

Home Page

Political Involvement

The Watchtower, December 15, 1976, p. 748

“Since Christians are ‘aliens and temporary residents’ and, as such, are awaiting the fulfillment of such a divine promise, how could they really interest themselves in the political affairs and violent conflicts of worldly nations? If their hearts are truly set on the ‘new heavens’ and a ‘new earth’ in connection with God’s kingdom, they sincerely could not do so!”

The Watchtower, March 1, 1978, p. 29

“Does this mean that Jehovah’s Christian witnesses now have a right to meddle in worldly politics? May they take sides, as Catholics and Protestants do, with this or that political party, even conspiring against established political government or stirring up revolution? Not at all! Uncompromisingly they have copied the example of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, in being ‘no part of the world.’”

United in Worship of the Only True God, 1983 ed., p. 166

“However, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not meddle in politics, no matter what the country in which they live. They do not interfere with what others do as to joining a political party, running for office or voting in elections.”

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Reasoning From the Scriptures, 1985 ed., p. 273

“What scriptures have always had a bearing on the attitude of true Christians toward involvement in political issues and activities? John 17:16: ‘They are no part of the world, just as I [Jesus] am no part of the world.’”

Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life, 1995 ed., p. 12

“Jesus said that his followers are ‘no part of the world.’ (John 17:14) This means being neutral in political affairs and living peacefully in harmony with Isaiah 2:4, which says: ‘He [Jehovah God] will certainly render judgment among the nations and set matters straight respecting many peoples. And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore.’”

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a foreign land. The reason for their doing this was that, as Peter said, "you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now God's people." (1 Pet. 1:3; 2:9, 10) Obviously, then, such ones are no longer a part of this world that is alienated from God. They are no longer walking in its darkness, but are light bearers from God. They are in a situation like that of Abraham of long ago.

¹⁵ Their hope is not that of this world. Their hope is one inspired by God's promise. This promise is now nearing fulfillment, glorious realization. More than nineteen centuries ago Peter penned the words: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell. Hence, beloved ones, since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace." (2 Pet. 3:13, 14) Those "new heavens" were the "city" that faithful Abraham awaited so patiently, a heavenly government "having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God." (Heb. 11:10) The "new earth" is the new human society made up of all those who procure a blessing through the spiritual 'seed of Abraham.'—Gen. 22: 18; Rev. 21:1.

CHRISTLIKE NON-INVOLVEMENT WITH THE WORLD

¹⁶ Since Christians are "aliens and temporary residents" and, as such, are

15. According to 2 Peter 3:13, 14, what is the hope of these Christians who have been given the "new birth"?
16. So, then, why can Christians not interest themselves in the political affairs and controversies of worldly nations?

awaiting the fulfillment of such a divine promise, how could they really interest themselves in the political affairs and violent conflicts of worldly nations? If their hearts are truly set on the "new heavens" and a "new earth" in connection with God's kingdom, they sincerely could not do so!

¹⁷ Jesus Christ said to his disciples: "Your heavenly Father knows you need all these [material] things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness." (Matt. 6:32, 33) Such a seeking of the heavenly Father's kingdom first would include one's taking an active part in the carrying out of Jesus' prophecy: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14) An obedient Christian cannot compromisingly divide his attention and time between the interests of God's kingdom and the interests of man-made kingdoms and actually be putting God's kingdom first and gaining his approval.

¹⁸ Having become "aliens and temporary residents" toward this old world, Christians no longer have the right to make themselves again a part of this world. Were they to do so, then they would not be included in the prayer that Jesus offered to God: "I request you . . . to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. Sanctify them by means of the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:15-17) There was sound reason for such a prayer, inasmuch as "the wicked one" is "the ruler of this world."—John 12:31; 14:30.

17. How does one's obedience to Christ's words in Matthew 6:32, 33 make it out of order for one to divide one's attention between God's kingdom and man-made kingdoms?

18. Why do Christians have no right to make themselves a part of this world?

Christ during the millennium when Satan the Devil and his demons are bound and confined in the abyss, no longer able to dominate mankind's affairs invisibly.—Rev. 20:1-3.

¹¹ Deliverance also nears for the "great crowd" of sheeplike people who are now taking their stand with the spirit-begotten remnant in favor of "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." But the Gentile nations have ignored the Kingdom "decree" about which they have been given notice, as set out in Psalm 2:1-9: "Why have the nations been in tumult [since 1914 C.E.] and the national groups themselves kept muttering an empty thing? The kings of earth take their stand and high officials themselves have massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one [his Christ], . . . Let me refer to the decree of Jehovah; he has said to me [Christ]: 'You are my son; I, today, I have become your father. Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession. You will break them with an iron scepter, as though a potter's vessel you will dash them to pieces.'"—Rev. 7:9, 10; 11:15.

NEUTRALITY ASSOCIATED WITH KINGDOM PREACHING

¹² Since 1914, the "kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" has had a right to interfere with Gentile nations. Does this mean that Jehovah's Christian witnesses now have a right to meddle in worldly politics? May they take sides, as Catholics and Protestants do, with this or that political party, even conspiring against established political government or stirring up revolution? Not at all! Uncompromisingly they have copied the example of the

11. Who else will then enjoy deliverance, but for ignoring what "decree" will the Gentile nations not share in that deliverance?

12. Despite the end of the Gentile Times in 1914, what position do Jehovah's Witnesses take toward worldly politics?

Lamb, Jesus Christ, in being "no part of the world." They hold strictly to the kingdom that was brought to birth in heaven in 1914. (John 17:14, 16; Rev. 12:1-12) In spite of the fierce persecution leveled against them because of their Christian neutrality toward worldly conflicts, they carry out the prophetic word of their heavenly Leader, Jesus Christ, when he said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10.

¹³ This Kingdom witness has to be done before this system of things ends and Christ's 1,000-year reign begins. Hence, the birth of God's kingdom in the heavens in 1914 did not mean the beginning of Christ's millennial reign. According to Bible prophecies, much has to take place before this system of things ends, making way for Christ's reign of 1,000 years with his 144,000 spirit-begotten disciples.—Rev. 20:4, 6.

¹⁴ Satan the Devil is determined that, before he and his demon angels are hurled into the abyss for 1,000 years, he will drag all the nations down into destruction and thus prevent their becoming Christ's subjects during His millennial reign. To this end he is leading all the worldly nations to the battlefield of Har-Magedon, there to fight against Jehovah God and his Christ. (Rev. 16:13-16) Satan the Devil will thus be responsible for the everlasting "woe" that strikes the Gentile nations there. (Rev. 12:12; 19:11-21) How can we escape that woeful destruction with those nations?

¹⁵ We must refuse to march as allies with the Gentile nations in their march to

13. So why did the end of the Gentile Times and the start of Christ's millennial reign not take place simultaneously?

14. What is Satan determined to accomplish respecting the nations before he is abyssed, and why?

15. For refusing to march with the Gentile nations under Satan, what has been the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses, and why?

¹² In sharp contrast, the clergy of Christendom are very much involved in the political affairs of the world. In some lands they actively campaign for or against candidates. Some of the clergy themselves hold political office. Others exert great pressure on politicians to favor programs that the clergy approve. Elsewhere the "conservative" clergy are close allies of the men in power while "progressive" priests and ministers may be supporting guerrilla movements working for their overthrow. However, Jehovah's Witnesses do not meddle in politics, no matter what the country in which they live. They do not interfere with what others do as to joining a political party, running for office or voting in elections. But, since Jesus said that his disciples would be "no part of the world," Jehovah's Witnesses take no part whatsoever in political activities.

¹³ As Jesus foretold, during this "time of the end" nations have repeatedly gone to war, and even factions within nations have taken up arms against one another. (Matt. 24:3, 6, 7) But in the face of all of this, what position have Jehovah's Witnesses taken? Their neutrality regarding such conflicts is well known in all parts of the world. Consistent with the position taken by Jesus Christ and later demonstrated by his early disciples, *The Watchtower*, in its issue of November 1, 1939, stated: "All who are on the Lord's side will be neutral as to warring nations, and will be entirely and wholly for the great Theocrat [Jehovah] and his King [Jesus Christ]." The facts show that Jehovah's Witnesses in all nations and under all circumstances continue to hold to this position. They have not allowed the world's divisive politics and wars to break up their international brotherhood as worshippers of Jehovah.—Isa. 2:3, 4; compare 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

¹⁴ An examination of the historical facts shows that not only have Jehovah's Witnesses refused to put on military uniforms and take up arms but, during the past half century and more, they have also declined to do noncombatant service or to accept other work assignments as a substitute for military service. Why? Because they have studied God's requirements and then made a personal, conscientious decision. No one tells them what they must do. Nor do they interfere with what others choose to do. But when called on to explain their position, Jehovah's Witnesses have made it known that, as persons who have presented themselves to God in dedication, they are obligated to use their bodies in his service and cannot now hand these over to earthly masters who are acting contrary to God's purpose.—Rom. 6:12-14; 12:1, 2; Mic. 4:3.

¹⁵ The result has been as Jesus said: "Because you are no part of the world . . . the world hates you." (John 15:19) Many of Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned because they would not violate their Christian neutrality. Some have been treated brutally, even to the point of death. Others have continued to demonstrate their neutrality during years of confinement. The book *Valves and*

¹² (a) How does the neutrality of the Witnesses contrast with practices of the clergy? (b) What does neutrality as to politics include for Jehovah's Witnesses?

¹³ As to their participating in war, what do the facts show that the position of Jehovah's Witnesses has been?

¹⁴ (a) Because of their neutral position, what else have the Witnesses refused to do? (b) How do they explain the reason for this?

¹⁵ (a) Because of maintaining separateness from the world, what have Jehovah's Witnesses experienced? (b) Even when they were imprisoned, how have Christian principles guided them?

24, 25) Nevertheless, mercy was shown to Rahab and to the Gibeonites because they demonstrated faith in Jehovah. (Josh. 2:9-13; 9:24-27) In the Law covenant God laid down rules for warfare that he would approve, stipulating exceptions and the manner in which this warfare was to be carried out. Such were truly holy wars of Jehovah. That is not true of the carnal warfare of any nation today.

With the establishing of the Christian congregation, a new situation came into existence. Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. Christ's followers were to make disciples of people of all nations; so worshippers of the true God would in time be found in all those nations. However, what is the motive of those nations when they go to war? Is it to carry out the will of the Creator of all the earth or is it to further some nationalistic interest? If true Christians in one nation were to go to war against another nation, they would be fighting against fellow believers, against people who prayed for help to the same God that they did. Appropriately, Christ directed his followers to lay down the sword. (Matt. 26:52) He himself, glorified in the heavens, would henceforth carry out the execution of those who showed defiance of the true God and His will.—2 Thess. 1:6-8; Rev. 19:11-21.

As to serving in the armed forces, what does secular history disclose about the attitude of early Christians?

"A careful review of all the information available goes to show that, until the time of Marcus Aurelius [Roman emperor from 161 to 180 C.E.], no Christian became a soldier; and no soldier, after becoming a Christian, remained in military service."—*The Rise of Christianity* (London, 1947), E. W. Barnes, p. 333.

"We who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons,—our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into implements of tillage,—and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope, which we have from the Father Himself through Him who was crucified."—Justin Martyr in "Dialogue With Trypho, a Jew" (2nd century C.E.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand

Rapids, Mich.; reprint of 1885 Edinburgh edition), edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Vol. I, p. 254.

"They refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire. . . . it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes."—*History of Christianity* (New York, 1891), Edward Gibbon, pp. 162, 163.

What scriptures have always had a bearing on the attitude of true Christians toward involvement in political issues and activities?

John 17:16: "They are no part of the world, just as I [Jesus] am no part of the world."

John 6:15: "Jesus, knowing they [the Jews] were about to come and seize him to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain all alone." Later, he told the Roman governor: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from this source."—John 18:35.

Jas. 4:4: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (Why is the matter so serious? Because, as 1 John 5:19 says, "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." At John 14:30, Jesus referred to Satan as being "the ruler of the world.") So, no matter what worldly faction a person might support, under whose control would he really come?)

Regarding political involvement, what do secular historians report as being the attitude of those known as early Christians?

"Early Christianity was little understood and was regarded with little favor by those who ruled the pagan world. . . . Christians refused to share certain duties of Roman citizens. . . . They would not hold political office."—*On the Road to*

1 John 5:21) So, true Christians do not venerate icons, crosses, and images. They also avoid more subtle forms of idolatry, such as acts of devotion to flags and the singing of songs that glorify nations. When pressured to perform such acts, they recall Jesus' words to Satan: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service." (Mathew 4:8-10) Jesus said that his followers are "no part of the world." (John 17:14) This means being neutral in political affairs and living peacefully in harmony with Isaiah 24, which says: "He [Jehovah God] will certainly render judgment among the nations and set matters straight respecting many peoples. And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."



¹⁵ Being "no part of the world" also means breaking off all association with "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion. Unclean worship spread from ancient Babylon until it held harmful spiritual dominion over people earth wide. "Babylon the Great" embraces all religions whose doctrines and practices are out of harmony with the knowledge of God. (Revelation 17:1, 5, 15) No faithful worshiper of Jehovah will engage in interfaith activities by sharing in worship with different religions or by having spiritual fellowship with any part of Babylon the Great. (Numbers 25:1-9; 2 Corinthians 6:14) Consequently, many new Bible students send a letter of resignation to the religious organization to which they belong. This has brought them closer to the true God, as promised: "'Get 15. What is Babylon the Great, and what do many new Bible students do to get out of her?'"



Spiritual activities balanced with periods of relaxation contribute to the happiness of those living a godly life