

**Q: We are told, “Thou shalt not kill.” How, then, can a conscientious objector be wrong? (8-2-25)1**

**A:** Well, I don't know that anyone can say that a conscientious objector is wrong. I don't believe we have any right to judge as to rightness or wrongness. But in my own experience—and, of course, all we're getting through The Infinite Way is my own experience, that which has been revealed to me—many, many things take place in consciousness to govern one's conduct in life. And the problem of conscientious objectors never came to me as an experience until the Second World War, when it came to me through a group of Christian Scientists who decided to be conscientious objectors and wanted the sanction of the Church, and didn't receive it. And at that time, because some of them came to me for help, it was necessary for me to take this up in meditation and come to a right answer.

Now, in my personal experience, when World War I was declared, that is, when America entered World War I, there was no question in my mind of what was right or wrong. I laid down my business, turned it over to other men, and I enlisted. That seemed to me the right thing to do. And you might understand that if you will realize this: My ancestry is Hebrew, and my ancestors were in Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition, and they fled or were driven out of there into the only two countries that would permit Jews to settle, and that was Holland and England. And so my entire ancestry on both my father's and mother's side was of that stock of Spain and Portugal who were driven to Holland. My father's went to Holland and my mother's went to England, and for generations lived in those two countries. And then finally, through a chain of circumstances, they came to America, where my mother and father were born, and where I was born, and all our family.

Now, with that for an ancestry, I think you can readily understand that to me, the most sacred thing on earth is liberty, freedom, equality. To me, nothing else counts. I would gladly lay down the message of The Infinite Way for any work that I could do that would perpetuate the idea, or I would dedicate The Infinite Way to the idea of liberty, freedom, equality, and justice for all. And so, when that war came, it was inevitable that I had to be one of the first and to do it without thinking. Don't think that I thought it out—no, no, no! It was just those generations of background that forced me to do that.

Now, a miracle happened after I was in service, because I began to pray for myself, for my safety, for my security, and my protection all around. And one day it dawned on me that I was either being a fool or I had a God who was a fool, one or the other. Because how on earth could a good God, a just God, a loving God, give me protection, safety, and security while I was walking around with a gun on my shoulder, a revolver at my hip, and four men in back of me with machine guns? Was God going to allow me to walk up and down Europe, shooting Germans right and left while giving me divine protection? (Joel laughs) No, I couldn't believe that was true. I just couldn't believe it. I couldn't understand

why God should so favor me. On the other hand, maybe the Germans were praying the same prayers? So why shouldn't they have the protection just to shoot me up? I saw that that was not intelligent. That really wasn't a God, but I didn't know what was.

And so I said, "I'm not going to pray. I'm not going to do any praying now. I'm even going to put my Bible aside and wait for divine guidance, wait for God to show me how to pray." And it was a few days later when I accidentally knocked my Bible off my stand. As I went to pick it up, in letters that looked *this* big, I read "Neither pray I for these alone." And I said, "Thank you Father." That is prayer. I have got to pray the realization that all men abide in God; that all men are under God's wing; that the everlasting arms uphold all mankind and all men. And forget this friend and enemy prayer business—"Save my friends and destroy my enemies." No, no, no. Pray for all men! And that led me to one of the revelations that now you will find in the message of The Infinite Way when you come to the subject of prayer. It is much more important to pray for your enemies than it is to pray for the members of your own family. There is a greater spiritual comeback to you in releasing your enemies from condemnation or the desire for their punishment or extermination; a greater, greater spiritual power in that prayer than in any prayer you can voice for yourself or your friends or your allies.

Now then, what happened? After that realization, I was transferred, and then I was transferred again, and then I was transferred again, and I was transferred again. And those transfers kept on and kept on, until one day we got on board ship to go to France to fight, and the armistice was signed that day, and the bells rang. So that at no time was I brought into danger. And at no time was any enemy brought into danger from me.

Now then, this all came back to me when I was helping these men with the problem of conscientious objector. And what I saw was this: Had I been a conscientious objector, somebody else would have been filling my uniform. And if they hadn't had that same vision that I had, I might have been responsible for their death—not only an enemy's, but an ally's, a friend's, a countryman's. Isn't it far better that I go out and get killed than let somebody else get killed in my place? Thank you, Father, I think so. I think so any time I would rather, if called upon, give my life than yours—much rather! And frankly, I'd rather give mine than an enemy's. Why? At least I have advanced to that point where I don't believe in death, and where I know it would merely be a transition from one state of living to another state of living, and I have no fear of that. And so I might save somebody else the fear of that. Or by shirking my duty as a citizen, I may be causing somebody else to suffer what would rightly be where I would be.

And so to me, a conscientious objector may be doing all right according to his own life, but he certainly is not preventing killing, because if he doesn't do it, somebody else is going to fill his uniform and do it for him. And the war's going to go on just the same, whether he's in it or out of it. And if he takes his position in some civilian activity or, as some of our boys did in the Medical Corps, they're still out there in the same position as

a person who buys a bond. Anybody who buys a war bond is just as much of a killer as the man who pulls the trigger. This is true at law. Any attorney will verify that an accessory to murder is a murderer. And if a person buys arms and ammunition for somebody else to use, they're part of it.

Now then, we are not in any position under Christ's law to defy human government. We must "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." And if we accept the joys of citizenship, we must pay the price of citizenship, whether we believe in this particular phase of it or do not believe in this particular phase of it. We have had occasion to witness that in the last twenty years in our country, where consistently forty-eight percent of our voting population were not in sympathy with our government. And yet, nobody has ever brought any accusation against them for doing anything detrimental to the government, but rather worked along constitutional lines to correct whatever we believe to be wrong. That's the way we'd have to work it out.

And so the conscientious objector must decide within himself what is right or wrong. I am presenting the subject to you from the basis of my own experience. I would prefer to accept my responsibility as a citizen and then depend on my spiritual understanding to see that no harm came to me or another.

<sup>1</sup>*This copyrighted excerpt is from Recording 703B: 1955 Johannesburg Closed Class, "Spiritual Breakfast." It is posted with kind permission from the Estate of Joel Goldsmith, which holds the copy protection on the recorded classes and the copyright on the transcripts. The full transcript of this recording is available at [The Infinite Way website](#) or by calling **1-800-922-3195**.*

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