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The Elements of Pain and Conflict in Human Life, considered from a Christian Point of View

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would be unnatural for those who are more mature to ask for. The Heavenly Father, Who carries on the education of all His children, may grant answers to prayer conformably with what is fitting at the stage at which they severally are.

But the great end which He has in all His relations with men, namely their moral and spiritual training, must never be forgotten. And I do not think it is unnecessary to observe that in connexion with the practice of faith-healing there is some danger that it may be. An interest in wonders merely as such, which is not religious, or altogether wholesome morally, may too easily be encouraged thereby, while the desire for relief from bodily sickness may take too prominent a place among the objects of prayer. The interests of edification by which St Paul sought to regulate the use of the Gift of Tongues should be applied here also.

In considering yesterday the nature of Divine Providence we saw that it must be conceived as directed to the triumph in the world of Righteousness and Love, and in its care of individuals to their moral education, necessarily in these same qualities. And I contended that human experience as a whole, including our experience of physical law, is not only consistent with, but favours, the belief that God does employ the forces of Nature and the actions of men in a manner to further those great ends. In treating of the function of prayer to-day, I have endeavoured to mark out the place Divinely appointed for prayer in relation to that scheme of Divine Providence.

WAR

Indirectly at least this whole course has been on the war. In dealing definitely with the subject, therefore, it may be that I shall largely repeat what has been already said. But repetition is not always unprofitable, for, to quote Wendell Holmes, "What would Socrates have made out of 'Know thyself,' if he had said it only once, instead of going on, as people complained, always saying it?"

From its place in the syllabus, I take the subject allotted to me to be the religious, not the moral aspect of war—in a word, to be God not Germany, Providence not Pacifism.

For true prophetic insight it might appear that war does not raise the problem of God for us more acutely than peace. Much escapes war, but nothing escapes the devouring tooth of time; wealth oppresses as well as arms; children suffer for the sins of their parents and subjects for the sins of their rulers; the most peaceful life is never anything save a continuous struggle against temptation without and weakness within, and uncertainties of events and the encroachment of old age. In so far as war is of man's causing, it might even seem less to involve the agency of God than other calamities. Yet somehow the prophet has seldom spoken except in face of the worst calamities

of war, and even Jesus spoke in view of such tribulation as had not been since the world began.

If we consider how we looked upon the question of God in the long years of our prosperity, we shall perhaps understand. Amid pleasant human relations, secure possessions, varied interests, frequent distractions, the world sufficed us, and few felt any great need of redemption from it. Consequently we both affirmed and denied the existence of God with amazing ease. As we accepted the surface meaning of the world, it was easy to say, this is a pretty good world and must have a benevolent Deity behind it, but it was equally easy to say, this world is sufficient in itself, and needs no such hypothesis to complete it. Both the belief and the unbelief depended on the conviction that this was a comfortable sort of place for sensible people; and naturally neither view was of much help when the present distress came upon us. A true faith, however, does not flourish upon ease and opulence, but is a torch which blazes up highest when the storm is strongest.

War demands another kind of faith, and is primarily important for it, because it is a calamity which admits of no such easy solution. While some accustoming of ourselves to frequent sorrow is necessary for the practical business of life, it is the greatest hindrance to any understanding of life's true meaning and ultimate purpose. War being catastrophic rids us for the moment of the illusion of the slow processes of time, and forces us to see that the repetition of evil is not its explanation, but the accentuation of its misery and the evidence of its usurpation. By thus knocking

the spectacles of custom off our eyes, war forces us to consider the evil of the world, and to ask ourselves, if we can be content to believe its final meaning the surface one of pleasure and its ultimate purpose the immediate one of worldly possession. And till we have asked these questions, we have not truly raised for ourselves the question of God at all.

Who can fail to ask them at the present moment, in face of the millions of promising lives extinguished or left maimed and broken, the millions of desolate hearts and bereaved homes, the millions of hungry and homeless and terror-stricken? And in that common human agony we need surely draw no distinction of sides.

At the beginning of the war many soldiers returned from it with the simple faith, that, if God had any regard for humanity and any self-respect as Ruler of the world, He must forthwith interfere to stop so insensate a slaughter. But the war goes on till it has become what a French private soldier straight from Verdun called it, "not war but the blotting out of the peoples."

War, for all who have any vision of its calamity, has thus raised for us the old question of redemption from the world; and till that is raised no real religious solution can be hoped for. At all events, except under the stress of that problem, no thought about God that has been of value to men has ever been produced, for the simple reason that nothing else has faced the evils over which faith is to make us conquerors.

Redemption from the world, however, is only a discerning of the true meaning and purpose of the

world, and not a mere discovery that the world is evil.

In one sense doubtless the problem must concern another life. If the departed are only "dust and ashes, dead and done with," what is life in these days but "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"? Unless life has a significance beyond its present pleasure, it can have no meaning; and unless there is in another state a victory to crown our conflict, it can have no justifying purpose. Yet the hope of a future life, apart from the meaning and purpose of this, is a mere precipice over which we roll the difficulties of this life, and so lose the profit, even as we escape the pain, of toiling at their solution. Though time may only be understood in its setting in eternity, for us, none the less, everything remains a question of time, so that we find no meaning till we can say amid the welter of human affairs, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," and no purpose unless we can somehow see "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the Living." It will not suffice to relegate God to another sphere, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," but we need to find something in our present experience which enables us to face all its evil in the assurance that this is God's world and we are God's children.

No eternal and infinite meaning and purpose, however, can ever be manifested in time as more than a vision of hope, a dawn which shines for us more clearly as we set our faces toward the light, as prophetic discernment and not as logical demonstration. If life is not a dead document but a living dialogue, always

interpreting itself to those who would understand, we may even rightly speak of revelation. By that I do not mean something merely accepted from another, but a growing purpose manifested to others who have lived more nobly in larger and more moving experiences, without whose help we can no more understand our own experience than, without any education, we can use our own minds. If experience is one, and the history of the race the unfolding in any way of a Divine meaning and purpose, it is the isolation, not of reason but of the madhouse, to think we can make most of our own insight by disregarding the insight of other men. The guidance of their understanding, the inspiration of their courage, the reflection of their blessedness, here, as in every sphere of life in which the issues are vast and distant, are our supreme, our necessary succour.

Thus, and not by dead tradition, are we founded upon the Apostles and Prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone. The prophet is the true organ of revelation, and the supreme mark of the prophet is the determination not to blink any of the world's evil, or rest any hope on thoughtlessness or hardness of heart. Facing the world with sympathetic hearts and sensitive consciences, prophetic souls have suffered above all men, yet out of the darkest judgment, especially of sin, they have won the highest view of human destiny. By that victory they have lived courageously and laboured joyously. The darkest judgment of guilt, expressed in the deepest human agony, which is summed up in the cross of Christ, has, in particular, inspired many who never could give their

faith any form of words. Nor are we likely in these days to forget how far the daring of insight and courage go beyond the timidities of argument and prudence, or to fail to understand the value for our own endeavour of those who never shrink from evil, yet never doubted the victory of good.

War thus forces us by its sorrows and its destruction to seek in life a deeper meaning than pleasure and a more enduring purpose than possession. But the special form of its disasters also raises special problems which have called out in prophetic souls special answers.

The first problem springs from the cause of the war.

This desolation has not come from the system of nature which we may believe to have some compensation of good for all its evil, so that, though it may press hard on the individual, it may yet be for the general profit, as when the tempest which wrecks the ships, purifies the air. Being directly due to the machinations of evil men, conceivably at least to the insane pride and regardless ambition of one man, who, as a man, is not stronger or wiser, and certainly no better than ourselves, we cannot even find in it the working of a generally beneficent law, but are left in amazement at the kind of government of the world which allows such calamitous might to one wicked human will.

The second is a problem special to war. War is met by war, organised destruction by organised destruction.

We looked forward to a day of larger consideration for the weak, and of more humble devotion of strength

and ability to the common weal, and to a larger recognition that we all find our own in all men's good. We dreamt of a good-will extending beyond the bounds of states, to include at least all civilised peoples in a republic of letters, science, art, religion, labour. Suddenly we found our morning vision of the dawn turned to the black and lightning-riven thunder-cloud of brutal violence and national hatreds. Nor may we delude ourselves into thinking that we ourselves are wholly escaping the spirit of evil. Our hardly won ideas of law steadily give way to arbitrary personal will; men are being driven so hard on the military curb, that many will never respond again to the snaffle of ordinary civil order; an extraordinary hardness is infecting our minds, so that we think less of 100,000 men killed in battle with hundreds dying slowly between the trenches, than we used to do of a small railway accident; and finally we are not always managing to preserve even the ancient chivalries of war, but are allowing our enemies to set the standard.

The third problem is one common to all evil. Yet no other evil gives it such vast expression. It is that the innocent suffer with the guilty.

In this particular war, affliction has been meted out freely all round, and the originators of the war have not escaped. Yet they have not suffered, and, in this life at least, they probably never will suffer like the humble laborious people whom they have used for their own purposes; and still less have they suffered like their homeless desolate victims. Thus we have this problem of the innocent suffering with the

guilty, for the guilty, more than the guilty, placarded up on the canvas of a continent.

Thus war raises for us, first the issues of sin, regarding which none of us can say we are not guilty. The Kaiser may apply the torch, but if covetousness is the kind of idolatry that leads to the worship of force, which of us has not added to the inflammable material? Second it forces us to consider what the Apostle calls the Tyranny of Darkness, the corporate nature and cumulative power of evil, in respect of which none of us can say, We have no responsibility. We stand between a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness, and there is no escaping the call to conflict. Finally, we have the problem of the sufferings of the innocent, in respect of which none of us can say, We will bear no part, for, in the end, in no other way can evil be undone or good made victorious.

In face of these problems the prophets have set up three conceptions, the most adequate expression of which is to be found in the Gospels. They are the Liberty of the Children of God; the Kingdom of God; the Love of God. A full explanation would be a complete system of theology, so I can merely indicate how, in these things, they took the meaning and purpose of life to lie. The essence of it, however, is that all evil is only the misuse of our powers as children of God, in His family, made in His image.

The Liberty of the Children of God means that God needs sons, and not merely slaves. The Kaiser's enormous power for evil is, as all evil is, only the perversion of our equipment for sharing in God's tasks, so that we may all take it as evidence of the

immeasurable possibilities of our choice of good or evil, as a commentary on the comparison between the loss of a soul and the gaining of the world.

Unless the purpose of God in the world is thus dependent on our responsibility, so that the meaning of the present life and the significance of a future life are determined by the uses of our freedom, what light is there on the problem of this war, or, for that matter, on any event in history? As the outcome of a mechanical system of natural law, or of a fixed process of the universe, or of a predestined scheme of things, what can the war be except mere horrible slaughter through unescapable insanity? The more religion is invoked, the more irrational the result. Mechanism is necessarily blind, and fixed process necessarily indifferent; but if these things are of God's directing and doing, following His decree as the planets move by gravitation, and not following in any way the responsibility He has committed to His children, what is the world but a magnified circus, where gladiators fight and suffer, with the thumbs around them forever turned down, but where nothing is ever really accomplished which could not be done as well by wooden puppets on a wire? God is a meaningless word and should be named Fate: while the only amazing thing about the idea of Providence is that it should ever have been planted, even as a wild illusion, in any head which was the product of a world so brutally determined. Unless tremendous issues really depend upon human choice; unless responsibility and character are the deepest, weightiest, most abiding realities; unless the very meaning of our experience is our training to

greater freedom by the use, and even by the misuse of such freedom as we already have; unless, indeed, God Himself cannot give us character and make us free by mere gift but only by discipline and duty, what is left us, if not sheer blackness of darkness? If, however, it is of supreme consequence to the Father of our spirits to have children who are not safe merely because they have been shielded from error and wrong, but who have won a victory after which they can neither be bribed nor browbeaten by any form of evil, may we not regard even this destructive conflict, not indeed with the assurance of knowing its meaning so as to escape all sense of mystery and pain, but with the assurance that it has a meaning worthy of all its sorrow as well as of all its courage and willing sacrifice? If free moral personalities are the ground of all value in the universe, if the essence of them is the imputation of all our actions which even God cannot lift from our shoulders and leave us persons, and if even He cannot make us free by the fiat of His omnipotence, but only train us to freedom by the exercise of our powers and the issues of our responsibilities, have we not at least some dim vision of a goal, in view of which we may hope some day, not in this life it may be, but in a greater, to be able to speak of the miseries even of this war as a light affliction but for a moment?

The second answer concerns the kind of order which God bases upon this liberty of His children.

If the rule of God is to be measured by the decent smoothness of the result, nothing can at present be said for it, and neither omnipotence nor goodness can enter into the situation. But, if the true order

concerns God's children, and must be of His children's will as well as of His own; if it must be won and not compelled; if, however far round man may wander in the ways of error, he cannot be one with God or with His children till he arrive at the goal of seeing eye to eye with them in truth; if, however hard and mistaken the conflict of will, he cannot be in harmony with God and with His children till he learn to stand shoulder to shoulder in love; if truth and love thus accepted are alone the gold and precious stones with which God builds His Kingdom, then, we can dimly discern some use in all conflict, not only if it spring from some deep-rooted and noble fellowship, and be for any just or lofty cause, but we may even discern a necessity for suffering the burning up of the wood and hay and stubble of worldly motive and selfish purpose. Like all other families, God's family must become a true moral fellowship by cherishing the ties of blood and of association, and by maintaining just rule and right discipline; and only by effort and sacrifice can we pass to the life in which both have disappeared into the spirit of freedom. Thus, dimly at least, we can discern why all progress must have blood upon its garment and upon its thigh and how the only final failure is not to strive, and the only way of not finding God's Kingdom is not to seek it.

If, however, we are only free as we accept, of our own insight and consent, God's rule as our own will, only free as we are gladly bound, only have the liberty of God's children as we cheerfully take our place in His family; if we truly belong to the family of God by the very constitution of our soul; if, in short, all

our powers are given us for the Kingdom of God, we can discern how the misuse of human freedom will mean not only evil passion and evil habit in the individual life, but a tyranny of evil organisation in the world. Throughout the ages this evil organisation has received various names and been explained by various theories, both theological and anthropological. Jesus speaks of being delivered, not from evils but from the Evil One—the organised Kingdom of Wickedness; the Apostle Paul speaks of the Tyranny of Darkness and wrestling with Principalities and Powers; Theology has spoken of Original Sin; Science of Heredity and Environment. It means that the powers of habit, association, organisation, cooperation, given us for the Kingdom of God, can be perverted to serve wrong social as well as personal ends, and that progress is only through arraying against each other the forces of right and wrong. The ages we look back upon as the great periods of the world's history have not been times when the large masses of men lived quietly by accepted faiths and customary morals, but when these broke down, often with vast evils to society and apparently with loss to the thoughtless masses of mankind. These losses, however, were compensated for by those who, of their own personal faith and moral insight, heard the imperative call to decision and conflict. Such periods of stress are apparently designed, not only for burning up the old social wrongs and worthless safeguards, but for teaching us the weakness of mere parasitic faith and morals and for summoning men with trumpet blast to a new fight of faith, a new warfare of the spirit.

Perhaps the most hopeless thing in our present outlook is our failure to hear that call, our determination to build again our old selfish, competitive social order, with its vast wealth and its measureless poverty, its worthless and restless ambitions, its lack of idealism in service and of brotherhood in fellowship, and to do it by the mere worldly resolve which says "The bricks have fallen, but we will build again with hewn stones." As long as that continues, for all that the nations have suffered, "God's anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." By that attitude it is plain that we are all involved. Even the Kaiser could only set fire to inflammable material, and if the prophet is right in saying that to use our strength to crush the weak is the same in principle as when the king of Assyria uses his army to annex a country, none of us can say we have lived for such an idea of justice as gives us at this moment a right to wash our hands of all responsibility for the kingdom and power of darkness.

The final answer concerns God's way of establishing His own rule.

If the very essence of God's rule is that it cannot be established by might, even though it be omnipotent might, how does He establish it? He does what the father of the Prodigal did. When he recognised that the lad's purpose was fixed, without argument, he gave him his heritage and let him go. All the time of his son's riot and ruin he did nothing except suffer. But, when the young man came to himself, he was there with every gift that could make forgiveness a reality, there waiting to help him to redeem the past

and secure the future. That vicarious suffering of the good is what we mean by atonement, and atonement in that sense is the true meaning of saying that God is love. To be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect, is not to engage in many pious services, or to do no manner of visible evil, or even to be supremely good people, but is to love our enemies, even as God sends His rain upon the just and upon the unjust.

Such love may require the repression of crime, the resistance of oppression, the standing in the breach to protect the weak and the guiltless. Yet when we ask where the final triumph over evil lies, it is not, it never is, with "reeking tube or iron shard," but, even in war, with the readiness to suffer, with the pain and the sacrifice; and finally it never can be in war at all, but in the spirit of victorious service which alone can replace all need for arms. After the thunder, God is in the still small voice. The final victorious service is in shouldering the follies and sins of mankind, even as we would shoulder the disgrace as well as the sorrow of the brother of our blood. The man who thinks we can have final peace merely by slaughtering Germans or by making commercial treaties, and who sees no need of knitting up again, and more closely than ever, the brotherhood of man, as the healing power after this rude surgery, I do not know what he may be, but he is not of the spirit of Christ, and he has never understood how Christ's cross is the world's true meaning, which is not pleasure and profit, but discipline and duty, and he has no vision of the goal of the world which is to be the Kingdom of God

established in the liberty of His children, through the service and sacrifice of love.

When we raise the question of God, we are raising the question of the meaning and purpose of life. In the end it is the question of our own personal moral values against the might of violence and brute force. The externality of our arguments and the formality of our religion have often separated the belief in God from everything for which the name of God stands. Too often we have left the impression that we might believe in none of the things Christ lived for and yet be good Christians, or, on the contrary, take up His attitude to life every day in trust in the powers of righteousness He believed in, and yet not be Christians at all. For example, a discussion arose among some soldiers on the needs of the country. A regular, a man of modest attainments but of marked ability and fine spirit, maintained that, above our need of a great statesman or even a great general, was our need of a spiritual leader. Though I have never heard finer or better expressed Christianity, and though he knew that he was echoing the Gospels, he prefaced each departure of his argument with the phrase, "Though I am not a Christian." By contrast I was reminded of the saying attributed to a certain bishop: "In my diocese there is not a single person who ever thinks a Christian thought or utters a Christian sentiment." Yet I suppose many there called themselves Christians.

We must rid ourselves of the idea that we can believe in the might of goodness and not in God; and in God and not in the might of goodness. When we are reasoning about God we are considering whether,

in spite of the success of wickedness, wickedness wins the final success; whether, in spite of the power of violence, violence is the final power; whether the meaning of the world is cruelty and cunning or truth and goodness. The question of God is precisely the question of the meaning and purpose of the world, and that resolves itself into the question whether truth is the last reality and goodness the one imperishable possession.

COMPETITION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND CLASSES, CONSIDERED FROM THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

Such is the subject assigned to me. I propose to deal with it by considering Competition as we see it in the world in which we live. Then I shall sketch the Christian ideal of social order, and lastly consider what possibilities there are of human society passing from the present competitive organisation to one more in accordance with the Christian ideal.

When I speak of Competition I mean the desire of acquisition, of possession, and the rivalry which results when individuals and classes strive to extend their claim to the ownership of things. This differs from healthy emulation in which the main desire is to do something well, and in which the pleasure results from the performance; the pleasure of the scholar, of the skilled workman, of the artist, of the man of science. Competition played very little part in the life-work of our great scientist Darwin. He did not write the *Origin of Species* in order that he might get money, though his publisher gave him a cheque for his MS. There may be rivalry, jealousy and uncharitableness among men of science and artists, and if report speak true there often is, but it is a rivalry in performance, in reputation, but not in acquisition.