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A Note on the Strange Resurrection of
John-Three-Sixteen

By
P. WHITWELL WILSON
Author of "The Christ we Forget"



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CONTENTS

I

AN OLD PASSWORD 7

II

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE 27

III

THE ALLIED CAUSE 39

IV

THE CONCLUSIVE PEACE 55

I

AN OLD PASSWORD

I

AN OLD PASSWORD

OUR boys at the front need food for soul as well as body. And of both kinds of food, they deserve the best. Of this little book, I say no more than this—it is the best I can give to the boys who give all for their country. The best is beyond ourselves and, here, that best is the Friend who goes forth to battle with the worst of us, if we desire Him. I am a journalist—what you in America call a newspaper man—but I see no reason why the Saviour of the world should be denied “the publicity” with which we surround senators and singers and actors. He is more interesting than them all. He is closer to us than them

BY THIS SIGN

all. He well deserves all that the best of us can ever say about Him.

When I was a boy twenty-five years ago, no sermon seemed to be complete unless it contained a reference to "John-Three-Sixteen." On both sides of the ocean, this little text was, beyond all question, the most familiar verse in the Bible. It was the theme of Dwight L. Moody and it was the theme of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I well remember how one evangelist, with zealous ingenuity, reduced it to an acrostic, thus :

God so loved the world, that He gave
His
Only Begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in Him
should not
Perish, but have
Everlasting
Life.

From which he argued that these few

WE CONQUER

words summed up the whole Gospel or God's-spell that He came, in His humble way, to preach. As I recall these memories, I forget about the many historic speeches that I have heard in our British Houses of Parliament, and my mind is carried back to a little chapel by the riverside, in a gray old town, northwards, where rich and poor sat together every Sunday, not many in numbers, but strangely united, because they trembled at the knowledge of their sins and rejoiced over God's redemption. Since those days I have seen much of life, including the seamy aspects of it, and, among other lessons, I have learned that "John-Three-Sixteen," which was the keystone of our faith in the little chapel by the riverside, has gone out of fashion. I know not how it may be in your country

BY THIS SIGN

but, in mine, there are not many addresses and sermons which to-day mention "John-Three-Sixteen," unless it be with a kind of apology. It is like a seed that has fallen into the ground and died. And it does not occur to us that amid the harrowing of war, the time may come when it will spring up again and yield a rich harvest of repentance and comfort.

Some people dismiss "John-Three-Sixteen" because they say that it is only one of the utterances or—as they like to put it—"logia" of the Fourth Gospel, which, in their opinion, is a document of no value as history, being inspired solely by some controversy with heretics, whose name, at the moment, I need not recall. In the past, we have all been a little impressed by this show of erudition, but, for some reason or other, we are

WE CONQUER

to-day very suspicious of theories made in Germany. Whatever we may think of other German imports, I, for one, decline any longer to bow to the spectacled Teuton as an authority on Truth, and I refer the entire race of higher critics, one and all, to Louvain, Lille, and the *Lusitania* as facts to be explained before we are required, at the bidding of the Professors, who for half a century have Prussianized our theologians, to tear up the Fourth Gospel, as if the treaty or covenant between God and man were a mere scrap of paper. From this bad dream war has suddenly aroused us, and the higher critics of the nineteenth century will go the way of the early heretics, the later schoolmen, and the rationalists—indeed, of all who by pride of intellect seek to obscure the simplicity of our Salvation.

BY THIS SIGN

For what is the trouble with modern Germany? There has never been a cleverer nation or a more patriotic nation, or a thriftier and more orderly nation, or in their way a more domesticated nation. If, then, Germany has gone so grievously astray, it is solely because she has thrown "John-Three-Sixteen" and all the truth that gathers round it into the waste-paper baskets of her universities. She has refused to believe that God loves the world—all nations in the world; that Jesus is God's gift to all mankind; that without Him, however wise we are, we perish; and that with Him, however foolish we may be, we have everlasting life.

I decline, therefore, to be put off by this question whether these words were actually uttered by Our Lord or should be read as the comment of the evangelist.

WE CONQUER

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that we lift "John-Three-Sixteen" clean out of its niche, and put it in the middle of one of Paul's epistles; what difference would that make to the love of God, the gift of Christ, and the perishing of our eternal life? An argument about authorship, however amusing as a way of passing the time, will not help us when we have to explain why we neglect so great a salvation as that which is offered to us in Jesus Christ. Take our verse by itself, as—let us say—a motto on a Christmas card, or a book-marker, or a text in your bedroom; get rid, if you wish, of the context, and it still challenges you. It still challenges the American people. It challenges the League of Nations. And what is so serious about disbelief in these things is that the results, though they may not

BY THIS SIGN

follow at once, are inevitable. It was not for thirty years after the crucifixion of Our Lord that Jerusalem was destroyed, but the end came at last. It has taken three generations to de-Christianize Germany, but the resultant catastrophe has followed. Many of us think that if we close our Bibles, everything will go on as before. So it will, for a time, but nature abhors a vacuum, and if our faith is not to be "John-Three-Sixteen," it must be something else. And something else is certain to be something evil.

Most of us have been startled by the capture of Jerusalem. It shows us that the Jews are still a race and that the Old Testament is still a book to be reckoned with. Its prophecies are not mere fancy but are substantial estimates of future probabilities. And I will submit to you

WE CONQUER

this proposition, that the Jews and their writers, whatever prejudice there may be against them, did at least contribute to our happiness an intense and quite unique belief in God. Other nations carved idols or painted pictures of their deities, but the Jews—men and women and children—did not need any god that they could touch with their hands, or see with their eyes, or hear with their ears. “Verily,” they said of Jehovah, “Thou art a God that hidest Thyself”—yet, though hidden, they knew that He was with them. To Abraham, God was an intimate Friend. To Jacob, God was a kind of Destiny, that must be wrestled with and so—as it were—mastered at a tremendous personal cost. To Moses, in the loneliness of the mountain, God was a burning enthusiasm, lighting up men’s hearts, like the bush that flamed

BY THIS SIGN

so fiercely, yet was not consumed. To Joshua, God was an Armed Ally, with sword drawn. To David, devoted to a guilty passion, God was the voice of a prophet, saying, "Thou art the man." To Elijah—staggering, as our soldiers stagger, under the shock of earthquake, wind, and fire—God was the still small voice of courage and duty amid danger. To Hagar, in the desert, watching her son, as the lad perished with thirst, God was a present help—a very present help in trouble. That, I say, was a great insight by the Jews. And they have it to this day. Without country, without king, without army or navy or citizenship, and, alas, without their Messiah, this miraculous race increases and prospers, scattered but indestructible, because of this passionate faith in the presence of God. Be very

WE CONQUER

sure that He is near us, that He hears what we say, sees what we do, perceives what we think, understands what we suffer. "John-Three-Sixteen" confronts us, bluntly, boldly, unanswerably, with the fact of God. Wherever your boys may go, whatever tragedy may develop them, suddenly there flames amid the gloom this Personal, All-Knowing, All-Seeing Presence. They will find that they are not alone, that Another is with them.

The very first word in this Bible of ours is this word, "God." We are told that God *created* the heavens and the earth. There were stages, doubtless, and evolutions; it was all done, as He does everything, in order and with patience, but the point is that He did it. There was nothing made that He did not make. And He made it good—not merely useful and

BY THIS SIGN

workable, but, I repeat, good. The old world is to-day vanishing in smoke and it is God who must make the new world. We grow apple-trees for the sake of apples, but there is no apple without a blossom. And the blossom is beauty. We want air to breathe, but God adds the clouds, the rainbow, the sunrise every morning, the sunset every evening—a tide of glory sweeping round the world every day. About the fiercest of wild beasts, the most deadly of reptiles, there is this universal beauty which artists see as they see it in the tempest, the lightning, the flood, and the fire. When, therefore, people tell me that God cannot have made things good, because of these slums, these trenches, these prisoners' camps, these crimes against women and children, I reply that even in slums and trenches, and all the

WE CONQUER

hideous scenes of war and peace, you will find, as artists find, a strange mantle of loveliness—love-like-ness—from which you cannot escape, so that if there were not these terrible things in the world, we should actually lose some of the world's beauty and goodness. Somebody once declared that there was nothing to be admired in a skyline crossed by mill-chimneys. A clever painter thereupon made a picture of the glowing evening sun shedding its warm radiance around the stern tall towers of black brick, and touching with splendid purple the level masses of rolling smoke. Even that factory town could not escape from the loveliness—the love-like-ness of God.

And it is the same in France. Men make shells with terrible purpose, and then an unseen hand moulds and gilds those

BY THIS SIGN

puffs of smoke, as if to suggest that when His creation returns from our control to His, there is He, with His loveliness. We wound and we slay, but again the spirit rises, like that puff of smoke, and we discover in our dressing-stations and hospitals wonderful glimpses of the divine Presence—such tenderness, such courage, such sympathy, such order amid confusion—showing again that, amid all these calamities, there is loveliness—love-like-ness—clinging to us like a garment. Rough soldiers become poets and write delicate lyrics. Their soul lives amid death because amid death, there is still love. For it is just this love which makes the difference between God and good. The good is a system, a law, a shape, a note, a jewel; but God is a Being, a Person, a Life, a Thought, a Will. And every hour

WE CONQUER

of every day He is coming to us, suggesting Himself as our Friend, by hints, by glimpses, by whispers, so that, if we wish, we can see Him, hear Him, touch Him, and so return His love. *God loved the world*—that is our first fact.

But the hints and glimpses and whispers were not enough. We are so deaf, so blind, so paralyzed that we do not hear, we do not see, we do not touch, and we are left amid the slum, without the sunset, and all our existence is as unlovely as those factory chimneys. To put the case in two words—we perish. The substance of us is still there, but the life, the love, the joy has gone. I have an old bicycle, with tires that are not punctured or injured in any way, but are quite useless, because the rubber has “perished.” The material looks all right, but it has lost its toughness

BY THIS SIGN

and elasticity, and when I wanted to ride the machine, I could not stir one mile until the tires were renewed. Men and women are often like that; they may be quite comfortable in their circumstances, but their hopes, their ideals—in a word, their happiness—has decayed. And it is just this capacity for happiness, for love, for hope, for gratitude—it is just this *soul* within us that we need in the next world. To conquer the whole world and lose the soul is thus a bargain without profit, for the soul is what lives on; its health is our health; its pain is our pain; its safety is also ours. Jesus knew all about dangers to the body, but **H**e would not have us afraid of these. But any influence that menaced the soul immediately aroused **H**is utmost vigilance.

Thus it is that God did not merely love

WE CONQUER

the world as Creator. He did not merely touch our surroundings with His own constant, subtle, and unimaginable beauty. He *so* loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. The hills and the streams and the flowers and birds are good gifts, which cost the Almighty His supreme effort of Power and Knowledge. But in Jesus, He gave us of His very Self—His one, His Only Son—the Companion of His intimate glory—an astonishing Sacrifice, that would be inconceivable if it were not for verses like “John-Three-Sixteen.” For there are certain dramas that cannot be invented. If they are told, they must have occurred. The gift of Christ could not have been imagined, it was revealed; for by revelation only could it have got into our language.

II

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

II

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

THE study of what theologians call the Trinity has puzzled all the philosophers and ennobled all the saints. I may, perhaps, put the matter simply by employing a familiar illustration. Here is a rich man who before the war enjoyed his town house and his country house, his motor-cars, yachts, servants, fruit, flowers, and other luxuries. If any one had taken these things from him, he would have been very angry, but when the world is thrown into chaos, he readily pays away his money in taxes and donations, turns his houses into hospitals, hands over his motor-cars and yachts to the Red Cross, provides for his

BY THIS SIGN

servants when they enlist, and shares his gardens, his fruit, his flowers, his books, and all that he has with the wounded. There, I think, you have a picture of the goodness of God in creation. Sea and land, thought and pleasure, He shared with us—freely, without hope of return, except our gratitude.

But let us suppose that, in addition to his houses and yachts and motor-cars, our rich man had one greatly loved son—his constant companion, his only intimate relative, whose loss would leave him solitary amid his abounding riches. Do you not see that his sacrifice would be multiplied ten thousandfold if this boy volunteered, not for the usual service of the army, dangerous though that is, but for some special duty, from which he could not hope to escape alive? And how in-

WE CONQUER

finitely would not that gift of an Only Son be, as it were, emphasized, if the death, so pitiless and inevitable, were to be of a kind most shameful and agonizing—no hospital, no anæsthetics, no Legion of Honor or Victoria Cross—but a suggestion of cowardice, of estrangement from the father, of utter and irremediable failure. That—in faint and distant parallel—is what is meant by the declaration that God not only loved the world, but *so* loved the world as to give His only begotten Son.

You will ask me—I am sure, most reasonably—why the Almighty, enjoying within Himself this perfect companionship, should have created this Universe, so fraught with evil, with results so terrible for His Own and only Son. If you wish to know why a man or a woman acts in a particular way, you inquire first into their

BY THIS SIGN

character, and unless all our poets and painters and fairy-tales and dramas are wholly mistaken, the most powerful of all motives in the world is love. We feel instinctively that the love of father for child, of child for mother, of husband for wife, of sister for brother, of a sailor for his ship, a boy for his school, a soldier for his regiment—this all-pervasive *esprit de corps*, as the French put it—is the normal thing. Hatred is love interrupted. Vice is love degraded. Jealousy is love reversed. Justice is love vindicated. Cruelty is love insulted. Pride is love venerated. All wrongs in the world are denials of love, and the reason why God delights in His creatures is that God is Love. Why Florence Nightingale left her dignified and well-ordered home to face the miseries of the Crimea is as great a mystery in its

WE CONQUER

way as the coming or gift of Christ, until we remember that this woman was thus great because she knew the love of God in Christ, and was obedient to it.

For we have here the very essence of what we call Romance—the Romance of Our Salvation. Over and over again in the New Testament the joy of Our Redeemer in the redeemed is compared with the joy of the Bridegroom in the Bride. You cannot reduce it to logic. It is as if He chose us for our own sakes—for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health—only it is not until death do us part, for in this case what we call “life” is a kind of separation, a betrothal, and death is union—the sight of Him as He is. And Romance, which is the wedding of life with life, ends not with itself, but is ever breaking into new life, a more abundant life,

BY THIS SIGN

which, as it were, lays hold of the future, reaches out weak hands into eternity, which means that Love is a Child. As Nicodemus learned, we must be born all over again. We must be constantly telling others of the Gift. We must be enthusiasts, heroes, missionaries, martyrs, toilers, sufferers—because of the joy that is set before us. Like Our Lord, we must be ready to endure the Cross.

I say “we,” but mean “you”—if you want it still more plainly, “thou”—“whosoever” thou art. For while God loved the world, which is a big place and an ancient place—boundless in space and time—He suddenly turns His eye from everything else on to the individual, and says, “Whosoever.” And He leaves the past and the future, limiting Himself to the present, for it is “whosoever believeth.” I like

WE CONQUER

that "whosoever," yet am a little afraid of it. It means the native races whom we have taught to fight, but not always to pray. It means the Russian, with his icons, his strange enthusiasms, his curious instability. It means the Frenchman, with his *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. It means the German, with blood on his hands and conscience. It means the American with his passion for citizenship, for justice, for freedom. And it means me. What is more, it means colored man and Russian and Frenchman and German and American and me, not as we were when war broke out or as we shall be when peace is restored, but as we are, locked in deadly strife. It means me, as I am now—at this very moment.

A few years ago, we would not have admitted, perhaps, that the world was perish-

BY THIS SIGN

ing. We seemed to be growing richer—to be discovering new resources—to be developing the untracked forest—to be exploiting the unscaled mountains. But we now see that our discoveries and inventions were like the accumulating forces of a mighty volcano. Some day, the passions of men would catch fire, a tremendous upheaval would wreck cities and provinces compared with which Pompeii was a village. Our wealth would vanish in the smoke. We did not foresee this; we smiled at “John-Three-Sixteen”; but it has come to pass. And although the eruption of this our European Vesuvius will doubtless spend itself, and we shall return to the lava-flooded and still smoking slopes of our warm and fertile mountain, who dares to suggest that we and our children will be immune from calamities even more

WE CONQUER

grievous? Let me put a case. We are teaching all the arts of war to China and Japan and India. In India and China and Japan there are many hundreds of millions of active, ingenious, intrepid people. What a perishing of the world there would be if, twenty, thirty, sixty years hence, the mighty and mysterious East were to develop a grievance against an unfaithful Christendom! Think what would be their argument. "You gave us guns," they would say, "and warships, and flaming gas, and you inspired us with your own zeal for money, luxury, power, but you never thought of bringing to us the gift of Christ, which was our right as much as yours. You kept it to yourselves. So now, having received from you quite another type of gift, we hurl back on Christians the ammunition invented by

BY THIS SIGN

Christians. Since you left us to perish, we will take good care that we do not perish by ourselves." Let us make no mistake about it, the world has drifted into terrible danger. We may frame treaties, and discuss secret diplomacy and all the rest of it, but if we will not bow the knee to the Prince of Peace, our arrangements will be rent asunder like gossamer, and one war will be only a prelude to other wars far more destructive.

III
THE ALLIED CAUSE

III

THE ALLIED CAUSE

SO it comes to this—whether we live in one hemisphere or another, we must perish, or we must believe. Not only will our beautiful buildings be threatened, and our pictures, and music, and games, and liberties, but what is far more important—our capacity for enjoying and appreciating these things. In Germany, the rejection of Christ has meant, not only a brutal militarism, but a sacrifice of native genius. Literature and music and painting have almost ceased, except as statecraft, which is death to art. As the Apostle Paul realized, everything of value is summed in Our Saviour, and without Him everything of value is in jeopardy.

BY THIS SIGN

So that our belief touches all that we have, and that we do, and that we are. It is not a part of our life, to be lived on Sunday and ignored on Monday. It envelops our homes, our politics, our armies, our factories, our farms, our theatres, our libraries.

And what is believing? Our motto says that *seeing* is believing, but what Jesus said was the exact opposite—"Blessed are those who have *not* seen, and yet have believed." Faith means "seeing the invisible"—the soul within the body; the anger behind the murder; the avarice behind the fortune; the Almighty Father behind the events of history; and Our Lord Himself, waiting patiently at the door of our hearts, and ever seeking admittance. We used to sing a hymn, "There is life for a look at the Crucified

WE CONQUER

One," and it may be that some of us derived from it the impression that belief in the Redeemer is a casual glance, an emotion that passes rapidly from the surface of our hearts, a flitting vision. I agree that, to some extent, it is an instantaneous matter—this conversion, this believing. Some hearts resemble a photographic plate which is exposed once, and is, in a fraction of a second, stamped indelibly with a picture that cannot afterwards be altered—just one aspect of the scene or person. If you are somebody like that, then, I bid you not to be disobedient to what St. Paul called "the heavenly vision," but you should also remember that, binding as was Paul's first view of Our Lord, changed as was his entire outlook thereby, he did not rest content with it. He devoted years to the

BY THIS SIGN

study of Our Lord from every point of view. He was like Holman Hunt, who did not give us what, without being misunderstood, I may call a snapshot of the Redeemer, but devoted all his powers to painting Him, over and over again, now as a Babe, then in the workshop, then again as the King of Love, with Lantern to guide us, and Hands and Feet pierced, knocking, knocking, while we slumber, or, waking, ask ourselves whether after all it is really worth while to let Him in. As one looks at Holman Hunt's pictures, one knows that he believed in Christ. It is in Christ that his art endures. And we ought, with the same perseverance, to study the lineaments of Our Saviour until they are formed, not on canvas, or with pigments, but on "the fleshy tables of our hearts." Christ on stained glass or in the

WE CONQUER

form of a crucifix will not save us. We must admit Him to the shrine within. And this is what is meant by believing on Him.

And if this great gift of so strong and faithful a Friend is worth our having, what right have we to complain if it costs us time and trouble? We spend thousands of dollars on making a man a doctor and other thousands on making him a soldier; it takes years to train a baseball player, or an engineer, or a musician. Why should we expect to be all that Christ wants us to be in five minutes? Belief is a look—that is true; but it is also a breath, it is spiritual, and when men live, they go on breathing. Take away their breath, and they perish. I am immensely struck by the number of churches and chapels that we are building, by their

BY THIS SIGN

organs and ornaments and memorial tablets, but I say deliberately that if we swept away the whole of these great fabrics, and substituted among our people a daily study of Our Lord's Life and Death, as explained to us in Old and New Testament, we should be a humbler, more reverent, more truly Christian people than we are to-day. And, conversely, if we go on building our churches and embellishing them, and, at the same time, let the dust accumulate on our Bibles on the book-shelf, we shall become, infallibly, a less Christian people. "John-Three-Sixteen" does not say "Believe on the Church," or "Believe on the Bishops," or "Believe on the Minister." It says, "Believe on Him," and whatever becomes of our cathedrals, or our chapels, we can still believe on Him, since He is the Same,

WE CONQUER

Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever. To read the Bible requires some courage nowadays, some concentration of mind, some setting aside of other interests. But such reading is the one thing that our world of to-day needs.

Which brings me to the final question—in what way the gift of Our Lord guarantees to us what “John-Three-Sixteen” calls “eternal life.” Certain it is that Our Saviour came, not only to dwell, but to die in our midst. It had to be so. John Howard would never have reformed the prisons of Europe if he had not braved the jail fevers of which in the end he died. Father Damien would never have convinced the lepers of God’s love and mercy if he had not touched their sores and suffered in his own body their terrible contagion. And Jesus could not

BY THIS SIGN

have included the dying thief in His "Whosoever" if He had not been his neighbor on the Cross. As He lived with us, so He died with us, and this sacrifice of His body and soul was the measure of His love. But was that all? When "John-Three-Sixteen" used to be fashionable, we were told that He died not only *with* us, but *for* us, which seems to carry us a step further, for greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life *for* his friends. That was the love of Christ; indeed, it was more than this, for He laid down His life for friends and foes alike—for the soldiers who pierced Him, the priests who reviled Him, the rabble who mocked Him, quite as much as for the disciples who worshipped Him. Thousands of gallant men have already gone forth bravely to die for

WE CONQUER

their country, and all honor to them. They think of America—how she has stood for justice, for liberty, for home, for laughter—and they sing merrily as they trudge forward to the trenches. Jesus died not for a country, not for a creed, not for an ideal. He died, as it were, for one man, one woman—whosoever he or she may be—and if there had been no more than one man or one woman, He would still have died, for He loved to the uttermost, He searched for the hundredth sheep—“Of them that Thou gavest Me,” said He, “I have not lost one.”

The fact that He was infinitely good while Barabbas was utterly bad made no difference. In offering life for life, He did not weigh values—not at all. The brute bullet has destroyed, not only some obscure Tommy, who was of more use in

BY THIS SIGN

battle, perhaps, than anywhere else. A Gladstone has fallen. An Asquith lies dead. A Roosevelt has been wounded. And we do not say, "Whence this waste?" The very best is yielded to the very worst, the strong to the weak, the upright to the fallen. Jesus died thus not for the righteous, but for sinners. Because they needed all, He gave all to meet their need. Because their guilt crushed them, He bore it in His own body on the tree.

For this word, guilt, is one which to-day is constantly upon our lips. We speak of guilty monarchs, guilty nations, guilty soldiers, and we are very certain that there can be no conclusive peace unless stern retribution is visited on the offenders. We are finding out that Love and Wrath are twin children of Justice, and we dislike

WE CONQUER

the conscientious objector who professes the one without the other. Do we seriously imagine that Our Father can love the world as He does without exhibiting what is called in the Bible "the wrath of God"? Take our planet at its best. There is plenty of room for everybody, yet multitudes of us are overcrowded. There is plenty of food for everybody, yet multitudes go hungry. There is an abundance of good books and music and art which the few only are taught to enjoy. In mind and body, or both, our race is stunted, oppressed, defrauded. Do you think that God is blind? Suppose that you are the father or mother of a family, and that one of your children was a cripple. What would be your "wrath" if the other sons and daughters denied to this backward or afflicted one his share of the

BY THIS SIGN

patrimony which was meant for all? "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My little ones, ye did it unto Me," is what Jesus said—did it, mind you, whether it be bad or good. While we withhold one syllable of God's good tidings, with all that they mean of social equity, physical and mental advancement, and removal of ancient wrongs, from our workers, our native fellow-citizens—yes, and our enemies in the field—we may rest assured that we need pardon for our sins.

And true pardon is expensive. If a murderer is reprieved it is not because the prisoner is guilty, but because his guilt in law is mitigated by extenuating circumstances, as between man and man. What we need is pardon when there are no extenuating circumstances, and this is a

WE CONQUER

costly matter. For we have within us a judge—that is, our conscience—than which none could be sterner, when the facts are fairly faced. Sometimes there is a good deal of argument in court, and we trust that our case may be obscured by mists of philosophy. Others of us flee from justice to pleasure, ambition, excitement, success, and so escape for a while. But there are, all over the world, countless men and women from whose minds this responsibility for evil cannot be thus thrust aside. Some of them torture themselves. Others confess to [an earthly priest. Others, again, believe that there is an efficient substitute for the true culprits in the sacrifice of bulls and goats. The craving for some kind of atonement is instinctive to the whole of mankind. Even in law there is the principle that if an innocent man

BY THIS SIGN

suffer punishment for a crime which he did not commit, the guilty goes free. "John-Three-Sixteen" invites us to abandon our philosophy, our pleasures, our ceremonies, as the escape from conscience, and accept Jesus Christ as "a Gift"—once made, for all people, of every time, and offered not by the clergy, or by the churches, but by God Himself. That "Gift"—living within us—is our eternal life. He is Prince of Peace—a conclusive peace—not alone between man and man, but between man and God.

IV

THE CONCLUSIVE PEACE

IV

THE CONCLUSIVE PEACE

THE other day I happened to be discussing the future of Europe with a leading light in journalism—a man of many clubs, a wit, something, indeed, of a cynic—when—he had been a little pessimistic—he turned to me and remarked, quite casually: “What we want is, I tell you, a religion.” I do not remember him mentioning such matters before, yet his words came naturally enough, as if they fitted into the conversation. “What we want is, I tell you, a religion!” That shrewd judge of human affairs was very near the mark. The new map of Europe is doubtless a problem of great complexity

BY THIS SIGN

and importance. But the great issue to-day is not whether we are to have a new map; the new heart—that is what will make the difference. Will this fearful visitation leave us still with our old troubled relations between Catholic and Protestant, Capital and Labor, Frenchman and German, German and Russian, Russian and Austrian? The map of Europe is a pen-mark on cardboard. But what is the Europe behind the map? Touch one of those obscure villages with the unpronounceable names, and it bleeds, it weeps, it cries out in agony, it starves, it burns, it suffers a veritable crucifixion. God has His map of Europe more carefully engraved on His heart than ours, and that map is to-day stained with blood and tears, and shadowed with hatred and despair. Do you imagine that your Cabinets

WE CONQUER

will cure this? I doubt whether any statesman shares your view. We fight—we fight hard for Justice; but what about a redeeming love?

May I tell you a little anecdote of war which happens to be true? Some French soldiers of the Jewish persuasion lay wounded in a hospital, near Paris, where they were tended by Roman Catholic nuns. Passover was coming along and two of these soldiers were in trouble because they would have no unleavened bread with which to observe the feast. The sisters of mercy heard them talking and one of them overcame her religious scruples so far as to walk a considerable distance into the Jewish quarter and purchase some of the required ceremonial food. She brought her gift to the men under her care and they were deeply touched. Hap-

BY THIS SIGN

pily their wounds healed and they could be discharged from the hospital. When the day came for bidding good-bye, they said to the nuns that they were grateful and they offered all the money that they had with them. The women drew back and answered that no money was needed—no money could pay for what had been done; and the soldiers went away, asking themselves how they could show their gratitude. At last, a happy idea occurred to their minds. They went to a shop or store and invested their savings in the most beautiful flowers that they could obtain. These flowers they carried back to the hospital and gave to the sisters. “What are we to do with these lovely flowers?” enquired the sisters, and one of the Jewish soldiers replied, “We want you to put them on your altar.”

WE CONQUER

Of course, these French Jews knew little or nothing of Protestantism as we know it. To them, the altar was simply Christ. The Crucifix was simply Christ's emblem. It was to Christ that they paid their due. It was Christ's love, revealed in those women, that constrained the Jewish heart. The quiet tact which did not argue but respected even an imperfect faith did more to win those men than centuries of persecution, which indeed had repelled their race. Tender touches of the hand are what we need to-day for healing, only it must be a pierced hand. However light the touch, the hand must have first felt the blow. Men and women are not worthy of Christ unless Christ has precedence over father and mother and even wife and children. Given that kind of loyalty, and a very slight hint will carry the fortress. A

BY THIS SIGN

very brief word will bring tears to the eyes. A very gentle command will be followed by a very expensive obedience. When any one has himself paid his footing, he has unlimited call on others. Our Saviour is our Saviour just because Himself He could not—rather did not save. He did not spare Himself and therefore He does not spare us.

As I jot down this last page or two, there arises before my imagination a battle-stricken landscape—let us suppose that it lies somewhere in Galicia. There, before our eyes, stretches a great military highway, amid desolation and ruin, but by some strange chance the guns have spared a shell-scarred shrine, under which still rises, silent and sorrowful, the Figure of Our Saviour. The tide of invasion ebbs and flows, leaving tragic flotsam and jet-

WE CONQUER

sam around that solitary symbol of the Crucifixion. An Austrian falls, wounded and dying, beneath the shadow of the Cross. The fortunes of the conflict change, and a Russian, also struck in the mortal part of him, is laid near the Austrian. The thunders of the artillery recede. The two men—friend and foe—lie lonely in the dusk of the day and the sunset of their earthly lives. They have no common language, but between them there seems to be an Unseen Interpreter. A drink of water—yes—share it with me ; it is our last. Cigarettes—yes—here are two ; one for thee, one for me. The darkness deepens ; they look up to Him who died. And then they turn to one another with a great wonder in their startled eyes ; anger has gone, passion has cooled, hand grasps hand, and arm is linked with arm. For they have

BY THIS SIGN

seen Him who, if lifted up, draws all men unto Him, and seeing Him, they say, each in the tongue his mother taught him :

"He loved us both."

And over them rises in splendor of eternal truth the despised and forgotten message of "John-Three-Sixteen."

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