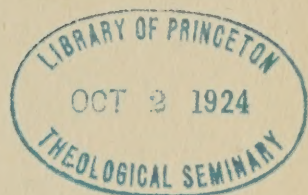


CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN THOUGHT

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**CHRISTIANITY AND INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

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CHAPTER IX

CHRISTIANITY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ROBERT E. SPEER

SOME time ago an old friend, Professor Lang, of the University of Alabama, told me a curious incident of which he had been a witness. It occurred in the city of Edinburgh, in the winter of 1909, when Professor Lang was there taking postgraduate work in the university. One day, he said, he noticed on one of the billboards of the university the advertisement of a lecture which was to be delivered that evening in McEwen Hall, the great hall of the university, by Mr. Arthur Balfour, as he was then, on the subject, "The Moral Values Which Unite the Nations." Professor Lang said that of course he was not going to miss such an opportunity, and as early as possible he went around to the hall and got a seat in the front row of the first balcony. In the moments before the lecture began, he looked about over the audience and saw sitting immediately opposite him on the front row of the balcony on the other side a Japanese student, whom he recognized as also engaged in graduate work in the university. Mr. Balfour was introduced in due time and went through with his lecture. It was just such a masterly presentation as anyone would have anticipated from that speaker of the different ties that bind together the peoples of the world, common knowledge, common commercial interests, the intercourse of diplomatic relationship, and the

bonds of human friendship. The speaker sat down amid a great outburst of applause. After the applause had died down, in the moment of silence when, after the Scotch fashion, the presiding officer had arisen to make his own little address of appreciation, Professor Lang said he saw this Japanese student stand up and lean over the balcony. Before the chairman could open his lips, the Japanese student had spoken. "But, Mr. Balfour," said he, "what about Jesus Christ?" Professor Lang said that one could have heard a pin drop in the hall. Everybody felt at once the justice of the rebuke. The leading statesman of the greatest Christian empire in the world had been dealing with the different ties that are to unite mankind and had omitted the one fundamental and essential bond. And everyone felt, too, the dramatic element in the situation, that the reminder of his forgetfulness had come to him from a Japanese student from a far-away non-Christian land. "But, Mr. Balfour, what about Jesus Christ?"

Now we are to answer the Japanese student's question. There is one great affirmation of St. Paul, which, in the field of thought with which Mr. Balfour was dealing. "The head of every man is Christ." In other words, the solution of the international problem is just the same as the solution of every problem, nothing else than Jesus Christ.

In St. Paul's great declaration, it seems to me we get right to the heart of the issue. Here he is setting forth the principle of human unity and the necessity to mankind of the instrumentalities through which its common life is to be expressed and by which its common work is to be done. He sets himself, of course, over against great and common opinions that govern the thought of many

men in our day. We have been living for a good many years now under a conception of mechanistic nationalism, to which the idea of human unity is a very strange and alien thing, and as that rather hard and barren conception has been somewhat broken up in these last few years, it has been replaced by an equally noxious idea that applies the old evolutionary conceptions to human life in their very crudest form and conceives the history of the world to-day to be what it is alleged it has ever been, just one long, bitter jungle struggle for the survival of the fittest among the nations and the races and one unending conflict and rivalry among the enviroins for dominance and supremacy.

Of course, one cannot reconcile these theories with the actual facts of life, for there is no such struggle as this between the races and peoples, and there is no such bitter jungle rivalry as this dominating the spirit of mankind. It is good to offer against these notions that have control of modern, practical international politics, the far richer and truer conception of St. Paul. Little by little, we are making our way into the heart of that conception. We are beginning to realize the economic solidarity of mankind, that there is no such thing as a conflicting economic interest among the nations that does not mean in the end some common loss. We realize now that no nation permanently can gain if other nations permanently have to suffer as the compensation for its gain, that human trade must be balanced and compensatory, that we cannot make money out of other nations endlessly unless they make money also and equally out of us, that we are all bound together in one great economic body.

I remember how vividly the apprehension of this

came home to me just after the war had begun, when I had gone out in part to see what the effects of the war might be in the far-off ends of the earth. We were making our way through the jungles of central Siam. The British engineers had secured the concession to build a railway from Bangkok south through the whole spine of the Malay Peninsula to the cities of Penang and Singapore, and the German engineers had secured the concession to build the railway north from Bangkok to the frontiers of Yunnan in southern China. We were making our way up through the jungle and came at last to the railhead, where a little group of German engineers were still busy, Siam not having yet come in on the side of the Allies in the War. The German engineers were trying to master a river that ran right across the line of their northward advance. They had, of course, been getting their materials from home, just as the British engineers had done—that is where the profit of the concessions lay—and now there was, of course, no possibility of getting out any more building material from Germany and in bridging this new river the German engineers had to do the best they could with what they had on hand. It happened that down the line there was a bridge no longer needed over the stream for which it had been built. They brought that bridge up and inasmuch as it would not fit the northern river they changed the size of the river to fit the bridge. Far off there in the heart of the jungle, the German engineers were changing the topography of a Siamese river because of the necessities of the great struggle ten thousand miles away. We were buried in the heart of the great southeastern Asiatic jungles and yet we felt the tremors of that great strife, as though the guns

had been thundering there along the waters of the Menam.

Little by little, I say, we are making our way into this conception that mankind has one common interest and that no part of mankind can gain without every other section of humanity profiting by that gain, nor any section of mankind suffer without all of us sharing in that suffering. And, of course, St. Paul's idea carries the conception much further than this solidarity of economic interest. He is conceiving of mankind as one great organic body embracing the whole human race, as an organism of which Jesus Christ is the head, with many members, all related integrally, one to another, all fulfilling their several parts and the whole body dependent upon the health and the freedom of each separate part and of its faithful activity and the subordination of the whole to its one rational and coördinating heart. We have the idea worked out in part in one of the greatest books of our generation, Mr. Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*. As Hardy sees Europe as one great organism, so the whole of human life is to be seen as one great biological unity, through which one common life is beating, governed by one common principle, animated or to be animated by one common dominant spirit.

St. Paul, I say, in reply to our Japanese student's question in McEwen Hall to Mr. Balfour, lays down for us the principle of human unity, which is Jesus Christ, and by the same token he lays down the method and the power of it. A Japanese friend, who was for some time in the Yokohama Specie Bank in New York—he happens to be a Japanese nobleman whom one cannot annoy more readily than by applying his titles to him—

wrote me of his experience in New York one Sunday when he had gone into the Broadway Tabernacle church to hear Dr. Jefferson preach. He said that when he went in, this whole problem of international relations was still a mystery to him, but when he came out it was as clear as the light of noonday. He realized in view of what he heard that morning that there is a solution to this problem and a perfectly clear and simple solution. It is simply that all the nations should submit themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ. He said that he realized now that the problem of international relationships is not an insoluble one, but that we can achieve a human unity if we can unite every nation by itself first of all with Christ.

I remember years ago in the old town hall in Paisley, on the west coast of Scotland, hearing the late Dr. A. B. Wann put the principle in much the same way as my Japanese friend put it, saying that it was a mathematical axiom that if people will move toward one common point, they must move toward one another, and if they reach that common point, they will have reached a common association and fellowship, and that if all the nations of the world will press in toward the one great centre of the life of humanity, it must follow of necessity that all these peoples of the world will find themselves in a common company round about their one head and Lord.

So I might begin and end just here in our consideration of this question of Christianity and international relationships. The head of every man, that is the head of humanity, is Christ. And all that is necessary is just that humanity should recognize the realities, that it should adjust itself to the ultimate spiritual fact, that

we should accept Jesus Christ, who is our head, and in the recognition of what we are, that is one great body to be governed by His spirit and mind, we should find the solution of all this chaotic discord of our day.

But this would be going quite too fast, and I presume we should go back over our ground a bit and try to analyze our problem more particularly. I should like to lay down what I have to say in four very simple statements.

The first is that a just and secure international order requires as essential to it some basis of agreement, and Christianity alone can adequately supply that basis. One of the strongest arguments against the League of Nations to-day is that the basis of moral concord underlying all the heterogeneous elements that enter into that association is not adequate. Many of those who have antagonized the League honestly I think have done so on this ground. They are convinced that the nation cannot unite except on some firmer and broader basis of common moral and intellectual concord.

Of course, that was just the difficulty which our American nation confronted at the beginning. I have been back to my old home in central Pennsylvania, where five generations of our family lie buried, running back to the Scotch-Irish Puritans long before the days of the Revolutionary War. The first of the long line was the first burgess of the town, Benjamin Elliott. He was sent by his constituents to the convention at Philadelphia, which was to determine whether Pennsylvania would accept the Constitution designed to establish the American nation. His constituents were opposed to Pennsylvania's accepting the proposed Constitution. "What," they argued, "ally ourselves with

Rhode Island! We have nothing ethically in common with that petty and repudiating State and we are resolved not to bind ourselves, our great commonwealth to other sections of totally different character and ideas." And when he came back from the convention, having voted that Pennsylvania should join with Rhode Island and the rest of the colonies in setting up the American nation, he was roughly handled by his constituents, who did not believe that there was an adequate basis of common moral agreement on which to launch this venture of the united American nation. Now it has turned out that there was an adequate basis of moral and intellectual concord. For my part, I believe that we have also an adequate basis among the nations of the world to justify the establishment of the League of Nations, that there is enough there of longing, of desire, of discontent, of revolt against the old order, enough there of positive purpose and view to furnish a basis of agreement on which to begin. But there is a measure of truth with those who still object. There will not be enough basis of agreement to last very long unless that foundation is to become broader.

There is an interesting passage in one of Sir Alfred Lyall's volumes, entitled *Asiatic Studies*, in which, surveying the history of the Asiatic states, he tries to determine what the function of religion has been in holding together a society of very diverse and heterogeneous elements, and his conclusion is that "religion and intermarriage are the bonds that amalgamate or isolate sound groups" and that "religion has often shown itself more effective as a bond of union, than territorial patriotism." We know very well that it was only because Christianity at last supplied common reli-

gious sentiments and convictions to the vast, disintegrating Roman Empire that that empire was held together for still longer generations. Let me cite the fact in a paragraph from Professor Ramsay's *Pauline and Other Studies*.

In the minds of the ancients, no union of men, small or great, good or bad, humble or honorable, was conceivable without a religious bond to hold it together. The Roman Empire if it was to become an organic unity, must derive its vitality and its hold on men's minds, from some religious bond. Patriotism to the ancients was adherence to a common religion, just as the family tie was not common blood but communion in the family religion. Accordingly, when Augustus essayed the great task of consolidating the loosely aggregated parts of the vast Empire, he had to find a religion to consecrate the unity by a common idea and sentiment. The existing religions were all national, while the Empire was striving to extirpate the national divisions and create a supra-national unity. A new religion was needed. Partly with conscious intention, partly borne on the tide of events, the young Empire created the imperial religion, the worship of an idea,—the cult of the majesty of Rome as represented by the incarnate deity present on earth in the person of the reigning Emperor and by the dead gods, his deified predecessors on the throne. [Just exactly this Japan has tried to do in our generation.]

Except for the slavish adulation of the living Emperor, the idea was not devoid of nobility, but it was incapable of life because it degraded human nature and was founded upon a lie. But Paul gave the Empire a more serviceable idea. He made possible that unity at which the imperial policy was aiming. The true path of development for the Empire lay in allowing free play to the idea which Paul offered and strengthening itself through this unifying religion. That principle of perfect religious freedom, which we regard as Seneca's, directed for a

time the imperial policy and caused the acquittal of Paul on his first trial in Rome. But freedom was soon exchanged for the policy of fire and sword. The imperial gods would not give place to a more real religion and fought for two and a half centuries to maintain their sham worship against it. When at last the idea of Paul was even reluctantly and imperfectly accepted by the emperors, no longer claiming to be gods, it gave new life to the rapidly perishing organization of the empire and conquered the triumphant barbarian enemy. If it had not been for Paul, if one may guess at what might have been, no man would now remember the Roman and Greek civilization. Barbarism proved too powerful for the Graeco-Roman civilization unaided by the new religious bond, and every channel through which that civilization was preserved or interest in it maintained, either is now or has been in some essential part of its course Christian after the Pauline form.

I believe that exactly what Christianity did for the Roman Empire in unifying its discord and giving it a basis on which its life could be prolonged, Christianity has to do for the nations to-day, and we shall never solve our international problems until we have provided human life with those religious conceptions by which alone mankind can be united against all that rends humanity asunder.

We should also remind ourselves that a just and secure international order is itself an idea which can only be kept alive by and upon other ideas adequate to sustain it and that only Christianity embodies and can supply those great ideas. I mean such ideas as, first, the idea of one God and one law. We are never going to bind together mankind in one just and secure international order if east and west of Suez there are different decalogues, if the same law does not run all the world

around. We can never set up a unified humanity on any basis of polytheism or polynomism. There must be one head over all the great body and one great law laid down for all its life.

I mean, in the second place, such an idea as the moral and biological unity of humanity and the nonexistence of racial superiorities, except as conceived as superiorities of capacity to serve the whole. We cannot set up a satisfying and enduring international order save as we rest on the principle that God has actually made of one blood all the nations of men, and that what we are accustomed to speak of as racial superiorities are discriminations springing subjectively out of the preferences of the race that is doing the judging. As a matter of fact we ought to have a sense of proportion and perspective enough to realize as an historic fact and as a sociological fact to-day that every race thinks itself to be superior to other races.

I came the other day on an old book, Jedediah Morse's *American Universal Geography*, published in Boston in the year 1796, and I found in it this footnote. It was the story of an interview between an Indian chief and Colonel Morgan in 1766 at a great salt lick in Ohio. The old chief was a man of eighty-four, leading a band of Iroquois and Wyandotte Indians, and this was the tale he told Colonel Morgan:

After the Great Spirit formed the world, He made the various birds and beasts which now inhabit it. He also made man but having formed him white and very imperfect and ill-tempered, he placed him on one side of the world, which he now inhabits, from which he has lately found a passage across the water to be a plague to us. As the Great Spirit was not pleased with this, His first work, he took black clay and made

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what you call a negro, with woolly hair. This black man was much better than the white man but still he did not answer the wish of the Great Spirit; that is, he was imperfect. At last the Great Spirit, having procured a piece of pure red clay, formed from it the red man perfectly to his own mind, and He was so well pleased with him that He placed him on this great island separate from the white and black men, and gave him rules for his conduct, promising happiness in proportion as that should be deserved.

Now, that is the ingenious, instinctive judgment of each race upon the other. A friend of mine was traveling in the interior of China. He had lived there many years and was dressed as a Chinese and spoke the language as the people around him spoke it. He passed through a little town where there was a Christian church. As he went by the church and looked in, there was service going on and he stopped near the door to listen to what the Chinese preacher might be saying. He was setting forth his ideas of ethnology and explaining to his hearers that there were many different kinds and colors of people in the world. He said: "First of all, there are the white people, then there are the black people, then there are the red people, then there are the brown people, and then there are we Chinese, the skin colored people."

Every race thinks it is skin-colored and that the others are the tinted races of the world. We are never going to build a human order on such ideas. We have to realize that there is no inherently superior race. No doubt the so-called white race has many advantages and holds in trust much for other races which it is to share with them but every race has its qualities of superiority and I suppose that, if literally we were to

judge races by the moral standards of the gospels, the negro race has more of those ethical, temperamental qualities which our Lord Jesus Christ exalted than any other race in the world. The superiority of which we feel conscious in the races is meaningless unless interpreted in terms of trusteeship for a united humanity.

In the third place, there is the idea of religious liberty, of the perfect freedom of the human spirit, without which we can never build a secure and just international order. We cannot build a united human order on any limitations of the freedom of the human spirit. We have to build it on the largest conceivable liberty and only Christianity has the conception of that type of liberty.

The kind of human order in which Christianity teaches us to believe requires a basis of universal human good will as well as common ideas. We are confronting to-day a very interesting new interpretation that bids fair to push off the ground the old conception of economic determinism, which had so much to do with landing us in this Hell that we are trying to get out of now in the world. We are replacing these old notions of economic necessitarianism with new ideas of climatic determinism. In his book, *The Conflict of Colour*, Mr. Putnam Weale sets forth the thesis that religious ideas, social conceptions, and political institutions are a matter of longitude and latitude, that they are determined by the climatic conditions which surround the people possessing these different ideas and institutions, that you cannot transport them from one climate to another. The theory of one common body of moral conceptions, of one common universal religion, he holds to be forbidden by the climatic diversities of the world.

Over against any such conclusions we just set our own human instinct of the unity of mankind, our conscious experience of brotherhood with men of every race, of every color, of every climate, of every section of the world. We have had enough of this experience of communicable religion, of interracial identity of spirit, of Christian understanding and acceptability to justify our conviction in this regard.

Let me cite three bits of testimony. The first one is from Mr. Fukuzawa, the most powerful nonofficial person in his day in Japan, the founder of the newspaper in Japan historically most nearly filling the position of the London *Times*, a man who has left his imprint deeply upon the educational, the intellectual, and the moral life of his land.

There can be no doubt that many serious troubles would have occurred had not the Christian missionary not only shown to the Japanese the altruistic side of the occidental character, but also by his teaching and by his preaching imparted a new and attractive aspect to the intercourse, which otherwise would have been masterful and repellent. The Japanese cannot thank the missionary too much for the admirable leaven which he introduced into their relations with foreigners. . . . I once said that if no missionaries had ever come to our country, the dissoluteness and wantonness of foreigners would have come to be much greater and our relations to foreigners would not be what they are now.

Let me take another testimony from a far other land, from Sir William Wadsworth Young, coming back from his lieutenant-governorship of the Punjab in India and reporting to a great gathering of business men in St. Michael's in Cornhill in London.

As a business man speaking to business men, I am prepared to say that the work which has been done by missionary agency in India exceeds in importance all that has been done—and much has been done—by the British Government in India since its commencement. Let me take the province which I know best. I ask myself, what has been the most potent influence which has been working among the people since annexation fifty-four years ago? And to that question I feel there is but one answer, Christianity as set forth in the lives and teaching of Christian missionaries. I do not underestimate the forces which have been brought to bear on the races in the Punjab by our beneficent rule, by British justice and enlightenment, but I am convinced that the effect on native character produced by the self-denying labors of missionaries is vastly greater. The Punjab bears on its historic roll the names of many Christian statesmen, men who have honored God by their lives and endeared themselves to the people by their faithful work. But I venture to say, if they could speak to us from the Great Unseen, there is not one of them who would not say that the work done by men like French and Clark and Newton and Forman, who went in and out among the people for a whole generation or more, who preached by their lives the nobility of self-sacrifice, and the love of God and man is a higher and nobler work, and more far-reaching in its consequences.

I offer one more testimony from a still different land, a long petition signed by Persian seals and Persian names from all the leading men of Kumanshah in southwestern Kurdish Persia, beginning with the Iman Jumei, that is, the chief Mohammedan ecclesiastic of the city, followed by all the other leading Mohammedan ecclesiastics, the leading merchants and business men and bankers of the city. It is addressed to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and it is an appeal

that they will not take a certain medical missionary, Dr. Packard, away from that purely Mohammedan and Kurdish city because he and the new things he has brought are indispensable to the city.

I could multiply the evidence from all over the world. There are no climatic divisions that split mankind into irrevocable and incommunicable diversities that can never be unified. Human love leaps all boundaries. There is a fellowship that is of all mankind. We shall set up no satisfying international order unless we build it on foundations of universal human good will, and these only Christ can produce.

Last of all, the only kind of an international order that will endure, that will stand the strain which will surely come upon it, must be an order founded upon righteousness. No idea or institution that is not based on truth, and pervaded with truth, can enduringly prevail. And the kind of an order to whose realization we are working our way—so slowly—is an order that must rest on righteousness. Until we build the life of the world, all our international and interracial relationships, on the same foundation on which alone we can build our lives, we shall have no order of mankind, healing the discords, bridging the gulfs, relating men in one orderly universal human society.

I know how far away we are from this, but we are making progress across the years. Consider the principles that built up the British Empire in India and then compare them and the attitude of the conquering nation and of all the other nations of the world toward that process, with the principles on which the Congo Free State was founded, and mark the long progress in the interval. Then take the mandates under which the

German colonies are held now under the League of Nations by the different trustee nations to whom they are confided and compare the terms of those mandates with the principles on which the Congo Free State was built up. No one who will do this can deny that we have come a long, long way across the last hundred years toward bringing home to the consciousness of the world the sanctions of Christian duty and obligation and relationship.

But it may be that some will say: "Yes, but the task is too big for the forces on which you propose to lay it. Christianity has done about as much as anything has done, perhaps as much as could be hoped for, but the weight of the moral inertia of humanity, the deepest, inherent traditions that we brought up with us out of the jungle and that we cannot shake ourselves free from, the wolf nature in us that is as powerful and ravenous to-day as it ever was,—all these make a burden too heavy for Christianity even to bear." No, they do not. When one thinks of what has been achieved by a few scattered individuals operating in the spirit of Christ and toward His great goals, one does not despair of the absolute transformation of the world, if once for all the forces of humanity are laid open to the uses of Christ.

I can think back over this whole missionary generation, to the beginning of the Student Volunteer Movement, when it chose its bold motto, "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation." That generation has come to an end and the world has not been evangelized—but it might have been. It was not the fault of the ideal, it was only that the number of men and women, ready to forget everything else and lend

themselves to the one supreme task for which Christ died, were not enough to enable God to reach the whole, big, moving mass of human life and cleanse it and lift it to the order that is His will for man. But some day it will come, because the head of every man—that is, the head of humanity—is Christ.