

## BOOK REVIEWS

WAR OR PEACE? 1. THE LONG FAILURE OF WESTERN ARMS, VOLUME 1, MANUFACTURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR; VOLUME 2, PULLING THE STRINGS OF FASCISM By Alan Storkey, Cambridge, Christian Studies Press, 2014, pp. 486 \$17.26 (available as E-book for Kindle reader)

This work is a major project that Alan Storkey has been working on in recent years. Evidently, as he has grown older, he has become impressed with the importance of telling this story, the first part of which we find in this document. *War and Peace 1* is available as an E-book for a Kindle Reader and its price is ridiculously low by current commercial standards (\$5US +/-). Its subtitle - The Long Failure of Western Arms - along with the titles of the two volumes contained therein - Manufacturing the First World War & Pulling the Strings of Fascism provide the gist of his narrative. And there is more to come in a second instalment, in which The Perpetually Armed World (Volume 3), and Keeping a Failed System Going (Volume 4) indicate his intention to bring us up to date, while also commending the cause of peace and disarmament.

Storkey takes on his "story teller" role in a style that can be easily and readily understood. He has also reckoned with the needs of readers - teachers and students - who might benefit from a highly condensed and summarised statement of what his work contains. He provides this in an appendix, the opening paragraph of which reads:

Wars come around like winter. They have led to the death of about two hundred million people in the last hundred years and we have been conditioned to be fatalistic about them. The 1914 War, the War to End all Wars, resulted in millions of horribly killed and maimed, and widows and statesmen determined to end this horror. They tried, but after a decade and a bit they failed, and since then we have accepted that war is more or less inevitable. Year after year new ones arrive. But humanity produces wars, and perhaps the time has come to review and rethink our military history. We arm, but seldom pull back to consider whether all of this is necessary.

That is the gist; that is the story in a nutshell. It is not as if Alan is telling us a story we know nothing about. To the contrary. This superbly written account is about how we - the dwellers of this planet called by God to be His stewards - manufacture and go to war. Storkey does not claim to tell us anything we could not find elsewhere, had we the inclination to go and look for it. In fact, he writes as if this is a story that most adult persons on the planet know only too well, even if we shrink from telling it in its awesome and bloody entirety. Storkey aims to tell the modern story of war *in toto*. And it needs to be told in this form. It is a story covering 225 years and we are still very much living in it.

Why then, if we know it already, would Storkey suggest that we do not dare to tell it to ourselves? Is it that we cannot hold it together in one continuous narrative? Well, the reasons are diverse as they are obvious. We know too well its horror; and who can blame us for wanting

to avoid the anguish? Storkey may not exclude conspiracy from his story but he is also alert to the devastating deeply-rooted anxiety that, for generations, makes it an irksome story to tell. And yet he would help us avoid self-deception that might creep up if, through our deep sadness, we neglect the story that makes sense (and nonsense) of so much of our news, if not "entertainment".

What Storkey writes here reminds me of what Herbert Butterfield penned in the opening pages of his little book, published in 1939 in a "Great Lives" series: *Napoleon*. Here is something of the "back story" to Bonaparte's contribution.

Whether the French Revolution led the world to democracy is a question which has still to be decided. There can be no doubt of one of its effects: it led to the development of a more powerful type of state. It produced a state more calculated for efficiency, more highly-organized, more wide in its competence, more terrifying in its power than any which then existed; and it made government more irresistible from the fact that henceforward government was to claim to be the incontrovertible agent of the new god, the organic people... The French revolution puts an end to the gentlemanly warfare - almost the mimic of warfare we might be tempted to say - of the eighteenth century professional armies. It puts an end to the urbane diplomatic game played with counters by cosmopolitan aristocrats, cynical sometimes, yet too worldly-wise for the last insanities of unforgiving passion. It brings conscription, the nation in arms, the mobilisation of all the resources of the state for unrelenting conflict. It heralds the age when peoples, woefully ignorant of one another, bitterly uncomprehending, lie in uneasy juxtaposition watching one another's sins with hysteria and indignation. It heralds Armageddon, the giant conflict for justice and right between angered populations each of which thinks it is the righteous one. So a new kind of warfare is born - the modern counterpart to the old conflicts of religion (Butterfield, 1939, pp. 15-17).

Written in that fateful year 1939, Butterfield's study of Napoleon tells us how "unbelief and revolution" converged in imperial presumption that further changed the earth's landscape beyond recognition. His were also the decades when the "industrial revolution" gained momentum. And though it involved a radical turn from Christianity, Europe and its colonies were not able to avoid obeisance to new deities including the "organic people".

Storkey has provided, as the cover to his tome, a painting of a soldier completely dominated by the spirit of the "new kind of warfare". There he stands, spiritually emptied one minute, and possessed by 70 times 7 spirits more evil the next - a hollow man, trapped in the trenches, covered the mud, the site of flies, standing in vermin, competing with rats, trying to stave off the stench, the horror. This is the man possessed and driven by evil spirits of military madness.

Like Butterfield, Storkey begins his story "Chapter One: The Start of the Industrial Arms Trade" in 1789 with the French Revolution. He notes the Napoleonic wars and the European

era of "relative peace", 1815-1853. The story line explains the genetic development of the armaments industry that emerged from industrial initiatives of Alfred Krupp of Essen. And thus the story unfolds from 1838, telling us how the militarist ethic became inextricably connected with the capitalist spirit that has taken possession of the armaments industry and much else of our global life ever since. This is the major thread of the narrative, testing the hypothesis that armaments manufacture and trade can be considered as an independent variable in the ongoing disclosure of a world-wide culture of militarised conflict. This is the all-too-gruesome story about the wars of peoples, nations, blocs and coalitions of the willing. It is a bloody story and if we are not completely exhausted by it, we are quite rightly left with many, many questions about where the world is headed, where we are headed, and what our God-given responsibility requires of us. In the light (or, more truly, the darkness?) of all this, how seriously, are we following Jesus Christ, the light of the world?

Let me make one other point about Alan Storkey, the sociologist. His method of exposition contrasts sharply with that of Max Weber to whom we have already alluded indirectly by juxtaposing a "militarist ethic" with the "capitalist spirit". If we look briefly at the famous paragraphs by which Weber summed up his famous essay (in its edited 1920 version that was the basis of Talcott Parsons' 1930 translation), we note Weber's allusions to the disaster(s) into which Europe had fallen. We also confront his deep reservations about the future, including the future of the pursuit of wealth in Europe's frontier, the United States, where "the pursuit of wealth ... tends to be associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport" (Weber 1930, 182). In preparation for this, says Weber, the stringent, ascetic way of life has departed the monastic cells as it was fated to do. Thus it moved out

into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality ... building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt (Weber, 1930, p. 181)

This is Weber's nutshell historical formulation of his "protestant ethic" thesis. What has become of the Puritan and his ethic has *universal* significance and value (PESC 13). This is where we now are, says Weber. We are locked into this situation. (Talcott Parsons was to assert that Weber pessimism got the better of his analysis.)

In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (Weber, 1930, p. 181)

Indeed Weber limited his discussion to exploring the connection between two historical "ideal types" - protestantism and capitalism. This is an historical and scientific study, disciplined by Weber to conform to his "methodological individualism". It is, indeed, an essay about the stringent life-style of duty that had been historically pioneered by the Puritan, and subsequently let loose upon the world to become an autonomous, fateful power.

Material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. Today the spirit of religious asceticism - whether finally, who knows? - has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer. The rosy blush of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading, and the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs (Weber, 1930, pp. 181-2).

Weber goes on to say that "no-one knows who will live in this cage in the future". Further he opines that it might truly be said that the last stage of the cultural development brings us to "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved." (Weber, 1930, p.182)

Why would Weber put this as a "quotation"? It seems to have been put forward as a judgment made as the logical and historical last stage of human development (*letzten Menschen* - a phrase Weber also puts in quotes which Parsons does not include in his translation). Weber, in *this essay*, says he is seeking to document historical-scientific truth from an historical-scientific discussion. He is more concerned with the next task that he will have to embark upon rather than concluding his essay in sentiments framed from "the world of judgments of value and of faith." Hence *qua writer* he comes to the conclusion, stringently, pin-pointing the limit he has placed upon himself. Here he speaks scientifically. But this "brings us to the world of judgments of value and of faith, with which this purely historical discussion need not be burdened" (Weber 1930, p.182).

Weber's methodological individualism, his particular form of *Wertfrei* analysis, is set forth in terms of his commitment to a single-minded asceticism which in its own way is a bequest of the Puritan outlook. For the purposes of his scientific *Beruf*, Weber will not diverge from this path. But, even if the picture he drew, in concluding his essay, was well and truly formulated at least a decade before the outbreak of the war, nevertheless his readers could not avoid wondering about, for instance, the impact of the war so recently concluded, upon his understanding of where things are headed? Or was he wanting to suggest it was so obvious that he did not have to say so?

Is there something perverse here? Weber's stringency may also be a personal ethic to prevent himself from getting in "too deep", keeping himself focused on the task at hand. But is his attempt to keep "judgments of value and of faith" at arms length, protesting too much? It seems as if he is not wanting to enter into the manner in which his metaphors and allusions must resonate with the experience of his readers. Will not his readers find themselves in a dark forbidding "world of judgment of value and of faith", that he keeps so stringently at arm's length, when they read these final pages of this work?

Even if we conclude that in certain respects Storkey's story-telling is an extension of Weber's thesis - of what we *already know* all too well - War and Peace 1 The Long Failure of Western Arms does not partake of Weber's post-Puritan stringency in this sense. For Storkey,

qua Christian sociologist, it is not a matter of a methodological separation of facts and values to preserve the (alleged) scientific integrity of "purely historical discussion". Neither is it that values are only another kind of fact, but more exactly that in investigating such facts - the facts of the long-term failure of western arms, of the life and death they have brought over 225 years - is indeed the documentation of a story we need to hear.

This suggests that Storkey may also be confronting "piece-meal" ways of telling the historical-sociological story. Our need to have this story told comprehensively may indeed issue a more general challenge to scholarship that wants to maintain a "methodological individualism", if not a *Wertfrei* deparation of facts and values. Whatever else social scientific scholarship is called to tell, it is also the stories we know so well but seek to avoid.

How is that though we know well enough the tragic story of this 225 year long disaster that continues to threaten all our lives, we prefer not to give it out in full but instead tell it in sound bites. Storkey's monumental work prompts the following question: is our passive incredulity to this troubling meta-narrative *because in some sense we have allowed ourselves to become a dependent variable* of this 225+ year disaster within which we still live? Are we living within a story of great denial? Is that what we can learn from War or Peace? Storkey's retelling of this story is with a winsome Christian spirit that aims to encourage, and his style is not burdensome.

It is a remarkable fact, repeatedly demonstrated, that those endowed with the story telling skills get regularly co-opted into accounts of the massive tragedy of war that renders them mere episodes of national and state destiny. Consider, for example, the recent commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli in Australia and New Zealand. Gallipoli was the disastrous engagement of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC cove, Ari Burnu, is now the site of a war cemetery on the Turkish peninsula). Once again our entire politics are taken up with hearing how these British South Pacific colonies "came of age" when young men answered the call and went and fought and died on foreign fields in the Great War. Why do we say it was when these nations "came of age"? Does it perhaps salve the grief we have about such a great loss of life? What is to be understood when that is said? Why the repeated statement that these young men went for us and our life is now their bequest to us?

To now type such questions on a screen as part of this review has the feel of challenging something sacred, the feel of desecration. The commemoration has come and gone reinforcing the view that the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915 was when we matured and became adult citizens of the world. "Lest we forget". But as modern nations we are not alone in this kind of thinking.

Harry Stout comments that the US civil war was prominently interpreted as "quite literally a blood sacrifice required by God for sinners North and South if they were to inherit their providential destiny" (Stout 2006, 249). In such story-telling the American civil war is depicted as the climactic chapter in the historical testament that revealed the incarnation of American civil religion, the baptism of the United States in the blood of a necessary sacrifice. And the US is not alone in such story-telling; perhaps it is the most prominent due its "highest development" (Weber 1930, 182), and the dissemination of its motion-picture industry.

---

What Alan Storkey does in his book is to force us to ask ourselves: just how militarised are we in our world-view? How deeply committed to war are we? Just how thoroughly compromised are we spiritually by the way in which we neglect facing this serious long-term disaster that continues to dominate our every-day life? Are we truly wanting to promote peace? Is there not good reason to support universal disarmament? Storkey concludes, in contrast to Weber's essay, by bringing us to "judgments of value and of faith", with which he finds his historical discussion necessarily burdened with the light cloak, the light yoke of Jesus Himself.

The way of peace and disarmament is open before us in a crowded, interdependent planet where wars and terrorism are even more senseless. It requires a plan of world disarmament which is clear, and sees the job which was not done in 1932 through to the end. The plan would require, say a 10% cut a year in all militaries for a decade, carefully policed by the UN... We could with principled wisdom and a commitment to peace and mutual justice close down this vast waste of life and resources in a decade, so that nation speaks peace unto nation and neither is there war any more. Jesus said, after the resurrection, "My peace I leave with you." It is time we recognized that peace is never against any one. It is always with others and does not allow the construction of enemies, especially so that an industry may prosper by selling the instruments of death.

Making peace is a good practical and necessary way for the human race and we can disarm the world to the great benefit of all of us. Come on, folks, let's do it.

Alan Storkey is suggesting that Isaiah's prophesy is still our agenda because King Jesus shall all the world command. His blessing is still held out to us inviting us to join with Him and become peacemakers, the children of God.

No strife shall rage, nor hostile feuds  
Disturb those peaceful years;  
To ploughshares men shall beat their swords,  
To pruning hooks their spears.

No longer hosts encount'ring hosts  
Shall crowds of slain deplore  
They hang their trumpet in the hall  
And study war no more.

### Works Cited

- Butterfield, H. (1939). *Napoleon*. London: Duckworth.  
Stout, H.S. (2006). *Upon the altar of the nation: A moral history of the civil war*. New York: Viking.  
Weber, M. (1930). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Bruce C Wearne  
Point Lonsdale