

THE CHRISTIAN-PAGAN NATIONS

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The paradox of the twentieth century is that everywhere Christian relationships prevail between individuals, but pagan relationships between the nations to which these individuals belong. This is the observation of Dr. Frederick Lynch of *The Congregationalist* (Boston) from the vantage point of a summer holiday at Lucerne, Switzerland. In this summer meeting-place of Europe he has seen English and Germans grouped together, "Their talk full of the utmost good-will," the relations "Christian through and through." "The German would never think of stealing the Englishman's purse, and the Englishman would never suspect the German of murderous designs upon him." If they differed in a dispute, they would not fly at each other's throat; they would refer the judgment to the nearest friend, or if it were a serious quarrel, to an impartial jury. "As a matter of fact, nationality is not uppermost in their talk." "But the moment the German Government and the English Government exchange words, the whole atmosphere changes from Christian to pagan." In fact,

"It is as if Christianity had never existed, or else had no part in the relationships of nations. The talk is all of preparation for murderous assault of one nation upon the other. Each declares the other harbors designs of invasion, and each seems to believe that the other would seize the land at once did it dare. Instead of good-will there is recrimination. No bandit in pre-Christian Europe ever armed himself against a fellow man as each one of these nations is arming itself against the other. Should the slightest dispute arise, these nations are ready to fly at each other's throats, and it is only because the few who believe Christian ethics should prevail between nations are influential enough to be heard in these days that these two great nations were kept from flying at each other's throats last year. It seems too horrible to be believed, but it is true; and so pagan still are all the codes of national ethics in spite of Hague conferences and peace congresses, that it would take little to plunge these two nations into war.

"There are a good many Italians in Lucerne and a good many Italian papers are sold here. I have been interested in getting the Italian point of view on the war with Turkey. The simplicity of that view is the most striking thing about it, except its barefaced paganism. It is simply this: Italy needed Tripoli and wanted it, and, having become strong enough to take it from Turkey, proceeded to take it. The beauty of it all is that no one sees anything wrong in doing it.

"It would be wrong and un-Christian for an Italian to steal a Turk's purse or to kill a Turk on the street. But there is nothing wrong in Italy's stealing Turkey's purse or destroying Turks in so doing. (The only man I have met whose conscience troubled him a little,

justified Italy's act on the ground that she was simply taking back what once was hers, for ancient Rome once owned North Africa.)

“Even the Church has fallen in with the Government and is blessing the armies—to little avail. The most encouraging thing has been the unprecedented condemnation of Italy's act by the European press. A German said to me that 25 years ago no daily paper in Europe would have seen anything wrong in a nation robbing or destroying another nation.”

Dr. Lynch finds a “rather striking instance of how this pagan ethics for nations persists right in the midst of our Christian ethics” in the daily avocations of his Lucerne neighbors, which he reports with these comments:

“Opposite our terrace, across the lake, is the station of the airships. Every afternoon at five there come out a great yellow dirigible balloon, fish-shaped, with sweeping propellers, and a monoplane whose resemblance to a great bird is startlingly striking. They circle around the city several times, the big Zeppelin ship slowly, the monoplane with the swiftness of an eagle. Now the people who sip tea on our terrace are the most estimable people. They go to church, and they are full of brotherly kindness to each other. But all the talk as these new adventures of the heavens fly above us is of their use in killing somebody. It is of the possibility of dropping bombs on cities, of building up aerial navies.

“Already France has gone crazy over a navy in the air, and even the children of the nations have contributed their pennies and a new outburst of so-called patriotism. Of course Germany and England are endeavoring to outstrip her, and so a new, mad race of armament has begun. Lucerne is full of military officers studying their airships.”—
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