

RELIGION IN A
WORLD AT WAR

GEORGE HODGES

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RELIGION
IN A WORLD AT WAR



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RELIGION IN A WORLD AT WAR

BY

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IN THE STORM OF WAR

Blessed be the Lord my strength which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight. Psalm 144:1.

THE Old Testament is filled with the alarm of war. Its books of history are occupied with accounts of campaigns, successful and unsuccessful. Its books of prophecy are composed of the sermons which men preached who took their texts from the bulletins of Assyrian and Chaldean invasion, from the plots of Egyptian conspirators, from the tragedies of deportation. When Ulfilas, the apostle of the Goths, translated the Bible into the language of his people, he omitted the books of Samuel and Kings, because there is so much fighting in them. He feared that his belligerent countrymen would find these books more interesting than the Sermon on the Mount. But even in an Old Testament thus pru-

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dently expurgated, there is plenty of war left.

The modern Hebrew is for the most part a peaceable person; sometimes suffering at the hands of semi-barbarous Christian neighbours, but rarely retaliating. The ancient Hebrew was a fierce and eager soldier. With his sword and with his bow he had won the land which he inhabited, and he had defended his possession in a thousand battles. According to his theology, the Lord himself was a man of war. The saints in his calendar wore helmets instead of haloes, and showed that the grace of God was in them by the might with which they smote their enemies. Saint Abraham took the three hundred and eighteen men who composed his body-guard and fell upon the hosts of the allied kings of the east. Saint Moses, meekest of men, began his career of social reconstruction by killing an Egyptian overseer. Saint Samuel, though properly a prophet rather than a warrior, hewed King Agag in pieces before the Lord, and wiped his bloody axe confident that in him God was well pleased. The time would fail me, says the writer of the Epistle to the He-

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brews, to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah,— saints and heroes all,— who waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Those were days when hatred was held high among the manly virtues. “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?” cries the writer of a psalm. “I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.” And then, without the slightest pause or hesitation, he continues, “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” There may be some wickedness in him, but he thinks not. His conscience is quite clear. That his hatred of his enemies might possibly be considered a defect in his character never enters for a moment into his mind. By the stoutness of his hatred he commends himself to the approval of God. He is proud of the perfection of his wrath.

As for war, it was commonly considered a normal part of every well-ordered masculine life. Sometimes, in the depression of discouragement and defeat long continued, a

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prophet might have a vision of a blessed peace when swords should be beaten into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks. This, however, was but a passing vision, and seemed on reflection a dull dream. The natural occupation of a man in ordinary health was to fight. "It came to pass," says an Old Testament historian, by way of casually dating an event, "it came to pass at the time when kings go forth to battle." The winter is over, the sweet spring awakens new life in the brown fields, the hearts of men beat faster in tune with the universe, and rejoicing kings lead their happy warriors forth with merry shouting. What can we do better, these fine fresh mornings, than to kill one another? The cause? They ask no cause. Is the war offensive or defensive? It matters not to them. Do they fight for principle, or for plunder? They do not greatly care; though they probably prefer plunder. They go to war for war's sake.

A theory of the Bible which put the Old Testament on a level with the New found precedent in these old battles and sanction in the fierce old psalms. Saint Bernard took the first verse of the One Hundred and forty-

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fourth Psalm, and made it the war-cry of the Crusades. The Christian knights rode into battle, singing as they couched their lances, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." Cromwell led his cavalry against the fortress of Drogheda with the watch-word, "Our Lord God," and said at the end of a massacre, whose fearful echoes ring in Ireland to this hour, "It hath pleased God to bless our endeavours." The English lost a hundred men that day; the Irish lost three thousand. But there was a similar disproportion at the taking of Jericho. There were texts of Scripture to justify it. "It was set upon some of our hearts," said Cromwell, "that a great thing should be done, not by power or by might, but by the Spirit of God." Cromwell was entirely honest about it. He could have said in his prayers that night, like the man in the psalm, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, and see if there be any wickedness in me." The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture may seem somewhat removed from the practical side of human life, but that day in Ireland a doctrine of the inspiration of the Old Testament encouraged

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an army of psalm-singing and praying soldiers to butcher a defenceless garrison.

Of course, the truth is that the Bible is a record of moral progress. Little by little, century by century, through experiences instructive but often terrible, the race comes on into better knowledge of God and of man. When the invading army of the Germans repeated in Belgium the methods of the invading army of the Israelites in Canaan, they had the Old Testament on their side. But the Christian world was horrified. In the midst of all the manifold confusions, misunderstandings and perplexities of the war, the invasion of Belgium stands out as one plain count in our indictment of Germany, one vast and hideous crime which has not been denied, and for which there has been no repentance. We go to war with Germany in defence and protest against a manner of fighting which defies the ideals of humanity. But it did not defy the ideals of humanity in the time of the Old Testament. Our state of mind shows the progress which has been made, in most nations, since that day.

It is true that history contains the record of just and necessary wars. Out of a hundred

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thousand pages stained with folly, and ambition, and tragic error, and the passions of wild beasts, and exhibiting war as the blind enemy of mankind, the destroyer of art and industry, the wanton hinderer of the progress of the race, there are chapters which shine with the splendour of heroism and martyrdom, and with the glory of permanent achievement. There are wars which have won decisive victories for humanity, for truth, for liberty.

Leonidas at Thermopylæ, meeting the hosts of the East at the threshold of their invasion of the West, as Horatius kept the bridge at Rome, was engaged in an undertaking for which no other implements than arms were competent. No priest of Corinth with his prayers, no philosopher of Athens with his arguments, could have held back that devastating host. Charles Martel, confronting the Saracens at Tours, was engaged in a business which neither courts nor churches could accomplish. Somebody had to fight that advancing army. It was the only way. The destiny of Christianity and of civilisation depended on the energies of war.

In like manner in this country, our fathers

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fought for liberty and unity. They had to fight. They went into battle with as clear a conscience, and upheld by as confident a conviction of the approval of the Lord of Hosts, as any warrior of the Old Testament, or as any martyr of the New. Thus fought the men of the War of Independence; and the men of the North when they met the men of the South. These soldiers went to war not to satisfy the ambition of anybody in authority, nor for the sake of the conquest of territory, nor to try out the value of the inventions of manufacturers of munitions, nor for any merely material interests; still less did they fight for the sake of fighting. They were of the mind of Sir Philip Sidney when he said, "Whenever you hear of a good war, go to it." It was a good war, and they went to it on that account.

The determining question which a Christian nation asks on the eve of war has regard not to the excellence of peace — which may well be debated in the time of peace — but to the character of the impending war. Is it a good war? Is the quarrel great enough, and irreconcilable enough? Is it so serious and urgent beyond all doubt as to justify the kill-

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ing of a hundred thousand men? Is it the kind of crisis which, arising between intelligent neighbours on our street, would require one neighbour, on behalf of the eternal principles of right and justice and humanity, to burn the other neighbour's house, and shoot his wife and children?

If we say Yes, the quarrel is sufficiently great, the disagreement demands settlement and cannot wait; still the question remains, Have all the civilised methods of settlement been tried? Have all the substitutes of law for war been put into effect?

For the event of war contradicts in a moment the whole progress of civilisation. It declares that that for which the church stands, and that for which the college stands, and that that is represented by the courts of law, is of no avail.

By long labour, by hard experience, by patient thought, by the endeavours of the best men, the race comes on slowly and painfully out of savagery into civilisation. The church is occupied in teaching the brotherhood of man, and in softening the natural brutalities of men; the college is engaged in getting the world administered according to

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the processes of reason, as opposed to the methods of physical force; the court is concerned to extend and maintain the peace which comes by the just and orderly settlement of disputes. Between them, they have almost abolished private war. It is true that they have not yet succeeded completely. But they have done much. They have brought it about that a man's house need no longer be his fortress, and that a man need no longer protect himself against injustice by attacking his neighbour with a gun. When that sort of thing happens, as it does happen still in the less-privileged districts of great cities, we perceive the last dregs of a cup of strife which was once full to the brim. The church, the college and the court have brought about the dominion of religion, of reason, and of law over the affairs of individuals.

They have not accomplished this civilising process in the affairs of nations. In spite of all this progress, suddenly comes war, and men revert to barbarism. The nations act as if neither court, nor college, nor church existed. Each nation undertakes to settle its difference with a neighbour nation in the ancient manner which antedates all civilis-

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ation. Thus they did beside the Tigris and the Euphrates before Babylon was born, and in the valley of the Nile before the oldest pyramid was built. Thus the lions and the bears administer justice in the jungle.

The sound of trumpets fills the land with primitive emotions; the drums beat and crowds gather in the public places; men are impatient to march into the flame and thunder. They would go singing like the crusaders, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." But the everlasting truth is that the Lord intends our hands to war and our fingers to fight not only when our cause is just, but when all other plans and endeavours have plainly failed, and the only way in which we can persuade our brothers is by the argument which Cain used with Abel.

Up to the moment when that condition is made plain beyond mistake, a Christian nation will maintain a patience proportioned to the solemn and tremendous importance of the event. It will preserve a patience which shall stir up in the souls of irresponsible people a very storm of abusive indignation,—and will still be patient. It will wait, not till

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there is an excuse for making war, nor till some act is committed which seems to call for the reply of war, but till the situation is such that it is plain that no processes of peace can solve it. For war means that your son kills your neighbour's son, and is brought back to you shot through the head. We shall never confront the situation fairly, so long as we state it to ourselves in terms of other people's sons. It is by our own relation to it that we must fortify our utmost patience.

Then, when the last walls of our Christian patience are beaten down, and we come to the pass of which our Master spoke when he said, "I came not to send peace but a sword"; when there must be war for the defence of our liberties, for the protection of our homes, or for the punishment of intolerable crimes against God and man; God give us grace to meet it with courage and a clear conscience. Blessed be the Lord my strength, who taught men's hands to war and their fingers to fight, in the old time when that was the only way. And blessed be the Lord of Hosts who on a thousand battle-fields has defended the right against the mighty; and shall again defend it.

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WHEN our Lord said, "The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify him,— and the third day he shall rise again," he included Good Friday and Easter in the same sentence.

It is the divine succession: after tragedy, victory; after death, the resurrection; hopeless failure, everything lost, all the good plans of God gone wrong, the devil dominant, the Son of Man betrayed, delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged and crucified,— then the third day. It is as he said in another place, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

In the conviction that the best prophecy is history, we consult the Old Testament. We perceive that a great part of the Old Testament was written under Good-Friday con-

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ditions. The nation was delivered over into the hands of its enemies, and was mocked and scourged and crucified. The situation was like that of Belgium, of Poland, of Serbia, of Armenia. The righteous were beaten down, and trodden under foot, and "killed all the day long." Most of the prophets preached under such circumstances. Some of them saw the evil afar off, and hoped that it might be averted; some of them, in the midst of the evil days, saw the dim light of a distant dawn. But there they were, in a world at war, as we are.

So with the men who wrote the Psalms. See how many of these poems are in the minor key. They are full of pain and perplexity. They express the amazement of the faithful at the prosperity of the wicked, and at the consequent defeat and affliction of the righteous. They were written by men who beside the waters of Babylon wept when they remembered Zion. As we read them, we perceive how perfectly they express the feelings of our brethren in the devastation of the German War.

Yet the Psalter ends with the great praise of the last psalm; and the poem of the pas-

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sion, which begins in the deepest depths with the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" comes out into the shining light of faith and satisfaction. It begins with Good Friday, but it ends with Easter. The sequence is so remarkable in the prophets as to give rise to the theory that sentences of promise and consolation and victory were added to the books by later writers. Even if this were true, it would mean that later writers saw that the universal gloom of the prophets was a misinterpretation of the course of the world. Probably the prophets saw that themselves.

Anyhow, here is the fact: most of the Old Testament was written in a world at war, and yet the dominant note of the Old Testament is the note of victory. The men of that tragic time, living as we do in the face of the strife of nations, themselves actually in the midst of it, daily suffering under the horrible distress of it, nevertheless maintained the serenity of their faith. They held that doctrine of the gracious and loving providence of God which in all ages has triumphantly withstood the contradiction of the facts. In a thousand wars, as in individual experiences

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out of number, the facts are dead against the assertion of divine providence. The proposition that God is our Father is disproved every day. But we believe it. That is the extraordinary thing. It is a part of the invincible creed of man, against which all facts and all arguments beat as vainly as the doctrine of the immortality of the soul survives the daily contradiction of the death of the body.

Nobody in Europe can add anything to the Old Testament consciousness of the calamity of war. The Hebrews learned the whole terrible lesson from the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, centuries before the Germans were ever heard of. Yet the total result of the Old Testament writings is that by patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope. Their message is that after betrayal, and mocking, and scourging, and crucifixion; after the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars fall; there comes the sure dawn of a third day, when the Lord of Life, whom we thought dead, rises again.

There is a serious defect, however, in the Old Testament hope and comfort. It is a

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message to the nations rather than to the men and women of whom the nations are composed. It is an interpretation of life in terms of continents and centuries. The "third day" is like the days of creation in the book of Genesis. It is so long, and the first day and the second are so long in between, that we despair of seeing it. It will come, no doubt, and this will be a better world in consequence of all this pain; but we shall not be here to welcome it. It is as when the Lord said to Mary in her mourning, "Thy brother shall rise again"; and Mary replied, "Yes, Lord, I know that he shall rise,—in the resurrection at the last day." That was a cold and remote comfort: as when one says, "It will be all the same in a hundred years."

The storm of war falls upon the land and sweeps away our home, our property, our place to live in, and those who are dear to us, and leaves us impoverished, spoiled, maimed and bereft. They who are thus taken out of our sight go, no doubt, to their reward. But here are we; here are our brothers and sisters in the devastated lands. There is no immediate consolation for them in the expectation that by-and-by, after years

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of pain and labour, these ghastly ruins shall be built again into decent habitations, and men and women shall live happily in them. What is the consolation of religion for these afflicted people now?

It is where the New Testament saints found it, in an interpretation of life which defied poverty, and persecution and the sword and the loss of all things, because they had transferred the emphasis of their interest from the world to the soul. Their treasure was laid up where no fire could burn it, where no thieves could steal it.

It is to be said for war that it makes a difference in the common standard of value. It distinguishes sharply between that which is material and temporal and that which is eternal. With all its hideous brutality, with its emphasis on the baser passions, tempting men to enrich themselves by means of the pain of their brethren, nevertheless it reveals among us an unsuspected prevalence of faith in the things which are above.

The men who go into the war leave their business, which had seemed to them the most important thing in life. They give up the pursuit of gain, which had been the goal of

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their efforts. The current of their ambition is suddenly turned into a new channel; they have not only new occupations but new motives. With the abandonment of the comforts of life, and of the ordinary aims of life, they are prepared to give up life itself. And this, with no expectation of reward. To the habitual question of commercial prudence, "What is there in this for me?" the answer which they make to their souls is that there is nothing in it of material advantage to them. All that they expect, all that they desire, is the satisfaction which comes to those who do their duty, and the joy which is the reward of those who have their part in the winning of a good fight. And these are things which are above.

Under the easy conditions of a long peace, such a situation may seem incredible. We may think ill of human nature. We may be of the opinion that man is invincibly selfish, and cares only for the comforts and conveniences of life, and has forgotten the ideals of his youth, and prefers gain to godliness, and is incapable of self-sacrifice. We may say to the social reformer, "You can't get men to give their money, or their time, or even the

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use of their influential names, to any attack upon the devil; because it would interfere with their business. It would interfere with their sacred business.”

Then war comes, and the doctrine that human nature is invincibly selfish is disproved by the argument of innumerable lives. Under the revealing conditions of this demand, unsuspected heroism, devotion, nobility, patriotism, self-sacrifice, and religion appear. Men are better than we thought. We ourselves are not so selfish, not so committed to the mere things of life, as we had feared. Even death takes on a new significance when it comes not in ignominious slow surrender to disease, but as a splendid offering of all that we have and are for the triumph of the righteous cause. The hero gives himself, with open eyes, with rejoicing devotion. He consecrates himself to the service of his country. He meets death not as an accident, not as a defeat, but as a part of the great day's work. “Gladly I lived, and gladly I die, and I lay me down with a will.”

The black storm of war overtakes us, and we count up our losses. They are bitter losses. A great war touches every family in

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the nation. There is no shelter from it. Let us not suffer ourselves to be deceived by the enthusiasm of thoughtless people, or to set out gaily keeping step to the beat of drums. Let us not share in the false security of those who say, as they read the tragedies of other people, "It can never happen to me." In this war, we shall all suffer. There is no escape. We perceive, however, that a large part of the loss in war consists in the destruction of material things. And we perceive, further, that most of these things are such as we can do without.

We learn again the spiritual philosophy of St. Paul, who not in easy theory only, not in a sermon only, but in the actual experience of his life, accounted all material things as no better than refuse, as of no value whatsoever, in comparison with the love of Christ. Christ, for our sakes, became poor, not of necessity, neither reluctantly nor regretfully, but with a great gladness, as one who enters into a splendid independence, unhampered, free, who sees life clear of all illusion, and puts first things first. St. Paul, and all the apostles, all the disciples, followed his example. "If ye then be risen with Christ,"

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he said, "seek those things which are above." It was his Easter message to those who had suffered the loss of all things. Seek those abiding things on which the destructive hand of adversity, of persecution, or of war cannot be laid. Though heaven and earth pass away, these eternal things remain.

War or no war, this is the true way of life. We may not get out from under the burden of our possessions, nor separate ourselves from our social complications, nor forsake the world. We may not seek the simple life under artificial conditions of seclusion. That would be the kind of retreat which is the same as defeat. We are to live the life to which it has pleased God to call us. But we are to live it in the spirit of the philosopher to whom a fanatic cried, "The world is coming to an end," and who answered, "I can get along very well without it." There is the test, there is our daily task of preparation. We are so to live, in the consciousness of God, in the sight of heaven, that we can get along without any of these material things, and survive the comforts and conveniences of life with unperturbed serenity.

MEMORIAL DAY IN A WORLD AT WAR

Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 15:26.

THEY had hazarded their lives not on fields of battle but in the dangerous adventures of peace.

Saint Paul, who was of their company, gives a list of the kinds of things which they had done and endured: "Five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep." To these perils of waters, he added perils of the wilderness, of the journey, and of the city; and perils by the heathen, by his own countrymen, and by false brethren. He said that he had been "in deaths oft." It is the experience of the soldier whose companions in the trenches have been killed on either side of him. And all in times of peace, without uniform or beat of

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drum, without the aid of the excitement of the stricken field! That which these men did and endured was under the conditions of a cold courage — the noblest and rarest kind of courage.

The situations were widely different, but the heroes thus described were kinsmen of those whom we have in memory to-day, and kinsmen of those other heroes the thought of whom, dying this moment on battlefields in Europe, subordinates this year the memory of every other war. Heroes of peace, heroes of battle — they are all alike heroic in the fact that they hazarded their lives. In the supreme moment, they considered not themselves. All their possessions, all their prospects, all the things for which men compete and strive, even to life itself, they piled up on the altar of their sacrifice.

We praise unselfishness; we assent to the assertion that all the virtues are included in it; but, at the same time, we group it with the passive excellencies. In our common thought it does not stand among the masteries. It is gracious and beautiful, but we do not instinctively recognise it as a manifestation of strength. The strong man asserts

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himself, impresses himself on his neighbours, leads the way, gives the words of command, and gets himself obeyed. We say dutifully that the meek shall inherit the earth, but we do not believe it. The meek? They are the unselfish, the humble-minded, who have no disposition to push their way among their fellows, and are not seeking anything for themselves. How shall they inherit the earth? the earth, which has been fought for, step by step, in all ages, as it is being fought for to-day in the fields of Belgium and France, and has been inherited, as a matter of fact, by the stoutest army!

Then comes such a day as this, when we think not so much of the living as of the dead, and commemorate not so much the heroes as the martyrs, and we begin to realise that these men saved the world by dying for it. They saved it, that is, by an act out of which all individual self-seeking had been taken. In the face of death, hazarding their lives, losing their lives, they asked nothing for themselves. They gave all; and gave it for their cause, for their country, for the forwarding of their ideal among men. We understand how our Lord said that He came

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not to be ministered unto but to minister, and expressed in that sentence a standard of life into which all the strengths and masteries are lifted up.

If we say that the men whose self-sacrifice is recalled by this Memorial Day hazarded their lives, indeed, but not "for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," then we may remember the debate which was argued in the presence of St. Anselm regarding a predecessor of his in the see of Canterbury, St. Alphege. It was said that Alphege could not properly be called a saint because he did not die in the service of religion. The invading Danes having captured Alphege and holding him for ransom, he refused to allow the burden of his release to be laid upon his people. They were poor enough, he said, already. Thus he died in resistance to an unjust tax. But Anselm said that Alphege was a saint indeed, because he gave his life for the common good, and the common good is the cause of God.

Thus died the men of the war which was ended fifty years ago. They died to set men free. They died to convert a confederacy of states into a united nation. Even the second

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of these purposes was so contributory to the prosperity and abiding peace of our people that we may recognise in it a religious value, and see the connection of it with the cause of Christ. Concerning the first, there is no doubt whatever. These men fought in a war of the Lord. They hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be discussed — and perhaps with profit — whether the results which they attained by the tragedy of war could not have been gained, and, on the whole, much better gained, by the patient processes of peace. We may frankly admit that the idea that moral betterment can never be had except by the methods of the jungle is altogether intolerable. Nevertheless, the fact remains that these men fought, and that out of their fighting, out of the hazard of their lives, came those good results. We remember them to-day not as heroes only but as benefactors.

Standing by the graves of these men we look out into our contemporary world. The storm of strife increases. On goes the unceasing tragedy of the war. We place our memorial flowers on the graves of the men

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of half-a-century ago at a time when the making of graves has come to be one of the chief industries of the race. They cannot be dug fast enough to satisfy the daily demand. But we perceive that we can in some measure understand now what was taking place among us fifty years ago. We can see in certain definite details how all that misery and pain and grief were concerned with human progress. And we believe, in the midst of the present strife of the nations, that this also shall some time be understood, and shall be found serviceable toward the long plans of God.

It may be that the men who are now hazarding their lives are by their pain bringing on the end not of this war only but of all war. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace puts forth a statement saying, "We wish to say to all friends of peace that the dreadful war now waging affords no just cause for discouragement, no discredit to past efforts, and no reason to doubt that still greater efforts in the future may be effective and useful. The war itself is teaching the gospel of peace through a lesson so shocking and so terrible that the most indifferent can-

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not fail to attend and understand it. Not only have the destruction of life, the devastation and suffering, in the warring countries passed all experience, but the cessation of production, the closing of markets, the blocking of trade routes, the interruption of exchanges, have affected industry and caused ruin and poverty in all the peaceful countries of the world. The universal interdependence of nations has been demonstrated, and the truth forced upon every mind that the peace of all nations is the vital concern of every nation."

And there is another effect than that. The policy of frightfulness has brought about an unintended result. It has stained and defaced the ancient glory of war. It has covered the profession of arms with shame. It has taken the name of soldier, which in spite of all the inevitable cruelties of war has kept a tradition of nobility, and has made it descriptive of the basest crimes of criminals. The report of Mr. Bryce's commission to examine into the conduct of the war in Belgium writes into the pages of carefully authenticated history the record of an army degraded into murderers, and adulterers and

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thieves. Here is war reduced to a calculated science, divested of all romance, emptied of all chivalry, equipped with torches to burn the houses of non-combatants, destroying here an ancient university and there a cathedral consecrated by the associations of centuries, levying monstrous fines: and this, not in the heat and rage of battle, not as the fiendish acts of men beyond control, but in deliberation, under orders written in military offices. These atrocities are the last word in war. They are the accomplishment of the most efficient military organisation which has been seen on this embattled earth since Cain murdered Abel. They reveal war as it is, a horrible crime against both man and God, menacing the human race as the savages in the colonial days menaced the settlers. And not to be endured, never again to be permitted!

The men who are putting their lives to hazard will break down that increasing might of militarism which has long menaced the prosperity of nations. In the armed camp of Europe, for now these many years, the energy, the time and the money which are needed for the positive purposes of civil-

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isation, for the work of moral and social construction, for education and religion, have been diverted into the unproductive and perilous maintenance of armies and the making of costly munitions of war. Every hour of this time, every ounce of this strength, and every dollar of this money have been taken from the great purposes in which we believe. And now at last the war has come for which these preparations have been made. We may trust that when it is over, and the weary and wounded nations return to the life which human beings ought to live, they will do so in a temper which will no longer endure the existence of these appliances for the murder of men. They will take their submarines and their aeroplanes, and their shrapnel and their poisons, and make a bonfire of them on the ruins of the Krupp gun-factory at Essen, in the light of whose flames men shall be able to read the fine print of the Sermon on the Mount from Petrograd to Constantinople, and from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Kiel Canal.

The war has deepened the moral and spiritual life in the belligerent countries. Old frivolities are being cast aside, like the toys

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of childhood. A new seriousness, a new consciousness of God, a revival of religion appears. This may be due, indeed, in part, to the fact that whole populations are suddenly brought face to face with the peril of death. Every man who goes to the front knows very well that he may never return, and that thought is in the hearts of all his relatives and friends. They all put on a cheerful face, so far as they are able, and away goes the father, husband, son, amidst shouts of applause and the waving of brave farewells, but nothing can disguise the presence of the awful probability of death. It puts a new value on all that part of life which cannot die. It emphasises religion.

But this it does, also, because it beats true with the heart of religion itself. This supreme unselfishness, this offering of oneself for the common good, this hazarding of one's life for a great cause, is of the very essence of Christianity, and finds its symbol in the cross of Christ. "Militarism," says President Tucker, "has nothing to teach Christianity regarding the practice of the heroic virtues. A religion which was born in the supreme act of sacrificial courage, which

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defied the centuries of persecution, which mastered in turn the virile races of Europe, which conquered despotism and cast out slavery, which has subdued savage tribes, and now holds its outposts in all dark and cruel parts of the hospitable earth, is not a religion to be asked to sit at the feet of modern militarism.”

Christianity is a militant religion, into whose service we are enlisted as true soldiers. It has within it place and play for all the heroic virtues: not for the courage of the arm only, but for the more difficult courage of the conscience; not for strength only, but for chivalry. It is a contention against principalities and powers, against the devil, against everything that is mean and base and evil in the world. War comes and contradicts it, presenting itself as the great selfishness, the great endeavour of the strong to subjugate the weak, destructive, ruthless, cruel. And yet war gives it opportunity, being at the same time the supreme call to unselfish service, and rising to self-sacrifice. Memorial Day and Trinity Sunday are almost coincident, significantly. For Memorial Day stands for the fact of war, and Trinity

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Sunday stands for the fact of God. What we need at this moment is somehow to hold those facts together, and to bring the one to the interpretation of the other. And for that we need the largest possible understanding of God. In the midst of war, for our comfort, for our faith, we would renew our belief in God not only as the creator of the world, and not only as the redeemer of the race, but as the constant sanctifier of humanity, our unfailing helper in the long struggle with all wrong, in whom believing we know that somehow, beyond our sight, all things, even in the storm of war, shall work together for the accomplishment of good.

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They wrought righteousness. Heb. 11:33.

They were tempted. 11:37.

THE eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews marches like a procession.

First come the kings and the captains: Abel in the lead, after him Noah, then Abraham, then Moses, in single file, dignified and imposing persons. Then follow the footsoldiers, in regiments and companies: first, the heroes of the active life, the men who did great things,—they subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; then, the heroes of the passive life, the men who endured great things,—they had trial of mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder. Thus they march, the heroes

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of the faith, the veterans of old wars, in uniform, with gleaming medals, and with the scars of their honourable wounds upon them.

But in the midst of these regiments of splendid warriors are two unexpected and surprising groups. With men in uniform before them, and men in uniform behind them, they march in plain attire, in citizen's dress. It looks for a moment as if some quiet persons, coming in out of the country, had got into the procession by mistake.

Among the heroes of the active life, are those whose humble record is contained in the description: "They wrought righteousness." This is the best that can be said of them. They kept the commandments; they were just plain good. And among the heroes of the passive life, between the memorial banner of those who were sawn asunder and the memorial banner of those who were slain with the sword, is an army of people still more humble, of whom the very best that can be said is, "They were tempted." Why, we are all tempted. As the long victorious procession passes, and these citizens come in sight, we spectators, any of us, may

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come in off the common sidewalk, and take our places in these ranks, keeping step with them. Of course, they resisted temptation. This is a march of triumph, not of defeat. But we, too, resist temptation, sometimes. If there is room among the heroes for such as these, there is room for such as we.

It means that there is another heroism beside the heroism of the battle. There is a heroism of the camp.

We come in sight of the same contrast when we read side by side this roll of brave men in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the roll of brave men in the eleventh chapter of the First Book of Chronicles.

The Old Testament heroes were persons of strenuous activity. One of them led the attack which resulted in the taking of Jerusalem by the Jews. He climbed up the steep face of the cliff, as Wolfe climbed to the Heights of Abraham. Another met three hundred Philistines, and faced them with his single spear, and slew them at one time. Three of them, in the heat of battle, heard David say, "Oh, that one would get me a drink of water from the well by the gate of

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Bethlehem," and they brake through the host of the Philistines and drew water out of the well and brought it to David. Another slew a lion in the midst of a pit on a stormy day. Another fought a duel with an Egyptian giant; the Egyptian was eight feet high, and had a spear like a weaver's beam; the hero plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and slew him.

The heroes of the New Testament list showed their courage in altogether different ways. Abel was a hero because he offered an acceptable sacrifice. Noah was a hero because he built an ark. Enoch was a hero because he walked with God. Abraham was a hero because he went into a new country, and there made a home for himself and his family after him. Moses was a hero because he preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of Egypt. Their heroism was displayed not in the field of military courage, but in the field of character. Not one of them won his renown by killing anybody.

It means that there is another heroism beside the heroism of danger. It is the heroism of quiet duty.

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A Hebrew captain, on the eve of a difficult and dangerous campaign, heard the voice of God in his soul, and the voice said, "Be strong and very courageous." Of course. These are the proper qualities of captains. But the rest of the sentence is in the New Testament spirit: "Be strong and very courageous — that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law." The Lord says, "Joshua, you will be brave in battle: that is taken for granted. That is easy. But the hardest thing that you will have to do is to keep the commandments. The conquest of the Canaanites is a matter of course. You and your men will fight, and enjoy it. But after the Canaanites are conquered, you will have to fight the devil. That is a very different and more serious matter. You will have to fight against the devil. You must resist temptation, and help your people to resist it. You must be righteous and make your people righteous."

It is plain — is it not? — that this call to the heroism of the camp demands even more than the call to the heroism of the battle.

The thing is verified in the experience of every nation. It seems hard enough to die

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for one's country, but it is much harder to live for one's country. Men, for example, are found in great numbers ready to imperil their lives in the defence of the community against a foreign enemy. But when it comes to imperilling their property, their business interests, their personal comfort or convenience, in the defence of the community against intolerable political conditions, or against the devil entrenched in the brothel or the saloon, that is another matter. Men who would be brave soldiers are found to be timid citizens. Sometimes they are found to be treacherous citizens, actual enemies of the community, contending for their own advantage against the life and character of their neighbours. They are willing to own houses which poison the bodies and souls of those who live in them, or to employ for their own gain the labour of women and children under such conditions of hours and pay that the women are unfitted to be mothers, and the boys and girls are unable to grow up into good men and women.

Dr. Benjamin Church, in the Revolution, was taken out of Cambridge to the music of a fife and drum playing the "Rogue's

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March," because he was discovered to be carrying on a traitorous correspondence with the enemy during the siege of Boston. That was in time of war. At such a time, traitors are recognised and sharply disciplined. But in times of peace, one may be a traitor to his social trusts without fairly perceiving his own treachery. Miss Addams, in her "Twenty Years at Hull House," speaks of a man whose conscience was in serious doubt as to the righteousness of contributing money to a social settlement because the settlements give no religious instruction, while at the same time the conscience of the settlement itself was even more deeply perplexed as to its right to take his money because of the notorious unscrupulousness of his business methods. So easy is it to attend to the great transactions of the battle, and at the same time to disregard the common duties of the camp. They who wrought righteousness belong among the heroes. They fought as brave a fight as they who "turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

You can see how this interprets the festival of All Saints. It is a day which brings

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plain people into the company of prophets and apostles. It extends the list of Christian saints till it includes so great a multitude that no man could number them. They stand before us a shining company uncanonised and uncalendared, but wearing haloes of celestial light. They have no place in the pages of history. There is no record of their names. Such commemoration as they have is like the Tower of the Forty Martyrs by the coast of Syria, concerning which nobody knows who the martyrs were, or in what holy war they offered up their lives, or even whether they were Mohammedans or Christians. They are indistinguishably lost in the ranks of the private soldiers of whom the whole army of martyrs is composed.

Thus the portion of Scripture appointed for the epistle for All Saints' Day is the most monotonous passage of the New Testament: "Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand." And so on down the list, wherein one tribe is exactly like every other tribe, and the regiments of twelve thousand march in step, every man

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like every other man, without any individual distinction. When the hundred and forty-four thousand saints are finally numbered, and to them is added the innumerable company of other saints, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, standing before the throne, clothed in white robes and having palms in their hands, all that we see is a vast multitude in which no person appears to be of separate value.

Then we remember that wars are won by armies, not by captains; and cities are built by companies of labourers, many of whom, in these days when our unskilled workmen come from all the nations of the earth, are known not by their names but by their numbers. The kingdom of God is set forward daily by the honest lives of plain people, by faith and love of which the world knows nothing, by prayer and patience seen only by Him who seeth in secret. We perceive, indeed, when we consider the matter, that the great saints, even the apostles, were distinguished chiefly by their loyalty, not by their ability. Even in their loyalty, they failed sometimes. When a book is written about the Acts of the Apostles the writer

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can find only two of the first twelve concerning whom he may report; and of these two, one says never a word, and appears only as the shadow of the other. As for the rest, the roll is called at the beginning of the book, and thereafter they are heard of no more: not because they were unfaithful, not because they accomplished little, but because the things which they did were so simple, so quiet, so involved in the customary routine of life, that the historian did not find enough material in their experience to make a paragraph. Peter, indeed, preaches in the street, in defiance of the municipal authorities, and is arrested, and put in prison. There is a whole chapter about that. But Andrew found his brother Simon, and he brought him to Jesus; Philip found Nathaniel: the fact may be stated in a sentence; it cannot well be expanded into pages. Nevertheless, thus it was that the kingdom of heaven grew, by quiet influence, by the word and example of plain people, by the kind of saintliness which we commemorate on All Saints' Day.

We perceive also that the All Saints' Day Epistle, which marches the saints in regi-

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ments of twelve thousand, and shows us, after these have passed, how the procession pushes on so eagerly that all the order of the ranks is broken, and the street is filled from fence to fence with a great multitude in which saints of all lands and languages are crowded together,— this epistle is followed by an All Saints' Day Gospel, in which heroism is defined in terms of simple goodness, not in terms of physical courage. The description of the saints in this passage from the Sermon on the Mount makes no mention of stopping the mouths of lions, or quenching the violence of fire, or turning to flight the armies of the aliens. It is concerned with righteous living, and with the endurance of temptation. The heroes manifest their heroism by their meekness, by being merciful, and making peace. Theirs is a moral courage.

It is not, indeed, so passive as it looks. They who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are not submissive persons. They would not be persecuted if they were. They are the obstinate souls who will not yield, who pay no heed to the voice of a majority in error, who block the way which leads to

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falsehood and wrong, and are persecuted because nobody can go that way without encountering them. The beatitudes are not a glorification of the merely passive virtues. But what they say is this: that heroism is by no means dependent upon strength of arm or boldness of spirit, does not wait for any dramatic occasion, tarries not for the proclamation of a war, but is one of the quiet virtues, the opportunity for whose exercise comes daily into even the most sheltered lives. Remember how a philosopher said that he who habitually speaks the truth shall find himself in situations sufficiently dramatic!

Blessed indeed is he who does a great thing in a great way. Let us give him a full measure of appreciation and applause. But the great occasions are infrequent, and they who thus stand out before the eyes of the world, even of the little world of their own neighbourhood, are few in number. Blessed are they who have learned that to do righteousness and to resist temptation is a part of the day's work of heroic souls. These are the heroes, these are the saints of the Lord.

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To encounter pain and disappointment and discouragement with a high courage, to be of good cheer when all the conditions are in contradiction, to take up the monotonous tasks of daily duty and perform them with unfailing faithfulness, this is to follow in the steps of the most holy life, and substantially to set forward the kingdom of God. This is to take one's place among all the saints.

Remember that the "chief of the devils," as he is revealed in the New Testament, is not the prince of the power of the air, nor the prince of the power of the water; he makes his attack neither by Zeppelin nor by submarine. His name is Beelzebub, which, being interpreted, is the "god of the flies," the god of the stinging flies. He is the devil of petty annoyances, of trifling irritations, of our besetting sins, the devil of the difficulties of common life. Against this devil we go not in uniform, nor to the sound of drums and fifes. So much the worse for us. It is a necessary battle in as hard a war as is being fought to-day upon this blood-stained earth. It calls for a longer courage than is

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needed in the army, as the trench needs a braver spirit than the charge. They who fight in this campaign with patience and success are not only saints but heroes.

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The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined. Isaiah 9:2.

ONE of the services rendered to religion by the revisers of the English translation of the Bible is to bring light into the darkness of the Old Testament lesson for the morning of Christmas Day.

The lesson ends, indeed, in a blaze of glory. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This is as plain as the shining day, and its appropriateness to the festival of Christ's Nativity is evident. But what is this about the "dimness" which "shall not be such as was in her affliction"? In whose affliction? What is this about multiplying the nation and not increasing the joy? It reads like a foreboding of national disaster and decline, when there

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are more people to be fed than there is food to feed them. "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." What does that mean? How does it agree with the anthem of peace on earth which the Christmas angels sang?

These questions are answered by the revised translation.

Isaiah was speaking at the moment when the northern kingdom of Israel,—the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, Galilee of the nations—was being invaded by the Assyrians, its cities and sanctuaries destroyed, and its people deported. In the midst of this distress, which we are able to understand by comparison with events now taking place, the prophet promised deliverance. He looked on as we do: except that between the conquered territory and his own country there was no protecting barrier of ocean. He was a wise man, who saw that the flood of invasion would not be stopped by any boundary line, but would roll even to the walls of Jerusalem. The world was at war, and no land was safe. Still, he promised peace and prosperity. So strong

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was his confidence that he spoke as if the divine blessing had already come. He looked through the smoke of burning cities and saw light.

“There shall be no gloom in her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation and increased their joy. They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as in the day of Midian. For all the armour of the armed men in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, for fuel of fire.” The munitions and the munition factories and all the implements of war, and every bloody trace of battle, shall the clean fire consume.

It is a promise of national salvation. The

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yoke of the invader shall be broken, and all the armour of the invading soldiers shall be burned. The nation shall be greater than before, with more people, and more joy in proportion. This shall be accomplished by that Messianic deliverer whose four mystical names are Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

We bring over the great words from their connection with the strife of contending peoples long ago in Asia to their relation to the strife of contending peoples at this day in Europe, and to all other strife between right and wrong, and all other conflict between joy and sorrow. Our leader, our hope, our invincible strength is that same Prince of old whom we now identify with the Saviour of the World. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder." It is true again for us, and true forever, that "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." It is a Christmas text for Cardinal Mercier in the midst of the ruins of Belgium.

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Christmas is the symbol and assurance of that saving light. It shines to-day in the dark world as the skies shone when the angels sang over the fields of Bethlehem. Its message to all afflicted people is the message of that holy night when the Child was born and the Son was given, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people: for unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord."

Christmas is so much a time of merry-making that we easily miss its profound significance as a Festival of Consolation. Sad people seem out of place in it. If they cannot be glad and laugh and sing, and take part in our games, let them go away by themselves until after New Year's Day. Their faces do not suit the gay colours of our decorations; their voices make a discord in our carols.

Not at all. Not only does the wide and warm hospitality of Christmas take in all sorts of men, but the holy day is vitally related to the tragedy of life. The light of it shines in the darkness, and is made visible by the darkness, as the stars appear when the sun is out of sight. The ministry of

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grew dark again, and the hard problems had to be undertaken as before, and nobody was promoted or enriched. The shepherds went out, night after night, into the chill pastures. Joseph and Mary worked for their living, and having had no friends before in Bethlehem had enemies now, and fled for their lives. The singing of the choir of heaven which seemed, for the moment, to be the beginning of an oratorio of general peace and joy, was followed by the cries of the mothers of Bethlehem who were weeping for their children, and could not be comforted. Anybody who is sad this Christmas may find his counterpart in the Christmas story.

Nevertheless, the quality of life was changed, the meaning of life was interpreted, and the Christmas people went forward into the new day with hearts uplifted, and with a joy which no affliction could take from them.

Christmas is a Festival of Consolation. It is true that the Christmas candles, as they burn, burn down; and the Christmas garlands wither; the symbols of our happiness are also symbols of the transitoriness of human life. Every year, and this year more

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than ever before, there are those who see these things through their tears. But the Christmas blessing is as abiding as the light, which shines not only in the candles but in the sun and the stars; it is as abiding as the life which is perpetually renewed in the growing trees, and in all the harvests of the earth. When the spring comes, even the battlefields shall be green again. The waning candles and the withering wreaths are only incidents in the great, wise, providential ordering of things.

For the heart of Christmas is the manifestation of the care of God. This it is which is preached in the sermons, and lifted into song in carols and anthems, and celebrated in all the holy solemnities.

What we need is to know the meaning of our life. Bitter experiences befall us, disappointment and foreboding darken upon us, all our individual ills blend with the black background of the present woes of the world. The facts make pessimism seem reasonable and inevitable. But Isaiah kept his faith under conditions which contradicted it as sharply as ever the Great War will. In the shadow of death he saw the light of life.

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Because he believed in God. And Christmas comes certifying the care of God, and assuring us in spite of all the oppositions of distress and doubt that we are the children of the divine Father. His dealing with us passes our understanding, but we know that somehow it is wise and right. The Son of God, our Brother, was cradled in a manger and after many bitter trials and disappointments was put to death on a cross: we remember that, when life seems difficult and tragic.

He came to save us from our sins and sorrows, and all along, on Christmas Days and other days, he does it, till they who walk in darkness see great light, and the light shines even on them that dwell, like our brothers across the sea, in the land of the shadow of death. Over our heads the heavens glow with new radiance, and there are voices from the sky and music of celestial choirs and proclamations of eternal joy. We perceive that behind the heavy clouds are the gates of heaven. We enter with new faith and new courage into the Christmas consolation.

GOD AND THE WORLD'S PAIN

Why standest thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble? Psalm 10:1.

IT is the everlasting question which is asked in all time of tribulation, and now especially in the increasing distresses of the war. There is some measure of comfort in the fact that it has been asked innumerable times, ever since the race of man began to think, and that although it has never been answered to our complete satisfaction, still we go on. Still we go on believing that this is on the whole a good world, governed by a good God.

Every vast disaster, like this war, every apparent contradiction of the fatherhood of God, has driven some people into the confusion and darkness of doubt. At first they have said, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Then they have cried, "My God, my God, look upon me, why hast

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thou forsaken me?" Then they have given it all up, saying in their heart, "There is no God." And all this they have done as if they had entered into an altogether new experience, and had made a new discovery about God and the world's pain.

It is one of the oldest of all discoveries. Every element of bitterness in it, every reason for doubt and disbelief, has been felt, and reckoned with, and counted, and faced, since trouble entered into the life of man. It is one of the primitive problems. The present war has added nothing to it. These tragic years have brought to our attention no detail of suffering or sorrow, no injustice, no evidence of the incredible patience, or of the non-existence, of God, which has not been written in the books of history a hundred thousand times. The only contribution which the present war brings to this immortal problem is the realisation of it which comes from its approach to us.

The idea that faith has entered now into an unprecedented peril, and that belief in the power or in the goodness of God must perish from the creeds of men, can be held only by those who are unacquainted with

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history. The whole matter was faced and fought out by the Christians who experienced the overthrow of the Roman Empire at the hands of the Goths and Vandals. Even then, it had been faced and fought out long before by the Jews who experienced the overthrow of the Hebrew Empire at the hands of the Assyrians and Chaldeans. These peoples met the question of the providence of God under the conditions of defeat: conditions which magnified every difficulty of the problem. The Jews of the Chaldean invasion and the Christians of the Gothic invasion, not only cried "Why standest thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble?" but they said, "Mine enemies live and are mighty; thou art far off, and puttest us to confusion, and goest not forth with our armies. Thou makest us to turn our backs upon our enemies, so that they which hate us spoil our goods. Thou lettest us be eaten like sheep. They have set fire upon thy holy places; they break down all the carved work thereof with axes and hammers. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth."

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The significant thing is that none of these vast calamities destroyed or even seriously discouraged faith. The king of the Assyrians came marching down upon Jerusalem, as the Germans came upon the Belgians, and as the Turks came upon the Armenians. He said in his heart, "I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." After the Assyrians came the Chaldeans, and Jerusalem was destroyed, so that not one stone was left upon another. But faith survived in triumph. An invincible trust in God over-balanced all the pain of the world. So it is to-day.

This belief has not depended on a process of convincing argument, or on a satisfactory understanding of the world.

In the Old Testament a common explanation of prosperity and adversity, of success and defeat, of war and peace, is in moral terms. *The prosperous are blessed of God*

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with prosperity because they are good, the unprosperous are cursed with adversity because they are bad. Thus it is written in the book of Deuteronomy: "It shall come to pass if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come out against thee one way, and shall flee before thee seven ways." Disobedience shall be followed by corresponding maledictions and disasters: "The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with a fiery heat, and with the sword, and they shall pursue thee until thou perish."

Accordingly, when the friends of Job came out and found him covered with boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, they said, "Job, what have you done? What fearful sin have you committed?" And when Job replied that he had

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done nothing: that so far as he knew he had lived blamelessly in the obedience of God, they could not believe it. They saw in his condition the sure proof of wrong-doing, and they pursued him with accusations to find out what the wrong-doing was.

So also in the New Testament, when the tower fell in Siloam and killed a number of by-standers, the immediate inference of the neighbours was that these were the worst sinners in the place. The discriminating stones had selected them for punishment. According to the common theory of the meaning of pain the stones must fall upon the heads of the most grievous offenders. Even to this day, a great disaster,— a fire, a flood, an earthquake, a shipwreck,— discloses the fact that this idea of the relation of God to the world's pain still continues.

The theory is confirmed by various facts of human life. It is the foundation of many very sensible reflections upon the course of the world, in the book of Proverbs. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinners." They shall be rewarded and punished "in the earth," here in their own life-

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time, by prosperity and by adversity. The thing is daily verified in the case of the moral qualities upon which the book of Proverbs lays the greatest stress; for these are the virtues of honesty, of thrift, of industry, of diligence. "The way of the slothful man is a hedge of thorns, but the way of the righteous is made plain." It is, indeed. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well. I looked upon it and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."

But the coming of want as an armed man cannot always be so easily explained. The poverty of the abandoned farm may be due not to the sloth of the farmer but to the depredations of the armed man. The desolate fields of Belgium and France, where nettles cover the face thereof and the stone walls are broken down, are not accounted for by

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the philosophy of the book of Proverbs, nor by the theology of the book of Deuteronomy. The explanation of the pain of the world by the assertion that he who suffers brought his suffering upon himself interprets a part of the problem of evil, but only a small part.

The Old Testament people realised this. They saw that the doctrine of pain as punishment did not account for the whole of experience, and they tried in several ways to bring the justice of God and the facts of life together.

They said, *It is true that the sinners are sometimes prosperous and the saints suffer, but these conditions are temporary.* "I was grieved at the wicked," says a psalmist, "I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity. They come in no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men. Then thought I to understand this, but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I the end of these men; namely, how thou dost set them in slippery places, and castest them down, and destroyest them." For the moment, the bad enjoy the riches which they have gained

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by plundering the good ; but wait, the God of justice will change all that. " Fret not thyself because of the ungodly, neither be thou envious against the evil doers ; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and be withered even as the green herb."

As a matter of fact, however, while some of the evil-doers are cut down like the grass, many more go on and prosper. They may miss the best joys of life, but we can only guess at that. The plain fact is that they keep the money which they gained by evil doing, and add more to it, and live in luxury all their days. Meanwhile the defrauded saints get nothing back, and die poor. Over the hopeless ruins of the houses of the innocent the army of invasion marches victorious. " Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord " ; we wish that, until our wish becomes a curse, but nothing happens. We cannot make reprisal, and God does not. The assertion as a general principle that the material prosperity of the wicked is temporary, may be made, as the psalmist said, in the sanctuary of God, where the harsh contradictions of the world are shut out, and in the stillness we think of life as it ought to be,

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but it cannot endure the test of actual experience.

So then they said, *It may be that the sin which brings adversity on men was committed not by them but by their ancestors.* Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who with their own eyes saw the righteous forsaken, quote a proverb which was current in their time: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The saying has a basis in the order of things. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. The children are poor because the fathers were poor, and weak because the fathers were weak. The doctrine of heredity is no longer accounted an adequate explanation of the general state of human affairs, but it does explain some of them. The prophets rejected it because it seemed to them to break down the foundation of individual responsibility. They said, "Every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." The essential discrediting of the theory, however, is in the impossibility of proving it. It is like the Buddhist doctrine that we suffer not for any wrong which we

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do, but for some wrong which we did before we were born, in a previous state of existence. It is not so much an explanation as an evasion of the apparent injustice of life.

The same objection holds against another endeavour of the Old Testament people to solve the problem of pain. The writer of the prose parts of the book of Job said that *evil comes into the world by the suggestion and action of the devil*. A door is opened into heaven, and he beholds a celestial conference in session, and Satan proposes the smiting of Job by way of experiment, to see how he will take it. Satan is permitted to smite Job. He spoils his goods, he kills his children, he puts upon him the burden of great pain. Thus the tragedy begins. The inference is that many of the afflictions of the righteous have some such infernal origin.

The devil has almost disappeared from our theology. He used to be brought out often for the scaring of sinners. Nowadays, perhaps because the sinners are no longer scared so easily, or because we have outgrown a doctrine which taught us to believe in two gods, one good and the other bad, the devil has become hardly more than a convenient

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and picturesque synonym for the power of evil. It is true that as we read the war news in the daily papers, and recall the inhuman and incredible things which have been done since the war began, the old doctrine of the devil seems a reasonable explanation. How could honest and friendly citizens be so transformed by putting them into uniform, unless they were possessed of the devil? The doctrine fails, however, because we cannot prove it. It retreats into those invisible regions whither we cannot follow it.

The unsolved problem of the good God and the bad world confronted the prophet Habakkuk in the midst of a world at war.

Out of Babylon came the Chaldeans, with their faces toward the Great Sea, and between them and Egypt lay the little kingdom of the Jews. The whole earth shook beneath them. Death and destruction came with them. Civilisation and religion seemed alike in peril. And God was silent. In the soul of the prophet, above the terror of the impending war, was a fearful perplexity, deepening into doubt. For him the supreme tragedy was his inability to bring the situation into accord with the just government of God.

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The march of the invading army, the spoiling of towns, the desecration of sanctuaries, the destruction of the patient work of centuries, the loss of life, he could endure; but it seemed to him that with these lamentable losses he had lost God also. How could the justice of God, the love of God, the very being of God, be consistent with these tragedies? He repeated the persistent question of the psalm, "Why standest thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble?" "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear, even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save?" "Thou art of purer eyes," he says, "than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity"—canst not look upon it with approval, or with indifference, or even with patience. "Wherefore lookest thou [passive and silent] upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest not thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

It is our own problem. It is the question which confronts us to-day in sight of Armenia, and Serbia, and Poland, and Belgium, and the ruined fields of France. Habakkuk says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set

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me upon my tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets that he may run that readeth it, *The righteous shall live in his faithfulness.*" The righteous finds his true life in his own soul, indestructible, safe from all invading armies, unharmed by any ills of war. He lives in his faithfulness to the truth, in his constant obedience to God, in his allegiance to his best ideals.

The watch-tower of the prophet is no sun-swept parapet on the broad roof of a strong castle. It is lifted only a little way above the stricken field, and the dust and smoke of battle are so blown against it that the watcher gets only glimpses of the situation. But what he sees is true. Here, while the earth quakes about him, he stands firm. The idea that God rewards the good with material blessings and punishes the bad with material defeat, is only partially true. The other explanations of the world's pain are not so true as that. But this is true: that the best of life is beyond this touch of tribulation. That for which we care most, and for which we

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believe God cares supremely, cannot be counted, cannot be measured, cannot be expressed in terms of possession. The best of life is separate from lands and houses, and art and architecture, and peace and prosperity, even from life itself. It is truth, and honour, and faithfulness and self-sacrifice, and love which is stronger than death. Out of the lower levels, and the selfish ambitions, and the lesser ways of living we are uplifted, even by the pain of war, to these high places, eternal in the heavens.

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He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5.

AS the queen's treasurer read this page aloud to himself, he looked up and saw the evangelist Philip, and, perceiving him to be a man of God, he asked, Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Philip, in reply, expounded the passage in terms of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. He it was who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and his life taken from the earth. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. It is doubtful, however, whether the prophet, as he spoke of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, had in mind some man, then living or yet to come, or was thinking of the whole people of God, suffering for the

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sake of humanity, whose pain is for the accomplishment of our peace.

It does not greatly matter. That the prophetic vision found fulfilment, centuries after, in Jesus Christ, is plain enough. "He is the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by his death hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life." It is plain also that the vision has been fulfilled so many times, under so many different circumstances, that it refers not so much to any single instance as to an eternal principle of life. It is true always, and the truth of it is illustrated every day, that suffering is a form of service, and that pain is one of the efficient elements of progress.

The fact is that the world is made that way. The world is so made, and we are in it upon such conditions, that obedience is essential to happiness. It is necessary to obey the laws of the physical universe in order to be well; it is necessary to obey the moral laws in order to be good. Righteousness and health, individual and general, are the goals of progress. This is what we desire for our-

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selves and for all men, that we may each of us have a sound body and a clear conscience. But before we can obey the physical and moral laws we must know what they are. And they are discovered by experience, by hard experience.

Every race, every generation, every one of us, inherits from the past a great amount of knowledge which has been laboriously and painfully learned. Some of it we have to learn over again because we are not quite convinced of the wisdom of our elders. But we are not only to enter into this knowledge, we are to add to it. We are to increase the amount of ascertained and accepted knowledge of the difference between good and evil. It is the business of every generation to say to those who come after: Here is something which we have found out; we have learned that such and such a thing, about which there used to be confusion of mind, is bad. It may be slavery, it may be autocratic government, it may be the settlement of international differences by war: no matter. This thing is bad. We have put it out. We have labelled it "Poison."

This is what we mean by progress,— this

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gradual addition to the sum total of acquired knowledge, this advance through experience into better ways of living. It is gained by pain. Even of the Supreme Master of the spiritual life it is said that he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Even for him there was no other way. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." It is a principle of life.

The physical world is so ordered that its laws are learned by processes of penalty. There is no discrimination. No allowances are made either for saints or for fools. The sun shines and the rain falls on the evil and on the good, and the same is true of the fire and of the flood. We may imagine different conditions, and shut our eyes to contradicting facts. We may rebel with the pessimist, and blaspheme the world. We may sigh with the poet,

"Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits — and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"

We know very well, however, that the actual ordering of our life is a wise ordering.

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We can see that. It might indeed be pleasant to have the law of gravitation pull suddenly and hard on a burglar climbing into a second-story window, and deal very gently with a small child leaning perilously out; but such a difference would put us to intellectual confusion. What we have, as it is, is a world on which we may rely, and which we may understand more and more, and to which we are therefore able to adjust ourselves. It is a world in which there are absolute scientific values. Under such conditions progress is possible. For if the well-being of the body of man depends on obedience to the laws of nature, it is necessary that those laws should be so impartial and unchanging that we may depend upon them.

The truth is that the natural laws of God, even when they seem for the moment to accomplish nothing but the pain of man, are found to be impelling influences toward progress.

Take, for example, the desolation and tragedy of drought. The heaven gives no rain, the sun shines with pitiless heat, the earth is dried up and yields no fruit, and people starve. A dreadful situation! What shall

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we say of a world in which the faithful pray and there is no answer, and little children die for lack of food? There is a reasonable theory that in just such pain as this the civilisation of the race got its first great start. Men had emerged from the savagery of the wild forests, and had encamped upon the grass lands of northern Arabia and of southern Russia. It was a place for the domestication of flocks and herds, and for the beginnings of human society. The primitive people liked it, and were contented with it. Having come that brief distance on the long road of progress, they were satisfied to sit down and go no farther. They were driven out by drought. Bad seasons made the pleasant grass-lands uninhabitable. Thereupon some of the people of northern Arabia crossed over into Egypt and settled the valley of the Nile; others went up and settled the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates. In like manner, some of the people of the steppes of Russia moved down into Greece, others into India. Thus the drought, which seemed for the moment to block the progress of the race, helped it on.

As in the physical world, so in the moral.

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The happiness of man consists in conformity to the will of God. But before the will of God is done, two things are necessary. It is necessary that we should know what the will of God is; it is also necessary that we should realise that our happiness depends on our obedience.

Slowly, the race learns by experience what the will of God is. For example, there was a time when the divine will was supposed not only to sanction but to command the destruction of our enemies. Out went the Israelites, led by the prophet Elisha, into the land of Moab, and this is what they did: "They smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them," and "they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their own country. And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees." That was their honest idea of the will of God. Even the neighbouring heathen were scandalised and horrified by it. "There was great indignation against Israel"; so that even the Israelites began to suspect that they had made a mistake as to the divine

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will; "and they returned to their own land"; having, perhaps, learned something. By hard experience, sometimes through pain of our neighbours, but more often through pain of our own souls and bodies, we learn how God would have us live.

This is a slow lesson, but more slowly still do we learn that our happiness depends on our obedience. We assent to the statement. That is easy. As a matter of fact, however, even the best of us sometimes act as if we were in doubt about it. And mankind in general is still unconvinced. We all desire earnestly to be happy, but a great number of people are of the opinion that more pleasure is to be had by breaking the moral law than by keeping it. The narrow way to happiness is entered by the gate of obedience, and there is a guide-post by the gate stating that fact plainly in all the languages of the earth; but people are forever trying other paths, hoping to get there by a shorter way.

Our life is so ordered that these experiments are permitted. Not only do we learn by experience what the will of God is, but we learn by the same process of instruction that our welfare consists in doing it. It is

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often a bitter lesson. In the distress and tragedy of it, in all ages, men say, Why does not God make the wrong choice impossible? Here, for example, is the pestilence of war. We thought that we had put it down. We thought that at last we had become so civilised and so Christian that disputes would be argued by force of blows only in the back streets of the world, only by men of savage tribes, ignorant and belated, still near of kin to the animals of the jungle, not by gentlemen, not by educated and religious people. In our disappointment, we ask, not only in grief but in grave doubt, Why does God allow it? Is he good, but not strong enough? or is he strong, but not good enough, to stop it?

The answer is that God, who made the world and us, has so ordered our life that man proceeds from the worse to the better by the discipline of experiment. It was in accordance with our best knowledge of God and of man that the Hebrews imagined the opportunity of a wrong choice in the Garden of Eden. Man had to have the chance to choose wrong in order that his right choice might be the expression not of a will with-

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out him, but of his own will within him. By this choice he became man. Thus his virtues became manly virtues. A world without liberty of choice would be a world of slaves or imbeciles. It would be a good world, because it would be compelled to be good: there would be no alternative. And being thus good, it would be spared much of the pain which now besets us. It would be a world of peace. But peace at what a price! Man would have the blessing of peace at the cost of his own soul. Such a solution of the problem of pain is like a sudden hard blow on the head, after which we shall have no worry and no conscience, no will and no manhood, and shall sit smiling vacantly at the empty sky. Anything is better than that.

It is true that, after all is said, pain is involved in mystery, and there are questions which we cannot answer. The long dialogues of the book of Job end here. God speaks to the disputants in a majestic reminder of their own inevitable ignorance. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Hast thou entered into the

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springs of the sea? hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? have the gates of death been opened unto thee?" We have to confess that the order and purpose of the world, of which pain is a detail, are beyond our understanding. We are like the footsoldiers in the midst of the battle, who see that which is immediately about them, but do not know how the great day goes, whether in victory or in defeat. We are like the passers-by who see beside the road great piles of stone and lumber, but cannot tell whether they mean destruction or construction. If we guess that some sort of construction is in progress, we do not know the plan, or how this apparently hopeless disorder shall contribute to it. Every calamity, every war, finds us confronting the world in this perplexity.

But under such conditions, our thoughts may take one or other of two directions. We may say, It is all a hopeless, tragic, awful muddle, which nobody can understand. Or we may say, Somewhere, overlooking this field of battle, there is a commander in whose purposes all these details are gathered up and have their place; somewhere, back of these heaps of wood and stone, there is an

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architect in whose plans they are all marked and have their use. I do not understand it; it all looks blind to me; but he knows.

Even in our ignorance, we are able to see that pain is a contributing fact in progress. Sometimes when the sky is more than usually clear, or the event is so far off that we can see it in completion, the sequence and significance are plain. St. Stephen, in the old time, is stoned. There he stands, young, strong, full of ability, full of promise, his face like the face of an angel, and they stone him to death. Horrible! But there are unexpected results. The disciples are scattered. Away they go, fleeing for their lives. But as they go, they preach the gospel. At once, the Christian mission widens into a new activity. Under the conditions of a hospitable Jerusalem, the Christian fraternity might have settled down to a quiet life of compromise, and so have disappeared. Out of the stones which killed Stephen the disciples began the building of the Christian church.

It shows the same relation between pain and progress which appears in the results of the successive invasions of Judea by Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and

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Romans. These invasions were interpreted by generations of good people in terms of doubt and despair. They seemed to prove that God had forsaken his people. What they did, however, was to scatter the Jews over the face of the earth. They went everywhere, preaching that higher truth and living that better life, which they were inclined to regard as a racial privilege rather than as a summons to a world-wide mission.

The same thing appears in the relation between religious persecution and the colonisation of this continent. Why did the good God permit the wars which followed the Reformation? Why did he suffer men in his name to work the works of the devil? These questions found no satisfying answers in the 16th and 17th centuries; and we are far from satisfied with the answers which we propose to them to-day. But this, at least, we see: that over the ocean, in consequence of this injustice and cruelty, came the men who established our American institutions. What Puritan of them all would have faced the perils of the sea and the perils of the shore if he had been well-treated in England? Out they came, as the friends of Stephen fled in

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the old time. Let us remember that, when the breaking of peace seems to us the building of a barrier across the plans of God. We were born under the stormy skies of a broken peace. Intolerance was our father, persecution was our mother. Out of evil came our good, out of pain our progress.

The physical world and the moral world, as they actually are, involve the fact of pain. Given these two conditions of life, the uniformity of natural law and the liberty of human will, and pain is inevitable. They are worth the price. The uniformity of natural law is the basis of our reason, the liberty of human will is the basis of our righteousness. On these conditions we exist. On these conditions we progress. For the advance of man is a process of adjustment; we adjust ourselves to this physical and moral world in which we live. Pain shows where the adjustment is not yet complete. It summons our energies to make the adjustment right.

Thus pain involves not only suffering but service. They on whom it comes ought not to feel that they are caught by the universal curse, but that their distress is a contribution to the cause of progress. They may be like

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the people on whom fell the tragedies of the drought, or the invasion, or the persecution, by which men were driven out of conditions of comfort into the undertaking of a great mission. Or their suffering, like that of our brethren under the storm of war, may be the last convincing and compelling revelation of evils of nationalism, of militarism, of materialism, with which the world can be no longer patient. Or the laying down of their lives may be an efficient means whereby war shall be abolished, and government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall be securely established in the earth. By their stripes we are healed. By their pain another step is taken in the progress of the world.

THE EVERLASTING VITALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. II Peter 3:13.

THERE was no sign of the fulfilment of the promise. The old heavens continued overhead, a grey sky, heavy with threatened clouds; and the old earth underfoot was as much the residence of sin and sorrow as it had ever been.

They had expected a speedy return of the Lord Christ to make all things new, but the months had lengthened into years, and nothing had happened. There was no apparent likelihood that anything would happen. The writer of the epistle says that scoffers were asking, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and were saying that "since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But the difficulty of the situation must have

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been plain to others beside scoffers. There must have been devout and faithful people who were sorely perplexed by the fact that the Christian religion seemed to make no progress toward the accomplishment of any great change in human life. Indeed, on the whole, things appeared to be worse rather than better. But they kept their faith. "Nevertheless," they said, "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

For already, in the short history of the Christian religion, there had been experience of the fact of failure, and experience also of the translation of failure into accomplishment. The word "nevertheless" had been both justified and glorified.

The Christian religion failed when the song of the Christmas angels fell into silence, and the light went out of the Christmas sky. For the light and the song were the symbols of a splendid promise which was not fulfilled. So, at least, it must have seemed to the shepherds and the wise men. They went home and nothing happened. Years passed, and nothing happened. The child thus welcomed into the world was never heard of afterward,

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so far as the wise men and the shepherds knew. Indeed, at the age of thirty, he seemed to his fellow-townsmen of Nazareth so ordinary a person that when they heard of the stir which he was making in the world they could not believe it.

Nevertheless, after the long silence and apparent failure of the promise at his birth, he stirred the world indeed.

Then came another failure. The Christian religion had barely begun, when the founder of it, the heart of it, was seized and put to death. The high hopes of his followers were frustrated. We hear them talking three days after his crucifixion, and they speak not only of him but of their faith in him in the past tense. "We trusted," they said, "that it had been he which should have delivered Israel." That hope had been disappointed. That bright vision had completely vanished; not even a "nevertheless" remained. It is impossible for us to exaggerate the sense of irreparable defeat which filled the souls of the disciples after the tragedy of Good Friday. They had come to the end of all their expectation.

Then suddenly they looked not for new

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heavens and a new earth, but at them. There they were: the earth firm with the everlasting solidity of the planet, and the heavens bright as with the constant shining of the sun. There they were, realised, the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

This divine sequence,— after the glory of Christmas, the uneventful and disappointing monotony of thirty obscure years; after the tragedy of Good Friday, the victory of Easter,— interprets for our understanding and encouragement the whole course of Christian history. It takes the word “Nevertheless,” and writes it on the cross, writes it on the blackest pages of the records of the past, writes it to-day on the battlefields of Europe.

For example, in the third century, when after a long space of peace another persecution was suddenly begun, the number of apostates was so great, the Christians in every city so crowded one upon another to deny the faith, that it seemed for the moment as if there were no saints left. The people deserted the services and the sacraments, and forsook Christ, led by their ministers.

THE EVERLASTING VITALITY

That was an appropriate time for essays on the Failure of the Church.

Nevertheless, the Christian religion asserted its everlasting vitality, and the church, which seemed to have failed, proved strong enough to defy successfully the combined strength of all the forces of the empire. The soldiers who had conquered the world could not conquer the church. Presently the emperor Constantine was converted, and Christianity became the accepted religion.

Then the Christians began to fight among themselves. They were divided by their doctrinal disagreements, and debated not only in conventions with fierce arguments, but in the streets with clubs and in the fields with swords. The world was filled with the clamour of Christian contention. Christians led out armies against Christians. At an election of a bishop of Rome, in the fourth century, the floor of the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore was found to be strewn, after the proceedings were over, with the bodies of a hundred and thirty-seven dead electors. Somebody, a year or two ago, wrote a paper in a magazine on the Collapse

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of the Church. He had in mind the condition of our own time! It was like the headlines in which such big type is used to describe a fight in a back street that there is nothing bigger left for the battles of a great war. Such a title might have been used with propriety in the fourth century. The situation was not only serious but desperate.

Nevertheless, it was a strong church which out-rode the tremendous storm of the barbarian invasion, and came to the summit of secular power in the Middle Ages. It built magnificent cathedrals, organised monastic orders, sent out missions which converted races, and ruled the world. And ruling the world, it lost its own soul. To no period of history may the titles, *The Failure of the Church*, *The Collapse of the Church*, be so fitly applied as to those days when the services of religion were most splendid and most numerously attended, and the Church was the most conspicuous fact in human life, — and faith had fallen into superstition, and the ministers of faith had fallen into immorality. After having descended into that abyss, and climbed up again, the use of such large words as “failure” and “collapse”

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for our own small discouragements, even for the contradictions of the present war, shows a lack of the sense of proportion.

Then came the Reformation, and in England the Puritan Revolution, and religion seemed to be the mother of divisions and confusions. It was identified with the inquisition. The hands of religion dripped with the blood of "holy wars." There was no crime of which the Christian religion was not guilty. It seemed to be a contrivance of the devil to poison the world. It lay upon the souls of men like a foul curse. Nevertheless, out of it, and through it, and by reason of it, appeared new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelt righteousness. A new freedom of thought and speech, a new perspective, a new sense of eternal values, and new standards of Christian conduct appeared.

In the midst of every such period of apparent defeat and failure, even the faithful are tempted to lose heart. They look at one another in grief and perplexity, asking, Has the church collapsed? They are of the mind of Pope Gregory who, at the beginning of the mission which converted the English to Christianity, described the church as "an old

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and violently shattered ship, admitting the water on all sides, its timbers rotten, shaken by daily storms, and fast becoming a mere wreck." Over what seas then undiscovered, through how many successful adventures, into what distant ports, has that wrecked ship sailed!

Early in the eighteenth century, Bishop Butler, in a charge to the clergy of the diocese of Durham, spoke of the "general decay of religion in this nation, which is now observed by every one, and has been for some time the complaint of all serious persons." Addison said at that time that there was "less appearance of religion in England than in any neighbouring state or nation." This observation was confirmed by Montesquieu, who said that he had imagined France to be the least religious country on the face of the earth, till he visited England. There, he said, the subject of religion, if it was mentioned at all, "excited nothing but laughter."

Early in the nineteenth century, religion in America was in the "Great Slump." The building of churches ceased, and those already built were almost empty. Young men in all the colleges professed themselves

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atheists. Good morals were fast going the way of good religion. The church, so far as its stoutest adherents could discern, had lost all influence over contemporary life.

Fifty years ago appeared the doctrines of Darwin and Spencer, which, according to their enthusiastic disciples, were to produce an "eclipse of faith," in which not the church only but Christianity itself was to fall into the everlasting dark, and perish. We were gravely told that nothing remained for the Christian religion but decent burial. And in spite of all the reassuring experiences of the past, a great many people believed it.

Nevertheless, and nevertheless! After the ebb tide there is a flood; after every night, no matter how dark, the sun rises in the morning; after the bleakest winter, the ice and snow melt, the streams run again, and the earth is green and fertile.

Some people find the history of the church depressing reading, but the chapters which seem the most depressing are in truth, when they are read aright, the most encouraging. They prove that the Christian religion possesses an invincible vitality. What peril has it not met, what might of adversaries, what

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treachery of false friends! Into what wrong roads has it not been misled, down what steep precipices has it not fallen! And yet, after all, strengthened rather than disabled by hard experience, the church has come on, slowly mastering the life of man.

All this about "collapse" and "failure" and the "impending crisis," and the "church at the cross-roads," has been said a thousand times, and may be said a thousand times again. It is a salutary thing to say, and there is always need of it. The mission of the church is to bring human nature into the fulfilment of the best ideals, and at this task it is forever failing. Of course, it fails. The only road to this attainment is beset at every turn with failure. Everybody who tries in his own life to transform the real into the ideal knows how true this is.

But there has never been a time when the church was so clearly aware of its mission, and so steadily engaged in it, as it is at present; never a time when the Bible was so intelligently read, and the creeds so reasonably interpreted; never a time when men were so free to study the problems of life and to announce the results of their investigations;

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never a time when ecclesiastical interests were so subordinated to religious interests, or when religious interests were so vitally related to social betterment; never a time so filled with helpful Christian activity.

But the war! It defies both religion and civilisation. We confess that. It is a manner of settling differences such as is proper not to rational beings, but to brute beasts. The billions of dollars which we propose to spend upon it would otherwise go, in great part, to the upbuilding of our useful industries, to the extension of manufactures and railways, to the education of our people, to the increase of our prosperity and happiness. The hundreds of thousands of young men whom we propose to send into this business to destroy property, to maim and kill hundreds of thousands of other men, and eventually to be shot to pieces themselves, are not only our sons and brothers, each of them the centre of the affection of a family, but they are the hope of the nation. These are they who should have been helpers and leaders in a thousand arts, poets, preachers, lawyers, men of business, husbands and fathers. Out they go with their young hearts filled with enthu-

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siasm and patriotism and self-sacrifice and most precious virtues, to be changed into dead bodies, fit only to be buried out of sight. War is the most horrible fact in the history of man, and this war is the most horrible of wars.

It is to be said, however, that we went into it with great reluctance. We waited until it seemed to some that we were patient beyond the bounds of patience. We endured insult and injury; plots were laid against our peace; our people were ruthlessly wrecked and drowned without mercy in the deep sea; we were daily made aware of conditions of warfare, at first incredible, then proved, in the sea and in the air and on the land, wherein all the savagery of primitive barbarism was revived and outdone, and all the ideals of humanity defied. We perceived that this warfare, which spared neither woman nor child, and which destroyed everything, — churches, libraries, mills, schools, peaceful villages, and even the land itself — was directed against those conditions of democracy and liberty on the basis of which this nation was founded. It became plain to us that the fight of the world against Germany

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was our fight, and that we could not stay out. We had hoped against hope that some appeal to reason might make the appeal to arms unnecessary. The situation is different from the foolish enthusiasm with which we hurried into the war with Spain. We have had no such savage and wicked watchword as "Remember the Maine." In the face of all provocation, we have entered the war slowly, advisedly, gravely, without hatred, for the securing of those principles of liberty and humanity which we believe to be essential to the well-being of the world, as a Christian people.

The Lord of our life, the Prince of Peace, looked through such a situation as this which now confronts us, and saw the light, and victory, and the kingdom of God, on the other side. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." In

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this dread confusion, our ears smitten day by day with the fearful sound of this universal storm, we hear again his serene voice, saying, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

It is the Lord's "Nevertheless." The whole world is at war. The Sermon on the Mount is torn into scraps of paper, as Moses in the old time flung down the tables of the law, and broke them into a thousand pieces. But the commandments survived, and the beatitudes shall likewise survive. What shall be wrought at last out of the furnace of this fire, nobody knows: what purification of the church, what defeat of the devil, what uplifting of the ideals of the race, what manifestation of the kingdom of God, nobody knows. But this we know, that the word of Jesus Christ shall be fulfilled again, as in a thousand wars of old, and out of this evil shall come good. Though victory to-day and to-morrow attend the armies of the adversary, and the thrones of the wicked seem as solid as the everlasting hills, "Nevertheless

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we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." We may wait long, but we shall not be disappointed.

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