

CHRISTIAN DUTY AND THE WAR

AS THE war progresses a bitter, partisan spirit spreads. The people of each of the warring nations are convinced that right is on their side, and that everything to the contrary is wrong. The sense of justice seems more and more to go blind. Any attempt to consider matters justly, equitably, is resented as disloyalty, stupidity, etc. The best elements of the natural man seem to be paralyzing under the influence of the war. Germany and her allies claim that they have maintained the world's peace for thirty years, during all of which time their jealous neighbors, noting their prosperity, have sought to hinder it and have awaited only a favorable moment for attempting their destruction. To them their commercial progress and attempt to build a navy proportionate to their population have aroused the jealousy of their neighbors already entrenched commercially on the sea.

They claim that Belgium was not neutral, but conniving with their enemies, and that, any way, the passing of German armies through Belgium was a military necessity. Similarly they claim that the protection of their national life against the European combination makes necessary their submarine warfare and blockade and other things which they do not prefer. They claim, too, that necessity knows no law, that this is the hour of their necessity, and that the object of war is *success* – to be obtained as honorably as possible, but to be *obtained*.

Britain and her allies take the contrary view. They declare that for forty years they have noted the progress of the Germans and considered it a menace to their rights. Accordingly, the French maintained an army of equal size with Germany; Russia, an army of double the size; while Great Britain has striven to have a navy stronger than that of all the remaining nations of the world. If

Germany be not crushed now, her spirit of progress will ultimately put her at the head of the nations, commercially and financially. This would mean that all the other nations would be less powerful proportionately. They see in this a terrible nightmare of militarism. Germany must be crushed at any cost, not only for the sake of the present, but also for the sake of future generations.

The Bible declares, "God is not in all their thoughts." (Psalm 10:4.) Although all the nations of the Continent, except the Turks, style themselves Christian nations, not one of them manifests any faith in God. They all feel that the entire responsibility, both for the present and for the future, rests altogether upon themselves.

"FEAR HATH SURPRISED THE HYPOCRITES"

Convinced of having a Divine commission and with sundry forms of godliness, but without any of its power or faith, many of these nations are only now awakening to the fact that this war is not like other wars – that God has let loose the winds, is no longer restraining them. The time has come for Him to allow the angry passions of men to bring the whirlwind of trouble, which shortly will lead on to revolution and then to anarchy, and will thus prepare the way of the Lord and His Kingdom.

What a sad spectacle the war presents – twenty millions of soldiers engaged, at a cost of over forty million dollars per day for their maintenance! Twelve millions of men in the prime of life have already been wounded, captured or killed. The consumption of ammunition is astounding. One of the British ministers recently declared that in one battle in Belgium the British forces used more ammunition than in the entire Boer War!

National debts were already enormous, and British consols (bonds) were selling at twenty-five per cent. less than their face value before this war began. Can any rational person suppose that the debts of the warring nations represented by their bonds will

ever be paid? And when the people shall realize the meaning of all this and of the crash of financial institutions which this will involve, the discovery will be terrible. The only logical result to be expected of the discouraged people will be as the Bible predicts – so great an earthquake as was not since man was on the earth – social earthquake, revolution, gigantic in its character. – Rev. 16:18.

WAR'S DEMORALIZING INFLUENCE

Professed ministers of Christ of various denominations seem to be vying with each other in leaving the Great Captain of our Salvation and His standard of peace and love in order to associate themselves more and more with militarism. Appealed to by the representatives of the Government, these professed representatives of the Prince of Peace are making themselves popular with their governments by preaching war. We hear only a little from Great Britain along these lines, but the suggestion of the Bishop of London is quite sufficient on this point. His suggestion urges boys and girls to marry early and to raise large families, presumably for mortal combat – not to be soldiers of the Cross of Christ and followers of the Lamb, but soldiers of the Cross of St. George which marks the British flag.

Recently in Canada the Editor was astounded by the activity of the preachers there – especially those of the Church of England. One was out in Khaki uniform [R5755 : page 260] marching through the streets with the volunteers. Asked by a college friend, "Did I see you in the ranks?" he answered, "Yes; I wanted to encourage the boys." "And did you think of going to the front, to the trenches?" "Not a bit of it!" He was merely acting as a decoy to get others to the front; just as a bull they have at one of the Chicago stockyards which meets the animals about to be slaughtered and, tossing his head in the air, becomes their leader up the gangway leading to the slaughter. There he knows his little

niche, into which he glides and is sheltered; while the others drive and press one another forward to the slaughter. But it is in the pulpit that the minister has his opportunity to address the mothers – "Why not have your boy go to the front?"

MINISTERS AS RECRUITING AGENTS

To give the matter a religious coloring, some of these ministers have taken texts from the Bible, which certainly have no application whatever to the subject in hand. The text of one in preaching about the valor of the Canadians who lost their lives in war was, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth." (Revelation 14:13.) The text of another, intended to encourage enlistment, etc., was, "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." – Rev. 14:4.

What a terrible perversion! And for what a purpose! To inflame the passions of humanity, to deceive people, to get them to do the very thing which Christ has directed shall not be done. Such ministers may gain favor and influence with their earthly king and his ministers and representatives in the government, but how will they stand with the other King, whose Empire is to be inaugurated with the great Battle of Armageddon, to which this present war is leading? We tremble to think of their responsibility, if they know what they are doing.

It is quite possible that they do not realize the true situation. Ninety-five per cent., probably, of all the educated ministers in all the great cities have confessed for years that they do not believe the Bible. Indirectly they have admitted that they merely use it as a book from which to select texts because the common people have a sort of superstitious respect for it. They have gotten so in the habit of selecting texts without any reference to the contexts – so in the habit of deceiving themselves and their trusting flocks – that they probably do not realize what they are doing and how they are

misrepresenting the Word of God. We know that the Lord's judgment in all cases will be just; we defer to it.

The ministers of Toronto, to show their patriotism and their confidence that the war is of God, that all the holy angels are applauding the recruits and that they will all go to Heaven at death, etc., etc., we suppose, have raised a purse of money for the purchase of a Gatling gun, to be carried across the seas and used to kill German Christians – in whose Christianity they have no confidence and evidently believe that God has none. The viewpoint of Bible students is that the fact that both British and Germans claim ninety-five per cent. of their population to be Christians is no proof that they are such really. Hence the Toronto preachers, in purchasing the Gatling gun to kill Christians, are quite right, probably, in supposing that they will not be killing real Christians, just as Bible students feel doubts that all Toronto ministers are Christians, in the true sense of the word.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PROPER ATTITUDE

Meanwhile, where do the true followers of Christ stand, and what is their duty? Bible students more and more are awakening to a realization of what the present war is, and are conscientiously inquiring respecting their own responsibility. Some have inquired in respect to the situation in connection with the manufacture of war ammunition. Our advice to them has been to avoid engaging in such work as this, except as the money would be absolutely necessary to provide food and shelter for their families and themselves. And then, taking such a situation merely as a matter of necessity, we recommend that it be vacated as speedily as something else can be found, no matter how poor the pay, if it will provide life's necessities.

We are not unaware that this is a far-reaching subject, and that many would class us as narrow in the giving of such advice. Some would tell us that we carry this matter to an extreme; that on the

same principle an employee of a railroad or steamboat should avoid loading such war munitions, the bill-clerk object to his part of the matter, the stenographer to his, etc. We would say that so far as reasonably possible we should avoid having anything to do with these implements of destruction, but if compelled from necessity, should hold our situation only until one for a better cause could be obtained.

In *SCRIPTURE STUDIES*, Vol. VI., we have set forth a suggestion that the followers of Christ seek by every proper means to avoid participation in war. We there suggested the possibility, but that in the event of conscription the Lord's followers should use all their influence toward obtaining positions in the Hospital Corps or in the Provision Department of the Army, rather than in the actual warfare. We suggested further that if it were impossible to avoid going into the trenches, it would still not be necessary to violate the Divine requirement, "Thou shalt do no murder."

We have been wondering since if the course we have suggested is the best one. We wonder if such a course would not mean compromise. We reflect that to become a member of the army and to put on the military uniform implies the duties and obligations of a soldier as recognized and accepted. A protest made to an officer would be insignificant – the public in general would not know of it. Would not the Christian be really out of his place under such conditions?

"But," some one replies, "if one were to refuse the uniform and the military service he would be shot."

We reply that if the presentation were properly made there might be some kind of exoneration; but if not, would it be any worse to be shot because of loyalty to the Prince of Peace and refusal to disobey His order than to be shot while under the banner of these earthly kings and apparently giving them support and, in appearance at least, compromising the teachings of our Heavenly

King? Of the two deaths we would prefer the former – prefer to die because of faithfulness to our Heavenly King. Certainly the one dying for his loyalty to the principles of the Lord's teachings would accomplish far more by his death than would the one dying in the trenches. We cannot tell how great the influence would be for peace, for righteousness, for God, if a few hundred of the Lord's faithful were to follow the course of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and refuse to bow down to the god of war. Like those noble men they might say, "Our God is able to deliver us, if He chooses so to do; but if He does not choose to deliver us, that will not alter our course. We will serve Him and follow His direction, come what may."

Those Hebrews of the past cast into the fiery furnace because of their faithfulness to God, but afterwards delivered, are a noble example. Indeed, the millions of soldiers enduring terrible privations through loyalty to **[R5755 : page 261]** earthly kings during the present great war are wonderful examples and illustrations. May not the soldiers of Christ well say to themselves, "If the Ancient Worthies knew God only partially, yet were so faithful to Him, and if these earthly soldiers are so faithful to earthly kings, what manner of persons ought we to be who have come into the family of God by the Spirit of begetting, who have entered the School of Christ, who are being guided and led by the Captain of our Salvation, and who have His exceeding great and precious promises in respect to our eternal future! How should we stand for Him and for His teachings? Could we lay down our lives in a better way than by faithfulness to the King of kings and Lord of lords, our Redeemer and Head?"

We are not urging this course. We are merely suggesting it. The responsibility fully belongs with each individual. We are discharging our responsibility toward many Bible students who are inquiring of us respecting the mind of the Lord on this subject. We gave them our best thoughts previously, but now fear that we were

too conservative. We always advocate conservatism, in the sense of not rushing into difficulties simply because they are difficulties and would mean trouble. But we do advocate that, while seeking to avoid trouble and to live peaceably with all men, where duty calls, or danger, we should not be wanting there.

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