

Blessed Are The Peacemakers . .

On January 18, 1816, the day of England's thanksgiving for the restoration of peace, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, professor of theology of the Free Church of Scotland, delivered the sermon, "Thoughts on Universal Peace."

The wars with the French empire were over. Napoleon was finally defeated. Dr. Chalmers remarked in his sermon: "The whole of Europe is now at rest from the tempest which convulsed it – and a solemn treaty with all its adjustments, and all its guarantees, promises a firm perpetuity to the repose of the world."

But the professor, though very thankful for the peace settlement, was also a realist. He said: "I am too well taught by the history of the past, and the experience of its restless variations, not to believe that they (i.e. wars) will burst forth again in thunder over the face of society."

History has proven him to be right. Many battles have been fought since the great Napoleonic wars and numerous peace treaties have been broken. No measure of good will or un-bounding optimism in human nature have prevented bloodshed.

One of the brutal symptoms of the deterioration of our present culture seems to be the little respect shown for treaties so solemnly signed by representatives of nations.

The Twentieth Century especially is noted for its disregard of treaties. The German chancellor, Von Bethmann Hollweg considered the treaty whereby Germany, France and England guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium no more than a "scrap of paper." Since that time (1914), such attitudes have become rather common.

Someone calculated that between March 1935 and May 1945 Hitler violated 64 times an international treaty or promise, and Joseph Stalin did the same 40 times between August 1939 and December 1945.

The post World War II story is certainly far from peaceful. Guns have not been silent. War planes are still swooping over villages and cities. We know the reality of war through our news media.

Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891) statesman and soldier, asserted: "In War, Man's noblest virtues come into play: courage and renunciation, fidelity to duty and a readiness for sacrifice that does not stop short of offering up Life itself. Without War the World would become swamped in materialism."

What a terrible statement! There is neither beauty nor nobility in war. War is horrid, ugly, brutal and gruesome. The wealth of the English vocabulary is not sufficient to describe the suffering, the cruelty and the scars caused by the war scourge. But

how do we get peace? Can peace and justice come through removing the conditions of poverty and the relief of every need with the help of technology?

Some say that the task of the church is precisely and solely that – the bringing of a peaceful world through social programs.

The latest on this type of prophetic ministry is the "lettuce outreach." Three ministerial students were at work in the Cincinnati area to promote the use of union "lettuce." Rev John Bank, head of the city's United Farm Workers Union called this work "a clinical education in prophetic ministry."

Social issues and the demand for social justice play indeed a very important role in the Old and New Testament, but yet one role among the many. Peace and righteousness can only come when man has become right with God. Only in Christ we have true peace.

"For He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2: 14). To have this peace is beautiful; but we cannot be satisfied with this personal peace. We cannot have the attitude: "Let me alone; don't let trouble at home or abroad come near my door. Just give me peace, personal peace."

Christians must take the risk of being peacemakers. For the sake of Christ we must be witnesses in the world of labour, politics, improvement of human relations, and seek peace and justice.

The Hebrew word for peace is shalom. This shalom is not just for individuals. It bears upon social relationships. and politics.

The Lord Himself touched with His presence and preaching every aspect of life.

He was not a representative of the status quo. Christians who seek peace are not people who run away from life, but are involved in it. They do not compromise with the world, but proclaim the shalom of the Lord. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt 5:9)

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