

The “Christian” Demand for War

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Originally published in a pamphlet in 1897

Although this pamphlet was written over 100 years ago, and deals with tensions that were then existing between the British (professedly Christian), and the Turks (professedly Moslem), it is particularly applicable to our time as well, where there is still tension between the western powers and many Muslim nations. Again, there is a growing cry from many modern Christian leaders for war against certain Muslim nations. This article shows how “un-Christian” this is.

Introduction

FOR a long time, especially for the last eighteen months, the attention of the whole civilized world has been directed to the events taking place in Turkey. The Armenian massacres have been discussed in doubtless every pulpit in Christendom, and the papers, both secular and religious, have overflowed with accounts, comments, and suggestions. Indeed, one expects to see in his daily paper a column devoted to the situation in Turkey or to the relation of the Powers to it, just as regularly as to the state of the market.

It is therefore not necessary in this place to devote any space to the detailing of the outbreaks and massacres. No neglect has been shown in keeping them before the public in all their awful enormity; no details have been omitted, that would tend to excite the horror of the reader or hearer. While we do not repeat the reports of these massacres, we shall, for the purpose of our present study, assume that they are all true, both as to the numbers of Armenians slain, and as to the cruelties perpetrated. It might be well, however, to remember that in these reports we have the testimony from only one side,—that of the Armenians and those who are prejudiced against the Turks,—yet we will not now stop to question their truthfulness; let each one think that the outrages are as fearful as his imagination has pictured them.

A Still More Terrible Thing

The taking of human life under any circumstances is an awful thing. To read of men being shot and stabbed, of human bodies mangled and bleeding in the streets, or kicked to one side as though they were dogs, is horrible; yet no description can equal the reality. So we say that people do well to shudder as they read of wholesale slaughter. But fearful as the massacres in Turkey may have been, there is something to which we do not see anybody's attention specially called, which is still more shocking, so much more shocking that there can be no comparison. What is that thing?—it is the almost universal cry for vengeance, the demand for war,—for more killing,—that has issued and is still issuing from the lips and pens of professed followers and ministers of Christ. We do not wish to call attention to any individual, but only to the thing, and therefore we shall not give the names of those whose utterances we quote.

One man, who shows his strong religious sentiments by the statement,

“We want a leader filled with the Holy Ghost, whose only fear is to displease God,”

—writes thus to a leading religious journal:

“Sir, I am the father of a family, but my sons and I are only waiting the call to go out. In God's name let us raise an army of volunteers, and wipe out the awful stain upon our fair island home of accomplices in crime, and sweep the old murderer and all his tribe into the sea.”

Another person, a woman, a regular correspondent of the same religious paper, quotes the story of two English captains who received some Armenian refugees on board their ships in the Bosphorus, and then when the Turks demanded the refugees, hoisted the British flag, upon which the Turks went away. Then she says:

“How fervently one wishes for a moment that they had fired upon our flag! It would have been the signal for instant war!”

Gross Perversion of the Gospel

We have before us a report of a great representative meeting of Wesleyan Methodists, that was held in the historic City Road Chapel a few weeks ago. The writer says that,

...it was a meeting that showed, above all things, in how large a degree the best conscience of the people is permeated with the idea that the ethical principles of the Sermon on the Mount are applicable in all their simplicity even to the complex problems of international relations.

And then follow these words:

The immediate outcome was a resolution “assuring Her Majesty’s Government of united and vigorous support in any steps it may take to bring to a speedy end these disgraceful and unparalleled atrocities.”

That by this resolution was meant support even in the event of war, is clearly shown by what preceded. One speaker said that:

“If necessary, England must stand alone in order to bring to an end this chapter of Eastern misrule.”

This, as another truly said, would doubtless “provoke a European war,” yet even this the reverend gentlemen assembled were ready to accept, for still another said,

“With Russia or without her, with the Concert of Europe or without it, we can, we must, we will, deliver the Armenians.”

Remember now that to “deliver the Armenians” means war. If one Power should undertake it alone, without the concurrence of the other Powers, it would result in a general war of all the Powers ranged against one another according to their several interests; if there were agreement, then the war would be against the Turks alone; but in any case there would be war.

Remember also that this war is just what ministers of the Gospel were and are still pleading for; and remember also the statement that the meeting showed:

“...in how large a degree the best conscience of the people is permeated with the idea that the ethical principles of the Sermon on the Mount are applicable in all their simplicity to the complex problems of international relations.”

It can be seen how greatly men have allowed their passions to cloud their perception of the simplicity of the Gospel as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5

³⁸ You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

³⁹ But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And further,

Matthew 5

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

⁴⁵ That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

That is all that is in the Sermon on the Mount that is especially applicable to this question, yet so far have professed Christians lost sight of its principles, that they can complacently cite their clamors for bloodshed and revenge as being an illustration of those principles. Indeed, it is from religious teachers and the religious press that the demand for vengeance principally comes, because they regard the case as one of religious persecution and therefore as especially concerning them.

Now let the candid reader pause and think seriously, and say if such a perversion of the Gospel is not the most fearfully deplorable thing that could possibly happen.

The killing of a few thousands of people by men who do not profess to be Christians, is horrible enough; but more horribly wicked still is it when professors and ministers of the Gospel everywhere fill the minds of the people with the idea that war and vengeance are in harmony with and manifestations of the fundamental principles of Christianity. Such teaching only serves to nourish and glorify the natural fierceness which the Bible says will be characteristic of the last days; and with the people become fully imbued with it, there will be needed only a spark to set the whole world ablaze with the fire of hell.

*When the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace,
is used as a war cry,
where shall we look for peace on earth?*

The Vengeful Spirit

It seems as though Christendom were becoming intoxicated with the spirit of vengeance, so that the most peaceably inclined men have lost their senses. One religious paper reprints some floating newspaper stories derogatory to the character of Turks in general, and then exclaims editorially:

“Ought such a nation to be tolerated for a moment on the face of the earth?”

And that but expresses the general sentiment among preachers and people. Just analyze this: “Ought such a nation to be tolerated for a moment on the face of the earth?” is the same as, “Ought such people to be tolerated for a moment on the face of the earth?” And that includes thousands of individuals, and of each of whom it is virtually said, “Ought such a person to be tolerated for a moment on the face of the earth?”

That is to say, the spirit of intolerance is already so firmly rooted in the hearts of professed Christians, that they do not wish to tolerate for a moment the existence of those whom they, taking the throne of judgment, have decided to be unfit to live. What is that but charging God with laxness in the discharge of His duty, because He suffers wicked men to live?

How different from the Spirit of Christ. When He was rejected by the Samaritans, and two disciples wished to command fire to come down and consume the inhospitable people, He rebuked them, saying,

Luke 9

⁵⁵ You know not what manner of spirit you are of.

⁵⁶ For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

The Spirit of desiring to be the instruments of God's vengeance has always been more prominent than the desire to be instruments of His mercy, and when it is once cherished it inevitably results in getting ahead of the Lord, and being both judge and executioner.

The True Christian Spirit

But we have a still stronger rebuke of this bitter, warlike spirit. When Jesus had been betrayed into the hands of His enemies, and a mob of man came to seize Him and put Him to death, Peter drew a sword in His defense. The blow just missed the head of one of the gang of murderers, and cut off his ear.

Matthew 26

⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, Put up again your sword into his place;

⁵² For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

And then, as an evidence that He came not to take life but to save it, Jesus healed His wounded enemy. *Luke 22:50-51.*

If there was ever a time when it was right to resist oppression and injustice, it was then. Jesus was innocent, as even His judges declared. Here was the worst kind of religious persecution. Every

indignity, insult, and outrage was heaped upon Jesus, yet He opened not His mouth, and forbade His followers to fight in His defense. How then can any of His followers fight in defense of themselves, or even of their brethren who are persecuted? The disciple is not greater than his Lord.

Not an Example to Follow

Peter was well-meaning and sincere in his defense of the Lord, and so would we fain believe are those who now counsel drawing the sword in behalf of the Armenians. But Peter did not then know the spirit of the Gospel. He was not converted, and within a few hours after his impulsive defense he denied that he knew the Lord. His example is not one to be followed by disciples of Christ. When he became converted, he learned to know the Lord, and then he wrote:

1 Peter 2

²⁰ If, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

²¹ For even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps;

²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;

²³ Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously.

Christians are called to follow Christ's example, and to suffer unjustly, without complaining, much less resisting; yet all over the world professed Christians are denying this calling. Why is it? —It is because a spirit, not from the Lord, is seeking to drive them to destruction, for Jesus said,

Matthew 26

⁵² All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

If Satan can only succeed in filling Christians with such zeal for any cause whatever, and no matter how worthy, that they will fight for it, he knows that their destruction is sure.

The Wicked, Devastating Sword

Mark the word “all.” There is no exception.

Matthew 26

⁵² **All** they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

One of our poets has pleaded that “the just, the holy, the benignant sword” might be drawn in behalf of the Armenians, and professed Christians have applauded the sentiment; but the sword is always unjust, unholy, and devastating. It makes no difference who handles it. The sword vigorously wielded by the hands of professed Christians will work as much havoc and destruction as in the hands of infidels, as history abundantly proves, and therefore it is just as cruel and unholy.

The fact that a man calls himself a Christian, does not make it any more a righteous deed for him to cleave another man’s head with the sword, than it would be if a Turk did the same thing.

How can anybody think that what is wicked on the part of a Mohammedan is righteous on the part of a Christian?

Is it so that Christians have a monopoly of crime in this world? And that no one but Christians can murder their fellow-beings with impunity?

Does the reputation that a man has determine the character of the deed he commits? If a man that is known to be a good man commits a murder, does that make the murder a righteous act? And is murder sinful only when perpetrated by men of previous bad reputation?

That is the theory upon which is based the outcry against slaughter by the Turks, and the demand for the slaughter of the Turks. But it is a horrible doctrine. No.

1 John 3

⁷ He that does righteousness is righteous,

—and,

John 8

³⁴ Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin.

When professed Christians do the deeds, and even overpass the deeds of the heathen, they nullify their profession, and place themselves in the ranks of the heathen. They are then worse than the heathen, because their high profession makes the insolence of their evil deeds the greater. Oh, the pity of the thing, that such a spirit should be consecrated by the name of Christianity!

Who Makes Them to Differ?

The prevailing idea seems to be that it is far worse to kill Christians than to kill non-Christians. Thus there is a great outcry when Armenians are killed, and on the contrary rejoicing when Turks are killed. Who has ever heard any sorrow expressed for the thousands of Turks who were butchered in the crusades? A religious paper that is loud in its outcry against Turks who kill, publishes without protest as a matter of simple history, the following:

The founder of the reigning House of Montenegro was Daniel Petrovitch. He was elected Metropolitan in 1696, uniting in himself both the temporal and spiritual powers. On Christmas night, 1702, he cut to pieces all the Turks he could find in his dominions.

It is doubtful if there would be much if any indignation anywhere in Christendom if the Armenians should now slaughter the Turks in a similar manner. Indeed, the comments that followed the attack upon the Ottoman Bank furnish a case in point. At first it was thought to be a master stroke on the part of the Armenians; but afterwards, when the theory was circulated that the affair was planned by the Turks, then it was denounced as a dastardly outrage.

It is on the same principle that when white men with machine guns kill several thousand blacks, it is a *brilliant victory*, and

when the blacks retaliate upon a few dozen white that they succeed in overpowering, it is a *cruel massacre*.

A well-known prelate has expressed regret that the Spirit of the Crusades has been allowed to die out to the extent that it has, yet he can scarcely be ignorant of the fact that in those Crusades Mohammedans were butchered without mercy, simply because they were Mohammedans. The following brief extract describing the entry of the "Christians" into Jerusalem, amply shows the spirit and work of the Crusades:

The Saracens gave way before them. They retreated through the streets, fighting at intervals until they were driven into the precincts of the mosque of Omar. Blood flowed in the gutters, and horrid heaps of the dead lay piled at every corner. None were spared by the frenzied Christians, who saw in the gore of the infidels the white way of redemption. Ten thousand dead, scattered through the city, gave token of the merciless spirit of the men of the West. Another ten thousand were heaped in the reeking courts of the great mosque on Mount Moriah. "God wills it," said the pilgrims....The spirit of the massacre is well illustrated in a letter which the Christian princes sent to the Pope. The devout writers say: "If you wish to know what we did to the enemies we found in the city, learn that in the portico of Solomon and in the temple our horses walked up to the knees in the pure blood of the Saracens."

The Crusaders are applauded, while the Turks, who have not equaled them in ferocity, are execrated. Why this difference?

In the Philippine Islands the Spaniards are at this very time slaughtering their Mohammedan subjects by the hundreds, showing no mercy to prisoners, but perpetrating the grossest cruelties. Yet there is no demand for the wiping out of the Spanish nation.

At the same time that the troubles were taking place in Turkey, English soldiers in Africa, under the direction of the Government, were slaughtering African natives. The white man's machine guns mowed down the comparatively unarmed blacks making "a

mere jujube of black humanity.” When the natives fled and took refuge in caves, these were blown up with dynamite; men, women, and children, torn and mangled, were thus buried, both dead and alive in one common grave. These reports come not from the victims, but from the victors; yet we hear of no meetings called to protest, nor any claims that English people are too wicked to be allowed to live, as indeed they are not.

The same course has been pursued with the Indians in America, until now there are but few left.

We do not cite these things as accusations, but simply for the purpose of asking why it is so much worse for Turks to kill people than it is for English and Americans; why that which is denounced as an outrage when done by Mohammedans is a thing for applause when done by professed Christians? Truly, the times are sadly out of joint.

Why is it so much worse for Mohammedans to kill Christians than for “Christians” to kill Mohammedans? Can anybody tell? Is it worse to kill a Christian, who has hope in his death, then to cut short the probation of one who does not know the Lord?

Think of the awful responsibility men take upon themselves when they set themselves not merely to execute God’s judgment on the ungodly, but to anticipate Him, and to send them into eternity while He is waiting for them to repent.

A Mistaken Idea

Thus far, in order that the case might stand in the strongest possible light, we have taken it for granted that the trouble in Turkey is simply religious persecution. The prevailing sentiment is thus expressed:

The recent atrocities are an exhibition of Moslem fanaticism and hatred of Christians, which the Powers strangely permit.

Now anybody who will take the trouble to think calmly and seriously, can satisfy himself that this is not at all the case. One sim-

ple fact alone is sufficient evidence. The Greek Church is just as much Christian as is the Armenian, yet it is a well-known fact that in all the troubles in Turkey, the Greeks have not suffered. In the midst of the greatest excitement in Constantinople, if a man were arrested, or were in danger of death, he would secure his instant release by showing that he was a Greek. If the Turks were persecuting Christians, why should they be so careful not to molest the Greeks?

Again, there are many Roman Catholics in Turkey, yet there has been no proceeding against them. We mention these three bodies—Armenians, Greeks, and Roman Catholics—together, because they are very similar. While the Armenian Church is nominally Christian, it is a well-known fact that it is most intolerant of Protestants, as much so as is the Roman Catholic. Protestant work in territory exclusively Armenian is attended with as much difficulty as in Spain. That is no reason why they should be killed, or why those who are suffering should not be assisted; but it may help some who assist the needy to do so on the simple ground that they are needy mortals, and not under the mistaken notion that they are suffering for conscience' sake.

In September, 1896, just after the last outbreak, the writer witnessed a baptismal scene at Constantinople. It was at a time when the Turkish soldiers were patrolling the streets night and day; one could not turn a corner without seeing a squad of them. In the open day, without asking permission of anybody, a company of Christians went through the streets to the sea, to witness the immersion of some believers. The place of baptism was about midway between the Mohammedan mosques, and within bowshot of each. About half of the company were Armenians, the rest Greeks, and the administrator of the rite was an Armenian. Such a company walking together very naturally attracted a little attention, and a policeman asked what it meant. Upon being told, he said that was all right, and paid no more attention. At the sea there were Turks standing near, witnessing the baptism, and yet there was not so much as a disrespectful or irreverent word or

gesture. There could not have been better decorum in any city in the world.

It might be well to add that the body represented on that occasion are not revolutionists, and are known to have no connection whatever with politics, but are content with being simply Christians. This is why they have had no difficulty.

Another instance will show that the Turkish opposition is against those who are plotting insurrection, and not against those who are teaching the Gospel. A young man, an Armenian residing in Scutari, was in Stamboul, and not being known to the police there, was arrested as a possible revolutionist. He told the police that he was a Sabbatarian, and they brought him to the house where the Sabbatarians were known to be assembled holding religious services, to see if it were so. When they were assured that he spoke the truth, he was released.

But that was not all. The young men engaged the policeman in religious conversation, and the writer twice passed the door of the room where they were, and saw that Mohammedan Turkish policeman sitting on a divan with the Christian Armenian, each with a Bible in his hand, reading. The thought would not be repressed, that if all profess to be Christians had used the sword of the Spirit instead of the carnal weapon in their dealings with the Turks, there might be a different story to tell.

Is the Gospel for the Turks?

It is said, as proof that the Turks are animated solely by hatred of Christians, that people have been promised their lives on condition that they would turn Mohammedan, and give up the name Christian. That is very probably true. When revolution and anarchy are upheld and applauded throughout Christendom, what wonder is it if the Turks should, to a certain extent at least, associate Christianity and anarchy together?

When to be a "Christian" is considered, and with good reason, synonymous with being an enemy of the Turks and the Turkish

Government, the repression of revolution would very naturally be considered as simply the repression of too active Christianity. In such case it could easily be that real Christians, who hold the name as something more than a national sign, might suffer because they would not give up their faith, the Mohammedans not being able to distinguish between them and those who use the name as a cover for anarchy.

In prophetic vision the Apostle John saw...

Revelation 7

⁹ ...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne of God, clothed with white robes, and bearing palms of victory over sin and Satan.

That is positive evidence that there will be Turks in heaven. Yet one would not gather from reading the religious press, that there was any possibility of salvation for a Turk.

It may be said that the Turks are bitterly prejudiced against Christianity. That is true, and who could expect it to be otherwise? Christianity is to them embodied in the boasted "Christian nations" of Europe, and none of these have ever done anything to recommend the name.

But that is not all. Those religious bodies, professing to be Christian, of which the Turks have most knowledge, are the Greek and Armenian churches, and in one important particular the Mohammedan has good reason to believe that his religion is superior to theirs; for he sees the members of those bodies bowing down to and adoring images and pictures, while the Mohammedan abominates the worship of idols.

But even this is not the worst. From the time of the Crusades professed Christians as a rule have regarded the Turks with lofty contempt, as beings to be execrated and driven off; now, all Christendom is ringing with unchristian cries for vengeance upon the Turks, and even their utter extermination. Can it be wondered at

that the Turks are not drawn towards Christianity, or that they are suspicious of foreigners?

But when the just Judge of all the earth punishes the Turks for their misdeeds, who dare say that none of their blood will be upon the garments of those who bear the name of Christian? We appeal to individual Christians to clear themselves, by being Christlike in their words and acts, from all responsibility for Turkish indifference to Christianity.

The Great Deception

There is a cause for this present cry against the Turks. That it is not caused by the Spirit of Christ, needs no argument. What spirit it is that is even now working, may be seen by remembering what it is desired to do with the Turks. The least thing that is demanded, is that they be driven from Europe. Such atrocities, it is said, ought not to be allowed on European soil.

But will they be any better on Asiatic soil?—Certainly not. Then what would necessarily be the next step after driving them from Europe—manifestly, to drive them from Asia, that is, from the earth, so far at least as their existence as a nation is concerned. This is even now demanded. Their overthrow will be the last act in the scheme to place the world under the dominion of so-called Christian powers, thus to fulfill the dreams of a temporal millennium, in which so many have indulged.

But what force causes these “Christian Powers” to come together? That gathering is thus described in prophecy:

Revelation 16

¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

¹⁴ For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

¹⁶ And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Here we are plainly told what spirit brings the kings of the earth together. That deception we see working even now; for that Christendom is being deceived is painfully evident. If men were not already grossly deceived, how could they in the name of Christ counsel war? How could they so misrepresent true Christianity before the world as to claim that the blood even of martyrs demands revenge by the sword? Is it not a terrible deception that is even now closing in upon the world?

What an awful thought, that every man, be he minister of the Gospel or not, who is upbraiding the powers for naught concerning the Turks, is simply an unconscious agent of Satan to gather the kings of earth to that great battle which is to result in the ruin of all. God grant that many who have thoughtlessly been led away by a popular clamor, may recover themselves from the snare of the devil before it is too late, and show to the world, including the Turks, that:

Christianity means to be like Christ.

We have full faith that this prayer will be answered.