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PHI 499

January 2005

The Political State and Christianity

From the Lockian *natural state* of man arose the necessity for a governmental establishment in order to protect what people view to be their rights. History unfolded to show that the endeavors of mankind aim at the creation of institution and stability. Biology teaches a student that the will of survival (the need to consume foodstuffs, procreation, protection from threatening adversaries and obstacles, et cetera) is the main driving instinct of animals. Though mentally superior due to the ability of abstract reasoning, human beings fall under the category of animal and are therefore subject to all of the driving instincts. Hunger, thirst, lust, and fight or flight reactions have led men to barbarous acts; consequently, murder and rape the distinctive results of these uncontrolled natural drives. In the majority of existing cultures, these actions, in one form or another were considered to be unethical, straying from any type of law whether written or unwritten; they were thought to be evil and contradictory to any natural law. Hence, governments were created by man to institute human law to protect the rights of man.

The government, the ruling party, the state, though always changing and differing from culture to culture, has existed for thousands of years. Like human beings, history unfolded to show that governments also aim at stability in order to prolong their survival. Different types of government have taken different types of approaches in such

endeavors. Democratic governments with legitimately elected officials try to balance the benefit of national policies among all political groups and peoples in order to prevent the rising of opposing factions. Tyrannical governments, governments lacking popular legitimacy, usually take the form of oppressive institutions that prevent the formation of factions and uprisings in a brutally controlled manner.

In this paper, I will explore the situation of the Christian within the police state. It seems from the Gospels and Epistles that it is one's duty to obey the law of the political state. Christ specifically stated that one should "[g]ive to Caesar what is Caesar's;" however, it cannot be forgotten that Christ finished his sentence saying, "and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). The Christian seems to have an obligation towards the authority of men; however, one's duty to God supercedes any man made law of the political state. It follows that the duty of the Christian on Earth towards authority falls under a complicated pattern in which one's duty to God is the highest duty no matter the consequence found within the system of human law.

Natural Law

In order to understand the law of the political state and one's duty towards this law versus the will of God, one must first begin by dissecting the notion of a natural law. Practically, with the accomplishments of society arises the need for a system of human law; when speaking of human law, natural law is commonly brought up in juxtaposition. When citizens entrust their freedom to the sovereign, it is the sovereign's duty to provide laws to maintain order within society. Ideally these laws are made to protect the rights and liberties of the citizen (although people may disagree about the definition of rights and liberties). In the Christian sense, governments ideally derive laws from underlying

principles of ethics (what may or may not be "good actions" for its citizens). Thus, natural law may be thought of as a law or body of laws that is derived from nature and is believed to be binding upon human actions apart from or in conjunction with laws established by human authority.

Whether or not a natural law exists has been a question and problem touched upon through the ages by many philosophers. Empiricists touch upon epistemological concepts which argue that all knowledge is derived from experience. Others argue for apriori knowledge in which there is an underlining principle that guides all knowledge and action. With existing systems of law, it seems that different cultures have different views on what may be "natural"; thus, the possibility for a type of relativism surfaces. In an extreme thought experiment, a society may exist where actions such as murder, rape, and theft are thought of as legitimate actions that one has the right to do. Ideally, the government within this type of society would have to provide the framework to keep such actions legal. Therefore, one society may exist whose system of ethics is in contradiction to another society which makes the existence of a universal natural law unlikely.

Conversely, within the Christian context and scriptural knowledge, natural law seems to be justified. As Aquinas argues natural law is man's participation in eternal law; the highest law encompassing the existence of the cosmos is the eternal law of God. It is in accordance with this law that the universe, the stars, the planets, the earth, and all of life were created to be seen by God as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Moreover, it is in accordance with God's eternal law that the rational man was created. Ergo, as Aquinas argues in the case of natural law:

> Since all things subject to divine providence are ruled and measured by eternal law, as is clear from what has been said, it is manifest that all things participate in some away in eternal law,

> insofar as by its impression they have inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Among others, however, the rational creature is subject to divine providence in a more excellent manner, insofar as he comes to be a participant in providence, providing for himself and others. Hence in him the eternal reason is participated in such a way that he has a natural inclination to the fitting act and end. Such a participation in eternal law in the rational creature is called natural law (The Summa Theologica 24, 91, 2 response).

The eternal goodness of God's law is something that can never be completely understood by the rational creature due to obvious limitations. The rational creature is one who belongs to the finite, while the infinite will of God dwells in the realm of the eternal. However, through rationality, one may logically decipher one's proper knowledge, actions and ends.

Evidence of the existence of a natural law is explicitly stated through the authority of Saint Paul in his epistle to the Romans which states:

> All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them) (Romans 2:12-15).

Problems may arise in the interpretation of these lines because it seems that the natural law is an underlying system that agrees with the laws given by God to Moses on the mount to symbolize his covenant with the chosen people. Though the original Ten Commandments to the Jewish people support a general etiquette (one is not supposed to steal, lie, murder, commit adultery, et cetera), it seems unlikely and even impossible that specific regulations of Torah would be rationally imbedded in the hearts of men. If one

lives on an island where the only foodstuffs available are impure foodstuffs (as noted in the Torah regulations), one would rationally eat these impure objects in order to survive. Rather, it is the general, simple, laws of etiquette that Paul speaks of. The concept of "treating one as one would want to be treated" though crude and unsophisticated is pertinent when deciphering the Pauline natural law.

Evidence of this natural law may be found within the Hebrew Torah, specifically in Genesis, within the creation story and Cain's transgression. In the creation story the only law given to mankind was the restriction of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As Genesis states, "And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat form the tree of knowledge of good and evil…" (Genesis 2:16). The set of laws symbolizing the Israelites' covenant with God is not officially given until Moses ascends the mount. After the fall of man, Eve gives birth to two children, Cain and Abel, and, out of jealousy, Cain slays his brother. Cain seems to commit a transgression against God and is consequently punished as Genesis states:

> What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 5:2).

However, the commandment "Thou shall not murder" did not exist at the time of Cain's murder. A discrepancy exists due to the fact that God did not prohibit the action of murder. For that reason, Cain should not have been subject to any punishment. Thus, God is punishing Cain for violating an unspoken natural law – an underlying governing principle. This is a concept one would expect to be rationally known through the former

golden rule concept. As animals human beings strive to survive. Murder is a threat to this instinct of man. Under normal circumstances (free from psychological stress) one would not want another to threaten one's existence, ergo in light of the golden rule concept one should know not to take the life of another.

The Virtuous Prince

From the system of natural law, people have a basis in which to create laws to maintain order and encourage virtue. The rational virtues which are "written on the gentile's hearts" may be manifested into a type of human law. As Aquinas argues, "…so too from the precepts of natural law, as from some common and indemonstrable principles, human reason must proceed to dispose of more particular matters. And these particular dispositions discovered by human reason are called human laws…" (The Summa Theologica 24, 91, 3 response). Law which pertains to reason and the common good is meant to stabilize virtue within society. However, not every being cares to view every thought and action in a rational manner, and even if every being did, not every being would adhere to rational knowledge and guidelines. Being naturally flawed, mankind needs human law in order to guide man towards virtue:

> …the perfection of virtue must be acquired by man by means of some kind of training…Now this kind of training, which compels through fear of punishment, is the discipline of laws. Therefore, in order that man might have peace and virtue, it was necessary for laws to be framed; for, as the Philosopher says, *as man is the most noble of animals if he be perfect in virtue, so he is the lowest of all, if he be severed from law and justice* (The Summa Theologica 24, 95, 1 response).

These human laws must be formally written within the precepts of the society and be deemed sovereign. Aquinas writes, "In order for a law to have the power of obliging, which is proper to law, it is necessary that it be applied to those who should be regulated

by it. Such application comes about insofar as they come to know of it by its promulgation" (The Summa Theologica 24, 90, 4 response). The act of promulgation calls for a leader amongst the people, one who would see that the laws are maintained, thus, the prince and the government is born into the world.

The prince should rule his people in a benevolent, compassionate and virtuous manner. Following rationality, the ideal prince should not be narcissistic due to the measure of his own power and societal status but must put himself in a position similar to the people in order to empathize with the needs of his own people. As Luther remarks, "A prince should in his heart empty himself of his power and authority, and interest himself in the need of his subjects, dealing with it as though it were his own need" (Luther 394). The virtuous prince is the civil servant of his people, and the prince exists through the needs of the people considering his subjects first and foremost. Rather than view the people as objects of his own possession thinking that, "The Land and people are mine; I will do as I please"; but this, "I belong to the land and the people; I must do what is profitable and good for them" (Luther 394). Christ, who was the ultimate prince was also the ultimate servant of the people; as Luther writes, "Thus, Christ did unto us; and these are the proper works of Christian love" (Luther 394). Without Christ's service mankind would be doomed to the ultimate death, however, through the grace of Christ mankind received ultimate salvation. As God and a prince, Christ had a stature infinitely greater than that of the average man, yet, through compassion, benevolence and virtue; he permitted the needs of others to come first.

The rational, established government with a benevolent prince follows the natural law, thus, man is supposed to adhere to the government. The princes "are God's jailers

and hangmen, and His divine wrath needs them to punish the wicked and to preserve outward peace…" (Luther 388-9). Adhering to the laws of a virtuous prince would in turn be the same as obeying the laws of God; disobeying the law would be an act of defiance against God. As Saint Paul states:

> Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established…Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, and agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience (Romans 13:1-5).

Furthermore, Saint Peter makes a similar statement when he says, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to the governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right (1 Peter 2:13-14). Obeying the virtuous laws which coincide with the natural law is something that all Christians ought to do. However, no human is perfect, and one may transgress against the law in the same manner as one would transgress against God. Hence Barth writes, "In this situation (which is the same for every Christian) prayer means going toward God…asking him to teach us how to obey the law and accomplish the commandments…" (Barth 11).

In light of Luther, Aquinas and the Bible, it is over the external aspect of man that the Prince and government maintain dominion. Due to the fact that men fall under imperfect patterns, a human system of regulation and punishments is needed in order to

preserve adherence to the natural law and promote virtue. However, a prince and government are limited in their power of judgment. Being a law abiding citizen does not insure one's eternal salvation. It is only through the grace of Jesus Christ that one may enter the kingdom of God. Therefore, it is only Jesus Christ that maintains dominion over the internal (one's spirit and salvation) aspects of mankind.

The Corrupt Prince

A corrupt Prince may ultimately become a tyrant. Aristotle defines a tyrant as one who claims power illegitimately. Examples of legitimate inauguration to power would be the succession of throne from a king to his son or a democratic election of a governmental leader. An illegitimate inauguration to power would be the opposite, a complete seizure of power without the consent of the set system or people. According to Aristotle, though a tyrant may rule with a harsh, oppressive manner in order to control his people, a tyrant doesn't necessarily have to and may lead in a seemingly virtuous way. However, the tyrannical government that oppresses its people is the type of government to which this paper will take reference to.

A tyrannical government does not necessarily to have to begin with tyranny at its roots. It is possible for a prince or government to start virtuously and then shift its pathway towards despotism. In regards to my position, a prince may transform into a tyrant in two situations: (1) when the prince advocates a position that violates the natural law and (2) when a prince tries to rule over both the internal and external.

The purpose of the institution of human law is to govern the technicalities of societal life. Actions deemed unfit for society – in example, murder, rape, theft, et cetera – are all actions of man (and according to Luther, they are external) and can therefore fall

under judgment of the law. However, the jurisdiction of one' faith towards God is not an area that is fit for human law to regulate. As Luther writes, "From this it follows that he does not speak of faith, and does not say that the secular authority should have the right to command faith, but he is speaking of external goods, and that these are to be set and controlled on earth" (Luther 386-7). What is Caesar's is what is external and what is God's is what is internal.

By trying illegitimately to rule over the internal the Prince becomes a tyrant. The Prince, "God's hangman," only holds power over the external affairs of his people. By trying to rule over the internal life of a citizen, the Prince creates a heresy against God in assuming that he has domain over what is exclusively God's. He mocks God, he spits in God's face and he creates an ultimate treason against God and the citizen whom he condemns against the way of God. As Luther writes, "Therefore, where temporal powers presume to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God's government and only misleads and destroys souls" (Luther 382).

The prince may also turn into a despot if he decides to rule out of his own will rather than the will of his people. When formulating human laws, a type of democracy is required. The majority of the people within the state must agree that a certain law is just. Therefore, Aquinas argues, "Isidore says in the *Etymologies* 5.0 – and it is also to be found in the *Decretals*, Distinction 2 – that law is an ordinance of a people insofar as the elders along with the people sanction something. Therefore, it is not for just anyone to make law" (The Summa Theologica 24, 90, 3 on the contrary). It seems that, if anyone were allowed to formulate their own laws, laws that would break the code of the natural law could surface. These laws would create suffering and anxiety amongst the subjects.

It would not be just for one person to decree that "murder, rape, and theft" were justified if not thought so by the will of the rational citizens of the country.

Furthermore, when the Prince, who is supposed to symbolize the institution of human law, makes decrees that break the natural law, the prince is not decreeing law at all, because unjust laws are not laws. Aquinas writes, "As Augustine says, *that which is not just seems to be no law at all*…Consequently, every human law has just so much of the nature of law as it is derived from the law of nature. But if in any point it departs from the law of nature, it is no longer a law but a perversion of law" (The Summa Theologica 24, 95, 3 response). A Prince who tries to make a law which strays from natural law stops being a benevolent Prince and turns towards the road of a despot. It is from this point that the citizens would find resentment concerning the Prince and try to oust him from his throne of power. In this case, the Prince would have a few options, namely: (1) leave power, in which he would be a failed leader, (2) reform his ways, in which he may become a benevolent Prince, (3) maintain his power illegitimately, in which he would transform into a tyrant. Again, for the sake of this paper, I will discuss the prince that chooses the third option and becomes a tyrant.

The Preservation of a Tyranny

Unfortunately, one does not live in a perfect world in which all people adhere to the rational, natural law discussed in Christian texts. Again, it is for this reason that the need for human law to preserve virtue remains pertinent in the world. Also, as discussed previously, it is possible, and frequently happened in history and continues to happen in contemporary times, that a Prince or governing body may stray from the natural law, or overstep its jurisdiction with the internal and become a tyrannical government. Though,

one would hope that these types of governments would quickly fail, in order to quickly restore order, these governments try their best to survive the scorn and resentment of the people.

The inhabitants of the tyranny are the only beings who may destroy the tyranny. When an administration arises without legitimacy people will have problems with that certain government. As Aristotle writes, "…[a] tyranny is also the most harmful to those it rules…(Aristotle 159). When a government is harmful to its people, its people become discontent. When people become discontent, factionalism results, which threatens the stability of the tyranny. As Aristotle argues, "Another way a tyranny is destroyed is from within, when those participating in it start a faction" (Aristotle 164).

In order to keep its people from rebelling, tyrannies are commonly overly oppressive towards its people. Censorship, unjust laws, frequent arrests, and trials resembling that of a witch-hunt commonly occur. Ergo, tyranny aims at three things:

> first, that the ruled think small, for a pusillanimous person would plot against no one; second, that they distrust one another, for a tyranny will not be overthrown until some people trust each other…Third, that the ruled be powerless to act (Aristotle 168).

Furthermore, Aristotle develops a lengthy list, all of which are ways in which a tyrant may preserve his ways. He writes:

> Tyrannies are preserved by: [1] cutting down the outstanding men and eliminating the high-minded ones. Others are: [2] Prohibiting messes, clubs, education and other things of that sort. [3] Keeping an eye on anything that typically engenders two things: high-mindedness and mutual trust. [4] Prohibiting schools and other gatherings connected with learning, and doing everything to ensure that people are as ignorant of one another as possible, since knowledge tends to give rise to mutual trust….(Aristotle 166-168).

Ergo, unlike the ideal Christian Prince, the tyrant rules out of his own will. Like a wandering tiger, the tyrant displays his teeth to all who look in his direction. The tyrant will look to destroy the people's God-given autonomous thought and free will.

Christians Duty towards the Despot of Situation I and II

As spoken of previously, Christianity calls for a benevolent prince, one to lead with virtue and compassion rather than malice and the iron fist. As Montesquieu argues, "…. The Christian religion is a stranger to mere despotic power…The religion of the Christians renders their princes less timid, and consequently less cruel… They are more disposed to be directed by laws, and more capable of perceiving what they cannot do (Montesquieu 29). Furthermore, he writes, "It is the Christian religion, that…has hindered despotic power from being established in Ethiopia, and has carried into the heart of Africa the manners and laws of Europe (Montesquieu 29). Ideally, this would seem to be the case of a Christian prince who tries to maintain himself with the virtue of God and his son Jesus Christ. Conversely, as the Bible shows, human beings are not perfect and every person is plagued with sin and people in power tend to abuse their power. Luther writes:

> You must know that from the beginning of the world a wise prince is a rare bird indeed; still more so a pious prince. They are usually the greatest fools or the worst knaves of the earth; therefore one must constantly expect the worst from them and look for little good from them, especially in divine matters, which concern the salvation of souls (Luther 388-9).

Just because a prince claims to be a Christian does not prove his benevolence as a leader. Historically, leaders who claimed to be religious have committed grave crimes against humanity. They cheated their own people; they were murderers, rapists, liars, paupers, et cetera.

In context to the first situation of a Prince transforming into a despot in the "Corrupt Prince" section of my paper, when a Prince breaks from the virtue of natural law, it is the duty of the Christian to disobey the governing body. By advocating unvirtuous statutes (for example, murder, rape, theft, lying) the Prince may tarnish the spiritual element of the Christian. Though Christ argued that it is his grace, not the act of perfectly following the laws (which is an impossibility), that will guarantee the salvation of an individual, the importance of maintaining virtue and reforming one's sinful ways is a key aspect to Christianity. Thus, Christians were, are and will be continued to be made martyrs. Despite the fact that Saint Paul advocates a type of cultural relativism in approaching prospective converts, this relativism cannot be attributed to an approach which would contradict the virtue of natural law. Hence, it is the duty of the Christian to maintain virtue if instructed otherwise.

In addition (in context to the second situation mentioned of a Prince transforming into a despot) when a Prince illegitimately tries to maintain power over the internal, trying to transform the citizen's ultimate duty towards God into an ultimate duty towards the Prince, the citizens have the right to disobey the Prince. Luther writes:

> If then your prince or temporal lord commands you to hold with the pope, to believe this or that, or commands you to give up certain books, you should say, It does not befit Lucifer to sit by the side of God. Dear Lord, I owe you obedience with life and goods; command me within the limits of your power on earth and I will obey. But if you command me to believe, and to put away books, I will not obey; for in this case you are a tyrant and overreach yourself, and command where you have neither right nor power, etc. Should he take away your property for this, and punish such disobedience, blessed are you. Thank God that you are worthy to suffer for the sake of the divine Word…(Luther 388).

The Christian's duty to God overrides any duty to finite laws as Luther writes, “Among Christians there shall and can be no authority; but all alike are subject to one another…For Christians must be ruled by faith, not by outside works" (Luther 391). Luther's statement specifically refers to the internal aspect of the Christian. It is not that the Christian is a perfect being and not in need of control over his external actions, but that the internal aspect of Christianity can never fall under judgement of the government – only through God. From which Luther states, "But if a prince is in the wrong, are his people bound to follow him then too? I answer, No, for it is no one's duty to do wrong; we ought to obey God who desires the right, rather than men [Acts 5:29]" (Luther 399). It is from the perfection of God's will and eternal law that natural law and human law originate. God's will and eternal law which are based in perfection and purity cannot be created by men.

The Bible warns of authorities who try to maintain unjust influence over its people. As Peter states, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who has brought them—bringing a swift destruction on themselves (2 Peter 2:1). The false prophets and the false teachers might hold high positions within society; hence, disobedience may conflict with the precepts of the human law instituted in the society. An act of transgression against the leaders of a society and their laws may directly lead to suffering. Thus, one will come upon conflict when deciding whether to obey the false prophets and live comfortably or to follow one’s faith and live a life of suffering. However, one who holds onto the laws of men over the righteousness of God is in error. Christ critically remarks, "You have let go of the

commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8). Therefore, suffering can be seen as an expected consequence of choosing a Christian life.

Religious Suffering

One then comes to the problem of living within a police state and carrying out one's duty as a Christian. Historically, Christians fell under much persecution. Christ was executed by the Roman government with the support of the local Jewish officials. The reason for oppression fell under the pattern of a government which tries to maintain its survival. The factionalism that arose from Christianity put the mainstream Jewish belief in jeopardy. Furthermore, the Christian belief of one God (rather than the multitude of Pagan gods), and Jesus being the ultimate king (rather than Caesar) put the authority of the Roman government at jeopardy. Thus, before the Roman government Christianized, they were responsible for the deaths of thousands of Christians. As a Christian in such a situation, one must continue to hold one's duty towards God in the highest position no matter the consequence.

Indeed, as spoken of before, suffering is something that should be expected whenever one decides to live a religious life. One who acts religiously, by renouncing everything for Christ, "belongs essentially to the highest life" (CP 440). Suffering for the religious man is "…higher than all good fortune and different from all misfortune" (CP 444). The suffering that comes from religion may both be internal and external. One may suffer in abasement specifically as Christ suffered physically. Furthermore, one may suffer inside with one's struggle of faith. As Kierkegaard notes, "a highly honored speaker forgets that religiousness is inwardness, that inwardness is the individual's relation to himself before God, its reflection within himself, and that it is precisely from

this that the suffering comes" (CP 437). Hence Christ knew that "[T]he son of Man [would] be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They [would] condemn him to death and [would] hand him over to the Gentiles, who [would] mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him" (Mark 10:33-34).

It is a misconception that being a pious Christian is equated with living a successful life. Popular thought on the nature of Christianity supports the idea that one's current situation is based on one's merit. It seems that some people have fallaciously integrated a system similar to that of Buddhist karma within Christianity. As Barth remarks:

> Those who are acquainted with Luther's small Catechism will remember the famous list that he draws up to explain the meaning of the word "bread": food, drink, clothes, shoes, houses, farms, fields, lands, money, property, a good marriage, good children, honest and faithful public servants, a just government, favorable weather (neither too hot nor too cold!), health, honors, good friends, loyal neighbors. This is no small order! This list contains the necessities and requirements for the life of a German "bourgeois" farmer in the sixteenth century. And nothing hinders us from interpreting and expanding it according to the needs of our time and of our individual situations (Barth 47).

However, Christian doctrine in not based upon living a comfortable, successful life full of superfluous provisions and amenities. Furthermore, one's piety towards God is not reflected through a reward and punishment system as some have come to believe. Whether one is born rich or poor, whether one has a good home, a good family, good health or the opposite is not a bartering chip God uses to encourage faith. In addition, Christ, the most pious man, was born the son of a carpenter, not of aristocracy. He was a witness to the truth of Christianity, as Kierkegaard writes:

> A witness to the truth is a man whose life from first to last is unacquainted with everything which is called enjoyment…from first to last it was initiated into what is called suffering…A witness to the truth is a man who in poverty witnesses to the truth—in poverty, in lowliness, in abasement, and so is unappreciated, hated, abhorred, and then derided, insulted, mocked—his daily bread perhaps he did not always have, so poor he was, but the daily bread of persecution he was richly provided with everyday…A witness to the truth, one of the genuine witnesses to the truth, is a man who is scourged, maltreated, dragged from one prison to the other, and then at last…crucified, or beheaded, or burnt, or roasted on a gridiron, his lifeless body thrown by the executioner in an out-of-the way place…(AOC 7).

The riches, power, and prestige that Christ promised through faith are to be found in the second life in the presence of God and his perfection.

The doctrine of Christianity is not meant to create Heaven on Earth but to create chaos on Earth. Christ states himself, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34-35). Horrible personal and political situations will always exist until judgement day. Tyrannies will rise and fall and sin, despair, and malice will plague mankind. To follow the doctrine of Jesus is to utterly renounce all attachments to worldly things. Jesus stated, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Men continually hold onto the doctrine of men, and as imperfect beings cannot grasp the true doctrine of God through their own action. The ways of men will be destroyed by God:

> I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!…Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother,

mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law (Luke 12:49-53).

Christ himself ordered the disciples to preach in poverty and suffering and specifically ordered the apostles to bring with them only the bare essentials in their missionary work. As Kierkegaard notes, " …the doctrine [is to] be preached in poverty, in abasement, with renunciation of everything, in the most unconditional heterogeneity to this world, at the furthest remove from all use or application of worldly power, etc…"(AOC 19).

In addition, Christ specifically informed the apostles that they would suffer in his name just as he would suffer for mankind. He stated to the apostles, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves… be on your guard amongst men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:16-18). He further stated, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" (John 15:18). Again Christ reconfirms their persecution when he said, "All men will hate you because of me, and he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another" (Matthew 10:21-23). From such statements, Kierkegaard supports "imitation" of Christ, in which the followers of Christ are to suffer in order to be religious. It is because of "imitation" that the Apostles suffered for the truth. It is also "imitation" that the Apostles required of the followers after them. (AOC 268).

Throughout the Epistles, it is seen that the followers of Christ willingly received persecution through their acts of righteousness. Saint Paul, originally an enemy of Christ, was responsible for the stoning and imprisonment of numerous Christians. As Acts states, "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison (Acts 8:2). Likewise, the Apostles received much persecution though their missionary work. The scriptures states, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). Through the unjust actions of the government, the apostles were persecuted unjustly. As Paul states in regards to his persecution, "You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" (Acts 23:3). Furthermore, Paul appeals against the state which has wronged him through appeal to Caesar:

> Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews, or against the temple or against Caesar…I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried…If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die…I appeal to Caesar!" (Acts 24:8-11).

The apostles, like Christ, did not live lives of luxury and comfort. The apostles lived their lives with the bare essentials and through physical, mental, and spiritual suffering which was a result of their persecution.

Conclusion

The duty towards God is highest duty and comes before any other obligation of the Christian individual. Let me recapitulate the previous notions of the paper. Though philosophers have argued and continue to argue over the notion of a natural law, most Christian thinkers advocate its existence and Paul gives his authority to it. It is from

natural law, a participation in God's eternal law, that men are able to formulate human law. Human law is needed due to the imperfection of mankind and their inability to rationally deduce and follow natural law. Thus with human law comes the necessity for a Prince or governing body in order to carry out the law.

Living within society, one has a strict duty towards the law and the government. When living in a virtuous kingdom with freedom of religion, one would not commonly fall under religious persecution and have to suffer for one's beliefs. Nevertheless, the Prince and government who in principle are supposed to be God's "hangmen" are also susceptible to corruption in which they may become despotic. Additionally, not every society practices freedom of religion and, within a tyrannical government, a Christian must decide to make a choice between God (his natural law, and his internal control over the individual) and the government. In this case, it is the duty of the Christian to disobey the government. Choosing Christ over the government will commonly lead to persecution and suffering. Though the words of the Bible support one's adherence to government regulation, the Christian doctrine also stipulates that suffering is central to the purpose of Christianity.

Christianity is a religion that was born into suffering and persecution. Jesus Christ was persecuted, flogged, crucified, and buried in order to save mankind from their sin. The Apostles were strictly informed by Christ that they would suffer in his name, and as history unfolded, Christ's words proved true. The early Roman government tried its best to annihilate the Christian belief system, which it felt was a threat to its tyrannical rule over most of the known world.

Idealistically, a government led by a virtuous Christian prince would make the life of a Christian much easier. However, many princes have existed and continue to exist that have committed the worst atrocities. The ideal government will not always be around to cater to the needs of the individual. Hence, Christ and the Apostles suffered in order to spread the truth. Thus, the Christian teacher must not discard the importance of the act of suffering. The consequence of mankind being finite by nature does not compare to the consequence of the infinite God. As Christ remarks, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

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