

God's Looking-glass

We view the war with horror, our foeman with disgust;
 We say his new religion has dragged him in the dust;
 We prattle how his kultur has darkened all his light
 And brought him like primeval man to worship brutal might.
 His outrage makes us shudder—Oh! cease; Awake and see,
 Put on, put on the Publican, put off the Pharisee.
 This conflict raging like a fire o'er Europe's bloody sod.
 This is for us, with all its shame, the looking-glass of God.
 You say the Huns have idols! Alas, what do we find!
 Ours differ only in degree; they differ not in kind.
 Our foemen worship Steel and Force; we worship Gold and Ease.
 If one should seek the higher gods which would he choose of these?

And having made us golden calves we placed them everywhere;
 In shop and farm and senate house, in every mart and square;
 We smuggled them into the school, and last, with impious fraud
 And brazen face, we set them up within the house of God.
 Then with our idols duly set we paid them worship fit;
 Exchanged the Sermon on the Mount for ethics of the Pit;
 And this our great hypocrisy not seeing even then,
 We taught as very truths of God the precepts base of men.
 Whatever haze obscured our creed two points we grasped full well;
 That wealth, quick got, was paradise; that poverty was hell.
 And as what man believeth he is in very deed
 Our constant daily practice was worthy of our creed.
 Our Father gave us years of peace: we filled them up with wrong;
 We let the base oppress the just, we deified the strong;
 We bade the teacher fire our youths with every noble aim,
 Then sent them to the market-place to learn its sordid game.

Oh, must the mountains burn with fire, and every valley quake
 Before our fat-enclosed hearts will to the truth awake;
 That all the horrors of this war, and all its pain and sin,
 Are but reflections of our hearts and what goes on therein,
 That if we truly do desire to see the age of peace
 These hidden wars within our breasts must now forever cease?
 Then let us study well that glass—this fratricidal war—
 Behold the demon-things therein are OURSELVES AS WE ARE.
 And may our newly-opened eyes have strength this truth to see:
 They who would liberate the world must first themselves be free.

—James Lawler.