

Thoughts for the Thoughtful

If only the Bible might be read freely, naturally, gladly, as Jesus was heard by the common people, what fruits we should see!

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It is a fine thing that God makes work His gift and not money and not fame, not this thing nor that thing, but just living work.—R. E. Speer.

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As the only way a swimmer can gain confidence in the water is by learning to float upon it, so the only way to gain confidence in God is by resting upon Him.

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You cannot run away from a weakness, you must some time fight it out or perish; and if that be so, why not now, and where you stand?—R. L. Stevenson.

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Govern the lips
As they were palace-doors, the king within;
Tranquil and fair and courteous be all words
Which from that presence win.

—Sir E. Arnold.

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The sinner who comes to Christ not only receives pardon for Christ's sake, but receives Christ. Forgiveness means nothing less than this: that in giving pardon God gives Himself.—Dr. George Adam Smith.

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Blessed are they who have the gift of making friends, for it is one of God's best gifts. It involves many things, but above all, the power of going out of one's self, and appreciating whatever is noble and loving in another.

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The maximum achievement of any man's life, after it is all over, is to have done the will of God. No man or woman can have done any more with a life; no Luther, no Spurgeon, no Wesley, no Melancthon, can have done any more with their lives; and a dairymaid or a scavenger can do as much. Therefore, the supreme principle upon which we have to run our lives is to adhere, through good report and ill, through temptation and prosperity and adversity, to the will of God, wherever that may lead us.—Henry Drummond.

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The offering of your life and thought, and love, and energy is not made to an abstract colorless humanity, but to a Person Who is the infinite, eternal, archetypal man. And He in turn has sacrificed life and thought and love to you, that you may receive back the love you gave Him with the addition of that infinite love which is His essence, and all the thought you gave Him made perfect in His infinite wisdom, and the life that you have given up to Him—translated into His eternal life of glory.—J. R. Illingworth, D.D.

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This must always be the truth which must underlie all understanding of the Incarnation: man belongs to God. The human nature belongs to the divine. It can come to its best only by entrance and possession of it by divinity. The Incarnation, let us always be sure, was not unnatural and violent, but in the highest sense supremely natural. It is the first truth of all our existence that man is eternally the son of God. No man who forgets or denies that truth can really lay hold of the lofty fact that God entered into man.—Selected.

War and the Christian

Extract from "The Challenge of the Present Crisis"

By HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK,
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THE love of Jesus is commonly appealed to by those who would altogether dispense with force. One has only to read the many conflicting interpretations of Jesus' sayings in their application to the questions which this war presents, to see how difficult, if not quite impossible it is, to build with confidence any solution of our special problems on a literal pressing of the texts. The Master never faced in His own experience, never directly considered in His teaching a national problem such as Belgium met when the Prussians crossed the border. To be sure He fraternized with centurions, taking them for granted as unrepiningly as in His parables He took slavery for granted, but no cause can be made out for or against either slavery or war from this natural attitude of His. The fact is that Jesus did not directly face our modern questions about war; they were not His problem, and to press a legalistic interpretation of special texts, as though they were, is a misuse of the gospels.

It is clear, however, that that boundless love of His, which was the centre of His life, was no mild and dovelike thing. It had terrific aspects. The love of Jesus looked on Lazarus, lying untended at Dives' gate, and then the love of Jesus looked on Dives, and God have mercy on him after that! The love of Jesus looked on pious Israelites coming up to the Father's temple to pay their tithes and make their offerings of sacrifice, and then the love of Jesus looked upon the hucksters who rang this piety upon their counters for their private gain; and the love of Jesus took a whip of cords and drove them out. Jesus pictures the ideal of life under the figure of a shepherd, and the tender aspects of the shepherd's ministry so captivate our imagination that we would leave the picture with no shadows in it. Not so our Lord. He is under no such soft illusions about life. He follows through His figure till the thief comes, that He "may steal and kill and destroy" he adds the wolf as well, who if he can "snatcheth them and scattereth them"; and then the shepherd proves his quality—while the hireling flees—by setting to in desperate encounter to protect his sheep. Jesus knew that a true shepherd could not always be a gentle man; at times the call must come for force. The love of Jesus, as we often are reminded, said, "Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you"; and that same love of Jesus, looking on the violators of the poor, also said, "Ye serpents! Ye offspring of vipers! How shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" Love like His does not always speak gently and act gently; love never can speak and act gently with effectiveness unless it has behind it capacious possibilities of moral indignation. Indeed so stern an aspect did the love of Jesus have that the greater problem which the serious interpreter must face and which pacifist writers commonly forget, is not to harmonize the Master's love with so temporal a thing as the use of force for moral ends, but to harmonize it with so prodigious a conception as the word hell—familiar on His lips—even in its most merciful interpretation must connote. "These mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me"—no soft and comfortable soul, afraid of force, put words like that into his picture of the Eternal. Just as in the Master's love there are heights of tenderness and horizons of compassion where even our imaginations cannot reach,

so, in the presence of obdurate iniquity, depths of sternness are there that make us quail. We have been too soft in our thought of Him; we have remembered the 6th chapter of Matthew's gospel and have forgotten the 23rd; and some of the most egregious misinterpretations of Him ever written have but lately come from extreme pacifists, identifying love with gentleness. While, therefore, none can be dogmatically sure what Jesus would say about our duty in this present war—although we can be sure that Jesus would hate war and all that makes it possible—one does not see how a soul who spoke as Jesus spoke could forbid as intrinsically wrong the use of force for moral ends. And if, in answer the familiar text is pleaded, "Resist not evil," surely both the context and the whole temper of the Master's life make clear that the meaning there is not passive acquiescence in iniquity, but rather that magnanimity of spirit which Paul summed up in his parallel word: "Recompense to no man evil for evil." For force in Jesus' thought must always be wielded with a heart of love behind and a purpose of good will ahead.

Those who would dispense with force, who at a stroke would lift all opposition to evil from the physical to the moral plane, and fight iniquity with reason and love alone, do not estimate aright what sin can do to human life. They have an unsupported confidence that no heart ever grows so callous in iniquity that it is unresponsive to the appeal of tenderness. Such folk should go to court some day when the little children and the fathers who have beaten them are brought in. If anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath can love and forgive beyond limit it is a little child. And these children have so forgiven and so loved again the brutal men whose rage has been vented on their defenseless bodies. Yet forgiven repeatedly by these little ones, beset by the appeals of their own children's unconquerable love for them, these men have gone on beating the scarred bodies of their own offspring with obdurate cruelty. Sin can work that result and does work it in human hearts. This is the deep damnation of sin—that it makes men's spirits callous until the nerves are paralyzed that once thrilled to the touch of tenderness and the appeal of reason. The state's force cannot save these men from their brutality—only love can do that—but it can stop the beating of the children. What do we really think Jesus would have said about it—Jesus who, facing something like it, said it were better for a man, with a mill-stone round his neck, to be flung into the sea, than to offend one of these little ones?

It is true that the advance of society is marked by the progressive substitution of moral suasion for physical force: in wedlock, where men once captured wives and held them by brute strength, but now woo them instead; in parenthood, where a father's power of death over a child was once constraining and where now force is a last resort; in education, where no longer is the birch the tree of knowledge; in penology, where physical compulsion gives way before more generous treatment of the criminal—everywhere the advance of social life involves the gradual displacement of brutal constraint by reasonable persuasion. But this advance of humanity will not bring us utterly past the need of force until it has eliminated more of sin than as yet has gone out of us. Any day on any street any man of us may face an exigency where sin is expressing itself in forms that far have overpassed the power of reason and gentleness immediately to handle. We must use force. The wolf has come and we must be shepherds and not hirelings.

It sometimes is maintained that even in international relations no emergency ever arises which a peaceful good will cannot meet. Writes an enthusiastic pacifist, "Suppose half of Belgium's sons who were killed in battle had died

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