

[Third Universalist Society, New York City]

PRAYER AND WAR

The Rev. W. S. Crowe Does Not Think God Should be Asked to Help

"Prayer and War" was the subject of the sermon yesterday morning of the Rev. W. S. Crowe of the Church of the Eternal Hope [Third Universalist Society]. He said:

"In a speech from the throne the other day the Queen Regent appealed to God for victory of the Spanish arms. Several of our Congressmen have made a like appeal to the Almighty for the success of the American arms. These prayers of the two Nations for the destruction of each other are offered to the same God, whom they both call our Father. That two nations of the same faith should appeal to the same God for vengeance on each other is a theological difficulty, a doctrinal embarrassment, a religious absurdity, which the thinking people of the world cannot much longer abide. The very sentiment of prayer is fatally compromised. If prayer is to hold its place in the thinking world it must assume a less vulnerable attitude.

"We cannot believe that God ever sided with any of the armies in the wars of the past. The modern world has thought its way up to such a vast conception of God that the idea of His taking part in any human struggle is supremely repulsive. If God were on our side and if He ever works a miracle, how easy it would be for Him to disable the Spanish fleet. If He sided with the Queen Regent, how simple a matter it would have been to cause the destruction of the Maine, to betray the Paris on her homeward voyage, to produce a series of accidents that would make all of our battleships useless. I cannot believe that there is even a Spaniard with any of the quality of the soldier in him who would rejoice at such a miracle. Neither can I believe that any American would pray for such a miracle against Spain if he faintly suspected that it would be granted. We can plant our mines under the water and speed our torpedoes in the night, but the reverence which our common Christianity teaches us forbids us to attribute these dark schemes of death to Him who is the Father of us all. Let us fight our own battles in a manly fashion, depending upon our own strength and genius. Let us trust that Americans and Spaniards, having fought it out as brave and respected enemies, shall meet in the higher life as friends.

"God has placed all earthy affairs in our hands and we must work out our national destinies. If God should elect to work miracles we should expect him to prevent war and not to assist. A few quiet miracles several years ago to relieve Cuban taxation, to prevent Weyler's barbarism, to insure a wiser treatment of all their colonies, to modernize and moralize the entire Spanish people, would have been vastly better than any miracle now to help us destroy the Spanish navy. Every great battle is the dawn of a better time for the human race. If the loss of life and the destruction of property which we have authorized shall lift the West Indies from barbarism and shall compel Spain into a nobler intelligence, history will record the accomplishment in letters of gold."

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