

Pax Hominibus Bonae Voluntatis

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These words, "Peace to men of good will," have been mistranslated, "Good will towards men." Christ said that he did not come to bring peace, but a sword; that he would divide mother from son and father from daughter, careless of the effect of such remarks upon the feelings of Dr. Sigmund Freud. There is no warrant to suppose that Christ was any kind of a Pacifist. On the contrary, he not only prophesied the most terrible wars and disasters to humanity, which, by the theory, he had absolute power to stop, but he threatened eternal damnation to the great mass of men. Billy Sunday's presentation of Christ is a perfectly scriptural one. Christmas is therefore a season of peace to men of good will, and to them only. But who are these men of good will? Only those who happen to agree with us for the moment.

We have the most artistic photographs dating back not so long ago of Mr. Roosevelt with his arm around the Kaiser's neck. Immediately before the war Mr. Erbert G. Wells published a book in which he said that Germany was the one country in the world worth living in. German science, German manners, German morals, German everything was the only love of Mr. Erbert G. Wells. No sooner did war break out than he published another book to prove that Germans were raving maniacs hypnotized by Nietzsche. It is evident from these shining examples that our humanitarianism, like all other forms of thought, is strictly limited by time and space. The circumstances of the moment must rule our deepest beliefs. In other words we must be opportunists. The idea of moral character is outworn and ridiculous. Herbert Spencer has shown that the animal which adapts himself to his circumstances is going to survive longer

than those who resist their environment. Away then with all considerations of principle! Good feeling, honor, truthfulness are merely false ideas. They are liable at any moment to get you into a mess. We must do as Mr. Pickwick said, "Shout with the largest crowd." One of the most dangerous things that we can do is to think for ourselves. Archimedes lost his life through being intent upon a geometrical problem when he ought to have been reading the newspapers so as to see the proclamation that his life was to be spared. His business was really to identify himself, and claim the protection of the conquerors. We hope that no reader of this paper is so foolish as to try to think for himself. What are papers for, but to save all this trouble? The only problem that can possibly present itself to us is this, "Which is the largest crowd?"

The idea of resisting repression is a totally wrong one. Christ submitted willingly to what is generally admitted to be the greatest crime ever perpetrated, although, as he himself explained, he had twelve legions of angels actually mobilized, which would have made as short work of the Romans as the angels of Mons did of the Germans in the early part of the war.

I have never been able to understand, by the way, why the angels contented themselves with a single victory. It would have been much nicer for everybody if they had marched straight on to Berlin. I have, therefore, the highest authority for submission to any kind of tyranny. Christ said once again, "Agree with thy adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest he deliver thee to the officer and the officer deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the jailor, verily I say unto thee, thou shalt not come out till thou hast paid the very last mite," or words to that effect.

It is sometimes a little awkward to draw one's morals exclusively from the teachings of Christ. They sometimes lead apparently to contradictory conclusions; and, being equally bound by both, contentions arise in our-

selves which are only too likely to lead to a neurosis; and that, as you know, leads to a kind gentleman asking us about what happened when we were three years old. The Australians have a better way of explaining these things. They say truthfully, "Oh, you are all right," and then as a sort of after thought, sadly, "It is a pity the tree fell on you."

Religion is in some respects a difficult if not a fallacious guide. *Quot homines tot sententiae*; or, as the Indians say, "A new language every eight miles." Our true guide is certainly the biological indication. Now, as explained above, biology counsels adaptation to circumstance. We shall save ourselves knocks if we do what the other man tells us without any grumbling. We may go so far perhaps as to say "brute" or "pig" when he is not within an ear shot, but even that is a little dangerous, tending rather to the calamity of thinking for ourselves. However, there are certain animals whose idea of biological adaptation is not quite so simple. There is the tiger, who adjusts his environment, or himself to his environment, by means of tooth and claw. The question is whether man is a savage brute like a tiger, or a dear little caterpillar whose highest aim in life is to look like a dead twig. It depends very largely as far as I can make out whether one happens to be a vegetarian or otherwise. It is a remarkable fact that this article appears to lead absolutely no where. The biological test of conduct breaks down in very much the same way as the religious test. What are we to do?

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law!

Now perhaps we shall get somewhere. If we conceive of each individual (with his heredity and environment complete) as a machine constructed to serve one definite purpose and one only, we relieve ourselves at once from all difficulty about moral judgment. We can justify the existence of President Wilson in keeping us out of war, making the world safe for democracy, and all these nice things which he does so splendidly; and we

can also justify the existence of the monster, tyrant, assassin and religious maniac invented by the New York papers and labeled William. The economy of nature provides for all types. You cannot feed a horse on rabbits or a snake on grass, in spite of Mr. Swinburne's remarks about "the chewing of some perfumed deadly grass." At the same time, we have a perfect right to take sides with either the horse or the snake. If I were a machine made in Germany, I have no doubt that I should shout, "Hoch der Kaiser" whenever there was a slight lull in the conversation. Even so, if I had been born in a cannibal island, I should have been constantly agitating for a regular supply of missionaries, and cursed my local Hoover if the distribution was insufficient or the price prohibitive. So long, then, as we are true to ourselves, it is as with William Schwenck Gilbert, "You are right and I am right and everyone of us is right." At the present juncture my righteousness consists of being an animal of such a nature as to wish the power to pass into the hands of those people who are reasonable. I do not quarrel with any one for being insane. I think he is perfectly right to maintain that he is a poached egg; but I also think that it would be more generally convenient if he airs that belief in seclusion. He will probably disagree with me; and we shall then proceed to submit the issue to various methods of arbitrament, ending with that of arms. But let there be no mistake about it, both sides are absolutely in the right. Even if I prove that the other man is dishonest in his belief in the righteousness of submarine warfare or whatever it may be, the situation is not changed at all. He has a perfect right to be dishonest if he wants to. I may dislike this quality in him so much that I am willing to kill him as the only cure; and he is equally right to kill me if he dislikes the color of my necktie. How many people were killed because they wanted to spell "Homoousios," "Homoiousios" with the iota? But one thing seems evident to me: that unless we get rid of our hypocritical Anglo-Saxon plague of Pharisaism, we shall never be fit to live with.

The other day I came into a fortune, and went to buy a necktie. The young man (or should I say gentleman) who accommodated me in this matter was English, and remembered me in those days of glory when I wandered in Bond street, and bought as many as three neckties on the same day. Having purchased my tie and wept together about Bond street, we began to talk about the war. I said to him: "If I had come into this shop (or should I say store) with the firm conviction that you were a dangerous maniac, thirsting for my blood, that you were insensible to every feeling of humanity, that the fiercest and most malignant wild beasts had nothing on you (I believe that is the correct phrase) in the matter of atrocity, I do not think we should have settled this matter of the tie (or should I say neckwear) with the philosophic calm which has characterized our interview up to this point." I regret to say that this person was so lost to all sense of patriotism as to agree with me.

It is necessary in many circumstances to fight; and, in order to fight well, one needs certain quite definite qualities. In olden days I did a good deal of fencing, by which I do not mean receiving stolen goods. I mean the play of rapier and smallsword. I learned that I must be entirely concentrated on the business on hand, and that elaborate arguments purporting to prove that my opponent was a Chinaman or a heretic, were out of place. I learned also that my best chance of defeating him was to know what he was going to do before he did it; to read his mind in his eye and his wrist. I think it will be clear that in order to read the man's mind, you must put away from you anything like emotion. You are there to kill him efficiently, and you should practice the detachment of the surgeon, who does not wring his hands and wail when he sees the patient on the operating table.

Whether we want to fight Germany or to come to an amicable understanding with her does not matter. In either case, we are handicapping ourselves by hating

her. We are failing to see her point of view. The Germans are under the monstrous delusion that God is with them; that they are fighting for their hearths and altars. It is none of our business to cure that delusion. We must accept it in estimating their minds. We can tell what they will do as soon as we can tell what they are thinking; if we make any mistake as to what they are thinking, we can no longer tell what they will do. Just so long as we hate them, we blind our eyes and confuse our minds. Now, with regard to German atrocities, they may be perhaps a little more systematic than atrocities on the other side; but that is evidence of more system, not of more ferocity. I think, therefore, that we do wrong in blaming either side for any atrocity that they may have committed, whether it is the murder of an English nurse or a Javanese dancer. And surely the rape and murder of a single Frenchwoman by one of the heroes who are saving France may outweigh a thousand such crimes committed by avowed enemies.

The mildest of animals, if it feels itself cornered, will resort to every means of defence. Queensberry rules were not invented for men who are scrapping in a life and death combat. How is it that the sentimental stay-at-home, domestic German becomes Giant Blunderbore? It is not a miracle. It is not an outbreak of collective sadism. It is simply the feeling that he is cornered. All Germans feel this. It may be a delusion on their part; but they have it; and we have to act on the assumption that they have it. Now what is the proper way to deal with people in this situation? There is only one sensible thing to do. We must remove the cause of their belief. Until we do this they are assuredly right in continuing to believe it. We should, therefore, say, "My dear friends, you are quite wrong in supposing that you are cornered. We do not wish to hurt you. We wish to come to an agreement with you on the points in dispute." This may be a little difficult, as we have all forgotten what those points were; but at least we can try to come to some

arrangement as to what is best to be done. In other words, let us quit fighting for a few weeks or months, and have a conference. If nothing happens, we can go on fighting again with renewed zest. Speaking as an Irishman, I might go further and suggest talking and fighting at the same time — an ideal state of affairs! Now one cannot help saying that the Germans have shown their good faith in this matter very clearly. They are always proposing “peace conferences,” thereby indicating that we are not, as some of their publicists maintain, “a gang of enraged millionaires bent upon destroying German liberties as American liberties have already been destroyed,” but a set of sensible people who want to settle down and live happily ever after. We reply, “Certainly not, you are monsters. On with the revel!” In such circumstances the German can hardly be blamed for thinking that we are set upon their utter destruction, and this thought is bound to destroy in them all considerations of mercy and kindness, or even ordinary reasonableness. They must argue that we who will not even discuss the question of peace can be none other than Huns. (Now I’ve said it!) I am told that the German offers are not sincere. Then call the bluff by agreeing to the principle of conference. We need not be afraid of an armistice; time is on our side, not theirs.

Where such ideas are pushed to the limit the results are utterly abominable. We need only refer to the destruction of one of the finest races of the world, the American Indian, which was due to nothing but the conviction that he was a remorseless and treacherous savage. The American Civil War would have resulted in the utter ruin of the whole country had it not been that Grant, in the moment of victory, forgot all about Simon Legree, dismissed the whole howling of the wolves of the press as nonsense, and observed succinctly: *Let us have peace.*