

INEXORABLENESS OF MORAL LAW

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of an ass, and who died upon the cross declaring that by His exhibition of self-sacrificing love He was going to draw all men unto Him.

Some of us must now rewrite our theology. It has been too sentimental. It has lacked moral stamina and grip. We have been misled by false ideas of what love is and what love does. Because Jesus declared that God is a loving Father, we have assumed that He has no moral character and that men may disobey His commands with impunity. The idea of suffering has been abhorrent to us and we have not been able to reconcile the love of God with the wrath of God. The war reveals the foolishness of much of our thinking. God is indeed a God of love, but He does not shrink from permitting men to suffer. He does not draw back from death. He is willing that men, if they break His law, shall suffer the full consequences of their misconduct. He will permit whole nations to writhe in agony, if they persistently defy His will. Nations which sin beyond forgiveness are simply blotted out. The phrases of the New Testament are more than poetic figures of speech. They paint awful and eternal realities. Why should we be reluctant to acknowledge this inexorableness of moral law, or hesitate to proclaim it to all who are willing to hear? The scientist has no hesitation in declaring the unchangeableness and inexorableness of the laws which run through the physical creation; why should we shrink from declaring the unchangeableness and inexorableness of the laws which run through the universe of souls? We live in a moral universe. We are in the grip of moral laws. There is a stone, and he who falleth on it shall be broken to pieces, and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. The Euphrates valley and the banks of the Nile bear solemn testimony to the fact that mighty empires can be scattered as dust. The continent of Europe is now proclaiming that "great powers" can be broken to pieces.

One can not discuss a problem like this without stirring questions which clamour for an answer. How are we going to account for the suffering of the women and children who have had nothing to do with the policy which has precipitated the war? How account for the suffering of the young men in the trenches who also are not at all responsible for the statecraft of Europe? How explain the suffering of Belgium which had no quarrel either with France or Germany, and whose chief offence was happening to lie between the territories of two hereditary foes?

The answer to these questions is

that not all suffering in this world is due to the guilt of those who suffer. There is an entire book of the Old Testament devoted to the task of freeing us from the erroneous idea that if a man is overtaken by calamity it is because of his own sins. In the New Testament the spectacle of Jesus of Nazareth—a man without sin—dying on the cross, makes it forever clear that God permits men to suffer and die for no fault of their own. There is such a thing as vicarious suffering. Some suffer for others. The innocent are swept down with the guilty. The virtuous suffer for the wicked.

We can not go through the world picking out the men who suffer because of their sins and separating them from the men who suffer for the sins of others. We only know that in a world like this, all human beings are linked together. Human lives are intertwined and interlaced inextricably. Parents and children are bound together by bonds so vital and intricate that the children must suffer with the parents and the parents must suffer with the children. Millions of children are suffering in body all the days of their earthly life for the disobedience of their parents, and multitudes of parents have their hearts torn and their lives darkened and shortened by the sins of their children. Citizens of a community must suffer for the sins of their fellow-citizens, and nations must pay the penalty of sins committed by their neighbors. It must be, so long as the world is what it is, that the innocent can not escape suffering with the wicked, and that the just must suffer affliction with the unjust. It is only through this vicarious suffering that human progress becomes possible. Were not noble men willing to suffer the loss of all things for the sake of mankind, the world could not get on. Great principles march on to their coronation only through the sacrifices and agonies of those who are determined that they shall be established in the hearts and homes of men. Gigantic evils are beaten down and enormous wrongs are righted only by the painful efforts of those who love righteousness. Noble institutions are founded and made glorious by the heroic self-denials of dedicated hearts. The world is so constructed that one man can not suffer without others suffering with him, nor can one nation suffer without its neighbors being afflicted also. One man can not sin without other men bearing a part of the consequences of his sin, nor can one nation trample on the laws of the Eternal without bringing tribulation on its own head and also on the heads of the nations round about. If one nation dresses like a rowdy, equipping itself with murderous weapons, building strategic railways to all its frontiers, practicing day and night on land and sea and in the air, the art of slaughter, then other nations must also similarly equip themselves, for no one nation can be permitted to strut in armor before the face of its unprotected neighbors. Thus can one nation by a vicious example lead another nation into paths which run down to the chambers of death. A group of nations can become so enmeshed in the network of false philosophy and mistaken policy that all of them will slide to destruction.

The question of comparative guilt is one which only the Almighty can fairly deal with. We men are victims of prejudice and passion, and are so knit up with one or another of the belligerent nations by racial and commercial ties, that it is impossible for us to judge the contestants with an unbiased and impartial mind. As to which nation is most to blame for the present tragedy, good men and true men are sharply divided. Each nation can point to the sins of the

others. The fact is that none of the nations have clean hands. There is none of them righteous, no, not one. The record of every one of them has crimson stains. Not one is free from the sins of greed and cruelty and uncharitableness. It is not difficult to understand how each one of the nations at war convinces itself that it is in the right, and is fighting for the defence of principles which are essential to the well-being of the world. It is not for us then to apportion the guilt, meting out to each nation the exact share of the blame it deserves. The Judge of all the earth must do that! This does not mean that we are to form no opinion whatever, and arrive at no conclusion in regard to which nation is most responsible for the precipitation of the present war. The diplomatic correspondence lies before us, and most of us have decided where the deepest guilt lies. But when one goes behind the immediate occasion of the war, and plunges into that complex of forces by whose creation this explosion was made possible, he finds himself facing a problem too intricate for the finite intellect to deal with, and there is nothing to do but leave each one of the sinners in the hands of God.

Nor can we confidently assert which class of men in each nation should bear the heavier burden of condemnation. The rulers are not guiltless. Some of them have long acted the fool. Nor are the diplomats and statesmen free from blame. Many of them have been morally stupid and spiritually blind. Nor are the ministers of the Christian church, nor the professors of the universities, nor the editors of the great newspapers, nor the manufacturers of munitions, nor the lords of finance, nor the kings of trade free from guilt. They have all failed to do things which they ought to have done, and they have all done things which ought never to have been done, and who will receive the heaviest condemnation at the Judgment it is not for us to say or know. We can only be sure that a monstrous sin has been committed. The law of God has been outrageously disregarded. The principles of Christ have been recklessly trampled on. Men have rushed blindly forward as though there were no God. The sin was not committed by any one man, or by any small group of men. It was committed by thousands and tens of thousands. It was a national, a continental sin. It was not committed on one day, or in any one week, or month, or year. It was a continuous sin, committed through more than one entire generation. No isolated sin committed in a moment of time could bring such fire as this from heaven. The transgression has been desperate and long-continued, the iniquity has been piled up higher and higher, year by year, until at last the forces of retributive justice were released and a continent was shattered! The one fact never to be blinked or forgotten is that war is due to sin. The apostle James wrote the final word on the subject when he said: "Whence come wars, and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members? Ye lust and have not, ye kill and covet, and can not obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not because ye ask not." The prayer which Europe should pray is the prayer of the Psalmist: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight."

But while we speak thus freely of the sin of Europe, let none of us imagine that the new world is more virtuous than the old. The new

world and the old world are alike in their disobedience to God. There is no sin committed in Europe which is not also committed in America. The vices which flourish on the other side of the Atlantic flourish also here. The poison which runs in the blood there, runs in our own blood also. The selfishness and greed which have been the curse of Europe are also our disgrace and scourge. There are no false ideas taught in Europe which do not have defenders under our own flag. There are no mischievous policies defended by the militarists of the old world which do not have ardent advocates in the new. The chief difference between America and Europe is that Europe is older than America. Her opportunity for transgression has been more extended than ours. She planted her seed long ago, and now the time of her harvest has come. "The lust when it hath conceived beareth sin, and the sin when it is full grown, bringeth forth death." The sin in Europe was full grown: in America it is growing. For Europe a day of judgment has arrived: ours awaits us in the future.

Let us not then think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, or thank God that we are not as other nations are. The great war should not be considered a reason for self-complacency. It is an exhortation to repentance. Disaster upon others is no evidence that they are worse than we. "Think ye that those Galileans whose blood was mingled by Pilate with the sacrifices, were sinners above all the Galileans? I tell ye nay: but except ye repent, ye shall in like manner perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The great war is a John the Baptist crying in the wilderness: "Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Now is the time to ponder Peter's great declaration: "Jesus Christ is the stone which was set at nought by your builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

HUGHES TO PROGRESSIVES

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responsibility is affixed. For that sort of thing could not continue if the administration took proper measures to stop it. That responsibility the administration can not evade by condemning others.

"It was officially stated by the secretary of state in the Mexican note of June 20, 1916, that 'for three years the Mexican republic has been torn with civil strife; the lives of Americans and other aliens have been sacrificed, vast properties developed by American capital and enterprise have been destroyed or rendered non-productive; bandits have been permitted to roam at-will through territory contiguous to the United States, and to seize, without punishment or without effective attempt at punishment, the property of Americans, while the lives of citizens of the United States who ventured to remain in Mexican territory or to return there to protect the interests have been taken, in some cases barbarously taken, and the murderers have neither been apprehended nor brought to justice.'

"What an indictment by the administration of its Mexican policy! And still we are unprepared. That unpreparedness in the midst of perils and after the experience of three years is a demonstration of an un-

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