

Can Christians

Participate

In Carnal Warfare?

"The weapons of our warfare are not
carnal" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

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F O R E W O R D

This booklet is issued by the GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD (seventh day). The teachings and beliefs of this church are set forth in a booklet entitled: Doctrinal Beliefs of the Church of God (seventh day). Article Number 20 of these beliefs is as follows:

"Inasmuch as Christians are to love their enemies and to work for the salvation of mankind, the Church of God stands opposed to carnal warfare."

On August 17, 1952, the Ministerial Council of the Church of God (seventh day) passed the following resolution:

"Be it resolved: That this General Ministerial Council of the Church of God (seventh day), with executive headquarters at 1510 Cook St., Denver, Colorado, reaffirm our position of many years standing, expressed in our Article of Belief number twenty, and that we do interpret the same to mean that we are opposed to participation in carnal warfare in any form."

CAN CHRISTIANS PARTICIPATE IN CARNAL WARFARE?

Can Christians participate in carnal warfare? This is a question in the minds of many people today. And in view of the war in Viet Nam and the danger of war in many other places in the world, it is indeed a great question. But no question is so great but that the Bible is able to give an answer.

In James 4:1 we have the question:

"From whence come wars and fightings among you?"

The simple answer follows:

"Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye have, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain..."

James did not try to find some good excuse for participation in war, but he gave the real reason why wars are fought. Note that he says:

"...ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain..."

Is this not true? Let us stop and consider. We feel that this is the best country in the world, and it has fought several successful wars. But what really was gained? In World War I our country fought to obtain safety for democracy and lasting peace. But has it been obtained? In World War II the United States fought to free the world of tyrant dictators. This was accomplished, but it only paved the way for other forces which may

prove worse than those overthrown. Behind the "iron curtain" of Europe people are not free. Now there are greater dangers than ever before. Many privileges have been lost and people live in constant fear of destruction by atomic war.

We are well aware that through the course of history the nations of the world have fought many wars. The winning nations have thought that they obtained their objectives. But what did they really obtain? Has any lasting benefit ever come from any war? Look at world conditions today. Surely we can see that fighting in war never brought blessings to anyone.

In 2 Corinthians 10:4 we read:

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

Here we are taught that the might of a Christian is not based on physical force but on love, for "God is love." The Christian carries on a spiritual warfare against sin, but not a carnal warfare against human lives. And so our weapons are not carnal. Our greatest weapon is the Word of God. It is the greatest weapon in the world against sin and wrong and injustice. If the nations of the world would recognize the Word of Almighty God, and if they would obey all of God's commandments, there certainly would be no reason for any war.

In Ephesians 6:12 we read:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Some people may think this teaches us to fight against wicked rulers, men of this world. But the verse says we do *not* wrestle against beings who have flesh and blood, as all men have. And so we see that what the verse really teaches is that we struggle against the evil forces of the devil and the temptations to do wrong. God sent His Son into the world to bring life, abundant life. As followers of Christ we cannot take part in a "machine" which is designed and prepared to take away human life which God has given.

How Should Christians Treat Their Enemies?

Christ gave very plain and definite teaching as to how His followers should treat their enemies. In Matthew 5:39 we find the words of Christ:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

And again in verses 44, 45, we read:

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

These may seem like very difficult teachings, but Jesus set the example for us. Concerning this we read in J Peter 2:23:

"Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

Should not we as Christians follow Him? Or do we have a greater right than our Master had—a right to force our way with bullets?

What About the Wars of Israel?

Some people believe that the Bible upholds war and that the many wars of Israel in the Old Testament are recorded proof of this. We will not here go into a study of that warfare but will simply point out that we are living in the Christian dispensation or age and that the teachings of Christ apply to us. Jesus noted the difference when He said:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil..."

What About Fighting for Defense?

Nowhere in this gospel age do we find any permission or direction from God to us as Christians, to use violence against an enemy. Christ would not even allow one to use violence in His defense. In the record in Matthew 26:51 we find Peter drawing a sword when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus. Peter wielded the sword

and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. This priest and his servant were there to take Jesus by force. They were there to use violence. But Jesus rebuked Peter for responding with violence. He said:

"Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. 26:52).

And then Jesus put forth His hand and performed a miracle by restoring the servant's ear.

Let us notice again what Jesus said to Peter. He told him to put away the sword. In our time it might have been a pistol or a rifle, or even a bayonet. Jesus said, don't use it! He did not make any exceptions. He did not say, "Not this time but later." He did not say, "Not for me, but later you may fight for your country." Christ simply said that the carnal weapon of war was not to be used by a disciple of His. And when the soldiers demanded of John the Baptist, what they should do, John answered:

Do violence to no man.

And what did Christ mean by saying that all who take the sword will perish with the sword? Certainly we know that everyone who uses a weapon of war is not killed by that same kind of weapon. He might live through the war and die later of disease or old age. But the society which uses carnal weapons of war to attempt to bring about peace and happiness will simply fail in this. They bring upon themselves eventual destruction. Life and peace are not to be made

sure by warfare. All who try to find peace by waging war, will eventually come to destruction. War destroys the moral fiber of individuals and of nations. Everyone loses in war, and this becomes more evident as we observe the results of recent and present wars.

Christians are to help anyone in need. But they are to be especially helpful to fellow-Christians. Note this teaching in Galatians 6:10:

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

There are Christian people in all nations. If all Christians were permitted to take part in carnal warfare there would be some fighting on opposite sides in war. Brothers in Christ would actually be killing each other! Surely this would not be pleasing in the sight of God but would be a terrible sin.

How Should a Christian Deal with Enemies?

Insofar as possible a Christian should live at peace with all other people. They are to do their utmost to make peace. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."*

But sometimes there are those who become our enemies in spite of all that we can do. And we find there is a Christian way to take care of this situation. In Romans 12:19, 21 we read:

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it

effort, notice the teaching of the following Bible verses:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

While this passage of Scripture may have an application to many things with which the Christian should have no association, it surely will also include the armed services, combatant or noncombatant. Christianity and carnal warfare simply have nothing in common. The calling of the Christian is higher and nobler. The Christian trusts in God for deliverance from enemies and believes that God has an overall control of the affairs of men and nations. Man's warfare cannot affect God's control. The only way to either personal or national peace, happiness and security is by accepting God's plan of salvation for man and by following the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

As a final text we turn to Revelation 13:

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is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him! if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

The force of good is much greater than the force of evil. The most hardened criminal will finally be overcome by the continued return of good for evil. The "coals of fire" will be the force of his own conscience as the power of good overcomes the evil.

What About the Christian in Noncombatant Service?

If a Christian cannot take part in active combat, can he accept noncombatant duty such as kitchen work, truck driving, or mechanical work? Or can he be in the medical corps and yet live up to his Christian faith?

In the conduct of war every part of the service is essential. Men cannot shoot the guns unless the trucks bring up the shells; men cannot fight unless they have regular meals; the army cannot maintain its strength unless the wounded are cared for. Every service is essential to the war machine and thus in effect all of it is combat. All the men who are inducted into the armed service are then a part of the war machine; all are responsible for the killing and the destruction. And it is therefore inconsistent for the Christian to be in any part of it.

In regard to our being inducted and bound up in connection with any part of the war

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