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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

## 'There was War in Heaven.'

BY THE REV. ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D., FORMERLY MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY in his message to the nation, dated 26th July, suggested that on Sunday, 4th August, the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the great war, 'the nation in all its parts should join in a solemn act of worship and in thankful remembrance of our brothers and sisters who have made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of righteousness and honour.' And he added this exhortation: 'On an occasion without parallel in the range of its significance let our action as a Christian people be whole-hearted and reverent in purpose, thoughtful in its self-surrender, firm and expectant in its resolve.'

If we are to make a profitable use of these aids to future conduct, we must have clear ideas as to the end which we have in view. The most excellent guides will be of little use to us, if we are still undecided as to the direction in which we are going, and the goal which we desire to reach. Until those points are settled, whole-hearted purpose and firm resolve will be impossible; and self-surrender will simply be thrown away. Are we clear as to the answer to two fundamental questions? Is war between Christian nations necessary and therefore lawful? If it is, are we sure that in this war our cause is, what the Archbishop calls it, 'the cause of righteousness and honour'?

'There was war in heaven.' If on the authority of the inspired writer of the Apocalypse we accept that statement as true, we shall perhaps feel less amazement and perplexity at what we know from the dire experience of the last four years to be a fact, that there is war on earth. Not that our amazement and perplexity are thereby made to cease; but they are to some extent lessened. If for some reason God allows war in heaven, there is likely to be good reason for the existence of war in other parts of His dominion.

It has sometimes been supposed that this war in heaven refers to the primeval rebellion of Satan in some unknown crisis before the Creation of the world. Whatever St. John may have meant by it, it is absolutely certain that he did not mean that. The whole context shows that, not only has the Creation taken place, but the Son of God has been born of a woman, has shed His blood for

mankind, and has returned to glory. This war in heaven is the result of an attempt to dethrone the exalted Christ (see Swete, *ad loc.*); and the fact of such a conflict shows that even in the highest spiritual spheres war cannot always be avoided.

Leaving this mystery, let us consider the subject which concerns us to-day—war upon earth; the greatest and most awful war that has ever been waged. Its magnitude is beyond the grasp of our comprehension, and its horrors baffle the powers of our imagination. Even those who have taken part in a great deal of it cannot form an adequate idea of what it must be in its entirety. It is a war in which nations which are in the forefront of civilization, and which for centuries have professed, and to a large extent practised, Christianity, are killing one another—sometimes by thousands daily—by means of engines and weapons which have for years been scientifically prepared, on an immense scale and with extraordinary ingenuity, in order to accomplish, with the utmost rapidity, the utmost amount of destruction.

Let us recall two predictions, each of them supported by reasonable arguments, which have been utterly falsified by this catastrophe.

Not many years before this conflict overwhelmed us we were told by some who had studied such problems, that the next war, whenever it did come, would be brief. The engines of destruction were now so prodigious and so swift in their effect that one or other of the two combatants would quickly be put out of action, and peace would be restored. Since that forecast was made, the engines of destruction have enormously increased in variety and power; and we know how erroneous the forecast has proved.

The other prediction was made, not by those who have studied warfare, but by some who had wide experience in the occupations of peace. Some experts in finance declared that the commercial relations between nations were now so numerous, so intricate, and so strong, that anything like a general war would be impossible. The number of persons in each nation who were interested in the financial prosperity of other nations was so large, and the interests at stake were

on such a gigantic scale, that no Government would contemplate war as a practical solution of international difficulties. The populations whose interests would be imperilled would not tolerate this solution. Some of us can remember how the Great Exhibition of 1851 led many people to hope that commerce would put an end to war. This later forecast assured us that it must do so: and here again we know how erroneous the forecast has proved. Commerce has not succeeded where Christianity has failed.

Why has Christianity failed? Why has God allowed the gigantic evils of war to begin and to continue? For the same reason that He allows each one of us to break, as often as we please, every one of His commandments. It is the price which has to be paid for the inestimable gift of freedom. God, so to speak, has limited His own freedom in order that we may be free. He could have made us perfect machines, unable to go wrong and violate His will. That would have made vice impossible; but it would have made virtue equally impossible. There would have been no sin; but there would also be no righteousness. We do not call a good chronometer virtuous or righteous; it cannot help keeping time correctly. The God of love desired to make something nobler than a perfect machine. He willed to have beings who could serve Him of their own free will, and of their own free will return His love. That determination involved the possibility that some of His creatures would refuse to serve Him and would rebel. We believe that this has happened with regard to some of those spiritual beings whom we call angels. We know that it has happened with regard to mankind. We ourselves have taken part in this rebellion. Thus it comes to pass that there is much conflict and crime among individuals, and much conflict and crime among nations—in other words, war.

There is obvious difference between conflict of individuals and conflict of nations. When two individuals claim the same property, a court of law decides between them, and they are forced to abide by the decision. When one individual violently assaults another, the law punishes the assailant, and he is forced to abide by the penalty. But when serious disputes arise between nations, there is no court before which they can be compelled to plead; and if they do consent to plead before a court, that court cannot enforce its

decision. Moreover, there are some questions which no nation that values its liberty can consent to submit to arbitration. The only possible arbitrator in such a case is war. Such is the condition of the human race, and Christianity has to work upon human society as it exists; namely, as a number of independent States, each of which is judge of its own rights. If there could be a universal perfecting of the characters of individual men and women, then war would be made impossible by making all misconduct impossible. But does any reasonable person expect that this universal perfection will be reached in this world?

So far as we can see, the only way in which God could have prevented the possibility of war would be never to have created beings with free will, never to have made anything nobler than a conscious machine. Such a creature would be far indeed from being in the likeness of God.

But there are those who tell us that Christ has forbidden war. He has said, 'Resist not evil,' and He has ordered those who are smitten on the one cheek to offer the other to the smiter. He has said so; but it does not follow from this that He has forbidden war. There is no instance on record of Christ's telling soldiers that, if they wish to enter His Kingdom, they must leave the army. Nowhere in the Bible are soldiers told that theirs is a wicked calling. When men on military service asked the Baptist what they ought to do, he did not tell them that they must cease to be soldiers.

Let us look at some other commands given by Christ. He said, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.' He said, 'Give to every one that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.' Do we find that the conscientious objector never lays by any money? that he always gives to every beggar, however undeserving the beggar may be? that he always lends to every borrower, however worthless the security which is offered may be? It is quite certain that the strenuous opponents of warfare do not act in this way. Quite reasonably, they save and invest money, and they are as prudent as other people are about giving and lending. They see that these commands of Christ are not to be taken literally. Then why is 'Resist not evil' to be taken literally? It is obvious that to interpret all these commands as *rules to be kept in the letter* is to make our Lord's teaching a laughing-stock to the common sense of mankind.

We can see two reasons why Christ has expressed Himself in this way. 1. He has put His teaching in this startling form in order to arrest attention and set us thinking. Such precepts are not likely to be forgotten; and they stimulate both thought and feeling in a very high degree. 2. Seeing that they are in the form of *rules* which in a sane society *cannot* be kept, underneath them there must be *principles of conduct* which *can* be observed. In a word, like so much Oriental teaching, they are figurative. They do not tell us what we are actually to do; they indicate *temper*; and temper is nine-tenths of religion. So far as our own personal feelings are concerned, we must not resent injury, but be ready to suffer it again; although for the sake of society, and for our assailant's own sake, we must resist and endeavour to check him. To give to every beggar, and to surrender our goods to every claimant, would do incalculable mischief; but our reason for refusing must not be simply that we desire to keep for our own enjoyment all the property that we possess.

The objector has yet another plea. Christ has said, 'Love your enemies.' Yes, and He has shown us what He means by that. We are to do them good, and we are to pray for them. In another place He intimates that, if they repent, we are to forgive them. That is the way in which the God of love deals with us. He is always doing us good; and, when we rebel, if we repent, He forgives us. Those are the express terms. Full forgiveness for full repentance, but no forgiveness without repentance. This shows us what kind of prayers to offer for our enemies. We are to ask God to turn their hearts, to abate their pride and assuage their malice, and to prevent their wicked devices from being accomplished. But there is this difference between God's treatment of us and our treatment of our enemies. He knows better than we do ourselves when we have really repented; and His forgiveness follows at once. But with regard to the repentance of our enemies we need security. We need strong evidence, something approaching to proof. For it is not merely our supreme interests as a nation that are at stake; we are joint-trustees and joint-champions for the rights and liberties of the whole world. We dare not grant forgiveness and peace without taking all possible security that the abominations which our enemies have committed shall never be attempted again. There are people who would make

enormous concessions to the enemy in order to be free from the enormous horrors of this war. We must beware of their specious arguments. Millions have shed their life's blood, not merely in order that these horrors should be made to cease, but in order that they may be made impossible for all future time. Are we willing that that blood should be shed in vain? A patched-up peace would be treason to our noble army of martyrs.

Few words are needed to show that our cause in this war is 'the cause of righteousness and honour.' Even if there had been no treaty binding both Germany and ourselves to protect Belgium from aggression, the infamy of attacking a small inoffensive kingdom would have justified us in coming forward to defend the innocent sufferer. The fact that we were solemnly pledged to protect Belgium against any assailant, and that the assailant was one of those who had given the same pledge as we had given, rendered it impossible for us to withhold protection, without being guilty of infamy almost equal to that of Germany. That was how the matter stood four years ago. How does it stand now? The unspeakable atrocities and abominations committed by the enemy in Flanders, France, Serbia, Rumania, Russia, Poland, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and on the high seas, have made war not only a sacred duty which we must not ignore, but an imperative necessity which we dare not ignore, if we value either our own credit as moral beings or the liberties and lives of the whole human race.

'There was war in heaven.' One is sometimes asked whether the Book of Revelation does not contain predictions of our conflict, and whether the Kaiser, with his cruel armies and wicked devices and lying statements, is not adumbrated there. The answer to that question is simple and decisive. 1. The author of that book wrote, probably about A.D. 96, but possibly some twenty-five years earlier, to give encouragement and warning to the Christians of that day. What use would it have been to them to have obscure allusions to the German Emperor and his allies? 2. Like all Christians of that age, the writer of the Apocalypse believed that the world would almost immediately come to an end through the Return of Christ in glory. Is it likely that a Prophet who believed that the world would hardly see the end of the first century, would have visions as to what would take place in the world in the twentieth century?

No; what the Prophet did see is this. However skilful agents of evil may be in adapting the marvellous powers of nature to their wicked purposes, and however successful they may be in inducing lying prophets to proclaim their aim as a thing to be desired to make one wise, yet, sooner

or later, the mills of God do their appointed work, and the evil-doers are ground to powder. In one respect it is not fanciful to say that this war on earth resembles that which the Seer calls 'war in heaven.' In it the moral forces of the world are uniting to defeat the efforts of the devil.

## Literature.

### THE NEW TEACHING.

THOSE who have heard of the New Teaching—and who with any interest in education has not?—will now be able to learn what it is. For Dr. John Adams, Professor of Education in the University of London, has edited a volume entitled *The New Teaching* (Hodder & Stoughton; 10s. 6d. net), to which contributions have been made by teachers of all the familiar subjects, and they are all exponents, in practice as well as in theory, of this new method. Professor Adams himself contributes the first article, and it is of course on the Teaching of English. But he also contributes an Introduction to the whole book, for the purpose of telling us how the new teaching differs from the old. What are its claims?

First, it trains pupils in initiative. Next, the teacher of the new teaching takes account of every pupil's point of view and peculiarities. Thirdly, grammar is banished, direct reading, writing, or speaking taking its place. Other things are mentioned, but they are minor or dependent; those three are the things that give this teaching the title of 'new' (or 'direct,' as some prefer to call it). It is nearly a return to the system of education that was prevalent in Scotland before the passing of the Education Act in the seventies. The parochial schoolmaster sat in his desk; the pupil went up to him with his work and had it examined; he then returned to his seat and went on working out his problems for himself or studying his text-book. But of course experience has taught improvements. The class is not annihilated by the new teaching. The individual pupil comes first, but he is still a member of the class.

What are the dangers? They are summed up in one word—coddling. Dr. Adams denies that the new teaching is guilty of coddling. 'There is really no danger. The "royal road" is as unattain-

able to-day as it was when the hoary proverb was in its first youth. There will always be plenty of difficulties to brace up our pupils. Surely there is no need to supply artificial obstacles after the manner of those who arrange steeplechases and golf courses, or even deliberately to retain difficulties that at present exist. The maintenance of our absurd weights and measures has been over and over again supported, apparently in all seriousness, on the ground of the excellent training involved in struggles with such troublesome items as  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and  $30\frac{1}{2}$ . When all artificial difficulties have been removed, there will always remain an irreducible surd of troublesome elements that will give full exercise to all the energy and determination available among our pupils. When the young people have been taught to study, and thus to avoid waste of effort, there will always remain the great mass of legitimate difficulties that no man can remove. If bunkers and hazards did not exist in our school course we might have to follow Voltaire's suggestion about God, and invent them; but of difficulties in learning there will never be a lack.'

In the chapter on the teaching of History, Mr. E. L. Hasluck discusses the difficulty arising from different views of any event or movement—a conservative view and a liberal. He comes to the conclusion that one case of over-emphasis on the 'Tory' side will balance another case on the 'Radical' side. And in actual fact 'there have been no complaints.' Why not so also in the teaching of religion? How well the old parochial teachers taught the Bible. No doubt each teacher had his own point of view, but 'there were no complaints.'

Professor Percy Nunn writes well on the teaching of science. Thus: 'The most obvious and fundamental characteristics of the scientific life are a love for "nature" and a disinterested desire to under-