

The Collapse of Civilization



Is That What the War in
Europe Means?

Selections from an Editorial
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THE COLLAPSE OF CIVILIZATION

CIVILIZATION can never finally prevent war. But many sincere people have eagerly, confidently believed that it would.

It is the civilization that lives, not only for pleasure, but for commerce, science, education, national honor or reputation, personal happiness and advancement of every sort, rather than for the glory of God, that insures war.

War is only one of many expressions of sin. Christ is the only cure for sin. Sin, indeed, is war: war against God. Every individual human life in which Christ is not Saviour and Lord is at war with God; and every nation which does not recognize Christ as Supreme Lord of its every national policy and action is thereby habitually at war with God. Only Christ can bring men and nations into peace with God.

When we say this we recognize that there has never been, since our Lord came to this earth, such a thing as a Christian nation.* There are nations in which live

*The Covenanters believe that an exception to this sweeping statement is found in the history of Scotland for a few years following the renewal of the National Covenant of Scotland in 1638 and the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643.

many Christians, both as private citizens and as public officials; but the world has yet to see a nation whose acknowledged and implicitly obeyed head is Christ.

If the individual in whom Christ does not live as Saviour and Lord is at war with God, whether he means to be or not, because of the deadly, sinful nature within him,—that “mind of the flesh” which is “enmity against God,”—equally true is it that all civilization which is not absolutely dominated by Christ, so that its habitual motives and actions seek only the glory of God, is a warring civilization. No matter how peaceful such civilization may seem to be outwardly, it is in a state of ceaseless war against God,—and that is the deadliest war of all.

Yet that is the condition of the civilization of the world to-day. And if civilization is thus, even though unconsciously to itself, engaged in an eternal warfare against the Creator God, how can it by any human activities or efforts or agreements be set free from war among men? It is hopeless for those who are warring with God to expect to be permanently at peace with one another. To look for temporal peace while an eternal warfare is going on is to look for fruit where there is no root. Temporal wars will come to an end when eternal warring come to an end, and not until then. So assured and final peace by agreement among those who

continue to engage in a common war against God is a mocking will-o'-the-wisp.

That is the reason why civilization has collapsed to-day in Europe. It will continue to collapse after every human attempt to set it up again. **Civilization without Christ as Lord is a failure before it is set up.** It is a permanent state of war; and we cannot have peace while war is going on.

A writer in a Chicago paper declares that "the very foundations of our faith in human civilization are torn up by the roots as we see this thing—this impious, loathsome thing—start on its way." He misses the fact that the sooner our faith in human civilization is torn up by the roots, the more hope for us. He recognizes that "there can be no true victory in this war"; but his reason is a false one, for he adds, "otherwise in vain are the inventions of the century, in vain the liberalizing and humanizing movement that struggles to engirdle the globe." But no humanizing movement can ever save this globe. Humanity is a sin-poisoned, sin-wrecked thing. Nothing but a superhuman, supernatural Lord can save our world.

Most people would thoughtlessly agree to the statement that the motives of war "are as primitive and as diametrically opposed to civilization" as "a blood feud in Kentucky, or the game of hunting heads in Borneo." Yet that is not true. War and civilization are not opposed to each

other; they are essentially the same. Civilization seeks certain desirable things for the glory of man. War seeks certain desirable things for the glory of man. **Civilization that is not supremely dominated by Jesus Christ is a condition of war against God.** That is why civilization leads with an almost inevitable certainty to the more obvious condition which we call war.

What is the solution, the end of all war, as seen by those who look hopefully to civilization for the way out? It is given at the conclusion of the typical article that has been quoted. "What is the answer? More rational public opinion. And that can only come from education. . . . I mean the education that comes from the field, the lathe, the scalpel, the test tube, the microscope."

The war in Europe to-day is the answer to that theory. Civilization by education has collapsed. God knew, and men to whom God was trying to speak might have known, that it was doomed before it was tried.

The Czar proclaims to his people: "It is not only the protection of a country related to us and unjustly attacked that must be accorded now, but we must safeguard the honor, the dignity and the integrity of Russia and her position among the great powers." That declaration well represents the attitude of most civilized Christian nations to-day. It says nothing

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about the honor and the glory of God. It represents the self-centered, sin-poisoned civilization that collapses when the right opportunity comes.

An editorial writer in one of the newspapers says, "War remains what it is: an abysmal and sickening reversion to the primitive brute in man." But that primitive brute in man continues unchanged in character in the most civilized man on earth who is without Christ as Saviour and Lord. War in such a man is not a reversion to a former state; it is only an expression of the present state. **So the nation that is dishonoring God through failure to live solely for the glory of God does not revert to a former condition when it goes to war; it only expresses its present condition.**

"We deplore," declared those present at a meeting of representative Germans and Austrians held in Chicago, "the existence of a state of war in this enlightened age, and we fervently hope that it may end speedily, and that peace and the pursuit of happiness may soon be restored to all the peoples of Europe." Men do not realize that peace and the pursuit of happiness as chief goals of life cannot go together. It is the selfish pursuit of happiness that makes war. Yet happiness such as men could never devise for themselves comes into their life when they put God ahead of their happiness.

A cartoon in the Public Ledger of Philadelphia tells its tragic story well. It is a picture of a woman, "Europe," staggering and about to fall from a bleeding bullet wound in the breast. By her feet is a revolver, the smoke floating from its barrel; it is labeled "Armed Peace Theory." Under the picture is the caption "It Was Loaded."

Yet the "armed peace theory" is no more dangerous and deadly than the theory of permanent peace by any other sort of human agreement. Every such theory is loaded with a deadlier bullet than is the revolver. It is loaded with man's sin. Agreement among men will never bring to an end the warring power of their sin. **Only Christ, received as Saviour and Lord both by individual men and by nations, can make harmless that which is deadly.**

This explains the futility of world-peace hopes in tribunals, conferences, and pledges of arbitration. Never has the futility of world-peace on the basis of man's agreement been so sadly revealed as in this hour. Yet multitudes of earnest Christian men and women have been deceived by that false hope. We should, of course, always do everything in our power to prevent war. Tribunals of international arbitration can prevent some wars. We cannot do too much to increase peace sentiment throughout the world. But in every such effort let us recognize funda-

mental things: that peace agreements among nations in which Jesus Christ is not the supreme ruler can at best deal only with surface conditions; they may be temporary preventives: they can never be cures.

As we see the truth of the inevitable collapse of civilization, we see also that the United States of America is no safer from war than is any other nation. An editorial writer gropes for the truth, but misses it, when he says: "America, in splendid isolation, retains her balance. It is a house builded upon a rock. Our great experiment, founded on peace and liberty, still holds the beacon. We stand to save the world from slipping back, to demonstrate to every people the greater value of peace, of progress, of civilization. As the anchor of civilization we must not fail."

But if civilization is our anchor, we have failed already. **It is not treason, it is not jingoism, to say that the United States is no exception to the sweeping truth that there has never yet been a Christian nation: a nation with our Lord Jesus Christ in supreme control of its life, its purposes, its plans, its policies.**

Copies of this leaflet may be obtained at 50 cents a hundred, by addressing the
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