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ARTICLE III.

HAS THE WORLD ENTERED A MORAL
INTERREGNUM?

BY CHARLES W. SUPER, ATHENS, OHIO.

WHEN we reflect that, during the past twenty years, one or another of the European powers has been at war either with another European power at the same time or with one outside of its boundaries, and that at times the belligerents have violated every principle of what is euphemistically called "civilized warfare," we may well ask in all seriousness, whether the world has been growing better. When we add to this that creeds have had no influence on the formation of alliances; that Moslems are fighting Moslems; that Roman Catholics are pitted against Roman Catholics; that those professing the Orthodox Greek faith are arrayed against men of their own faith or of no faith; that Protestants of all creeds are in arms against their ecclesiastical brethren, we stand aghast. It may even be seriously questioned whether that form of betterment which is summed up in the term "civilization" has made any progress. What gain is it to the world that man has achieved amazing conquests over the blind forces of nature, and has constrained them to do his bidding, if these conquests only increase his ability to destroy?

Knowledge is power; but what doth power profit, if it is used chiefly to do harm, to inflict injury upon fellow men? No obligation has been held sacred; human life has been no more regarded than the life of a noxious beast; every senti-

ment of kindness and kinship has been thrust into the background, in order to win, or to inflict the greatest injury upon an enemy. We need not here stop to consider which of the parties has sinned most grievously, for often a foul deed committed by one party has been made the excuse or the justification for a greater atrocity by another. We are at times prompted to conclude that these conditions are without precedent. But when we study the records of the past we find that such a judgment is hasty. We need go no farther back than to the Persian wars to learn that such representative potentates as Darius and Xerxes took no account of right and justice when they were contemplating the invasion of Greece: the only question was, whether they could win and how.

The history of the Persian wars, so far as the incomplete records that have come down to us can be called history, reads almost like a chapter from the records of European events during the past two or three decades. If our information about the remote past were as complete as it is of recent words and deeds, we should probably find the parallel still more striking. When we come to the Peloponnesian wars and read the speeches recorded by Thucydides or composed by him to set forth the aims and motives of the belligerents, we are forcibly reminded of some that have been made in twentieth-century parliaments.

The fundamental right and wrong of the parties is either ignored or perverted to such an extent as to amount to little more than a justification of foul deeds already done. During the progress of that war which proved so baneful not only for Greece, but for posterity through all future ages, the belligerents found it impossible to make a treaty or even a truce which either party considered itself bound to observe when to break it seemed to promise an immediate advantage. The most mel-

ancholy fact about the wars waged by the Greeks of the olden time is, that so clear an insight into the fundamental principles of right and justice counted for so little in the conduct of affairs. Æschylus preached to his countrymen the baleful effects of wrongdoing with almost the vehemence of the Hebrew prophets. He warned them that they could not sin without paying the penalty. For thirty years Socrates went up and down the streets of Athens teaching his fellow citizens that it is never profitable to do wrong, and that if they did not heed his warning they could not escape punishment. Sophocles seems to have written his "Antigone" with the distinct purpose of showing to his countrymen that no man can transgress the laws of eternal justice with impunity. He may also have had in mind to portray by an actual example the dangers which an autocratic ruler incurs when he yields to passion and refuses to heed the claims of right.

To the Revelator the conditions in the Roman Empire were hopeless, and to him that empire was the world. Yet he did not lose faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. But he believed that all things must be made new, that a new heaven and a new earth would come forth in which the saints should bear sway. Many Christians have been asking themselves during the last two years whether such a consummation is the only condition under which the world shall become regenerated. Must the present rulers be dethroned and their places taken by those who regard right as more important than commercial supremacy and the acquisition of territory? Would the people have ruled more wisely than sovereigns by divine right, as they claim? Will there be no more wars when the people become masters of their own political destinies? St. Augustine also believed that there would some day be established a City of God and a reign of righteousness. But

both he and many of the church fathers did not expect all men to be saved.

Professor Eucken has for years been engaged in elaborating and teaching a philosophy which in many of its postulates is highly spiritual. He seems to have expected it to find acceptance beyond the boundaries of his native land. Hence he established it on a cosmopolitan basis. Yet he has declared that "to us more than to any other nation is entrusted the structure of human existence." As an *obiter dictum* such an expression would be harmless enough. But it not only becomes worthless, it is actually dangerous, when spoken by a man who defends everything done by his government, and who joined almost a hundred of his fellow intellectuals in denying facts that soon became known to all the world. He has forfeited all claims to be regarded as an independent thinker. He is nothing more than the docile tool of an unscrupulous government. One of Professor Eucken's English admirers wrote of him so lately as 1913: "He has no dearer wish than that philosophy should cease to be a mere academic specialty and become a power in the life of the people; and he seeks in particular to interest all those men and women who are grown tired of mere negation and agnosticism. For Eucken has done much — more perhaps than any other living man — to render possible to modern people a belief in the reality and supremacy of the spiritual world. And what he finally seeks is nothing less than the reconstruction of our entire life and civilization on a positive spiritual basis."

Furthermore: "Here we find a human life of the most homely and simple kind, passed in a remote corner of the world, little heeded by his contemporaries, and, after a short blossoming life, cruelly put to death. And yet this life had an energy of spirit which filled it to the brim; it had a stand-

ard which transformed human existence to its very root; it has made inadequate what hitherto seemed to bring entire happiness; it has set limits to all petty natural culture; it has stamped as frivolous all absorption in the mere pleasures of life, and has reduced the whole prior circle of man to the mere world of sense. Such a valuation holds us fast and refuses to be weakened by us when all the dogmas and usages of the Church are detected as merely human organization. That life of Jesus establishes evermore a tribunal over the whole world; and the majesty of such an effective bar of judgment supersedes all the development of external power." If we did not have other evidence to the same effect we could hardly help asking ourselves, How is it possible for a man's philosophy and his life to have so little in common? Professor Lasson, now a very old man, recently wrote: "We are morally and intellectually superior beyond all comparison as to our organization and institutions." The intrinsic value of organization depends entirely upon its purpose. Like power, it may be employed to destroy quite as efficiently as to build up.

A professor in the University of Munich assures the neutral nations that they have only one means of leading a profitable existence. It is to submit to "our guidance, which is superior from every point of view. For we not only have the power and the force for this mission, but we also possess all the spiritual gifts in the highest degree, and in all creation it is we who constitute the crown of civilization." Such language emanating from Bavaria is not only nauseating; it is also false to history. That country has contributed almost nothing to literature, to philosophy, or to science. In this respect it ranks far below its western neighbor, little Württemberg. Eighty years ago Heinrich Heine declared that

Christianity had somewhat tamed his brutal Germany when it engages in combat, but had not destroyed it. To the French he wrote: "You have more to fear from a free Germany than from the entire Holy Alliance and all the Croats and Cossacks put together." He warns the French to keep themselves constantly armed to the teeth, and to profit by the symbolic Goddess of Wisdom who always wears a coat of mail, keeps her helmet on her head and her sword in her hand.

The belief that a people has a divine, or at least a sort of supernatural, mission to fulfill in forcing its civilization and its intellectual achievements of a certain kind upon others whom it chooses to consider inferior, is a phenomenon that has appeared from time to time in the course of human events. The semi-barbarian, Philip of Macedon, was probably not prompted by any such obsession. He was bent upon extending his power and nothing more. But his son had, at least in part, a different aim, perhaps inspired by his teacher, Aristotle. He set himself deliberately to the task of making the East as Greek as possible. However, in so doing he largely missed his aim. The Greek intellect was moribund. Its vitality was gone forever. Except in a very limited sphere, Alexander's generation and all that succeeded it lived upon the past. They were men of the book. Greek conquests prepared the way for Rome.

Rome first discovered her strength in her conflicts with Carthage, which were carried on solely for commercial and political supremacy. Albeit, the intellectuals of Rome under the Empire viewed the conquests of their country in a very different light from those of recent Germany. All of them saw that the conquests could not stop, yet to continue them meant irreparable disaster sooner or later. To advance and to retreat would be equally fatal. After Christianity had be-

come self-consciously strong it began to make conquests with the sword. But the idea of intellectual superiority was not a part of the motive. Charlemagne was, however, a promoter of popular education of a certain sort. After Europe had been broken up into a congeries of small states it was no longer possible to induce any considerable number of them to coöperate for a political end. The popes met with considerable success from time to time in preaching crusades, but the ultimate result was almost nil. It is doubtful if the Crusades made a single Christian convert. After France had become consolidated, Louis XIV. gradually developed the idea of making his kingdom thoroughly Christian and all Europe French. He was fairly successful in both attempts.

Then came Napoleon. When he first set out on his phenomenal career he had not discovered his overtowering genius. His success gradually turned his head and he undertook to make Europe French on even a grander scale than did Louis XIV. When an exile on St. Helena he professed to believe that in all he did he had only the good of the world at heart: that he had never acted from motives of personal ambition. Probably overweening national self-conceit always deceives itself by professing the desire to benefit others more than itself: at least, this motive is always put forward by rulers who call themselves Christians. I am not aware that either pagans or Moslems have professed altruism. No pope has ever more vehemently and persistently proclaimed himself God's ally than the present Emperor of Germany. Whether he believes it in his heart or not, he seems to have been successful in persuading many of his subjects of his supernatural mission. The Germans deserve some credit for the success they have had in converting foreigners and men of foreign birth to their way of thinking in matters political. The men-

tality of men like H. S. Chamberlain, of Treitschke, of Nietzsche, of Bernhardi, and of others is instructive if not exactly edifying.

One of the outstanding facts in the records of the past is the evidence of an almost universal belief in a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. This belief was held not only by the thinkers; it was also held by the rulers and the people. The Code of Hammurabi declares that there is a god of right whose representative upon earth is the king, and that it is the duty of the king to dispense justice among his subjects for the purpose of promoting peace and well-being. The same thought appears in the legislation of the ancient Egyptians. Even the souls of the dead were required to undergo a sort of examination by judges. For centuries the Hebrews were ruled by Judges, the judge and the warrior being the supreme authority in the land. The three judges in the lower world, according to Greek mythology, were once men who had gained this conspicuous position by their righteousness when upon earth. It was held to be impossible to escape the penalty for wrongdoing.

To illustrate this truth Herodotus tells the story of Glaucus. When the Athenians began to quibble about the keeping of a compact with the Spartans, one of the latter told them that three generations before there lived in Sparta a man, named Glaucus, whose reputation for probity was higher than that of any of his countrymen. There came to him a certain citizen of Miletus for the purpose of entrusting to his keeping a sum of money, it being one half of his estate. Glaucus accepted the trust, and gave to the Milesian stranger some tallies upon the presentation of which the money was to be returned. Years afterward the sons of the Milesian appeared before the Spartan with the tallies, and demanded the return

of the deposit which their father had left with him. Glaucus professed to have forgotten the transaction, requesting, however, the young men to go away and return four months hence, during which time he might be able to recall it. Meanwhile he consulted the oracle at Delphi, whether he might not swear that he had not received the deposit and keep it. The Delphic goddess answered, that he might swear or not; but the wrong had already been done, and he would have to pay the penalty. Whether the historian accepted this story as the account of an actual occurrence or as a mere parable to illustrate a truth, does not concern us here and is a matter of no importance in any event. The important feature of the anecdote is that the narrator believed the immorality of an act to consist in the intention rather than in the deed itself.

The story of Glaucus is fairly well known to English readers, as the works of Herodotus are accessible in several translations. But an incident is told by Diodorus Siculus that is rarely referred to, for the reason that there is no English translation of the history of the Sicilian. After the unfortunate Greek army had fallen into the hands of the victorious Syracusans during the siege of their city, a council was held to determine what should be done with the men. One speaker advised that they should be treated with the utmost harshness, and won tumultuous applause. Thereupon a citizen, named Nicolaus, arose and came forward, supported by two of his slaves because of his feebleness. He began his address by telling his auditors that he had lost two sons in the war, and had, therefore, much reason to be bitterly incensed against the enemy; but that he was, nevertheless, in favor of showing clemency to the vanquished. "The Athenians," he said, "have paid dearly for their folly in beginning this war. They have sinned against the gods and against us. The gods are mightier

than men who do wrong. All their money has been spent in vain, and their army has been killed or captured. Is there any honor or glory in dealing harshly with a prostrate enemy? Have your enemies not shown their faith in your compassion by surrendering to you? The fortune of war is often a matter of chance, but to show mercy is the mark of a noble mind. If we show mercy toward the vanquished, we shall increase the number of our allies and diminish the number of our enemies. If we show no compassion, we lay down a hard law that may be cited against us. To the argument that Greeks have aforesaid been put to death by Greeks, let us answer by following a nobler course of action; let us seek glory by a nobler path; let us show clemency toward our prisoners, as becomes free Greeks; and let us not deal cruelly with them, as is the custom of barbarians." The long and eloquent speech of Nicolaus produced a profound impression upon the assembly, and the proposal of the speaker was about to be adopted, when another speaker arose who advised the opposite course and prevailed.

Here, again, it is the moral rather than the incident that is instructive. The historian doubtless found some data in the course of his researches which led him to believe that right and wrong, clemency and cruelty, had been pitted against each other in the person of the speakers who had taken opposite sides. Cicero, who mainly interpreted Greek thought, primarily that of Aristotle, divides all law into *jus gentium*, or *jus naturale*, and *jus civile*. The latter is of local force only, while the former is of universal validity. All Roman jurisprudence is based on this twofold division of law. *Jus gentium* is the unwritten law, of which St. Paul also speaks; while *jus civile* is the statute law, which it is the duty of the magistrate to enforce. It is objective, and can be enforced;

while *jus naturale* is subjective, and not enforceable. Notwithstanding the belief of both Greeks and Romans in the doctrine of retribution, of Nemesis as its personal embodiment, for wrongdoing, their thought is pervaded by a spirit of resignation and a feeling of hopelessness: it is not possible for men to escape the decrees of fate. Even the gods are powerless in the face thereof. This conviction found utterance in the words which Herodotus puts into the mouth of a speaker whom he brings upon the stage: "Verily it is the sorest of all ills to abound in knowledge, yet be lacking in power." Plato and Aristotle do not seem to have believed in progress. They were of the opinion that there had been many civilizations, and that one had succeeded another through countless ages. This thought also finds expression in *Ecclesiastes*, a book in which we have a strange mixture of Greek pessimism and Jewish hopefulness. Hence its author sums up his philosophy of life in these words: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

During the last half-century we have seen a recrudescence of that most dangerous doctrine that might makes right, and that justice and injustice are relative terms. It was against this doctrine as maintained by the Sophists that Socrates directed the keen shafts of his irony and the heavier guns of his logic. The doctrine was doubtless the outgrowth of conditions; the Sophists did little more than formulate into a sort of system a practice that prevailed among their contemporaries. In the end neither party profited by their perfidious dealings with each other, and both moral and political ruin overtook Greece. We are not wont to commend the policy of Rome; yet the Greek historian Polybius does not hesitate to declare that her victories over his countrymen were due to the

fact that she was the worthier of the belligerents. Although Rome dealt harshly with the peoples she conquered, she was less ruthless than was Germany with the Danish provinces half a century ago. "*Pax Romana*" did not imply the acceptance, under duress, of the Latin tongue, nor of its literature, nor even of its political organization *in toto*. It merely implied peace under Roman suzerainty. To such an extent did this peace commend itself to the subjected peoples, that in the course of a few centuries Latin had become the speech of a large part of Europe. As a bond of unity, the language of Rome and her admirable system of jurisprudence eventually prevailed, not alone over Europe, but also over a considerable part of Asia. So late as the time of Quintilian every educated Roman spoke Greek with the facility of a native. When in the course of events the Roman aristocracy had no more territory to conquer, to add to the Empire, they began to turn their arms against each other, and the colossal commonwealth also began to verge toward its downfall. Thenceforth all the efforts of monarchs and dynasties to establish a second Roman Empire ended in ultimate failure and disaster. The spirit of nationalism asserted itself again and again, and it became evident that the only way to suppress permanently the spirit of a people is to exterminate them.

I have found no evidence in the early Christian writers that they regarded the vocation of the soldier as incompatible with their faith. In the New Testament he is always mentioned with a certain measure of consideration. St. Paul declared that the powers were established by God, in order that the citizens might lead a peaceable and quiet life. As soldiers were the guardians of order, they occupied an important and responsible position in the body politic: they were, in fact, absolutely indispensable. If they sometimes took advantage of

their privileged position and made a bad use of their authority, such abuse did not necessarily go with their functions. The medieval church held that the cleric must not bear arms, yet the Crusades were wholly the work of this class. To convert heathens and infidels by force was not only regarded as entirely proper; it was even praiseworthy. Although Protestantism never went to such an extreme, it commended those who defended their faith with the sword. Zwingli is said to have bitterly regretted, in the hour of death, that he had borne arms; nevertheless, his votaries usually followed his example rather than his advice. The Anabaptists, and later the Quakers, were the earliest pacifists from principle. The former, moreover, also refused to participate in any of the activities of government, as some of them still do. This abstention may have been wise under certain conditions; it is utterly absurd under a democracy. When and where the people are themselves the government, there can be no government if the people refuse to recognize their obligations. Some of the minor sects also abstain from litigation. Albeit, as they claim the protection of the laws under which they live, why should it be thought unchristian to invoke their aid under exceptional circumstances? Although inconsistency is commonly regarded as a vice, and its opposite a virtue, it is impossible to be always consistent and take part in the civic life of the community. We cannot regulate our conduct to-day by what may happen next week or next year.

The position of the thoroughgoing pacifist is embarrassing, not to say painful. In time of peace he acknowledges the authority of the government under which he lives. He pays taxes either indirectly or directly. He performs such civic duties as the law enjoins upon him. If need arises he appeals to the government to protect him in life and property. Under

a strong government such protection is absolute. Suppose now that his country becomes involved in war, can he consistently refuse a call to arms? or, if he be disqualified from bearing arms, can he consistently refuse aid in such ways as he is able? Aside from the question of consistency such support is sometimes a matter of vital importance. Now suppose he is firmly convinced that his government is in the wrong, what shall he do? When his conscience forbids a man to do what the law enjoins, which of the two shall he heed? Even Kant admitted that he could not reconcile these antinomies. Can the citizen exculpate himself by quibbling, and persuade himself that he had not actually borne arms if he had killed no one? This position is sometimes taken. A friend of mine who rose to the rank of General in our civil war was wont to console himself, in after years, with the reflection that he had never taken a human life. In such a case one is reminded of the story of the trumpeter who, when he had fallen into the hands of the enemy, pleaded for his life on the ground that he had never slain any of their number. His plea was refused for the reason that he was more guilty than the actual fighters, because he had incited them to battle. On the same ground the captain of a man-of-war might allege that, although his ship had been in many actions, he had not himself taken a single life. In this connection we may cite the legal maxim that whatever a man does by the hand of another he is himself responsible for.

If the dictum that America is but another name for opportunity was true, even in a limited sense, threescore or four-score years ago, it is true in a far wider sense in the twentieth century. To praise one's own country is often the cheapest form of patriotism; but when good words are supported by good deeds they stand the test of examination. It can be said

to our credit that, as we have increased in power, we have decreased in bumptiousness and pugnacity. In this respect a remarkable change has come over the spirit of the American people since the war with Spain. When it was in prospect, a hundred volunteers offered themselves to every one who expressed a willingness to take part in war with Mexico. Probably the discovery that Spain was not responsible for the destruction of the Maine has had a sobering effect. No American of standing believes that might makes right, as has been proved repeatedly in our diplomatic relations with smaller nations. We have steadfastly insisted that disagreements could and should be adjusted by peaceful means. No other country has been so liberal with its gifts for benevolent objects both domestic and foreign. No other people have given so much money for the support of foreign missions, with all that they imply. We are steadily giving more and more proofs of sanity and safety of our democracy. Great as has been the liberality of our people, it is still far short of what it should be. We should recognize that it is in a large measure incumbent upon us to rebuild the countries devastated by war both in Europe and on this continent. There will be no moral interregnum, as surely there need not be, if Americans do their duty.

Recent observers have reported the existence of widespread pessimism in the neutral countries of the Eastern Hemisphere. This is probably due to the fact that the minds of the warring nations are kept so tense by the hope of victory or the fear of defeat and the necessity of finding a livelihood that they have little time to think of other matters. In the very nature of the case some of them are destined to a bitter disillusionment, more bitter than any they have as yet experienced. It is not putting the case too strong to say that

if the spirit of Christianity, or even of the sentiment of humaneness and international charity, are to survive, the preservation of these virtues will devolve upon the leadership of the American people; and not upon the churches only, as there are large resources in the hands of men who acknowledge no affiliation with any religious body. For more than two years it has been evident that the people of Europe have entered a period during which moral sanctions are for the most part in abeyance. But there is no reason why this period should be more than an interregnum, nor why it should long endure.