum are unbalanced in their perspective. The person who sees only one side is an extremist.

What child has not tried to find the center of the see saw at the playground? Standing astride the pivot point and giving weight to one side and then the other the child attempts to hold the horizontal. A million arguments could be prevented if in calm and reason people attempted to find the place of understanding and the place of balance.

This is not to say that truth is to surrender ground to error or light give way to darkness. The place of understanding the eye of the storm. When a should finds that center that should finds peace. The question should not be are the Orangemen of Northern Ireland or the Irish Republican Army right. The question should be where can the Protestant and the Catholic find that epi-center of peace in the midst of a million broken promises, untold heartaches, and rivers of blood? That center, that place of balance, that fulcrum of faith is at the Cross, it is at Mt. Calvary.

There is only one law at the foot of the cross. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Nothing is said by Jesus about insisting that my neighbor love me, or agree with me, or live like I live. I am called to love him, however, and to treat him as I myself like to be treated.

Jesus taught his followers how to be survivors under tyranny while at the same time living above it. The Sermon on the Mount is the spiritual constitution of spiritual kingdom of God, and God's kingdom is spiritual. Once you attempt to materialize it you are in danger of setting the German against the Jew, the French against the English. Although it might come as a surprise to some, I must point out that God is not an American, and Jesus was not a WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant).

The problem with extremists is they live as if this world is all there is. The person who understands that this world is but a shadow of a greater world to come can afford to be more patient. The person who believes in a great judgment day may leave vengeance in the hands of the Almighty. The person who understands that the kingdom of God is entered by faith can enjoy the peace and security that that kingdom affords, regardless of the chaos that rages around it.

A wife married to a boorish husband, an employee working for a tyrannical boss, a peasant picking rice as the jet-set fly overhead can find the center of peace and happiness in God's kingdom. To kill the husband, blow up the plane, or take over the factory is not the path to peace.

While Paul does speak about "fighting a good fight" and the Christian knows that he is involved in a "warfare" we are told that the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual." Here is where the zealot and the extremist have erred.

Love, prayer, faith, and non-violence comprise the arsenal of the believer. We are to bless those who curse us and pray for those who spitefully use us." We are to love our enemies, and pray for those in authority. We are to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are

God's.

We are to give our enemies a cold drink of water if they are thirsty, we are to live by faith. We are called to walk the "second mile" rather than reach for the sword. In so doing we heap coals of fire upon our enemies heads.

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