

A Single Standard of Morality

In a speech to his Birmingham constituents, delivered in 1858, John Bright, the great English statesman, said:

" . . . The moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once, it may not come in our lifetime; but, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet, when he says: "The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite, Nor yet doth linger."

The rule for which Bright so eloquently pleads is the ideal toward which the world has been moving, all too slowly, but moving, for centuries and the need for this single standard of morality—a standard applicable alike to individuals and to nations—is emphasized by every war that stains the hands of man. It is the supreme international need at the present time.

The universally recognized standard of morals for individuals is built upon the Ten Commandments, and no one disputes the validity of the Commandments against killing, stealing, bearing false witness and covetousness, when applied to individuals; but these commandments are not sufficiently applied to the large groups, called nations, and because they are not applied there is no standard of morals which can be authoritatively invoked for the regulation of international affairs.

Men whose consciences would not permit them to take a neighbor's life, as an individual act, think it is entirely proper to take life by wholesale, either through those whom they command or at the command of others—and that, too, without regard to the cause of the war. Nations which long since ceased to imprison their own citizens for debt, do not hesitate to bombard foreign cities and slaughter the inhabitants of foreign countries as a means of enforcing the re-payment of international loans—sometimes loans of questionable validity.

Men who would not think of stealing from a neighbor are taught to believe that it is patriotic to defend the taking of territory, if their nation gains by the act. Men who would shrink from slandering a neighbor seem to feel no compunctions of conscience when they misrepresent the purposes and plans of other nations; and covetousness, which is regarded as sinful in the individual, seems to be transformed into a virtue when it infects a nation. This attempt to limit the application of these commandments to small transactions has cost an enormous quantity of blood and has brought confusion into international councils.

The false philosophy which is responsible for the blurring of the line between right and wrong in international affairs, is the old, brutal, barbarous doctrine that might makes right—the doctrine that a nation is at liberty to seize whatever it has the strength to seize and to hold whatever it has the power to hold. This doctrine not only leads to cruelty and inhumanity as between belligerents, but it leads to the ignoring of the rights of neutrals. Belligerent nations which make might the test of right, exalt "military necessity" to a position of supreme importance and demands that neutral nations submit to any dangers or damage that the belligerent nations think will contribute to the success of belligerent arms.

International law is a series of precedents and, since precedents relied upon are the wrongs perpetrated, or the rights respected, by nations at war, international law has the appearance of being written upon the theory that war and not peace is the normal relation between nations. The remedy for this very unsatisfactory condition is to be sought along five lines.

First, the substitution of arbitration for force in the settlement of all differences which are arbitrable in character. The leading nations, however, do not regard all questions as arbitrable. For illustration, the most advanced arbitration treaties to which the United States is a party contains four exceptions, viz., questions of honor, of independence, of vital interests and questions which affect the interests of third parties.

Second, the investigation, by an international tribunal, of all disputes which are not declared by treaty to be arbitrable. This closes the gap left by the arbitration treaties and leaves nothing

which can become the cause of war until after a period of delay which gives opportunity for passion to subside, for the separation of questions of honor from questions of fact and for the peace of the estranged nations to bring their influence to bear on their respective governments.

These treaties are framed upon the theory that diplomacy, at its best, is the art of keeping cool. Man should deal with his fellows, not when he is angry, but when he is calm. When he is angry he talks of what he can do, and usually overestimates it; when he is calm he thinks of what he ought to do, and listens to the voice of conscience. The settlement of international disputes should, therefore, be postponed until the parties can dispassionately consider the questions at issue.

The thirty treaties above mentioned, negotiated in 1914 and 1915, with governments exercising authority over three-fourths of the inhabitants of the globe, contain three provisions which promise to make wars between the contracting parties a remote possibility; first, they include disputes of every kind and character; second, they allow a year's time for investigation and report; and, third, they pledge the contracting nations not to declare war or begin hostilities until the investigation is concluded and the report made.

Third. It is not sufficient to provide the machinery for the preservation of peace. Much depends upon the tone of diplomatic communications—they may be persuasive or irritating. When the moral code now recognized among individuals becomes binding between nations, the rules which make lifetime attachments possible between neighbors will be followed in the chancelleries of the world and the threat and the ultimatum will give way to the maxim: Nothing is final between friends.

Fourth. Back of this change in the language of diplomacy must be a change in the dominant national thought—a change which can not come until limitations are no longer placed upon the operation of moral principles. The individual, if his ideals are worthy, is as careful to respect the rights of others as he is to enforce his own rights, and it is this respect for the rights of others that makes neighborhood peace possible.

The same scrupulous regard for the rights of other nations will go far toward promoting international peace. Respect for the rights of others requires a higher form of courage than is required for the enforcement of one's own rights, and the heroism of self-restraint is superior, therefore to the heroism of conquest. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Fifth. Still more fundamental in building a permanent peace is the spirit of brotherhood. Love, and love only, can take man from the "tooth and claw" class, make him conscious of kinship with all the race and conform his conduct to the Golden Rule. It is this, and this only, that will make it possible to plan for a limitless period of peace, with a nearer and nearer approach toward perfect justice. This is the solid rock "all else is shifting sand."

Carlyle, in the closing chapter of his French Revolution, presents this philosophy when he says:

"Hast thou considered how Thought is stronger than artillery parks, and (were it fifty years after death and martyrdom, or were it two thousand years) writes and unwrites acts of Parliament, removes mountains; models the world like soft clay? Also how the beginning of all Thought, worth the name, is love?"

International relations, like all other human relations, rest on moral philosophy, and, in constructing an ethical code for the direction of governments in their dealings with each other, we must begin with a sense of kinship—the spirit of brotherhood.

Obedience to the injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" will lead to self-restraint; indeed, the motive for wrong doing being removed, self-restraint will become easy. Then nations will be as careful to avoid doing injustice as they are now to enforce what they call their rights, but which are sometimes mere selfish interests, sometimes the promptings of brutal instincts and sometimes the supposed requirements of a false standard of morality. When love is on the throne, nations will accept

the measure of greatness to which the individual is expected to conform and seek to cultivate respect, not by exciting fear, but by rendering service.

Love, the wisest of instructors, will also soften the language of diplomacy, purge it of the phrases that intimate a resort to force, infuse into it the living spirit of good will and make it an irresistible power for the promotion of peace.

The lasting friendships, not formal but real, thus created will lead us to investigate with fairness all disputes which may arise and, constantly enlarging the number of controversies which can be submitted to arbitration, finally include ALL and usher in the day for which the Christian world has so long prayed, when "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

W. J. BRYAN.

FOR THE CAUSE OF PEACE

Stanford University, January 6, 1916. — Dr. John J. Mallowney, of Paxtang, Pa., a young man, a member of the Society of Friends, has compiled a peace calendar which has been received with great favor as the best of its kind which has yet appeared, the selections representing many of the very best things that have ever been said in favor of the reign of law, security and peace.

Unfortunately, and without realizing that a calendar is a perishable commodity, Dr. Mallowney contracted with the publishers to sell a very large number of copies himself. The calendars were not received until the first of December, and it has been impossible for him to sell the stipulated number. This has thrown a very heavy financial burden on a man not ready to bear it.

This is to ask the friends of peace into whose hands this letter may fall to buy one or more of these calendars, worthy of space in any library, for the sake of the cause and for the sake of relieving a burden undertaken purely in the interests of peace.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) DAVID STARR JORDAN.

(Contributions for the purpose of placing these "Educationally wise" calendars in the public schools may be sent to Miss A. Carter, Secretary of the Friends Philanthropic Work, 1305 Arch Street, Philadelphia. The Calendars cost just 50c each in San Francisco, where they were published.)

Republican campaign orators who charge that the deficit in the treasury was due to the democratic tariff law will not quote any figures to prove the contention. The reason is that the figures prove that the law, which also carries an income tax provision and increased the corporation taxes, produced more revenue than did the Payne law. The customs revenue fell off from \$313,891,395 the last year of the Payne law to \$292,128,527 the first year of the democratic law, but there was an increase of 4 millions in the corporation tax collection and \$41,046,162 new taxes from the income tax law. The revenues, therefore, were 37 million dollars greater under the democratic law, until the war came to halt the import trade. Since then comparisons are impossible.

Two million dollars' worth of products from the munition making and powder mills of the United States is being sold each day to the belligerents of Europe, at prices that give enormous profits. When the war comes to an end the mills will still be running, but there will be no buyers unless by that time the United States has been frightened into adopting a strong military program. And yet some people grow angry when it is suggested that the war material makers are so anxious to find a continuous market that they are back of much of the preparedness agitation.

Not one of the many church societies and labor organization that have held conventions within the last few months, since the preparedness hysteria seized upon a part of the people has passed resolutions in favor of making this an armed nation with large navies patrolling its coasts. On the contrary many of them have declared their most solemn antagonism to this reversal of national policy. Yet some persons delude themselves into the belief that the plain people of this country are for doubling or quadrupling the appropriations for national armament.