



Reports

Thomas K. Johnson

Theological Sanity During the Insanity of War

Edward J. Tanis

The Church, the Christian, and the War

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International Institute
for Religious Freedom



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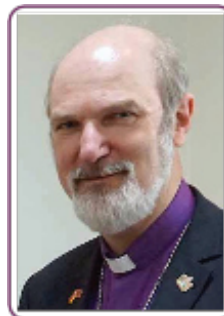
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Thomas K. Johnson is a philosopher of culture and religion who taught for two institutions started by anti-communist dissidents, The European Humanities University, Европейский гуманитарный университет (Belarus) and The Institute of Fundamental Learning, Institut základů vzdělanosti (Charles University). He serves the World Evangelical Alliance, which represents 650 million Christians in 164 countries, as Envoy to the Vatican. He is married to Leslie P. Johnson, a granddaughter of Rev. Tanis.

Edward J. Tanis (1887–1958) was born in the US, the son of immigrants from the Netherlands. After five years of study at Calvin College and Seminary, he was ordained in 1911 as a Christian Reformed minister. He was serving Broadway Avenue Church in Grand Rapids in 1917 when he wrote this essay, *The Church, the Christian, and the War* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1917; now in the public domain). Older spelling and punctuation have been modernized only when difficult for today's readers. Some references to the Bible have been added.

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Preliminary remark

This report contains an introduction, by World Evangelical Alliance senior theological adviser Thomas K. Johnson, to an essay on a Christian approach to war that was composed by US pastor E. J. Tanis in 1917. The topic seems pertinent today in view of the multiple ongoing and unresolved wars currently taking place, regarding which Christians globally have widely diverging stances.

Theological Sanity during the Insanity of War

Thomas K. Johnson

World War I was absurd. On 22 August 1914, 27,000 French soldiers died. This was day 19 of a war that lasted 4.5 years. Thousands of soldiers from other countries also died that day. The death toll of the first month of war surpassed the total death toll of many previous wars combined; for example, only about 4,500 American soldiers died during the entire eight years of the US Revolutionary War.

Twentieth-century weapons, especially explosive artillery shells, were more effective than was generally expected. But what seems insanely surprising about the war was not the effectiveness of the weapons nor the unthinkable death toll of some 10 million soldiers and 6 to 10 million civilians. What is absurd is how the countries fighting the war—France, Britain, Russia and the US versus the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire—suddenly became very religious. These powerful countries all claimed to be defending God by killing God’s enemies; from a distance, it looks like a massive religious mutual suicide pact.

In August 1914, during the first days of war, H. G. Wells (author of the 1898 classic *The War of the Worlds*) wrote several editorials for London newspapers, then published them in September as a booklet entitled *The War That Will End War*. With slight variations, his book title became a slogan of hope. To end war, he claimed, was the proper purpose of the British army: ‘We are fighting Germany. But we are fighting without any hatred of the German people. We do not intend to destroy either their freedom or their unity. But we have to destroy an evil system of government and the mental and material corruption that has got hold of the German imagination and taken possession of German life.’¹

Though Wells rejected theologically defined religion, he seemed dismayed that Pope Pius X had died (on 20 August 1914) precisely when Christian Europe needed moral rationality, not religious insanity. Wells quoted some of the last words of Pius: ‘Once the Church could have stopped this thing.’² Wells commented, ‘Faith without intellect is a negligent angel with rusty weapons. This European catastrophe is the tragedy of the weak though righteous Christian will.’³ (Emphasis added.)

Historians usually say the war to end all wars was caused by militarism, nationalism, imperialism and foolish alliances. Philip Jenkins adds, ‘The First World War was a thoroughly religious event, in the sense that overwhelmingly Christian nations fought each other in what many viewed as a holy war, a spiritual conflict.’⁴

¹ H. G. Wells, *The War That Will End War* (Musaicum Books, Kindle edition), 1.

² Wells, *The War That Will End War*, 41.

³ Wells, *The War That Will End War*, 41.

⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade*

The causes were Christian militarism, Christian imperialism and Christian nationalism, though the Ottoman Turks fought for Muslim nationalism. Available evidence indicates that the soldiers who died by entire battalions at a time generally embraced the religious/political message they received from their religious and political leaders.

The horrendous irony must be noted: in many battles, the soldiers on both sides could have used the same scriptures, prayers and creeds in church, but they killed each other because government propaganda convinced many they had to protect their Christian countries by killing God's enemies. 'All the main combatants deployed such [holy war ideological] language, particularly the monarchies with long traditions of state establishment—the Russians, Germans, British, Austro-Hungarians, and Ottoman Turks—but also those notionally secular republics: France, Italy, and the United States. More specifically, with the obvious exception of the Turks, it was a Christian war.'⁵ This was religious nationalism at its worst.

The US did not enter the war until it was two-thirds finished, but when the US did enter the war, American religious propaganda was particularly extreme. The American Congregationalist spokesman Newell Dwight Hillis took holy war teaching to its logical conclusion, declaring that Satan's earthly servants must be annihilated; that meant the German race should be exterminated. In 1918, he urged the international community 'to consider the sterilization of ten million German soldiers, and the segregation of their women, that when this generation of German goes, civilized cities, states and races may be rid of this awful cancer that must be cut clean out of the body of society.' America's Liberty Loan Committee distributed a million and a half extracts from Hillis's book.⁶

In other words, to gain popular support for US involvement in World War I, a prominent Protestant minister advocated genocide, and this open Christian endorsement of genocide then became part of the official US government propaganda supporting participation in the war. The German soldiers Hillis wanted to exterminate wore belt buckles with 'Gott mit uns' (God with us) printed on them, while their understanding of God was shaped by German Protestantism. Therefore, in the supposedly enlightened 20th century, two groups of Christian countries were seeking to destroy each other, all purportedly seeking to defend Christianity with the force of arms.

In this historical context, an essay by the Dutch-American theologian E. J. Tanis stands out as a truly serious alternative. On the basis of his understanding of church-state relations he rejected German Christian nationalism, British Christian nationalism and American Christian nationalism. He stated:

Because the Church knows no national boundaries, she cannot participate in a war of one nation against another nation. If the Church were a German institution, then the Church could give her strength and support to Germany and fight the enemies of Germany. Or, if the Church were an English institution, then the Church could fight the enemies of England. The Church, as a cosmopolitan, universal, catholic, world-wide institution, cannot fight for any one division of the human race or any government representing a section of humanity. ... The great task of the Church is to preach the Word of God.

(HarperCollins, Kindle edition, 2014), 4–5.

⁵ Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War*, 7.

⁶ Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War*, 11. Jenkins was quoting Newell Dwight Hillis, *The Blot on the Kaiser's Scutcheon* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1918), 59.

Tanis's insights on the war

However, this understanding of the church did not force Tanis to keep silent regarding the war. Among his key points, he stated the following:

1. World War I was 'the most stupendous event since the dawn of the Protestant Reformation'. He was aware of the French Revolution, the American Revolution and airplanes and thought World War I exceeded all of them in significance.

2. 'The Church, as an institution, and in her official capacity, can take no part in the hostilities of war. She cannot preach sermons in which the wrongs of other nations are emphasized and the people wronged are aroused to retaliate. The German and English clergymen have been guilty of this sin, and it behooves the Church of Christ in America to guard against this error. Likewise, the Church has no right to raise money in an official way, through ecclesiastical channels, for the prosecution of the war.' He thought that in matters as great as a large war, every government is heavily dependent on the consent of their population. If a large portion of the population is strongly opposed to a war, the citizens will simply refuse to fight.

3. Tanis criticized the extreme German Christian militarism, inspired by Nietzsche's ideals, which claimed that war is usually good for the health of a nation. A semi-official summary of this principle came from Graf von Moltke, who had been chief of staff for the Prussian Army in the 19th century: 'War is a part of God's world order. War develops man's noblest virtues, which otherwise would slumber and die out: courage, self-denial, devotion to duty, and willingness to make sacrifices.'⁷

4. 'The lamentable apostasy of Christendom is the fundamental cause of this terrible conflagration. Secondary causes are tyranny, greed, oppression, international jealousy and hatred, an Imperialistic England and a militaristic Germany. ... While these are secondary causes, the fundamental cause is the apostasy of the so-called Christian nations. This great war is a scourge [literally a whip, metaphorically a means of punishment] with which a holy and righteous God is scourging Europe and America.'

5. Rather than militarism or pacifism, Tanis drew on just-war theory. Though he did not explain it at length, Tanis claimed that a government has a duty to defend its citizens when attacked. In 1917, this duty required the US government to declare war, and citizens had a duty to do their part in the war. 'The Christian who expects the government to protect his bank account, his home, his dear ones, and all that he holds precious in this world, but does not believe in supporting that government when its existence is menaced, should not believe in his right to live under that government.' Just-war theory assumes that many or most decisions to go to war are mistaken and wrong, but it asserts that certain carefully defined circumstances can properly lead individuals and states to conclude that participating in a particular war is morally justified. The classical version of just-war theory does not give an easy answer regarding what to do if your government calls you to participate in a war that you assess as unjust. It is not clear what Tanis would have said to young German men called to serve in the Prussian army, since, it seems, Prussia's participation in the war was unjust.

6. Within the perspective articulated by Tanis, the young men in his American Christian communities had a duty to go to war if they were called by the government, even though the war was a way in which God was punishing the West and

⁷ Helmut von Moltke, *On the Art of War: Selected Writings* (Random House Publishing Group, Kindle edition), 22.

the US for their many sins. This is a complex point of view. No soldier or army should have claimed that ‘God is with us’ or that ‘God is against our enemies.’ All soldiers and armies should have been aware that they, and their countries, deserved the wrath of God for their sins (many of which were not directly tied to the war), but this awareness should not have kept people from their duty to serve in a just war. An estimated 116,500 Americans died in World War I, less than 1 percent of the total death toll; though Tanis would have honored the dead and wounded for doing their duty to their country, the losses were, he claimed, a way in which God chastised the country as a whole.

E. J. Tanis versus H. G. Wells

Wells’s hope that World War I would end all wars was in vain. Absurdity continued to reign via the decisions of American, British and French diplomats whose decisions regarding the end of the war set the stage for World War II and a century of conflict in the Middle East. The death toll from World War II, which began only 20 years after the end of World War I, surpassed the death toll of all previous wars combined. Wells’s cryptic observation about the threats from ‘faith without intellect’ during the first month of war seems prophetic. If the religious, intellectual and political leaders of the countries in the war had insisted that faith and intellect must never be separated, they would not have claimed that God was on their side, or that their enemies were also God’s enemies. Such claims are irrational.

Though Tanis’s views about the wrath of God being unleashed because of the apostasy of Christendom are difficult to verify, Tanis embodied a kind of theological rationality. I take his approach to be far more rational than the claims made by each of seven great nations that God was on their side in a war that killed millions without regard to their religion. It would be better for all if all political and religious leaders hesitated to kill people because they were afraid of the wrath of God, rather than being eager to kill other people because they want to kill God’s enemies. Read the essay by E. J. Tanis in that light.

The Church, the Christian and the War

Edward J. Tanis

Should a Christian fight? Should a Christian go to war?

Literature is being circulated at the present time in Christian circles in which the above questions are answered most emphatically in the negative. The ‘non-resistant’ writers argue that it is contrary to the teachings of Christ and the apostles for a Christian to participate in war. We believe that the logical error in the reasoning of these Christian pacifists lies in their failure to distinguish between the relation of the Church of Christ to the State, and the relation of the Christian citizen to the State. The Church, as a divine institution, occupies a peculiar position here upon earth, which forbids her, as an institution, to engage in the active support of war, but this is not true of the individual member of the Church. The individual member of the Church is a citizen of the State, has sworn allegiance to the government under which he lives and whose protection he enjoys, and has faithfully promised to uphold that government against those who menace its existence.

Many people at the present time are losing sight of this distinction, namely, the distinction between the attitude of the Church of Christ and the attitude of the Christian citizen towards the war. Hence, on the one hand, there are those who believe and advocate that the Church should lend her most active support to the war as war, a position which is decidedly un-Biblical. And, on the other hand, there are those (Christian pacifists, ‘non-resistants’) who maintain that a Christian should never fight as a soldier of a civil government, and this position is equally un-Scriptural.

In the following pages we shall attempt to give an answer to the twofold question: What should be the attitude of the Church, and what should be the attitude of the Christian citizen towards the present war?

The Church and the war

The Church of Jesus Christ, as a heavenly institution, with a heavenly mission and a heavenly destiny, can take no part in the hostilities and animosities of war. The attitude of the Church, as a church, must be a purely spiritual attitude.

The Church is not of this world, does not originate here upon earth, was not conceived by the world, nor the men of the world, but is the creation of God. Jesus said to Pilate: ‘My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews’ (Jn 18:36). Christ’s kingdom is His rule, His reign, over the hearts and lives of those who are born again by the Holy Spirit, a kingdom which will include the whole redeemed creation after the second coming of Christ. The very heart of this kingdom, the center, the core, as it were, is the Church, the body of Christ. When Christ therefore says: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’, then it is evident that the heart of this kingdom, the redeemed body of Christ, is not of this world.

And therefore Christ says to Pilate: ‘My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews.’ My disciples have not resisted the officers and soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane when they arrested me. ‘If my kingdom were of this world, I would use the same weapons that the world uses, but since my kingdom is not of this world, we do not fight as the world fights.’ Now if the

Church may not even fight with worldly weapons, swords, slaves, or guns, gunpowder, submarines and Zeppelins, in defence of herself, then it is just as clear as can be, that the Church may not participate in the wars which the civil governments wage.

And just as the origin of the Church is heavenly ('not of this world', said Jesus), so also the character of the Church is heavenly. The Church is an abnormal institution in this world as it is today. It is a gathering of men and women who are chosen out of the world, separated from the world, born again by the Holy Spirit, sanctified in Christ. To the heavenly character of the Church belongs her internationalism or catholicism. The Church knows no national boundaries. God so loved the world, the Jews, the Gentiles, the Germans, the English, the French, the Americans, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever, Americans or Germans, believeth in Him, should not perish. God loved the world! The boundaries of the Church are worldwide. Hence, the Church has no national flag. You can't fly the Stars and Stripes from your church steeple and call that the flag of the Church. The only banner of the Church is the truth, and her glorious ensign is the cross of Christ.

And just because the Church knows no national boundaries, she cannot participate in a war of one nation against another nation. If the Church were a German institution, then the Church could give her strength and support to Germany and fight the enemies of Germany. Or, if the Church were an English institution, then the Church could fight the enemies of England. The Church, as a cosmopolitan, universal, catholic, worldwide institution, cannot fight for any one division of the human race or any government representing a section of humanity.

The mission, or task, of the Church is spiritual. It is not commercial, to buy and sell goods; it is not industrial, to manufacture goods for the purpose of clothing and housing men; it is not political, to rule men and nations; it is not military, to wage war. The great task of the Church is to preach the Word of God; to preach the glorious gospel of peace between God and man in the blood of Jesus Christ; the gospel of peace between man and man and nation and nation. This is the supreme task of the Church, even in the time of war; hence, to urge men to lay aside their differences, or rather to adjust them in the interest of humanity; to urge men to approach one another in the Spirit of the Gospel, seeking one another's good, not one another's destruction; to promote a true Christian brotherhood, such a brotherhood as is the fruit of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and of faith in the Christ of Calvary. This is the task of the Church and this task she can never perform save as she refuses to support war. The Church as an institution, the Church in her official capacity, the Church speaking through her representatives, must refuse to choose sides so that she is unhampered in the performance of her task.

And in the same sense that the origin and character and task of the Church are heavenly, so also the destiny of the Church is heavenly. Her citizenship is heavenly (Phil 3:20), and she looks for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet 3:13). The ideal of the Church is not a brotherhood of nations with Christ left out, nor a world-democracy which refuses to recognize the sovereign God as the only source of all authority. The glorious ideal of the Church is the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ in a world made free from the curse of sin by Christ Himself at His second coming.

In view of all this, the Church, as an institution, and in her official capacity, can take no part in the hostilities of war. She cannot preach sermons in which the wrongs of other nations are emphasized and the people wronged are aroused to retaliate. The German and English clergymen have been guilty of this sin, and it

behooves the Church of Christ in America to guard against this error. Likewise, the Church has no right to raise money in an official way, through ecclesiastical channels, for the prosecution of the war. No more than the Church may raise money for the purpose of launching commercial or industrial enterprises, may she raise money wherewith to strengthen the sinews of war. Moreover, it is not only unscriptural for the Church of Christ to raise money for the prosecution of the war, hut it is also a violation of a fundamental principle of the republic, the complete separation of Church and State.

If it be legitimate for the Church to support the State, will it not be legitimate for the State to support the Church? And will not this be a menace both to the State and to the Church? Let us hold fast to fundamental principles!

But while the Church cannot give her active support to the war as war, she may not for one moment assume an indifferent attitude towards the war. She should recognize this great war as the most stupendous event since the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, an event of far-reaching significance for the Church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God, an event which represents a most important stage in the fulfillment of prophecy, and which should form the subject of careful and cautious, but none the less diligent study.

Above all, the Church should emphasize the solemn fact that the lamentable apostasy of Christendom is the fundamental cause of this terrible conflagration. Secondary causes are tyranny, greed, oppression, international jealousy and hatred, an Imperialistic England and a militaristic Germany with ideals born of Nietzsche's doctrine of the 'Superman'. But while these are secondary causes, the fundamental cause is the apostasy of the so-called Christian nations. This great war is a scourge with which a holy and righteous God is scourging Europe and America. We read in Isaiah 24:5–6: 'The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men left.' This solemn word of Isaiah can be applied literally to present-day conditions in Christendom.⁸

We have defiled the earth with our idolatry and accompanying immorality. We have worshipped the idols of Money, and Pleasure, and Fashion, and Science, and Progress, and Enlightenment. And this blatant idolatry has been accompanied with an immorality and vice which has reached such huge proportions that our modern cities are nothing less than Sodoms and Gomorrahs. (See Reports of Chicago, Baltimore, New York, and even Grand Rapids Vice Commissions.)

We have 'transgressed the laws'. Profanity, Sabbath-desecration, disrespect for parents, murder, suicide, adultery, fornication and divorce are the outstanding and glaring sins of this generation.

We 'have changed the ordinance'. Men are tampering with those fundamental laws which God has written in the constitution of things. Think of your 'birth control', the murder of unborn children, sex perversion, the attempt to wipe out sex distinctions, etc.

⁸ In the theological circles that Rev. Tanis inhabited, Isaiah 24 was seen as describing the judgement of God on nations in history, of which the destruction of Israel and Samaria was an example that Isaiah may have personally observed. This was distinguished from the eschatological, final judgement of God. Tanis does not see World War I as the only time the words of Isaiah 24 were fulfilled in history. John Calvin's commentary on Isaiah contains similar observations.

Is it any wonder that the rest of that text in Isaiah is also literally true? 'The curse' (this great war) 'hath devoured the earth; and they that dwell therein are desolate' (the millions of widows and orphans in Europe and Canada); 'therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned' (the tens of thousands of soldiers burned by the fire of cannon and bombs and burning gases); 'and few men are left' (few able-bodied men are left in London, Paris or Berlin). War, no matter how justifiable, is in itself a scourge, and the Christian sees in the present war, confined to the nations of Christendom, the righteous scourge of a just and holy God because of the terrible apostasy of the present generation.

Let the Church of God, called to denounce the sins of individuals and of nations, emphasize this solemn and tremendous truth, and arouse the Christian peoples to repentance and conversion unto the living God. Let her again and again preach such texts as these: 'If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land' (2 Chron 7:14).

This attitude of the Church of Christ, though offensive to vast numbers, will prove to be a far greater blessing to a war-torn world than any attempt on the part of the Church to propagate war.

Furthermore, the Church may and should most heartily support the Red Cross work, the YMCA work in the army and navy, and all forms of relief, organized for the humane purpose of alleviating the suffering and distress accompanying war.

Neither should the Church hesitate to denounce all disobedience to the divinely instituted authorities. Without entering into an extended discussion of the war, which is better suited to the platform than the pulpit, the Church can emphasize the teaching of God's Word that all men should respect the authority vested in the divinely instituted government. 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power [the authority of the government] resists the ordinance of God' (Rom 13:1-2). 'Honor the king' (1 Pet 2:17).

The Christian citizen and the war

In the above paragraphs we have made it clear, we think, that the Church, as a divine institution, with a spiritual character and spiritual task, cannot lend her active support to the war. Does this position of the Church justify us in drawing the conclusion that the Christian may not go to war? We think not.

Those who teach that a Christian should not go to war confuse the sphere of the Church with that of the State. The Church has no right to prosecute criminals but should rather bring to those criminals the gospel of repentance and faith in Christ for the remission of sins.

Is it therefore wrong for the State to arrest criminals, try them in courts of justice and punish their crimes? Of course not! This is one of the functions of the State. See Romans 13. And in the exercise of this function the State has the right, when the crime committed justifies it, to put the criminal to death. Genesis 9:6: 'Whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.' Romans 13:3-4: 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. ... If you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil.' God has given to the State the 'sword', and when the occasion justifies it, the State may wield the sword. (Those humanitarians, who

before the war argued against capital punishment, ought to be consistent and hold that the State has no right to prosecute war, but we notice that the majority of these humanitarians are enthusiastically supporting the war. O, consistency, thou art a jewel!)

The Bible teaches, then, that under certain circumstances the State (not the Church, nor any other institution, much less any individual) has the right to take human life. This teaching justifies capital punishment and likewise justifies war.

This is, indeed, a tremendous power which the Sovereign God has vested in the State, and it behooves the State to exercise this power with great discretion and only for the most justifiable reasons, but it cannot be denied that the Bible gives the State the right to go to war.

If the State has the right to go to war, then the citizen, even the Christian citizen, has the right to support the government in the war it is waging. This is the right of the Christian citizen as well as of the worldling. There is not one law of God for a Christian and another law of God for a non-Christian. What is wrong in the one case is also wrong in the other case. Some of the non-resistants argue that it is alright for a worldling to fight, for 'he belongs to this world', but it is not right for a Christian to fight, because he belongs 'to the kingdom of heaven'. Here again we meet with that hopeless confusion of spheres and duties for which the non-resistants are noted. We repeat, if it be wrong for the Christian to fight, it is also wrong for the non-Christian to fight. We believe that the Christian has the right to fight, because the State has the right to fight and the State can wage war only when supported by its citizenship, and that citizenship is made up of Christians and non-Christians.

If a Christian believes that the State has no right at any time to wage war, or that he, as a Christian, may not go to war, he has no right to be a citizen. Citizenship involves the duty of going to war when called by the government. From time immemorial every government has expected its citizens to fight in time of war. This is not something new. It has always been thus. One cannot hold citizenship in any country in the whole wide world without that very citizenship involving the duty of going to war. If a Christian does not believe in going to war and actually refuses to obey the government when called into war service, he should refuse to be a citizen. And he should refuse to be a citizen, not merely in time of actual war but in time of peace. He cannot conscientiously and consistently support any government which believes in its right to wage war, when he does not believe in that right.

But this thing does not end here. If a man cannot be a citizen of a country because he cannot take the full oath of allegiance to the government, then he has no right to live under that government. The Christian who expects the government to protect his bank account, his home, his dear ones and all that he holds precious in this world, but does not believe in supporting that government when its existence is menaced, should not believe in his right to live under that government. We do not advocate expelling him from the country, if in all other respects he is a loyal citizen, but he himself ought to realize the inconsistency of his attitude. And all this is in full harmony with the teaching of the Holy Bible that the authority vested in the State is a divine authority, which every citizen should respect and obey. Jesus said to Pilate (a heathen governor): 'You could have no power at all against me, except it were given from above.' The power exercised by Pilate, the power to crucify a man or save him from the cross, and hence the right to take human life, was given him from above. In this one majestic sentence of the Christ, the State is declared to be clothed with the power to take human life when the occasion justifies it.

We read in 1 Peter 2:13–14: ‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto those that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers.’ In God’s providence we are allowed the right today to choose our own form of government, but the power and authority vested in that government is divine, God-given, and therefore it is the duty of every citizen, and also of the man who refuses to be a citizen, to obey that government. If the government of the United States of America believes it to be its solemn duty to wage war against Germany, because of her deliberate and persistent invasion of our national rights, then it is the duty of every man and woman to support the government.

Personally we may abhor war and heartily deplore the entrance of our peaceful and peace-loving land into this colossal conflict; we have no right to obstruct the government in carrying out what the government sincerely believes to be the solemn duty of the hour. No one can accuse the President of hasty action. He has bent every effort in the direction of maintaining peace, and is it not probable that it was this very policy which almost cost him his re-election last fall? The campaign slogan, ‘He has kept us out of war’, did not receive the hearty and overwhelming endorsement of the American people. It was evident from the tremendous support given the Republican candidate that a large portion of the American people believed that the time had come for the nation to vindicate its rights.

During the winter following this election, the President steadfastly continued to labor in the interest of maintaining peace with Germany, and even put forth a brilliant effort in the month of January to reconcile the belligerents, but all in vain. In the meantime, the German government persisted in sinking American vessels and destroying American lives. The overt act, which forced the nation into war, came in March. Three American vessels, flying the American flag, two of which were without a cargo and bound for this country, and hence could in no wise be regarded as lending aid to the enemies of Germany, were sunk without a warning. This was the final act in a long series in violation of our national rights which forced this country into war with Germany. Let it be remembered also, that not only merchant vessels were sunk, but the same fate was meted out to our hospital ships and boats carrying relief to stricken Belgium, and that these ships bore unmistakable marks of identity.

No doubt the government was also in the possession of information by which it was influenced in adopting the course pursued in April. Since our entrance into the war, a flood of light has been thrown upon a long series of plots and intrigues against the government and people of the United States by the German government, even while this government was bending every effort to preserve peace.

If, as Christians, we believe that the Sovereign Ruler of the world, the Almighty God, has instituted government for the purpose of maintaining justice on earth, then it is our duty to support the government in its effort to maintain this justice for ourselves and for humanity at large. We have the writing of God’s hand in history, teaching us that there are times when nations must fight to preserve that which is precious. If the Christian armies of Europe had not resisted the advance of the Mohammedan hordes in 732 at the battle of Tours, we would all be Mohammedans today. If war is always wrong, then brave little Holland should not have resisted the tyranny and despotism of Spain in the Eighty Years’ War. If it is always wrong to fight, then Napoleon should not have been blocked in his efforts to create for himself a world empire in which the will of the despotic Napoleon was to be the highest law.

We thank God that all men and all Christians have not been ‘non-resistants’. We thank God that He gave our sturdy and noble ancestors a glorious victory in their long battle for freedom and justice! We thank God that He raised up a great Christian general, the Duke of Wellington, to bring the despotic career of Napoleon to an ignominious end in the famous battle of Waterloo! And we pray the same Almighty God that He bless our beloved country as she fights today, not for conquest nor material gain, but in vindication of justice and righteousness!

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