

'STAND FAST IN THE FAITH'

(A Weekly Instruction specially written for the N.Z. TABLET by GHIMEL.)

IS WAR LAWFUL?

A reader of these articles wishes to know if war is ever lawful, and what are the objects and conditions that justify it. An appropriate question in these days, when the big guns are speaking in thunder, and, perhaps, especially appropriate because there has lately been much confused thinking and inaccurate writing on the ethics of war. An Anglican Bishop, for instance, writing in a high-class English magazine, has assured us that 'New Testament Christians can scarcely doubt that war, both in its roots and fruits, is essentially evil.'

Purely defensive wars may be morally defensible; but seeing that they are caused by the attacks of selfish aggression, and selfish aggression is immoral, therefore, in their primal origin, even defensive wars are immoral also.' Professor Jones, of the Glasgow University, also writes in the same issue of the *Hibbert Journal*: 'I think that the present war, like every war that was ever waged, is wrong, and that nothing can make it right.' These views, of course, are the echo of the peculiar tenets of the Society of Friends, generally known as Quakers—namely, that our Lord taught the unlawfulness of all wars, and that the earliest Christian writers were agreed that nothing less than this was their Master's doctrine.

What is our position? We most heartily admit of course that war is un congenial to Christian feeling; that the character developed by Christian teaching will tend to the avoidance of war, as it has in point of fact led to the abolition of slavery and the uplifting of woman; that war is often sent by God as a punishment for the ambition and greed of those in power, and for the corrupt, luxurious lives both of rulers and subjects. Still, we hold that war is sometimes neither more nor less than a duty; that a nation is in duty bound to stand up for itself even at the risk of war. Such has been the common verdict of every age and every race, ever since the Prince of Peace came.

We are told, indeed, that Christ condemned war. But we must have absolute proof of such condemnation before admitting the assertion, for men have always believed that war is at times necessary and obligatory, and God is the author of nature as well as of grace. The only words of our Lord which can possibly be urged in this connection are those of Matthew v. 39, and Luke vi. 29. Here He exhorts His Apostles: 'If any one smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also.' But these words, as generally understood and in accordance with their obvious meaning, do not lay down a hard and fast rule for the every-day life of all men. They were given as a counsel of perfection to the Apostles and to others like them, who, as missionaries of the Gospel message, were to be as sheep amongst wolves and to win their way by the rhetoric of invincible kindness. Understand these words as a precept and they clash with the natural right which every man has to defend himself, if necessary, by physical force against an aggressor, even to the taking away of his life, if needs be. It would be impossible of observance, and hence was never imposed.' No man could possibly feel himself bound to take the words of Christ literally, if he saw his mother or sister or wife or daughter smitten on the cheek.

Far from condemning war, our Saviour recognised its lawfulness: 'If My Kingdom were of this world, verily would My servants have fought, so that I should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews' (John xviii. 36), which is much the same as saying: If I had come to set up an earthly kingdom, as the Jews expected their Messiah would do, My people would have fought for Me, and would have been right in so doing. Whence we may conclude that if God wishes to have nations and kingdoms in the world, we have the warrant of Scripture to fight for them. Our Redeemer, too,

though He bore His sufferings without resistance, could yet rebuke the smiter: 'If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil, but if well, why striketh thou Me?'

We conclude then, 'in accordance with the common sense of mankind, that war is sometimes just, and to be entered on with soberness indeed, and a deep sense of responsibility, but yet with the confidence that, under the circumstances, it is a work like other works of danger and difficulty, which it has been given into our hand to do.'

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

KAPPA writes: (1) 'In the *Tablet* a few weeks ago there was an account of a French soldier priest having a finger amputated. He wept because he could never say Mass again. Why not? This may be a foolish question, but I am not a Catholic.'

Answer.—The question is by no means a foolish one, though it admits of an easy reply. Doubtless the finger lost by the priest in question was the index finger. In saying Mass a priest has to handle the Sacred Host with his thumb and index finger, and would find it very inconvenient to do so were either of these parts taken off. He would experience a similar difficulty in handling the chalice, and here, indeed, there might easily be danger of spilling the Precious Blood after the Consecration. To safeguard therefore the reverence due to our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament, the Church does not ordain, or, after ordination, allow to celebrate, those who labor under such disabilities as the one mentioned. Total blindness is another such impediment, and it is only rarely that the Pope grants permission for a priest who has become blind to celebrate even with the assistance of another.

(2) 'Whilst I am asking questions, would you tell me what is meant by Quietism? In the preface to *Thesaurus Fidei*, Robert Hugh Benson writes: "...insidious attractions and perils in such methods of prayer as (let us say) that of Quietism..."'

Answer. Quietism, in its many varieties, means the doctrine which holds that man should strive to let his soul be absorbed into the Godhead; that his true perfection consists in allowing the mind and will to become passive, while God takes full possession of them and works within them. The religions of India generally speaking make their followers cultivate a state of indifference, in which all desire is quenched, and in which the soul enjoys untroubled calm. So long as the soul is thus independent of external things and immersed, more or less completely, in the Divine Being, the body may give way to the lowest passions. Of course such ideas are subversive of all morality. Quietism within the Church found expression in the works of some Spanish and French writers of the 17th century, but was sharply condemned by Pope Innocent XI., and never had any considerable vogue. These spiritual writers taught that a man should abandon himself entirely to God; should never think of death or eternity, heaven or hell; must not think about the state of his soul, take any notice of temptations or try to resist them. Prayer to God, our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, in the sense of asking for help or returning thanks, is to be ruled out. Works of penance are a useless burden.

Such are the main points of the system, which, though very convenient in many ways, is obviously directly opposed to the teachings of Sacred Scripture.

Among the buildings injured by the German raid on Hartlepool was the Catholic Church of St. Hilda.

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