



## Lambs among Wolves

*George R. Brunk, Sr.*

The disciples were brought up in the Jewish Church, the law of which allowed killing in self-defense and in wars under divine direction. When Jesus called them to follow Him, He sent them out as “lambs among wolves” and charged them to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, He laid down the principles of the new dispensation of the Church. Born of hate and nourished with blood, the great red dragon of **human violence** has slowly fought its way down through the centuries, devouring half the human race, and is still hungry.

This evil cannot be cured by clipping at the branches of the tree of sin and hate, but the axe must be laid at the **root**, which is the corrupted nature of the unregenerate and unsanctified human heart.

The infinite wisdom in giving the greatest sermon in the world did not begin with **externals** or details of human duty, but with **getting right inside**.

Notice the steps as the Beatitudes present them—**humility, repentance, heart-hunger, purity**, and then immediately appears the fruit of **peacemaking**.

Further on in the Sermon, He says in effect, **you formerly were taught to hate and kill**—“eye for eye”—**but now you are to love your enemies and not fight back**.

The Savior provided a **peace spirit in regeneration**, a **peace commandment in the Gospel**, and a **peace example** in His life.

The old habit of thought reasserted itself under pressure when the disciples wished to call down fire from heaven upon the city that refused to entertain the Lord, and in Peter when he drew his sword impulsively and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. In both cases the Lord rebuked the error and prevented or healed the injury.

After the Pentecostal anointing, they were **established** in the Gospel of nonresistance; **no hate, no vengeance, no self-defense, no bitter feuds, no participation in war**, in all the Gospel records.

During World War I, an eminent statesman declared that Christianity had failed, and therefore the nations must resort to machine guns and cannon.

It was a mistake; **Christianity had not been tried!** If all professed followers of Christ in the warring nations had suddenly put into effect the Sermon on the Mount, the war would have stopped short. Jesus commands us to **love our enemies and not avenge ourselves**, but how will churches answer Him in judgment who not only **kill their enemies in self-defense and war**, but **people in the same church** allow themselves to be lined up on opposite sides in carnal strife, and kill each other in the name of God?

### Delusions

During World War I, an uneducated mountaineer was called for army service, but he did not think it was right to kill his fellowmen after this fashion. But by the time he was put through the war-mill of Scripture-twisting experts, he was ready to go and proved to be the champion killer of America, and won honor, fame, and great financial gain, and likely thinks today that he has done great service for God and humanity.

Young men who had been raised under Christian influences and whose heart shuddered at the thought of thrusting the cold bayonets through the vitals of men that had never done them injury, were prodded up to the killing point by stories of diabolical frightfulness charged against the enemy, stories which now have been retracted by “honorable” statesmen of the world and acknowledged to have been only war propaganda.

The false sentiment was widely disseminated that men giving their lives for their country would thereby accomplish their own redemption. The desolated homes were assured that war would have an ennobling and purifying effect upon the soldiers and upon the nation, but alas, the crime waves follow deep and dark!

Soldiers were represented as following in the footsteps of Christ who came to **die** for men—but Christ came to

**The great red dragon of human violence has slowly fought its way down through the centuries, devouring half the human race, and is still hungry.**

die for men and **not to kill**, whereas **soldiers went out to kill and not to die**.

Old Testament examples like Abraham, Moses, and David were held up to prove the Christian duty to war and kill, in spite of the fact that the Gospel everywhere forbids it in many different forms of instruction. It was said by them of old time “hate your enemies” and “eye for eye” but “**I say unto you that ye resist not evil**,” Jesus said. He rebuked the disciples for wanting to call down fire from heaven upon their enemies **like Elijah did**, proving that the violence of the Old Testament is contrary to the Gospel of Christ.

An adjutant general who had been in charge of a camp of conscientious objectors cross-questioned the writer for an hour on the matter of nonresistance. He was very familiar with nearly all our arguments and owned that the New Testament teaches nonresistance for the individual Christian, but gives the sword to the civil powers; and that while a Christian cannot do violence on his

own account as an individual, he is in duty bound to do so as a representative of the Government.

I replied that on two points we agree:

1. That the Gospel requires nonresistance of the Christian as an individual.
2. That the civil powers are given the sword.
3. But on the third point we separate, for [Christians] hold that whatever is wrong for them as individuals cannot be right for them any other way in the world.

### Why are young men unprepared?

It has been often charged and insinuated that the Church had not properly fortified and indoctrinated the young men that were compelled to go into CO camp, and that they were therefore, in youth and inexperience,

thrown upon their own resources under most trying circumstances.

This charge, as far as I have learned, comes only from the liberal class who had been educated away from the standards and policies of the Church, largely repudiating the orthodox leadership and being filled up with worldly knowledge and practically ignorant of the first principles of the Gospel. They have themselves to blame, for there were adequate resources all about them for complete equipment to enable them to fight the good fight of faith. Imagine a bishop's son, far advanced in education under

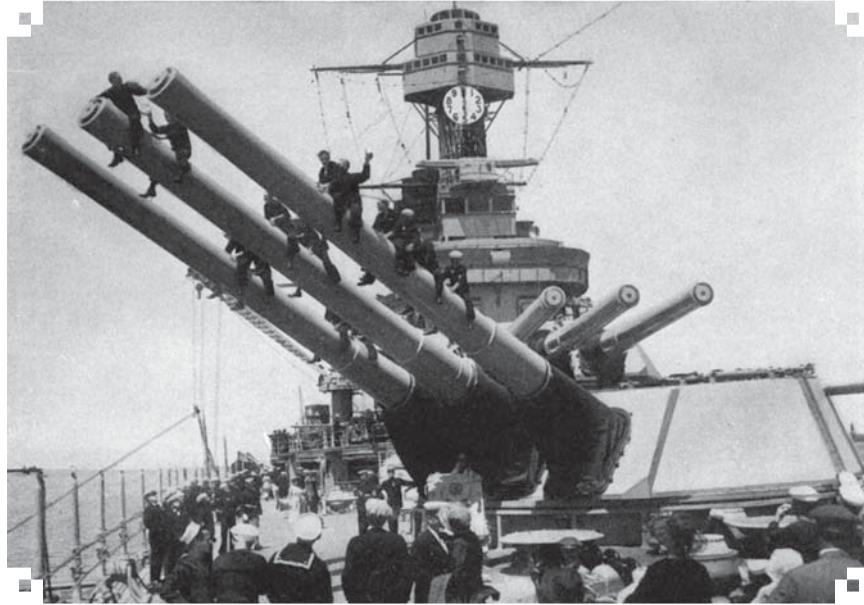
influences of a Mennonite school, surrounded by the literature of the Church, claiming neglect and professing to have sat in the army camp **trying to study out whether Christ would take the cold steel and thrust it through the vitals of His fellow man!!**

Another storm is brewing and is bound to break sooner or later upon the world.<sup>1</sup> Let the rising generation of young men keep in sympathetic touch

with loyal leadership and enrich their minds with Gospel truth which will enable them not only to satisfy their own hearts, but to give a convincing answer to every man as to the hope that is within them.

### Broadening the path

I was on a ship loaded from stem to stern with transport troops from Australia—a woman religious war worker was with them. She opened the conversation with me and in five minutes revealed a dense ignorance of the simplest teachings of the Bible, but was otherwise cultured and learned. She asked of our people and faith. At **first she opposed**, then **marveled and admired**; and then I re-



**“Madam,” said I, “the way is already made, and it is a narrow one, and there is no authority in heaven or earth to make it wide [enough to include war].”**

<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1929, and George's words here are almost prophetic of the coming second World War. Note that in a few places the words in this article have been changed to “World War I,” as George called it the “great World War.”

lated the persecutions in the Army camps—the long sentences in penal institutions and told of our boys chained fast to iron bars in dungeons with no other crime than a determination to keep the words of Jesus. Next I told her of the published report of an army officer who inspected them saying that when he saw these persecuted Christians with no mark of crime upon their pale faces, he hurried away as fast as he could, for **he thought he saw the face of Jesus Christ in prison**. She cried and gave me her hand in token of kindest regards for our faith and people; but then she turned and waved her hand over the crowds of soldiers and said, **“But you see, we must make a way for these.”**

“Madam,” said I, “the way is already made, and it is a narrow one, and there is no authority in heaven or earth to make it wide.”

I listened to an eloquent address of an Indian chief in the line of succession from the famous Powhatan, father of Pocahontas, on the wrongs done to the American Indians who, he claimed, were willing to **share** their territory with the pale faces, but that they have been broken and scattered and plundered and driven into the western sea.

I was glad that I was able at the close to shake his hand and say, “I am a Mennonite preacher. I have always sympathized with the American Indians in their wrongs. We settled with William Penn in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and do not believe in war. I assure you that the Mennonite people have never lifted up their hands against the American Indian.” The way he grasped and held my hand, and the appreciation which shone from his face revealed the fact that an Indian too may have feeling in his heart.<sup>2</sup>

A professional man of high intelligence and culture was supporting the war against his better nature. “It’s a devilish business,” said he, “but we are in it and have to go on.” A prayer meeting was appointed to seek divine aid for the American cause, but here he revolted; he refused to attend, or ask God’s cooperation in such a fearful business.

O blood, blood! What a fearful thing it must be to have the lifeblood of fellow men upon the hands!

### An uncondemned killer

A Fundamentalist Calvinist preacher had a good reputation as a champion of the historic faith, but **nonresis-**

<sup>2</sup> Even in George’s time some people still felt that Indians were not fully human, almost incapable of normal feelings.

**tance and nonconformity to the world** were two of the fundamentals that he had overlooked, as is true of most denominations. Bad blood had been aroused between the preacher and religious and political enemies. An opposer visits the preacher’s office ... the preacher kills him ... a court clears him on ground of self-defense. He is reported to have gone into the pulpit the next Sunday and to have preached on the text, “There is therefore now no condemnation!”

By the civil law free, but what Gospel?

It seems clear that Calvinistic error tends to encourage violence. How could John Calvin rest after having Servetus slowly tortured to death by fire?<sup>3</sup>

His Calvinism would allow him to put it over on God as having infallibly decreed everything that comes to pass.

His Calvinism would allow him to believe that no crime of his could in any way affect his salvation.

A Calvinistic group of conscientious objectors in England published a booklet against war, making it the **work of the devil, betrayal of Christ, and wholesale murder**, but closed the last page by assuring those Christians who do go into it, that by so doing they shall not forfeit their salvation!

And now a preacher kills a man and calmly assures himself that there is no **condemnation!**

Does the **Spirit** of Christ clear him?

Does the **Word** of Christ or of the apostles clear him?

Does their **example** clear him?

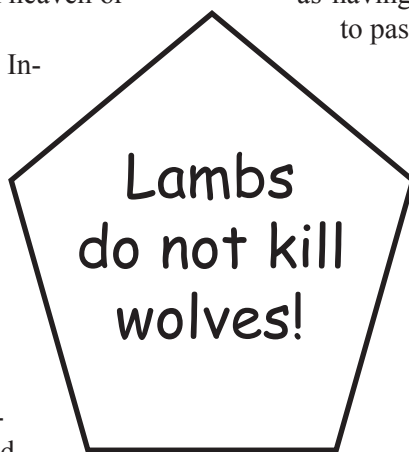
Verily not, except perchance through repentance and confession.

And what of such as trust in the doctrine that God has infallibly decreed their crimes<sup>4</sup> and that they therefore were unavoidable? Or those who trust in the doctrine that no sin of a “believer” can affect his salvation?

False theories can help a person into sin, but can never help him out.

Lambs do not kill wolves! ~

Taken from—*The Sword and Trumpet*, April, 1929. Bold wording is original.



<sup>3</sup> Michael Servetus was a Spanish theologian who was burned at the stake on October 27, 1553 on the outskirts of Geneva, with the full approval of Calvin.

<sup>4</sup> In other words, God has predestined them to commit crimes, since God is sovereign and man is incapable of making free will choices as to whether he will sin or not.