

"YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON"

Sermon Preached in St. Saviour's Church, Laidley, Queensland. By the REV. J. STUART ROACH, September 11, 1938.

To-day I find myself in a difficult position, as, no doubt, later on I will find myself in a still more difficult position, because to-day I am compelled, by reason of the fact that I am a man under authority, to take part in a public religious act against which, to a certain extent, both my reason and my conscience rebel.

But I realise that on certain occasions my own personal views must be subordinated to the duties of my ministry, and that others who disagree with me have a right to be considered.

Whether this attitude is both moral and logical, or merely word spinning, I am not prepared, at the moment, to argue. But, at any rate, it seems to provide a working compromise which I shall try to follow out in this address.

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth has asked the Christian Church unitedly to pray for world peace and goodwill to-day, and the Bishops of our Church, with others, have enthusiastically taken up his request. Looked at superficially it is a noble request and a noble response, and I wish I could wholeheartedly believe in it. But after many years of study and reading I am forced to the conclusion that the emphasis is laid in the wrong direction.

Mistaken Viewpoint

By publicly praying for peace and goodwill to-day the impression is given that it is the peoples of the world who are responsible for its disturbed conditions, and if only God could be prevailed upon to soften their hard hearts and change their perverted outlook all would be well again. I believe this to be a wholly mistaken point of view. Prayer and conduct are most intimately related and interdependent upon one another.

And so it seems to me useless for our leaders to ask us to pray for peace in the world to-day if they are not prepared to give us the leadership in the necessary policy which will make peace possible.

I myself believe that the Prime Minister, Mr. Lyons, represents politically those vested money interests which are the most prolific cause of modern distress, and ultimately of modern war. And it is the determination to preserve these privileged positions of money power, and all their associated ramifications, which makes international goodwill and peace impossible. So that, to me, the Prime Minister's request borders on the blasphemous—that is, to ask God to lead us into peace and security when all the time our bankers, our economists, our statesmen are not prepared to make those changes in monetary policy which will be the most potent influence for world peace and goodwill that is at present possible.

That this is not my own cranky view I could soon show you. But I must content myself with one reference from an article which appeared in the London *Chamber of Commerce Journal* as far back as 1933. The article is entitled, "GOODWILL or USURY?" And the comment has been made that, "He would be a bold man who would say that, in regard to business matters, the London Chamber of Commerce is a body of cranks; it is probably the most conservative body of men in the world, and one of the wealthiest and most powerful," the article begins, and this is the paragraph I want to quote and emphasise: "**Humanity can have goodwill and peace, but it cannot have usury and peace; it must make its choice.**"

Choice Before Us

Those last words are the ones I want to underline at the moment: "It must make its choice."

Unfortunately, humanity cannot make its choice. Only an infinitesimal fraction of people understand money, and the part that it plays in the modern world; and so, through ignorance of the technique of the creation, cancellation, and management of money, and through ignorance of the fact of the imposition of a mistaken economic policy with its concomitant abuse of the most marvellous mechanism the world knows, humanity at large is inarticulate in its ignorance, and cannot make its choice.

I have no hesitation in saying that almost all of the disturbed and distressing conditions which we see in the world to-day, and for whose solution we are asked to pray, arise out of mistaken monetary policy, and not out of man's evil mind and corrupt heart.

And further, I refuse to believe that those in supreme authority, like Mr. Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England; Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of England; Dr. Schacht, the economic adviser of Herr Hitler, probably the most influential banker in Germany; or Mr. Reginald McKenna, Chairman of the Midland Bank, and late Chancellor of the Exchequer; together with leading American bankers and others do not know this. They do know it, but they are not prepared to face the immense economic and social changes their recognition would involve; and so they spend their time advising statesmen looking for a solution for world peace and economic progress and security within the framework of an economic policy which is a contradiction in itself, and throw the blame for failure upon dictators like Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin (the very men their policy has created, and the wicked people they represent) for all the threats of war and social evils in which we live.

It is my firm belief that peace and goodwill in the world is impossible while the present policy of international debt finance remains unchanged. We can have either peace and goodwill, or usury, one or the other; but we cannot have the two together; and all the praying in the world won't alter that fact.

Broadly speaking, the effect of the international debt system, which is the logical development of the national debt system of orthodox banking policy, is to set every man's hand against his brother; to set every nation against another; and as such it is clean contrary to the principles of the Christian Religion.

Cause of War

The primary cause of modern international war is the competition for export markets occasioned by the present system of finance, which makes it imperative to try and sell abroad that part of production which the home market cannot buy, not because it does not want that production, but because it has not got the money to buy it, and maintain withal what is called a favourable balance of trade.

Further, the scandal of private armament firms, and war material contractors, whose business thrives on war, necessitates the use of discreet advertising and propaganda, which fosters the war spirit by these money interests.

That there are other factors I do not deny. At its basis and reduced to its simplest terms war does proceed from the evil, impatient heart of man; it is much easier to quarrel than to reason; so much easier to be selfish than generous; so much easier to draw the sword and fight, than sheath it and forgive an injury; so easy to forget the principles of Christ which govern the attainment of that abundant life He promised, that is the principles of sacrifice and service for the common good.

How to apply these principles in a world of great complexity, I grant, form a problem the solution of which is worthy of our highest and most faithful prayers. Man does need God very badly. He needs a new spiritual vision and a new moral direction in his life; a vision and a direction which I believe can only come through a new and more vital interpretation of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, our Divine Redeemer.

But there is a grave danger of the sentimentalist amongst us for ever clamouring after a change of heart, so distorting the real situation as to lay the emphasis of world disturbance in the wrong direction.

Our prayers, if they are to be real, must be outstanding prayers, and have contact with life's realities.

Therefore, to pray for world peace, goodwill, and economic security, while refusing to recognise the root cause of modern international war, and thus act upon the recognition of that primary cause in such a way as to remove it, is to render our prayers null and void, and blasphemous.

It is as though a man deliberately set fire to his house, and then unctuously prayed God to put it out. Such an act would be both foolish and blasphemous. We must not ask God to act contrary to morality and reason. I do not believe that modern war is solely the outcome of national jealousies, misunderstandings, and temperaments of themselves. But the struggle to maintain national freedom and economic security in a world of rising taxation, diminishing export markets, and contracting opportunities for obtaining adequate incomes, so obscures the real issues and the causes of war that national feelings are easily played upon by financial interests to such an extent that the blame for the world's troubles is shifted from the responsible quarter to the shoulders of the peoples themselves, who have had no say whatever in the formation and the imposition of that monetary policy.

However, if the world's prayers for peace will change the mind of those in authority, who of their own deliberate will impose this economic policy of debt and financial scarcity upon us then by all means let us pray, and that right earnestly.

War Is Wholly Evil

No man or woman in his or her right mind wants a war to break out. The horrors of modern war are indescribable. There is not one decent word to say for war. It is wholly evil, and gets us nowhere, except further down the road to hell.

The last great European War was confidently stated to be fought as the war to end all war. We now know that that fantastic hope was entirely false. War, as it always has been, is still the great deceiver. It promises us much good and gives us nothing but evil.

So far as I understand the matter, war is undoubtedly clean contrary to the mind of Christ who, rather than use the drawn sword of St. Peter in His defence, willingly gave Himself up to His enemies, declaring: "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

If only the people could be organised for peace as thoroughly as they are organised and prepared for war there would not be any more war. It must ever be remembered that those who are responsible for making war never fight it; ironically they are always well and truly at home looking after the welfare of the nation.

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon!" That, undoubtedly, is the alternative which faces the Commonwealth Government to-day, just as it faces every other Government, because the principles of international finance are the same, whether in Russia or England, Australia or Japan. Money power the world over is supreme; and its representatives are the real government, who shape a policy which protects and strengthens the privileges of the few at the expense of the many. Further, it is the imposition and the furtherance of a policy which violates the principle laid down by Our Lord in His famous words about the Sabbath: "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."

Reform Resisted

Every effort made to reform this financial policy is met with stout resistance, until one is forced to believe that the principle which governs the formation of the policy of our bankers, economists, and their political mouthpieces is: that man was made to serve the money system, and not the money system to serve the needs of man.

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, Mr. Lyons, is not unaware of this situation, and yet without any effort to tackle the problem at its roots he has the hardihood to ask the nation publicly to pray about it.

"A large majority of Australians are in a state of economic slavery. A majority of our primary producers, after years of hard labour and sacrifice, are struggling beneath a load of debt. The majority of business men are compelled to engage in competition for customers, in which all the decencies of human conduct are thrown overboard. The coal industry is now beginning a strike which can only bring misfortune to all concerned. Thousands of young people are being driven to a mental state of hopelessness because they are denied a place in industry, commerce, or the professions. Hundreds of thousands of families are living in conditions which are a shame and a disgrace to a Christian community" (*New Era*, 9/9/38); and these are the results of a policy which is called "sound finance." To my mind, scarcely anything could be more unsound in principle, and in its results more detrimental to the welfare of the people as a whole than this. And, mark you, these are the principles and the results our men fought for and died to maintain in the last war. And these will be the same unsound principles of orthodox finance we shall be asked to fight for and maintain in the next war.

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