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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CHURCHMAN

November, 1914.

The Month.

The All-
Engrossing
Topic.

THE war continues to engross public attention to the exclusion of every other subject. Even those who affect to be "heartily sick of it," and to be anxious to give their mind to anything else, find it more difficult than they imagined to take up seriously any other topic which under ordinary circumstances would appeal to them. It is well that it should be so, for this great crisis in our nation's history must be faced resolutely and sternly by the whole nation. The progress of the war is of the greatest possible moment to every man, woman, and child in the kingdom, and nothing but good can come to those who carefully and systematically endeavour to understand the exact position from day to day on the various fields of battle. None need fear that they are giving too much attention to the war. An intelligent acquaintance with the operations of our forces, and of those of our Allies, has many advantages. It serves to stimulate and to strengthen patriotism. When we read of the splendid gallantry, the dauntless heroism and the superb devotion of our sailors and soldiers on sea and land, it thrills us with a righteous national pride that we have men, serving their King and country, who are joyfully ready to pour out the last drop of their life's blood in upholding those eternal principles of justice and truth which are at stake in this conflict, and in vindicating the cause of right against might. It serves,

also, to call forth all that is best and noblest of human love and human sympathy with those on the field of battle. Who has not felt his heart riven through and through when reading of the awful hardships our men have had to undergo and of the piteous sufferings of the wounded? Nor has this sympathy expended itself in sickly sentiment. The glorious response made to the Prince of Wales's appeal for the National Relief Fund, and the ready support given to the many and varied efforts made for providing comforts for the troops, are indications that the nation's sympathies have been moved as never before. It serves, again, to sober and to steady the life of the nation. Before the war broke out we were given over to the love of luxury, pleasure, and worldliness, but now the nation is learning as it has never learnt before the seriousness of life, and with that knowledge has come greater simplicity of living, more self-denial, and higher aim and purpose. We do not say that in these respects all is yet well with us. We know, indeed, that there are still thousands of people who are as feather-brained and as flippant as ever; but we are profoundly convinced that to the great mass of our people has come a new vision and a new inspiration. It serves, once more, to turn the mind of the nation to the value and importance of prayer. As men and women contemplate the vastness of the forces now arrayed in battle, they realize, as they have rarely done, the absolute need of God's protecting mercy and care. We justly pride ourselves on our Dreadnoughts, we are deeply thankful for the skill and endurance of our men in the field; but the heart of the nation is learning afresh that its abiding strength is in the Lord Jehovah; and day by day thousands and thousands of people are committing our cause and all that it represents to God in prayer. It will be a great purpose accomplished when all men shall recognize that "the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." The more constant our prayers the firmer will be our resolve to hold with the Psalmist, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

War is one of God's sore judgments, and, whilst
 Humiliation and Intercession. it may thankfully be recognized that a great change
 has been wrought in the life of the nation during
 these last two months, it rests gravely upon our leaders to consider whether the time has not come for a great act of national humiliation and intercession before God. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, the well-known Evangelist, has given a "Message to London" in these terms :

" This is the day of days for London. Commercial prosperity, the pursuit of pleasure, the glamour of the world, have turned men's thoughts from God to matters of comparatively small importance. Now, like a bolt out of a clear sky, there is a change. Peace has given way to warfare, and in the midst of life we are in death. This is a day when God is calling for surrender to Him, for enlistment in the service of His Son, and for our best effort to be put forth in the interests of our fellow-men. This is the day when the unsaved may be won to Christ, when the indifferent are willing to listen. God expects every man to do his duty—and to do it now. This is the day for prayer. I submit that if the Government should call for a day of fasting and prayer, the victory for which we long would be more easily won."—*Times*, October 17.

If it seem strange that the first public request for the appointment of such a day should appear in the advertisement columns of the *Times*, it ought to be remembered that the matter has been under consideration by leading Churchmen, and it is stated that the matter was formally discussed at a recent meeting of the Bishops. At the moment of writing the result of their deliberations is not known, but if such a day could be appointed, we believe it would have a solemnizing effect upon the nation. We need to humble ourselves before God and to approach Him in penitence and prayer. Only so can we look to Him for a blessing upon our arms. It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the mere conventional observance of a Day of Humiliation would avail much ; that would be to draw near to God with the lips, whilst the heart is far from Him ; but if the nation is prepared—and we trust that it is—to turn to God in sincerity and truth, He will hear and He will save.

Queen
Victoria's
Views.

The proclamation of a General Fast Day would be no new thing. It may be recalled that one was appointed at the time of the Famine in 1847, and by Her Majesty's special command there was issued "A Form of Prayer to be used in all Churches and Chapels throughout those parts of the United Kingdom called England and Ireland, on Wednesday, the twenty-fourth day of March, 1847, being the day appointed for Proclamation for a General Fast and Humiliation before Almighty God, in order to obtain Pardon of our Sins, and that we may in the most devout and solemn Manner send up our Prayers and Supplications to the Divine Majesty : For the Removal of those heavy Judgments which our manifold Sins and Provocations have most justly deserved ; and with which Almighty God is pleased to visit the Iniquities of this land by a grievous Scarcity and Dearth of divers Articles of Sustenance and Necessaries of Life." Another such day was proclaimed at the time of the Crimea, not, however, without some hesitation on the part of the Queen. At first Her Majesty was stoutly opposed to it, "as she thinks," so she wrote to the Earl of Aberdeen, "we have recourse to them far too often, and they thereby lose their effect." The Queen asked that "a *prayer*" should be "substituted for the *day of humiliation*." Her objection was twofold : first as to the character of the services. "Were the services selected for these days of a different kind to what they are, the Queen would feel less strongly about it ; but they always select chapters from the Old Testament and Psalms which are so totally inapplicable that it does away with all the effects it ought to have." But the Queen's objection went deeper still. Her second point raised the question whether the war called for humiliation, and the words she used seem so exactly to fit the present circumstances that they should be quoted in full. "Moreover," wrote Her Majesty to Lord Aberdeen, "really to say (as we probably should) that the *great sinfulness of the nation* has brought about this War when it is the selfishness and ambition of *one* man and his servants who have brought this about, while our conduct

has been throughout actuated by unselfishness and honesty, would be too manifestly repulsive to the feelings of everyone, and would be a mere act of hypocrisy. Let this be a prayer expressive of our great thankfulness for the benefits we have enjoyed, and for the immense prosperity of this country, and entreating God's help and protection in the coming struggle. In this the Queen would join heart and soul. If there is to be a day set apart, let it be for prayer in this sense" ("Letters of Queen Victoria," vol. iii., p. 25). It will be recognized that there is a great deal of shrewd common sense, as well as of genuine religious feeling, about this letter, and the caution it contains deserves to be held in remembrance by those who will have the responsibility of drawing up the Service which it is desired to hold in connection with the present war. It ought not to be forgotten that in this respect our hands are quite clean, but there is much in our national life which should humble a Christian nation to the very dust. These sins must be acknowledged and repented of, and it may be that this war is God's call to us as a nation to return unto Him. In 1857, in reference to the calamitous state of affairs in India, it was again proposed to hold a day of National Prayer and Humiliation, and the Queen reminded Lord Palmerston of her former objection. She suggested "its being more appropriately called a day of prayer and intercession for our suffering countrymen than of fast and humiliation." The Queen also advised it being on a *Sunday* and not on a week-day, as "on the last Fast-day the Queen heard it generally reported that it produced more harm than good, and that if it were on a Sunday it would be much more generally observed." In this matter, however, the Queen evidently modified her request, as the day was observed on *Wednesday*, October 7, 1857. It may be that the appointment by Proclamation of a general Day of Humiliation is not without its difficulties and dangers, but with due care on the part of those responsible and with the hearty co-operation of Christian leaders of all denominations—an essential factor in a successful issue—these difficulties and dangers may be overcome.

To those who are troubled about the problem—
Christianity
and War. and problem it is—of Christianity and war, we may commend the very striking article by the Dean of Durham in the new issue of the *Church Quarterly Review*. He shows, in connection with such questions as “Can a Christian man escape from the plain language of the New Testament, or deny the obvious inconsistency between war and those principles of action which received supreme exposition in the life of Jesus?” that the variety of opinion which marked the earlier patristic period was replaced by a general acceptance of St. Augustine’s doctrine, that war “in obedience to the Divine command, or in conformity with His laws,” implies no breach of the Christian law. It is this doctrine which still holds the field. It is sustained by a twofold argument—practical and Scriptural. The Old Testament, it is admitted, carries the legitimacy of war on every page, and Dr. Henson cites a passage from Maurice to show that the New Testament presupposes the Old, and must not be supposed to disallow its witness, save where such a disavowal is specifically stated. The Dean, however, points out that the fact that the Christian conscience tolerated war in the past is no reason for thinking that it ought to tolerate it in the future. Von Bernhardt’s attempt to claim Christian sanction for a doctrine of war which has certainly shocked the conscience of the civilized world is shown to be based on strange reasoning and stranger exegesis, and the Dean contends that as against the German militarist the founder of the Quakers holds an impregnable position. The Quaker doctrine is carefully examined by the Dean, who also refers us to the fact that whilst within the last few years a section of Christian divines, mostly Nonconformist, have set themselves to preach a species of international Quakerism, “the most conspicuous of these preachers of peace, Dr. Horton, has found himself compelled to abandon his doctrine at the first crisis.” What, then, is the Dean’s own conclusion? He states it with characteristic exactness :

“Armies and navies have precisely the same title to exist in a sin-disordered world as policemen, judges, and clergymen. All, we hope, will

be dispensed with in that future, which faith can discern even now, when the kingdom of God shall have been finally established on the earth, and no man shall teach his brother, saying, ' Know the Lord, for all shall know Him ' ; and ' the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'

" In the meantime the Church works towards the abolition of war in two ways : First, by constantly raising the moral standard which determines the occasions of fighting ; next, by continually raising the standard of humanity in warfare. We may add yet a third. The Church upholds before mankind the ideal of universal peace resting on the basis of justice and love. This threefold activity of organized Christianity proceeds with ever more energy and effect as mankind is brought within the fellowship of Christ's Church, and in ever larger proportion accepts the government of His just and merciful Law. The action of nations will be finally shaped by the principles and standards of conduct which are accepted by the individuals which compose them. That the process of change must be gradual and slow is evident ; that it will be continuous and in the end triumphant no Christian can doubt."

The Appeal of German theologians and Missionaries addressed " to Evangelical Christians abroad "

A Decisive Reply. was not calculated to carry much weight in this country. It was too partisan and too palpably at variance with acknowledged facts. Still, we are glad that leaders of religious thought and life amongst us felt it right to put out a detailed reply, and, as an answer to the allegations made, it could not be more convincing or decisive. The Reply bears the signatures of the Archbishops of Canterbury, York, and Armagh ; the Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland ; the Bishops of London, Winchester, and Ossory ; the Deans of Durham, St. Paul's, Wells, Westminster, and Christ Church, Oxford ; Professors Burkitt, Scott Holland, Moulton, Paterson, Peake, Sanday, and Swete ; Dr. Clifford, Rev. R. J. Campbell, Principal Forsyth, Dr. Horton, Dr. Scott Lidgett, Dr. Meyer, Dr. Campbell Morgan, Sir William Robertson Nicoll, and Principal Selbie ; Lord Balfour of Burleigh (President of the Edinburgh Conference, to which special reference was made in the Appeal), Dr. Eugene Stock, and many other distinguished men. The Reply traverses almost every statement of the Appeal, resisting as " wholly baseless and untrue " the wicked allegation that Belgian territory was only violated after the Belgians had

agreed to allow the French to march through. The facts are, of course, incontestable, and the Reply in simple charity can but suppose, "incredible as it seems, that those honourable and gifted men who signed the German Appeal were unaware of the obligations by which we were bound, and also of the story of the negotiations." The Reply also reminds the German theologians of the teachings of Treitschke and Bernhardi, which were strangely ignored in the Appeal. Finally, the Reply, whilst deploring the disastrous consequences of the war, reasserts in unmistakable language the British position. "Dear to us as peace is, the principles of truth and honour are yet more dear." The Reply is wonderfully effective, but we have reason for doubting whether the full text—with the weighty list of signatures—has been published in Berlin.

We commend to the careful attention of the Bishop of Salisbury a volume which has just been published by one of his clergy, "The Priest as Confessor," by the Rev. A. H. Baverstock, Rector of Hinton Martel, Wimborne. It is one of the most audacious attempts to secure recognition within the Church of England of the practice of Auricular Confession ("voluntary, but not optional") that we have ever read. It is not necessary here to traverse the extraordinary statements in this volume, but we may be permitted to refer to one chapter which we have read with the utmost astonishment. It is on "Getting People to Confession." Mr. Baverstock apparently recognizes the immense difficulties in the path of the advocate of the Confessional, and significantly quotes as the motto of this chapter the words of St. Francis of Sales: "More flies are caught with a teaspoonful of honey than with a pint of vinegar." What is the "teaspoonful of honey" that he has to offer? First from the pulpit:

"It will be well often to dwell on the inducements to a good confession; to speak of the joy which a good confession brings, the fears from which it delivers. When we preach on heaven, we should remind our hearers that its joys are forfeited by one mortal sin, and that this barrier to heaven is removed by the simple expedient of making a good confession. We can

preach on hell and point the same moral. Speaking to children, especially, we can dwell on the joy a good confession brings to our guardian angel and our friends in heaven."

Among the obstacles "which prevent sinners from presenting themselves at the Confessional" is shyness, and whilst nothing else will break it down but intercourse with individuals, "something may be done from the pulpit by familiarizing people with the business of confession":

"The confessional can be shown, and the people told exactly what happens—how the priest sits in this place and the penitent comes and kneels there; how the priest gives a blessing and the penitent says the *Confiteor*. It is even a good thing to sketch an imaginary confession. How a person might say, for instance: 'I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary and all the saints, and to you, father, that I have sinned very much, in thought, word, and deed, by my fault, my own fault, my own grievous fault. I have often neglected my prayers, not saying them at all, or not saying them properly; I have spoken against religion; once I tried to set someone else against what I knew was right; I have stayed away from church on Sundays; as a child I was often disobedient and disrespectful to my parents; I once struck my mother,' etc. A description of this kind gives valuable opportunities of teaching some who already go to confession how to make better confessions."

Another deterrent is fear, or the sense of shame, and Mr. Baverstock has his remedies for this difficulty also; but he is frank enough to affirm that "in the attempt to establish regular habits of religion, and especially the habit of confession, the children are our greatest hope." As one "who has had a good deal of experience in hearing the confessions of quite small children," he "can testify to the really wonderful effects of this sacrament upon them." What, may we ask, does the Bishop of Salisbury think of the idea of "quite small children" being familiarized with the confessional?

Children
and the
Confessional.

Mr. Baverstock so entirely believes confession to be for the children's welfare that he is willing apparently to receive them even if their parents object. Here is what he says—the quotation is a long one, but it will repay perusal:

"It is, of course, desirable that children should go to confession with the knowledge and consent of their parents. But are we to say that such

knowledge and consent are necessary, and, as some priests have done, refuse to hear the children's confessions without them? I must confess that I feel strongly that we have no right to refuse any one of the Sacraments to a child on account of the withholding of consent by the parent. To begin with, every parent who has brought a child to the font has virtually consented to the child's undertaking to believe the Christian faith and live the Christian life; and these, as interpreted by the Church, include the belief in Penance, and its use when required. We should, I think, be prepared to deny strenuously the right of the parent to forbid what God and the Church allow and sometimes require. And I, for one, have no hesitation in saying to a child, forbidden confession by his parents, that he must hearken to God rather than to man. In this matter the priest has to contend for the liberties of the Christian child, and we have surely no right to acquiesce in any interference with these liberties on the part of the parents. We should, I think, decline to prepare children for Confirmation unless it is perfectly clear that they are to be left free to follow their own consciences in the matter of confession. Nor does it seem to me at all necessary in every case, although desirable in many, that children should tell their parents they are going to confession. Of course, there must be nothing like deceit. Confession should be so openly preached and practised, that all who come to the Church should know it is the custom. And those parents who never come, although they send their children, can scarcely expect to be consulted on matters in which they show so little interest."

Mr. Baverstock proceeds to offer counsel concerning "the preparation of children, whether before Confirmation or earlier, for first confession." We quote one more passage :

"Great care must be taken in dealing with the question of purity. In many cases the priest, from his experience in the confessional, knows how much in the way of evil is common knowledge among the children who attend his schools, and how far it is safe to talk about such matters. But he must reckon on the certainty that many children will require help to confess sins against purity, and he must tell them to say in the confessional if there is anything they find it difficult to confess, when he will be able to help them. All authorities are agreed nowadays on the necessity of facing this matter, where the welfare of souls is so much at stake; and the priest who brings to his task a reverence for the innocence of childhood and a love of holy purity is not likely to mishandle the subject."

We do not propose to comment upon these passages, but we think the parishioners of Hinton Martel, who are having this kind of teaching given to them and to their children, are entitled to be told whether their Bishop knows about it, and whether it has his approval, and we venture to express the earnest hope that the Bishop of Salisbury will not be long in letting his opinion be known.