

The Pastor's Page.

THE CLERGY AND THE WAR.

By the Rev. H. Pereira Mendes, Rabbi of the Congregation Shearith Israel, New York.

"Cry aloud, spare not!" was exclaimed by a prophet who spoke in the days when Remus leaped the walls of Rome in scorn. That Rome built the mightiest material power on earth. But greater than her greatness and mightier than her might was the spiritual power which that prophet helped to build. For Rome is dead, but the prophet's ideals still live on to inspire the world—the ideals of universal peace, universal brotherhood, arbitration among nations, righteousness and praise to spring forth on earth, etc. My brother, it is for us of all men to proclaim the horrors of this war, its crime, cost and curse, to condemn the wastage of human life, the immolation of manhood, the desolation of women's hearts. But let us also use our pulpit to suggest remedy; let us, the clergy, realize our obligations as Americans, as men and as servants of the Most High.

1. As Americans. We know that honor demands that a solemn signature shall be upheld, cost what it may. Then does not American honor demand that America's solemn signature to the international agreement embodies in the Hague convention of 1907 shall be upheld at all cost?

The very first articles forbid the violation of the territory of a neutral state by the transit of belligerent troops and other acts of war. (See articles 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)

If America remains silent, is not her honor tarnished? She signed that convention. She is bound to uphold her signature! Or is righteousness dead?

We, the clergy, cannot, we dare not be silent when righteousness is flouted.

2. As men. This treachery to signature, important as it is, is among the least important of the crimes of the present war, against which, we, the clergy, must "cry aloud and spare not." We must act as men, as human beings with human emotions, among them those that protest against the awful bloodshed of this war, against strife that makes a million mothers mourn and contest that ruins countless homes and fortunes.

I think the clergy can as men do something, and perhaps much besides just protest. Let us, by concerted action, challenge the attention of the communities or cities in which we preach, and compel them to realize what war means, and what it means for nations to betray national honesty.

Some few weeks ago a lady who bears an honored name in American history, suggested that all flags be at half-mast during the war.

A few days ago, in conversation with an eminent divine, I said that were I a Christian minister, I would on Christmas day drape the altar of my church in black and preach on the text, "And Jesus wept!"

Whether we hang our flags at half-mast; whether every synagogue and church for the last week of the year be draped in black; whether women with gentle hearts wear mourning and men alive to honor's call wear the band of black, all these outward signs to appeal to inward emotion must be but preliminary to action, to democratize nations by making the voice of the people the supreme power over and above rulers and cabinets.

I believe this can be done, and with very few years of hard and earnest work; by concerted action on the part of the church and synagogue, chambers of commerce or boards of trade, labor organizations, fraternal orders, educational institutions and, not least, women's organizations. For, after all, it is the women who are the mothers and widows to mourn for sons and husbands.

This concerted action should move all voters to vote only for those candidates for the legislature of the nation who will pledge themselves for arbitration instead of war.

It is the legislature that can compel arbitration, or appeal to the bar of reason and justice by voting against supplies for appeal to the sword.

It is time that war was declared an anachronism, except when one's country is actually invaded.

This arbitration would be at the hands of an international court of honor, and war would be declared against any nation that refuses to submit its *casus belli* to that tribunal and to abide by its decision.

I think the mere threat of war would suffice. Surely every country has in it enough sane men and women to compel loyalty to such a tribunal, even if compulsion of its government should mean revolution.

The establishment of such a court, coupled with the creation of a world university "where the world's best thought, drawn from all nations, will work for the weal of the world, that is, for human enlightenment," would lead to a United States of Europe, with war between them as little likely as there is likelihood of war between the states, each a sovereign state, of our own United States of America.

3. We must act as servants, ministers, of the Most High. Let us not forget that it was the clergy who, from the days of Runnymede, helped forward English liberties and who, by their preachings during and before the Revolution, encouraged American Independence.

Fain would I see the leading clergy of all denominations bury their dividing thoughts of doctrine and come together "to take sweet counsel" for mankind's betterment in this pathetic crisis in human history, when, in spite of our supposed progress and enlightenment, civilization is hurled backward, religion is denied and God is defied.

In a few short weeks countless lights in Jewish homes will celebrate the triumph of right over might achieved nearly twenty-one hundred years ago.

In a few short days countless lights in Christian homes will celebrate a proclamation of peace on earth and good-will to all men, uttered some nineteen hundred years ago.

Let us all unite to protest against religion being made hypocrisy. Let us preachers be more than powerless talkers.

"Come, let us walk by the light of God." "By his light we will see light." With such words prophet and psalmist inspire us.

Let us, the spiritual leaders, the servants of God, be we Catholic or Protestant or Greek church or Jewish church, or of any shade of belief, be united in this. Let our governing councils or executives or authorities meet to consult for concerted action, and let us devote the last Sabbath of this war-cursed year to waking the public conscience and to stirring the hearts before us. If we, the exponents of religion, remain silent while the world is weeping, what is the good of religion?

Before the prophet proclaimed, "Cry aloud and spare not," he exclaimed, "Cast up the highway, build up the highway, prepare the road, lift up the stumbling block!"

It is for us clergy to build the road, to prepare the way for peace and human happiness, and to lift up every stumbling block, be it national jealousy, national hatred, national revenge or national selfishness.

Who shall measure how much success we will have, after a few years of earnest preparation, to prevent future wars, if we work and "walk by the light of God"?

As for this present war, we are told that it is worse than useless to interfere while the warring nations are war-drunken, and their leaders "possessed with demons" that shatter human lives and human loves.

Emphatically I declare I do not share this belief. For a memorandum signed by the leading Catholic and Protestant church dignitaries of every country would be respectfully received, and would, even if its appeal should be rejected, at least "prepare the way" for an opportune presentation.

And the moment must come when one side will listen to the whisper of mediation, and will welcome some way, any way, to honorable peace. Shall the voice of religion be silent then? Would not the united voices of all shades of religious thought carry weight?

Let the persuasive voice of religion be ready to be heard. Let us, the clergy, "prepare the way."

We have these three great tasks before us:

1. To stir America to defend America's honor.

2. To educate public opinion in the direction of appeal to reason instead of to force, thus to hinder or make less likely future wars.

3. To be ready to speak the word which religion should speak, and must speak, when the opportune moment arrives, and say to the men-slayers and widow-makers, "O brothers, do not sin!"

TO BE A MINISTER.

When I hear some of the things which young men say to me by way of putting the arguments to themselves for going into the ministry, I think that they are talking of another profession. Their motive is to do something, when it should be to be something. You do not have to be anything in particular to be a lawyer. I have been a lawyer and I know. You do not have to be anything in particular, except a kind-hearted man, perhaps, to be a physician; you do not have to be anything, nor to undergo any strong spiritual change in order to be a merchant. The only profession which consists in being something is the ministry of our Lord and Saviour—and it does not consist of anything else. It is manifested in other things, but it does not consist of anything else. And that conception of the minister which rubs all the marks of it off and mixes him in the crowd so that you can pick him out, is a process of eliminating the ministry itself. WOODROW WILSON.

"There is probably not one in a thousand who enter the lodge, who know when blindfolded they take the terrible oaths, that Masonry is an anti-Christ and one of the most powerful enemies of Christ that exists. But this is put beyond the possibility of a doubt by the highest Masonic authorities,"—Rev. James B. Walker, D. D.