

RELIGION AND WAR

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WE ALL believe quite simply that God knows all things, from the most sublime truth to the lowest, ordinary, every day incident. He knows Himself; and each single, solitary hair on one's head! If He has this vast treasury of knowledge, who will deny that God knows all about this present world struggle, even to the most remote incident therein? He not only knows about it, He permits it; just as He knows the number of hairs on the head and permits them to fall, in time and in a particular pattern. Should anyone deny this truth, he but deludes himself, and shadows his intellect so that an accurate appreciation of the state of war is impossible. The patent fact of God permitting this war, then, is not open to dispute; but the solution to the question why He permitted it, may be viewed from many different angles. We will attempt to look at but one of them, in an effort to present and develop a true perspective of the war.

Since the smoke lifted from the final cannonading of the last war and since the godless signing of the Versailles treaty, morals have declined rapidly in sympathetic accord with the decline in religion. This fact is most obvious to any thinking man. Chiefly in morals, but just as universally in philosophy, politics and economics, this decline has drawn men away from their essential realization of a dependence upon Almighty God. Using this fact as a basis, it is rather easy to consider the present struggle as a divine attempt to bring men back to a religious trend of thought and manner of living. Many facts and incidents, each completely isolated from the other, are proving every day that the war is accomplishing this very end.

It is not strange, in the least, that war makes men religious. After all, war brings us very close to death; death in any form and at any time. What need have any of us to speak of the fear we all have of death; for no matter why we fear it, that awesome apprehension is ever there in some degree. And death means, and will always mean, the meeting face to face with God. Indeed an awesome thought! Man is a creature, and as a creature must depend on his Creator for all things. Failing in the observance of the universally known and proclaimed commands of the Creator, the earthling must

necessarily tremble with fear and pray the mercy of the All-Powerful and Just One. As the animal fears its master at some wrong doing, and as the child respects whole heartedly the wishes of the parents, so the creature must conform to the dictates of the Creator. Yes, the one idea that will always give us pause—and for excellent cause! Religion is a bond; a knot tying us close to our God. A religious man need never know gnawing fear. Bound to his God in loving tie, the man of religious conviction can look on all men and all things—yes, even death—with supreme confidence and virtuous strength.

Years of luxury, even the minimum of luxury, have made most of us forget our rôle as creature. We have become as the pagans of old; indeed, neo-paganism is not just a notion these days. Just as the proud and “cultured” Romans of antiquity glutted their unquenchable appetites for pleasure and food, so are we today frolicking merrily in the halls and shrines of Bacchus and Venus. Rome paid a price, a mortal sum. Are we, too, to die the same ignominious death of that once glorious nation? If we do, it will be through our own viciousness. They knew not the slightest concept of our God or His religion. We have had His priceless gem of faith these many centuries. They were ignorant, but we cannot cry that plea. Madly making merry with material things we have lost our perspective. Accidentals loom much more importantly before us than do essentials. After all, the material is so all-pervading; we do not have to imagine the world and all its abounding life, for it is all about us in all its enticing splendour. We have tasted and it was good; but that one taste has paralysed our vision. What good succulent sweets if we cannot see eternal truths?

But put us on a battlefield! The first paralysing shock and tension will open our eyes just as a screaming power dive repairs the physical defect of the deaf. Accidentals fall away, and the necessary essentials loom large before our staring eyes. What good the relaxations, the comforts and pleasures of yesterday when death is calling loudly? The material paradise we have built up these many years suddenly dissolves into the mist of the useless. Nothing matters now, or ever will, but the one big question: Am I ready? Only one type of man can answer that without too much fear of reprisal; he is the man who knows why he is on this enigmatic earth, and how he is going to traverse its many twisting paths.

While our loved ones do battle and see the truths at last on some distant land or unknown part of the sea, we have our own test at home. We are also on the battlefield; for here we quickly realize our own helplessness. What can we do to help them, other than in a

material way? What good our casings for their guns, or of what use infinite shipments of food, if they are dead? We are helpless in the face of death. But are we really? Religion now arises from its deep sleep within us as we, too, suddenly see its undying worth. We see how religion binds us to them and to our God. Our only means of aid for them brings us back to God, and bringing us back it also draws near the end of war. The end for which He may have primarily permitted it, and the end of the war itself. We are at home once more in the heavenly kingdom on earth; and our beloved ones will soon be at our own cherished hearths and homes.

Religion will become for all of us all that it really is; not a mere name, a concept to be tossed about like an idle breeze. It will be basic, essential, in the lives of each and every one of us. Through religion we will see ourselves and our lives with perfect vision; in its enfolding strength we will become strong. Worthless things, as worry and despair, will be discarded; and reaching out fully, we will complete and fulfill our every thought and desire. We have seen how worry has not helped us or our fighting ones; we can and will see how religion takes care of all needs. Either in religion itself, or in our many acts of life emanating from a religious font we have a realistic view of our everyday life. Our leaders have followed this trend of thought, at least essentially, and have said that we must have peace with justice. They say this because they realize that without these two virtues so combined there cannot be a world free from war. If we truly desire such a world, and what man does not, then we must perforce have religion the basic factor, the driving, motor force in our lives. It is religion, and religion alone, that brings us peace and justice; for then we are living as true creatures of God. If we do not render to Him all that He demands and deserves, how can we be just and peaceful in small things when we have such utter disregard for the supreme and all important task of our lives? Let us all realize how completely religion dominates our lives; and realizing it, use to full advantage the truths we have sooner or later learned.