

THE WAR AND MISSIONS.

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Two years ago in a public address the writer made the following statement concerning the effect of the war on the Church's missionary work: "This great world catastrophe has not happened outside of the ordering of Providence. What the providential meaning of it may be will not be known until God's plans have been revealed in their historic development. To one who believes in God, however, this world-situation furnishes no occasion for pessimism. As the final outcome of it all we may be assured that His purposes will be established and not overthrown, and the triumph of His kingdom will be hastened and not retarded."

Some things in the present situation seem to be in conflict with that statement.

For instance, notwithstanding the remarkable fact that the missionary income of nearly all Protestant churches has been maintained, and even increased, during the war, the cost of the work has at the same time been so greatly increased by war conditions as to make any enlargement impossible. The present missionary income of the churches is even more inadequate than it has been heretofore for the proper maintenance of the present work.

There have also been heavy losses in the missionary personnel. Two thousand German missionaries were interned or expelled from their fields, leaving seven hundred thousand of their followers without missionary supervision, except in so far as they have been cared for by missionaries from other countries.

Large numbers of French, British, Canadian and Australian

missionaries left their missionary work for some form of war service, and many of these gave their lives on the battlefield. A large proportion of the young manhood of these countries also, from which these losses might have been supplied, is sleeping under the soil of France and Belgium.

There has also been destruction on a colossal scale of resources in the hands of Christian people that might have been applied to the constructive work of the kingdom. There is no formula of arithmetic or algebra or differential calculus by which this loss could be estimated. It has been stated on good authority that the interest on the national debts incurred by the countries involved in the war will be greater, for a generation to come, than their combined revenues before the war.

How is it possible that the coming of the kingdom should be hastened and not retarded by a war whose results have been such as these?

In seeking the answer to this question let us consider some of the things that must be set down to the other side of the account.

One thing that meets us constantly in the study of past history in the light of God's word is that God uses war and other agencies of destruction to remove things that stand in the way of His kingdom *that cannot be otherwise removed*. And one thing we have been witnessing in this war is a great holocaust of those things that have been built up in human society on the principle of competition, which is only another name for war, and which must in some way be gotten rid of before the kingdom of God can come. In a great competitive effort to conserve their interests in respect of trade and national prestige the plans of the nations engaged in the war have come to grief once for all, and the world must now see that the only hope of permanent peace and of the maintenance of conditions compatible with human welfare and happiness is that its political, social and industrial life shall be organized on the basis of international good-will and of the golden rule. And God has raised up a prophet to proclaim this doctrine in the person

of the President of the United States, and has given him the entire world for his audience.

One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the kingdom during the past century has been the liquor traffic, and the war has accomplished more in four years' time for the suppression of this traffic than all the temperance propaganda of the century combined. What this will mean for the success of our work in mission lands, where the trade conducted by citizens of nominally Christian countries in liquor and narcotics has done more injury than it has been possible for the missionary work to counteract, must be evident to any reflecting person.

Perhaps the most far-reaching in its effects of all the results of the war is this, that it has finally rid the world of autocracy. There are still a number of countries that have titular kings and emperors, but these all rule under elaborate constitutional limitations, which is the same as to say that they do not really rule at all. Since the German emperor has gone the pope of Rome remains the solitary representative of the autocratic idea, and his prestige in that capacity comes out of the war in a sadly dilapidated condition. His shrewd effort to bring himself to the front as the world's peacemaker, and so to rehabilitate himself as a spiritual autocrat, was defeated by the masterly diplomacy of President Wilson, whose letter to the pope in reply to his proposals which were so manifestly in the German interest, is a document than which there is nothing finer in the literature of diplomacy.

One of the features of autocratic government has always been the existence of a small privileged class whose function was to exploit the common man for its private benefit, with the result that the common man—that is to say the masses of the people—has been kept in a state of poverty, ignorance and degradation. If this statement is not literally true of the masses of the German people it is still true that the proletariat of no other country has been more enslaved and exploited than that of Germany has been by its privileged class of junkers and military satraps.

It is on that account that it has hitherto been almost impossible to build up self-supporting churches in non-Christian lands, in all of which the privileged class has been dominant, and in those Roman and Greek Catholic lands in which the privileged class still retains its place. It will probably be a long time before this result of autocratic government will entirely disappear from the earth and the common man come into his own. One result of the war, however, will be to bring about a situation in which it will be possible for him to make a beginning in that direction. In another half century we may hope to see developed in all these lands the "bold yeomanry" which has been the pride of countries like England and North America, and which will be the material out of which churches of influence and power may be built up. And this alone will be a gain for the kingdom of God almost great enough to compensate for all the losses entailed by the war.

Still another result of the war has been to open up a vast new field which has hitherto been practically closed to evangelical missionary effort.

Across the continent of Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic lies a tier of countries known as the "dead lands of Europe." They are Bohemia, Poland, parts of Austria-Hungary and the South Slav states. Their national life has been suppressed by Germany, Russia and Austria, but the effort to extinguish it proved a failure. They have enjoyed neither political nor religious liberty, and it has been impossible to conduct evangelical missionary work in any of these countries except under conditions that made it almost fruitless. They are now liberated and are coming under the protection of friendly powers, who are ready to guarantee to them the blessings of the freedom which they themselves enjoy.

At a service of thanksgiving of these liberated nationalities recently held in New York, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler said: "It is not often that one may witness the birth of a nation. But these nations have not been dead. By a tyrannical control, by a military autocracy, by a despotic power, their bodies and their souls have been held separate. Their bodies lay pros-

trate under giant domination and were bound hand and foot. But their souls were free. Their spirits were at large in the hearts and minds of their men and women and children who are bearing their standards today. Those souls were immortal and could not be killed. The bodies might be in chains, but the souls could not be reached by military autocracy, nor could the spirit be broken. What we celebrate and sing, what we give thanks for to Almighty God, is that we have been permitted to make possible, to join in making it possible, for those souls of nations to return to their bodies, to unite them once more in a real personal existence so that they may no longer be names, no longer be aspirations, no longer be distant and unfulfilled hopes, but that now they are accomplishments on the pages of human history, where the record of freedom is written."

The two personalities who have had the most conspicuous part in bringing this to pass are the Presbyterian elder, Woodrow Wilson, and the Christian lay teacher, David Lloyd George. Can there be any doubt as to the kind of reception that will be accorded to the representatives of the evangelical churches of Great Britain and America when they go to tell these people of the gospel whose teachings have made Britain and America what they are, and have inspired them to the amazing self-sacrifice of which they are now the beneficiaries?

As the result of the war the Jews of Russia and Austria are emancipated, and the land which God gave to their fathers has been rescued from the Turk and is about to be opened up to be the national home of all who wish to return to it.

Already about 120,000 Jewish colonists have come in, mostly from that "hearth and hell of Modern Jewry," the Russian Pale, and under their intelligent husbandry Palestine has begun to recover its ancient prosperity.

This unspeakable boon has been conferred on the Jewish people by Christian nations, and it would seem that the inevitable result must be to put a different phase hereafter on the work of Christian missions to the Jews.

Over between the Tigris and the Euphrates is the land

where in ancient times "far-sighted engineers and strong-handed rulers turned the waters of Babylon into waters of life, and Mesopotamia became a great heart of civilization, breathing in man-power—Sumerians, Amorites, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and Arabs—and breathing out the works of man, grain and wool and Babylonish garments, inventions still used in our machine shops, and emotions still felt in our religion." The country was so rich and populous that Rome and Persia fought seven centuries for its possession. Finally it came under the rule of the unspeakable Turk and was turned by his blighting hand into the desert which it now is. A celebrated English engineer, Sir William Willcocks, has estimated that an expenditure of one hundred and fifty million dollars, about three days' cost of the world war, would restore the reservoirs and canals and other engineering works, by means of which this great country could once more be made to blossom as the rose. With this accomplished its fertility would attract and furnish conditions of prosperous living to millions of the over-crowded populations of Egypt and India.

With the Church of Christ on the scene and ready to do its part in looking after the spiritual interests of the incoming people, there might be developed in this cradle of the human race a church that would ultimately be the great distributing centre of gospel influence for the whole of Western Asia and Northern Africa. The first condition of bringing this to pass has been fulfilled through the military campaigns of General Maude and General Allenby in the war that has just come to a close.

So much for the great new opportunities which the Lord has opened up through the war to the Church in its missionary work. The question of the hour, of course, is what will the Church do with these opportunities?

This brings us to the last and greatest of the results of the war as they affect the progress of God's kingdom in the earth. It has put to eternal shame the kind of consecration to its task of world conquest which the Church has manifested hitherto. How pitiful is the highest standard of missionary giving yet

reached by any evangelical church in comparison with what the nations engaged in this war have been doing, almost without a murmur of complaint, and for the most part in a spirit of joyous *abandon*. The war has taught the people as they had never been taught before the lesson and the joy of sacrificial giving, and sacrificial service. Multitudes of church members whose lives had been devoted to a perpetual round of selfish social pleasures have abandoned their whist parties and their luncheons for the work of the Red Cross and other forms of war service. And they have found a satisfaction in this kind of life which they never knew before. May we not hope that this spirit and this habit of service will remain with them to be utilized in the work of the Church, now that the war is over?

At the very time that our people have been pouring out their money like water and doing it with gladness to support the war they have incidentally been increasing instead of diminishing their missionary gifts. Can we believe, in the light of such unselfish devotion and such unstinted expenditure of treasure for a cause in which their hearts were enlisted, they will be satisfied hereafter with the standard of missionary giving that prevailed before the war? We do not believe they will. Our confident hope is that within the next decade the financial problem of the missionary cause will have been solved, and that the problem of the Church will be that of the judicious and statesmanlike administration of a missionary fund, which for the first time in the Church's history is sufficient for its need.