

# From Whence Come Wars and Fightings Among You?

*by Dean Taylor*



With the ever increasing occurrence of wars, terrorist attacks, and political corruption, even the secular world is beginning to ask the question—what’s going on? Not that war and corruption are anything new, but more and more, many are beginning to notice an exponential increase. Compounding this anxiety is the fact that modern society is finding fewer areas to place the blame. In the past, the church took the blame; but as America moves farther and farther away from Biblical-based principles of right and wrong, and deeper into a neo-Christian, humanist-based secular society, the only ones they have left to blame are themselves.

After the so-called Great Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the humanists exploited the failed testimony of the state church and blamed all wars, corruption, and bloodshed on Christian doctrine. The humanists felt that mankind, working together as a democracy, could do a better job of judging morals and ethics, without the interference of Biblical influences which they saw as mere ancient fantasies and archaic fables.

In the latter part of the 18th Century secular humanism flourished, offering to the world the idea that mankind was better off without the nuisance of any religious absolutes. It taught that man was a better pilot of his destiny, and therefore launched philosophical attacks on what it saw as naive holdovers from the “dark ages.” However, their attack on Christianity and particularly, their attack on the authority of God’s Word, has ironically done more damage to their own secular world than it ever did to the Church.

The settlers and founders of this country lived and governed by the basic premise that their world was ordered by the hand of God. Even though many of the founders were humanistic unbelievers themselves, they at least lived under the borrowed influence and popular understanding of the time—that the Bible was the ultimate source of truth and morality. Although this minimal acknowledgment was far from God’s perfect way, even a bygone shadow of God’s Law gave the society some sense of absolutes. However, now that this foundational presupposition has mostly vanished, the only thing remaining from which to determine right from wrong are the arbitrary judgments and laws passed to protect our soci-

ety's own happiness. In this world of collected values, based upon majority opinion, faith decisions and morals are thrown off as idiosyncrasies of the individual. Instead of basing decisions upon the guiding principles of the Bible, ethics are forced to change and adapt to the comforts and pleasures of all persons currently involved. Inevitably, these

irresolute ethics must constantly evolve with each case, adapting to the given situation.

A simple definition of pragmatism is this: "whatever works—is what is right." Utilitarianism can be defined as: "what is right—is whatever is best for the greatest number of people." Both of these concepts imbibe the idea of expediency which is: "what is right—is what is appropriate for the immediate situation."

Within our utilitarian society, justice and equality must constantly be in flux to facilitate the greatest percentage of societal happiness at the time. The majority dictates that life decisions and moral dilemmas be decided in the spirit of utilitarianism to benefit the popular vote. With no set value underlying these decisions, democracy itself easily becomes the



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only real value that is underlying the society as a whole. In the end, all that is preserved is democracy itself, and means nothing. The very nature of an absolute democracy, as fair as it may seem, without an underlying guiding principle, is meaningless. Something deep in the collective soul of a society dies when attempting to represent every-

one; no one and no thing really ends up being represented. As Christians, we do have an absolute underlying principle, and that is nothing other than to glorify God. Furthermore, we have an absolute standard by which we can live out this absolute principle, and that is to live by the truths and promises of God's Word. We Christians need not apologize for the dogmatic claims our Bible makes. The world is in darkness, and it is up to us show forth the light.

Built right into the American psyche, these three ideologies—pragmatism, utilitarianism, and expediency—now reign as philosophical fundamentals. As a good American boy, these concepts were well ingrained in me. My childhood dreams were full of ideas of climbing the ladder of success. Growing up, I felt that getting ahead, making the grade, and paying



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my dues would lead me on the path to achieving the American dream—'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' Later in my life, however, I discovered that if I actually wanted to experience the fulfillment of the promises of God in my life, these pragmatic ideologies were three giants that needed to be slain.

To turn away from this type of thinking was not easy for me. When I was first coming to the Lord, I soon discovered that everything around me, my culture, my friends, and my profession, had all been dictated more by expediency than anything else. I found my own society's life-blood flowed to the beats and demands of valueless pragmatism.

Francis A. Schaeffer in his book, *How Should We Then Live?* said, "...men have presuppositions and will live more consistently with these presuppositions than they themselves know. People's presuppositions rest upon that which they consider to be the truth of what exists... With no base for the dignity of the individual, only arbitrary expediency gives whatever dignity is given. And being only arbitrary, expediency can twist and turn at will. Men tend to act ultimately with remarkable consistency to their presuppositions—their world view."

When biblical absolutes are lost and the ultimate goal of our society becomes personal gratification and the pursuit of happiness, pandemic-nationwide selfishness is the only natural result. With this mindset, conflicts and wars are inevitable. If the pursuit of happiness is the ultimate goal, then naturally, when another person or society threatens to interfere, any measures necessary to preserve this end appear justifiable. Hence, nuclear equipped armies called "Peace keepers," or multi-layered national task forces labeled "Home Land Security," become reasonable

means to achieve these ends, regardless of the moral or financial cost.

This type of moral ambiguity and uncertainty is all understandable coming from a people who believe they are no more than 'organisms', evolved from cosmic space-matter, or from faithless unbelievers whose final hope is only in this life—but coming from the people who claim to follow the only living, personal, and benevolent God, it is an inexcusable tragedy.

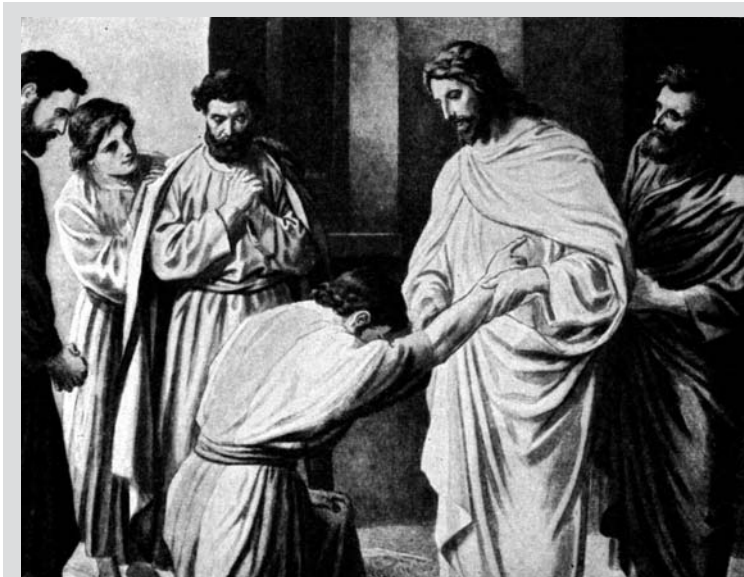
The book of James asks the question, "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Since the days of Cane and Able the reply has never changed—"Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have,

and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:1-3).

When Jesus came to earth he spoke and taught often of "the Kingdom of God." Jesus revealed to the world a radical, diametrically different, underlying, and guiding principle that was much more than personal gratification and the pursuit of happiness. In His Kingdom, the all-encompassing goal in our life is our all-out pursuit to love God and to glorify Him with every bit of our lives. In His Kingdom, our entire lives, including our ambitions,

happiness, decisions, and desires are consumed to this end—to glorify God. When the angels proclaimed the birth of Jesus they sang, "Glory to God in the Highest!" The Apostle Paul said, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

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show forth a better way. Empire after empire has come and gone; nations have raised and nations have fallen, but the Kingdom of God has remained the same. The Meads, Persians, Greeks, and Romans have all died out. The pride and schemes of powerful leaders such as Alexander the Great, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Caesar Augustus, Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin have amounted to nothing more than noisy confusion and needless bloodshed.

Over 700 years prior to the New Testament era, the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, foretold of the triumphant, eternal nature of the Kingdom of God say-

ing, *"For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."* (Isaiah 9:5-7)

This Kingdom was ushered in 2000 years ago by its King, Jesus Christ. Remarkably, unlike earthly



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monarchs, who historically have taken great pleasure in the weakening and exploitation of their subjects, Jesus gave up His life, nobility, and heavenly privileges to give strength, power, and eternal life to his subjects. By so doing, He also left us an example that we should follow:

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:5-8).* Here Paul is showing that we are to have this same sacrificial mindset, this same selfless world view, if we are to have the mind of Christ.

Jesus said, *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.”* And the Apostle Paul also echoed this saying, *“For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Matt 10:16; Romans 8:36).* These words can seem rather discouraging to some. But when pleasing God truly becomes our ultimate end, then things like war, lawsuits, and all other worldly striving suddenly becomes meaningless. Ironically, such a spiritual resolve actually brings great release and happiness! However, that happiness is only a byproduct, but not necessarily the ultimate goal. As long as glorifying God remains the ultimate goal, a person

can suffer and even die and still reach his goal. The apostle Paul tells us:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35-39).*

The cross of Jesus Christ stands as an eternal witness to the futility of man’s strength, resources, and good ideas. In his letter to the Corinthian church, warning them about the foolishness of fleshly resources, the apostle Paul taught that the way of Christ is not won by our own strength, but by laying our life down, even to the point of death. He wrote: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written,*

*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world. (I Corinthians 1:18-20)*



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When I was converted I began to understand for the first time the nature of God's Kingdom. At that time, my wife and I were soldiers in the U.S. Army. In obedience to God's command to "love our enemies" we decided to seek legal release from the Army as **C o n s c i o u s** Objectors. As we struggled over getting out, I read through many books attempting to justify the Christian's place in war and self-defense. As I read these military, theological, and historical books, war was often likened to the surgeon's knife or the farmer's hoe. The need to defend the innocent, the helpless, and the "just" outweighed all the evil acts of war. Even questionable acts, such as the nuclear bombing of civilian women and children in

Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WWII, were defended as being "just" and "right."

Yet, in spite of all the rationale, as much as I tried, I just could not let go of the simple, albeit unpractical words of Jesus—"love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." But now, as we endeavored to walk out these 'new' ideals for the first time, our commitment to them was being challenged right from the start. When my wife and I finally made up our minds to leave the Army, we were met with the overwhelming reality that we had suddenly lost all of our support. Losing our careers was just the beginning. As we had thought it through, we had realized that we would be



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many others who had gone before us.

During this time I believe God was taking me beyond the surface of the mere doctrines of peace and war, down to the recognition of a deeper need in my life—the need for security and self-sufficiency. As I continued reading the Scriptures and praying, it became clear to me where some of my confusion was coming from. I slowly began to realize that I had allowed 'pragmatic thinking' to creep in and destroy many areas of my life by minimizing the promises of God and teachings of the Bible. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt 6:33) had always been a

giving up all that we had labored so hard to accomplish. Yet we still trembled as we watched our lives seemingly fall apart before our very eyes. It wasn't easy to say goodbye to our health insurance, retirement, college money, rent payment, bank account, church, friends—all of life as we had known it. And as time went on there were moments we were really tempted to despair. But as the anxiety from this realization began to mount and at times loom over us, we were forced to take ahold of God's promises. We had no choice but to either turn completely back, or take the Lord at His Word. And we certainly were not the first Christians to find ourselves in this place. It was inspiring to remember that we were simply following in the footsteps of

beautiful verse to me—one that I knew by heart—but it wasn't a reality in my life.

My flesh, or human instincts, argued that a lesser evil could be done to bring about a better good. But as I studied the Word of God, I found that God was vehemently opposed to such teaching. My flesh cried out, "the end justifies the means!" But I found that God was just as concerned with *how* I did things as He was with *why* I was doing them. Proverbs 16:25 says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome stated, "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just" (Romans 3:8).

Throughout Bible history God's heart has desired to have a people who would put their trust completely in Him. In the early days of the nation of Israel, God called Abraham at a very old age to leave his home, friends, and way of life, and follow Him through unknown lands based on promises from God—promises that He would give him a son and take him to a land "flowing with milk and honey." God was so pleased with Abraham's faith that He gave Abraham the name "friend of God." The Apostle Paul, speaking of Abraham's powerful trust in God's promises said of him, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22). History has demonstrated time and time again that when the Church has stopped trusting in God and begun to trust in its own strength and resources, failure and compromise have always followed.

There is a very pointed, although merely legendary account from the 13th century, of a surprise meeting between the famed theologian Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent II. One day Aquinas came upon the pope while he was inventorying some of the church treasury. The pope was right in the middle of counting a few large stacks of silver and gold coins when Aquinas came walking in. Looking up to Aquinas the pope quipped, "You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say 'silver and gold have I none.'" "This is true," replied Aquinas, "but neither can she say, 'arise and walk!'"

As the corruption of our society continues to 'come in like a flood,' the Church must stand all the more resolutely on the principles of God's Word and 'raise up a standard.' The reason for wars, fighting, lust, and corruption is the same now as it always has been—it results from putting man first. All the passions, pleasures, and pride of man will never form a peaceful society, regardless of how liberated and democratic it may claim to be. Right and wrong are not a matter of popular opinion or majority vote. Our morals, ethics, and beliefs are given to us solely by divine revelation of the Word of God. We should never apologize or feel sheepish about the dogmatic claims of God's Word. James finishes his rhetorical question "whence come wars and fightings among you?" with this strong admonition, "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:4-6). I certainly do not want to be an enemy of God! I want to be like Abraham—to fully and even foolishly trust in the Promises to the point that I, too, may be called a friend of God. □

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