

The Christian Year

Danger, Temptation and Grace

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE Collect for to-day recognizes dangers, and asks for strength to live through them. The petition refers to dangers, physical and spiritual. We know ourselves to be in the midst of physical dangers. The daily death toll from accident and disease, and our own daily experience bear abundant testimony to that fact. More people, we are told, have died of the influenza epidemic than were killed in the war. It is our blessed privilege to pray for protection against danger to life and limb, believing that God both hears and cares for us.

It does not follow that we are to so put our trust in such prayer as to neglect ordinary precautions, which an enlightened science has put in our way. God does not hold us up in His hand without due regard on our part for the laws of life and safety, which it is the province of prudence to exercise. Occasionally, one can see where people have been immune from disease and spared in the midst of disaster, and there can be no doubt that the unseen hand has been active for some good cause or reason; but we must not expect God's fatherly care to take the place of our own efforts, so as to render unnecessary the exercise of the gift of good sense which He has given us for self-preservation. An object which is not worthy of caution and action on our part is scarcely likely to be prayed for with any degree of intensity. That "God helps those who help themselves," is literally true, and our religion would contain the seed of demoralization if it were not so. The thing which does not command our best effort to attain is not worthy of God's intervention on our behalf. That religion would not be morally justifiable which would recommend what would seem to be the easier way of prayer rather than the harder one of work—even though it be true that real prayer is the hardest work. If material blessings could be had in that way without the effort of the will involved in the necessity of struggle, the gospel of prayer would indeed contain a moral weakness at the heart of it. God won the war because the allied world bent their energies to the attainment of that end, feeling it to be worthy of such an effort; and thereby learned the value of the righteousness for which they were contending.

The Collect refers also to spiritual dangers, to which, in the eyes of those who discern the presence of sin and temptation, we are constantly exposed. The practical abandonment of organized religion by a large constituency of nominally Christian people enhances the power of sin and temptation over us, because we fail to detect their presence. To undermine the religious sense, and with it the sense of sin, is one of the most effective methods Satan has in his full quiver to destroy the kingdom of Christ and imperil the souls of men. The breathless efforts of Christian bodies to promote movements, increase organizations and church activities to attract, is symptomatic of the helplessness of the genuinely religious imperative to worship God in the true spirit of devotion. God is not regarded as a Personal God, the worship of Whom is man's chief glory.

The value of the *soul of man* has been given special emphasis in recent years by great collective sacrifices; but the *souls of men* and women are in greater danger than ever. The value of the individual soul and its salvation is in danger of being lost in a transcendental conception of the soul of a people. Souls are not saved unless redeemed to God through Christ, and united in the fellowship of His body, the Church. We are in the midst of great spiritual dangers because we do not see them.

But even those who are aware of the dangers and temptations of life, because of their frailty, "cannot always stand upright." His help is needed to "support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptation." We need His grace to go before us—"Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings." It is not by our merit that we can escape. We have no merit apart from Christ; but associated with Him the merit of obedience and faith is effective to the sustenance of spiritual life. The word "prevent" is not adequately expressed in the word "direct." One may receive direction for a journey over an unfamiliar road, but apprehension remains lest the direction given should not have been faithfully followed; but if the person knowing the way goes on before, it is a great comfort and assurance to the traveler. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

"Lead us not into temptation."

World Citizenship

The Message to Mohammedans

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THE second chapter of this little book (Jesus Christ and the World Religions) is on "The Message of Christianity to Mohammedans." Let us first of all try and realize what an enormous problem Mohammedanism is. Moslem numbers are variously estimated at from two hundred to four hundred millions. They comprise more than one-seventh of the world population. No less than one hundred and sixty-one millions of these are under Christian rule or protection, and of these again between eighty and one hundred millions are subject to Great Britain. That is, our Empire embraces a Mohammedan population practically equivalent to the population of the United States of America. There are, it is estimated (1901), sixty-two and a half millions of Mohammedans in the Indian Empire alone, or between one-fifth and one-quarter of the total population of India, so Great Britain is by far the greatest Moslem power in the world. Now according to the census of 1901 the white population of the Empire was estimated at fifty-three millions. Mohammedans, therefore, outnumber Anglo-Saxons in the proportion of almost two to one. Or if we had a central parliament of the Empire at Westminster, in which all our peoples were represented according to population, we should find two Mohammedans there for every Christian. A people who make up such a large part of the Empire, and who have on the whole been so loyal during the past four years of war when no stone was left unturned by the Germans, from the Kaiser down to the meanest spy, to arouse religious hate and the fearful *jihad*, deserves much of us. We must respect these people as fellow-citizens, we must respect also their adherence to a faith which, though we believe to be mistaken, they consider to be as true and authoritative as our own. And as Christians we must love them, and even at the cost of great sacrifice make known to them the Gospel which we believe will make them better citizens, better fathers and mothers, better husbands and wives, and save them both for this world and for that which is to come.

As our author shows us there is much of truth as well as much of error in the Moslem system. It is our privilege to bring them a Gospel which while it acknowledges and retains all that is true in Islam, nevertheless enlarges, deepens, transforms and fulfils that truth and purges away its error. And the true missionary will have a sympathetic appreciation of the Mohammedan point of view. He will think how, if he had himself been brought up as a Mohammedan, he would look with pity or detestation on Christian error, and view with suspicion and alarm the Christian propaganda. The Koran is the great obstacle to Mohammedan evangelization. Here the devout Moslem has a book which he believes to be infallibly inspired from beginning to end. If we suggest anything to his mind which he can answer with a verse from the Koran, the authority of the Koran is final for him. Our appeal to what is reasonable, and to the claims of historical criticism is futile, for he considers the Koran to be above and beyond the court of Reason. It is not for him to criticize the Koran but for the Koran to criticize him. And so it is exceedingly difficult to get at the Mohammedan by any process of reasoning. All we can do is set before him the example of a Christian life—the joy and peace, the moral purity and integrity, the love and self-sacrifice manifested in the individual Christian and in the Christian group. This life of love is a Book, where, unconsciously, the Moslem reads a better, nobler, truer Word than he can ever find in the Koran. Let us go, then, to the Moslem, confident that the life of Jesus Christ and that life reflected in the lives of His followers is the only Gospel which can win the hearts of men of whatever race, colour or language.

And this brings us to another thought which will, perhaps, help us to understand the suspicion, scepticism and unbelief of the Moslem with regard to Christianity—the Moslem has not been fortunate in his contact with Christianity. He has not always, or perhaps generally, seen the best, but rather the worst that is in us. The types of Christianity with which Mohammed himself came in contact were admittedly of a very low order. And the types with which Mohammedans are chiefly in contact to-day—Abyssinian, Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, and to some extent the Greek—give very little better results in character than Mohammedanism itself. Many who have lived or travelled in the East bear witness to this. And another fact is to be remembered, viz., that the mass of Christians who go abroad do not necessarily set before Mohammedans the

highest type of our Christian civilization. We must remember that Germans as well as Britons are Christians to him. A religion is, after all, to be judged by the best which it produces, not by the worst. How much of the best in the individual and the group do the rank and file of Mohammedans see? Practically nothing as yet. And so missionary work among Moslems must be carried on with far greater vigour and energy than we have shown in the past. Thousands must go where we are now sending out only one's and two's or Moslem evangelization and discipleship cannot be realized for many generations to come. Is this impossible? Look at the energy, devotion and self-sacrifice we have consecrated to the cause of truth and justice in this great war. Can we not make the call to proclaim the ideals of peace, of love, of righteousness, of liberty and truth throughout our Empire and the world as compelling as the call to take the sword and fight for them. We ought to be able to do it. And only if we give ourselves as devotedly to this as we have to war, shall the reign of universal peace for which we have prayed and fought and bled and died be secured to our children forever.

Sons of the Motherland

By Samuel Tregear.

WHEN the Great War broke out, we speedily came to see that Germany had her agents in every nook and corner of the earth. Of these serpents nurtured in our own homeland, we have all too vivid a recollection. Great Britain, too, had her agents in every clime washed by the Seven Seas. But of what a different type! Not slaves of the Fatherland, but sons of the Motherland, whose response to her call will echo through the years, till time shall be no more.

It so happens that one of these agents, serving as a humble missionary on the far-flung battle line in the heart of Asia was at the crux of the attempted uprising of the natives of northern India and Burmah, where German poison and propaganda had done their worst to undo all the honest effort of Britain's years of service and sacrifice. He was permitted, under the guidance of God, to extract the poison, quench the fires of propaganda and "cast out the devils." In recognition of these services he was decorated by the British government. The Lord God of Hosts thus uses human agencies—even the oft-time despised missionary—to "confound the politics and frustrate the knavish tricks" of the enemy of righteousness.

Meanwhile, the missionary's wife and boys and girls in Western Canada were, in their solitude, holding the thin red line. Soon after the opening of the war, the eldest boy, scarcely twenty years old, enlisted. The mother was American born, and from the windows of her home floated the Union Jack and Old Glory of her native land. The Stars and Stripes were yet to be unfurled in the war to make the world safe for democracy. America had not yet found her soul, but this daughter in exile had. Did she stoop to that subtle appeal not to send her "boy to feed the guns"?

"God gave my son in trust to me,
Christ died for him. He should be
A man for Christ. He is His own
And God's and man's, not mine alone.
He was not mine to give. He gave
Himself, that he might help to save
All that a Christian should revere,
All that enlightened men hold dear."

Last summer, after two years in active service, this son met the Great Adventure. To-day, he lies "where poppies blow in Flanders fields."

"What if he does not come?" you say;
"Well, then, my sky will be more gray,
But through the clouds the sun will shine
And vital memories be mine.
God's test of manhood is, I know,
Not, will he come—but did he go?"

Thus did the sons of the Motherland from every corner of the old world answer the roll call. This story is told not alone to illustrate the filial affection and loyalty of the sons of the Motherland, but also to suggest the sublime devotion of the mother born under the Star and Stripes, to the high ideals of her British husband and son when they were following the Union Jack. The divine union of this family but symbolizes that of the two great English-speaking nations on the North American continent. They are not divided, all one body free, "one in hope and doctrine, one in liberty." The sons and daughters of the Motherland, and the daughters and sons of Uncle Sam have pledged each their troth. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

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