

The Church and the Call of the New Era.

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WE have been passing through one of the great judgment-periods of the world's history. We stand at the end of one era, and at the beginning of another. The history of the world is not one of even continuous progress. That is a view of it which we had grown too apt in recent years to accept under the influence of the thought of evolution or development; as if there was a principle resident or immanent in things which made it inevitable that the world should gradually move onwards and upwards. In a world, however, in which God reigns, and reigns for moral and spiritual ends, there are also days of Divine 'crisis' or judgment, great catastrophic days of history, when wrong courses of thought and action if persisted in are allowed to come to a head so as to be 'shown up,' and thus lead the world's reason and conscience to condemn them and to will better things.

Such days are days of Divine visitation above other days of the world's history—veritable 'days of the Lord' or 'days of the Son of Man' as Scripture writers would call them—when God's judgments are abroad in the earth and the inhabitants thereof are taught righteousness. Such a day of 'crisis' is the present, when through God's overruling one order has been judged and a new and better order is travailing to the birth.

I.

What this 'crisis' or judgment was in its main issue may be stated very briefly. Primarily it was a judgment on a certain ideal of international life which had been entertained and persistently cherished by one of the European nations through many years. It is the ideal commonly spoken of as 'militarism,' which in plain terms is simply the ideal of 'the will-to-power' or life-for-self among the nations, leading, if realized, to world-domination and world-control, 'Germany over all.'

That is what brought the war about to begin with, the governance of that ideal leading to the disregarding of the rights of weaker states by a stronger, and the tearing asunder of international law or treaty as a mere 'scrap of paper,' simply

because 'military necessity,' the necessity of victory for the strong in the pursuit of its ends, seemed to demand such a course. And what the progress of the struggle did under God was to expose that ideal by revealing its true nature and consequences. The unmeasured ruthlessness and 'frightfulness' which were the most marked characteristics of the struggle as carried on by the enemy, the employment of every inhuman cruelty and device which science and scientific efficiency, so-called 'kultur,' have placed within man's reach—these only revealed as with a searchlight what is essentially and logically involved in such an ideal when given unbridled sway. It is an ideal, it came to be seen, which involved the destruction of the very foundation-principles of a Christian civilization, liberty, justice, fraternity, and honour among the nations. It meant indeed the negation of God Himself—at least of all that a Christian calls God—and the crucifixion of humanity. With the result that, as with the progress of the conflict this was ever more clearly realized, we had the impressive spectacle of practically the whole civilized world rising up in moral indignation and revolt, determined in its united strength, cost what life and treasure it might, to save Europe and the world from the menace of such an inhuman and barbaric policy.

Now in this world-wide revulsion against the essential barbarism of the militaristic spirit and ideal, as well as in the unprecedented measure of international co-operation for the vindication of the principles of justice and brotherhood and for the destruction of mere self-interest as the guiding principle of national life, we have already under God a great step forward towards the coming of a new and better order among the nations. And more; through the struggle we have the exposure and condemnation not only of the militaristic ideal but also of a materialistic order of civilization. The war 'the proof of the failure of Christianity'! Nay rather, as became ever clearer with the progress of the conflict, the war was the revelation of what comes from the failure to apply Christianity and its ideals in national and international life, a revelation all the more impressive that it was made in the life of

a nation claiming scientific and cultural superiority above all other nations of the earth. In the light of the war we see that intellectual and scientific and commercial progress in and by themselves, if not controlled and guided by worthy spiritual ideals, only lead to anarchy and world-desolation; and that the only hope for civilization and for the world's progress and peace lies in the emergence of a more Christian spirit and a fuller carrying out in international relationships of the ideals of service and brotherhood taught by Jesus Christ.

II.

The spirit and ideal thus exposed and condemned as 'writ large' in international relationships, and evidenced in its most thorough-going and climactic manifestation and expression in Prussian militarism is, however, not confined to these relationships. It is at work within our own national life as well, in much of our own social, industrial, and economic life—the spirit and ideal of life-for-self, of the will-to-gain and-profit and-power, the spirit of unbridled and unprincipled competition, involving the exploiting of the weak by the strong and the reproduction within the life of our own nation of those very wrongs and atrocities, the same denial of God and crucifixion of humanity, which, as we saw them on the large scale on the part of Germany, we were moved so justly to loathe and to condemn. And what the war has done under God's over-ruling is to reveal as with a searchlight what such a spirit and such an ideal means in any relationship, national or international, and to lead the world's reason and conscience to will better things.

So it is that through the war the call to social reconstruction has become so insistent, the call to a reconstructing and rebuilding of the life of society less on the basis of life-for-self and the will-to-get and-gain, and more on the basis of brotherly co-operation and good-will and mutually regarding service. Victory in the European struggle has been accomplished. But this victory is not an end-in-itself, it is only a means to an end beyond itself. It is a victory for *certain ideals*, and as such is a trust wherewith we have been trusted for the fulfilment of certain specific purposes. Others were willing to die for victory's sake, believing that through their suffering and dying they were under God purchasing a better world for those who were left behind, a world in which righteousness and

brotherhood and peace should be established. It is ours who remain to accept this trust, this legacy of blood, and use it in such a way as to 'carry on' in the spirit of those who gave themselves for victory's sake and to make dominant in the life of our own and other lands the ideals of justice and liberty and brotherhood for which so many gave their all. Such a reconstruction and renewal of the spirit of our national life will be the only adequate compensation and the alone sufficient memorial of the sacrifices of those who gave themselves in the struggle, as it will also be the only guarantee that peace in Europe will be followed by peace at home.

For this work of renewal and reconstruction the work of war, after all, was but preparatory. It has been compared to a surgical operation. Its function was eliminative rather than constructive—to remove an evil growth or menace to the world's peace and progress. For rebuilding or upbuilding, once the menace has been removed, some more positive creative constitutive principle or power must be supplied. And the only hope, as the war itself under God has made more manifest than ever, lies in a fuller Christianizing of all life's contacts, in making more dominant in all the relationships of life—social, economic, political, as well as international—of the spirit of Christ, the spirit of brotherhood and good-will and unselfish, self-denying living. Herein lies the tremendous responsibility of the Christian Church in the present world-situation—the Church as put in trust by her living Lord with the gospel of Christian brotherhood and good-will; the Church whose primary business it is 'not to maintain a tradition of doctrine or worship, but to carry on a crusade for the accomplishment of those ends for which Christ lived and died and rose again.'

III.

Never has the Church faced so great a call or so great opportunities of service, and the challenge presented to her in this period of reconstruction is in the main twofold:

1. It is a challenge, first, to thought—to an energetic *reconsideration* of what is involved in the application of the principle of Christian brotherhood to the social and industrial problems which are already so insistently confronting us. Writing to the Philippians, St. Paul said: 'Let your citizenship (rather than "conversation" as in A.V.)

be worthy of the gospel of Christ' (1²⁷). And what the determining principle and fundamental condition of such Christian citizenship is, the Apostle defines a few verses later, thus: 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,' or, as Moffatt translates it, 'Each with an eye to the interests of others as well as to his own.'

The foundational character of this principle for a true Christian social order all the world has been made to realize in a new way through the war. The ideal or principle of life which has been judged and condemned in the recent struggle is, as we have seen, that of the 'will-to-power' or life-for-self whether in international or in intra-national—social and industrial—relationships. In the process of the exposure and condemnation of this principle in the international relationship it came to be seen that the only hope of secure and stable peace among the nations lay in the dominance of a more Christian ideal—the ideal, namely, of a League of Nations bound together for the maintenance of the common good and common rights of all, by relation to which common good the conflicting interests of each must be determined. In like manner, in social and industrial relationships within the nation, the only solution and the only hope of peace, it is being increasingly made manifest, lies in what may be described as a League of Co-operators or Co-workers—in the different interests and classes, employer and employed, Capital and Labour, realizing themselves as partners in a common service and co-operating for the common good in a spirit of mutual understanding, sympathy, and good-will; mutual interest, 'each for all and all for each,' thus being substituted for mere self-interest as the guiding and controlling principle of the social and industrial order. What the application of this Christian principle of partnership or co-operation in industrial relationships involves—what is the Christian ideal of a social and industrial order pervaded by justice and brotherhood, and what must be done to bring this ideal nearer realization—to the consideration of this, and not to the mere enunciation of the general principle of brotherhood, the Church is being insistently called to-day. Here is a task demanding Christian wisdom and Christian courage, but it is a task which the Church cannot afford to neglect, if she is to fulfil her Divine function of expressing the

mind and will of Christ in this day of confusion and strife.

2. The challenge of the present to the Church is a challenge not only to thought but to life and action, a challenge to *reconsecration* and more heroic Christian living. Christianity essentially is a way of life, the Jesus way of life, the way of the cross and self-denial. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself—let him say "no" to self—and take up his cross and follow me.' That was Jesus' determining condition of discipleship, and why it was so lies in the very nature of the case. The root of the world's wrong, the essence of sin, is the putting of self at the centre of life instead of God. A wrong centralization of life, as the result of which not only our relation to God but in consequence our relations to our fellow-men are put out of joint. Conflict and disintegration and war of interests ensue. When the centre is changed, however, and Christ enthroned, then the principle of conflict and disruption is removed, and not only are men reconciled to God, but they are reconciled to one another, realizing community of interest and community of end, with a new sense of brotherhood and comradeship in a common service.

Here, then, in the situation in which by the goodness of God we find ourselves as a land and Empire to-day, is a challenge to the Church—and to the Church not merely as an institution, or not merely to her leaders or officers, but to us as individual members of the Church—to live our lives on a more heroic scale; to manifest the same spirit of sacrifice and devotion and the subordination of personal interests to the good of others as has been so grandly manifested in the war, only for more positive and constructive ends. To such a reconsecration or rededication of ourselves we are being summoned in loyalty at once to the God who has entrusted us with victory for ends of righteousness and world-brotherhood, and to those by whose devotion and sacrifice this trust has been made possible. The coming of victory through the sacrifices of others does not release or absolve us from sacrifice. Rather it binds us all the more to it, it lays a new constraint on us to live less unto ourselves and more in the power of the ideals for the realization which so many suffered and died. The torch they bore so bravely is handed on to us to carry forward, and without our sacrifice theirs must fail of its proper fruits. In

the words of Abraham Lincoln, spoken at Gettysburg in setting apart a portion of the battlefield as the final resting-place of those who gave their lives for freedom's cause: 'It is for us the living to be dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It

is for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we may take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.'

Literature.

IN spite of the enormous increase in the cost of production the number of books published month by month seems to be about as great as ever. It is evident that men are able still to buy books, even religious and philosophical books, and even the most expensive of these. No book seems to be doing better than the *ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS*. It must be finding its way into many a working pastor's library. The minister of Kingussie, a small Highland parish where the Editor spent his holiday, was in possession of a copy, and eagerly expecting the issue of the last two volumes. These volumes will not now be long delayed.

This month the two books of most importance, so far as we have observed, are both published by Messrs T. & T. Clark. The one is Dr. Charles's *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, in the 'International Critical' series. The other is the first three volumes, issued together, of *The Children's Great Texts of the Bible*.

'*Virginibus Puerisque*' has been a feature of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for some years. No part of the magazine, unless perhaps the Introductory Notes, has been more appreciated. But the demand has been always greater than the supply. For the children's sermon is now almost everywhere a part of the regular service; and it is often the most interesting part. In the Highland parish already referred to there is a succession of great preachers throughout the summer months, and the people have got into the way of comparing one preacher with another: this year we were struck with the fact that it was the children's sermons that were compared and that were most vividly remembered. This series is an endeavour to meet

the demand. In six volumes the whole Bible will be covered. Three volumes have been issued; the other three will be issued next Spring. The price of each volume separately is 9s.; but the Publishers offer the whole set at 7s. 6d. each.

The two handsome volumes of Dr. Charles's *Commentary on the Apocalypse* take some reading. But it is most interesting reading. We are at present making our way through the Introduction, with not a little surprise. Dr. Charles speaks as if his whole previous work had been in preparation for this Commentary. We can believe it. Since the appearance of the first volume of Lightfoot's Commentaries, no commentary of equal importance has been published in this country. If Lightfoot was revolutionary, Charles is no less dynamic.

WHO WAS WHO.

'WHO'S WHO' stands on the desk of every man who takes an interest in his fellows. But 'Who's Who' is an annual. Where is the desk that can hold twenty volumes of it? The publishers have come to our relief. One volume has been issued containing the biographies of all the great ones who died within the twenty years preceding 1916. The title is *Who was Who, 1897-1916* (A. & C. Black; 21s. net).

The first thought about it is that it will serve as a continuation of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. For that great book had begun to fail us, and just where we most frequently wished to turn to it. The next thought is that an extraordinary amount of reliable information has been packed into a single volume. It is reliable information. We had occasion, some time ago, to