

735
Leaflet No. 13.

PRICE 2d

The League of Nations Union.

President: VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON, K.G.

A British Organisation founded to promote the formation of a World League of Free Peoples for the securing of International Justice, Mutual Defence, and Permanent Peace.

15, GROSVENOR CRESCENT, S.W. 1.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

The Right Hon.

LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P.,

*At the Annual Meeting of the Church
of England Men's Society, held at the*

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, Thursday, June 3, 1920.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK IN THE CHAIR.

GENTLEMEN, I speak in the presence of one of the great masters of Theology who is to follow me. Therefore, if I should utter what he considers wrong he will have the opportunity to correct me. I shall, therefore, address you quite boldly, as a layman may speak. I say, then, that the great evil of the sin of Schism, the division of the Christian Church into different sections, has been the weakening of the sense that the Church is an universal society, and that it preaches, and rests upon, the brotherhood of the whole of humanity. For, after all, it is a mere platitude to say that in the life of humanity love is the foundation of all Christian ethics. It is here, really, if you look at the matter, that Christianity fundamentally differs from even the highest form of Pagan ethics. Christianity depends on love. This principle runs through the whole of the New Testament. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if you have love one to the other." Also, you will remember the celebrated and magnificent chapter of St. Paul on "Love,"

or "Charity," as it is termed in the Authorised Version. Then there is St. John's great poem on the theme that "God is Love." Love, therefore, being the foundation of all our Christian ethics, what are we to say of war? How is war consistent with Christian love? I do not think there is any use blinking the fact that war—I will not say always and universally, in every case and in every human being—is inconsistent with the law of love, but I will say this, that there are comparatively few men—at least, so far as I have observed—who can go through the terrific strain of war without some weakening of that principle of Love on which our whole morality depends. The Bishop of London has just told us—I have no doubt quite truly—that he had suffered keen disappointment, that he had seen men, under the immense pressure and dangers of war, who had, apparently, turned to Religion, but when they came back to this country very little was to be seen of the results of that change. Well, it is deeply disappointing, but, I think, if you consider what war is, if you consider, after all, that the purpose of war is to kill as many of the enemy as you can, it is very difficult—indeed, it requires a man of great courage, great principle, and great self-control to go unscathed through such a trial as the war we have passed through. We know, in point of fact, that hate flourishes in war time.

MALIGN INFLUENCE OF WAR.

I am not going back into the old stories of the war, to the "Hymn of Hate," and the rest of it, but no country can really look into its conscience and say, "We went through the war without hate, we never suffered the purity of our motives to be debased; we, at any rate, fought for principle without a tincture of human weakness or hatred." None of us can so speak, or very few of us, and those who cannot speak so must have suffered an injury to the law of love. Well, that is a terrible consideration to me, apart from all the vast material waste, suffering, and injury that war has caused, which, as you know, was colossal. Apart from all that, there is this moral aspect which is at least as serious, indeed, far more so. Yet, do not misunderstand me, I believe that defensive war is justifiable, is inevitable. Even defensive war is a terrible thing; but I do not say—I have never said—that it is wrong to fight in a defensive war. But I think aggressive war is a horrible crime.

DEFENSIVE WAR.

Defensive war, undoubtedly, is permissible. Consider for a moment—if anyone wishes to be convinced on the

point—what is the actual situation of international affairs? Suppose you lived in a savage country with your wife and family. You, of course, would rightly defend them, and if you found no other way of defending them, except by killing savages, it would be your bounden duty to kill them. In the present international situation, apart from the League of Nations, we should have international savagery and international anarchy. That is the fundamental position. At present there is no remedy for a nation which is attacked, or in danger of being attacked—apart from the League of Nations—there is no remedy except its own power of self-defence. I do not want to go back into the old question, the old controversy, of the late war, but that is as good an illustration as any other. We quite genuinely—I believe it from the bottom of my soul—entered into that conflict, not merely in self-defence, but in defence of a small nation which was being attacked. There was nothing else we could do. If an individual in a civilised community sees that an injustice is being done to the weak and powerless he can appeal to the Government, to the courts of the particular State, for redress. Amongst nations there is no such appeal. Each nation must first make up its mind what is right, and if it has the means of enforcing what is right, it must enforce it by its own strong arm, and by the strength and vigour of its own people. But that is a terrific and terrible system.

THE ALTERNATIVE.

It means, unless there is some substitute, that each nation, necessarily, must judge its own cause, must decide, first of all, that it is right in its quarrel, then try to execute judgment. What system can be worse, even if every nation acts from the highest principles, and free from the least possible tincture of self-interest or sordid consideration? Surely, in that state of things, where we may be forced into war, it is clearly the duty of every Christian man and Christian woman, to strive to his or her very utmost to find some remedy for war in the future. I have left out—because I am speaking, as the Bishop has said, to friends, and I do not fear misunderstanding from you—all the more obvious reasons, the horrors and the cruelty of war, and all the sufferings following war, which ought to be patent, and ought to be present in the minds of all reasonable beings for years and years to come. But all this, of course, greatly strengthens the argument for the duty of all Christian men and Christian women to do their

utmost to extirpate war among Christian nations. How is it to be done?

AN IMPRACTICABLE SOLUTION.

There is one possible solution which I have seen advocated, more or less openly, in this country. It is really what I may call the German solution. It is the solution that one country, or group of countries, can become so overwhelmingly powerful that no other country, and no combination of countries, would ever be able to stand up and resist it or them, and they are, therefore, able to enforce their own peace on the whole world. That, of course, was exactly the idea that the commonplace Germans held, for it was their idea to impose German *Kultur* on the whole world by force of German arms. I think that solution, as you will all say, is one utterly impracticable and utterly pernicious when practised by the Germans, or, indeed, by any foreign country, and it would be equally impracticable and pernicious if it were to be practised by this country. It has been tried so often; it has always failed, it always will fail, and, I think, will always deserve to fail. I had a little controversy with a lady the other day on this question of the League of Nations, and she put forward this idea of *Pax Britannica*, enforced on the whole world by the power of Britain, and she said, "After all, we must rely on our strength to keep the peace." She went on to say that Christ settled that point once for all, for He said, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace." I am not very good in recollecting how texts exactly run, and I took the precaution to look the passage up, and there I found that "the strong man armed" was the Devil; and I also found this, that the passage went on to speak of a stronger than he, who would come upon him, overcome him, and take from him the armour in which he trusted. I do not think, therefore, what I may call the German method, or the *Pax Britannica*, is a practicable solution, and I do not think it a desirable solution. It means the creation of a super-State over all other States; and I care not whether it is our State or anyone else's which is thus created, and crushes out the nationalism and patriotism of all other States, such a super-State would be nothing less than a world tyranny.

THE LEAGUE AND PATRIOTISM.

I think patriotism is a very great and noble force, and I repudiate altogether the idea of the League of Nations ever weakening patriotism. Patriotism is a very fine

thing, a magnificent thing. I agree with Miss Cavell that "patriotism is not enough," but it is, none the less, magnificent, a great unselfish merging of the individual in the interest of the State, in the interest of one's neighbour; it means a corporate life against the individual life, and it means all those advantages which the Socialists believe would accrue from their system; and further, patriotism aims a great blow at the innate selfishness of human nature. But, I repeat, I do not think patriotism is enough. We have to recollect, above all if we are Christians, that though we owe a duty to our country, we also owe a duty to humanity at large. What is the other plan—the plan of the League? It is founded on this idea, that all the nations of the world shall agree, in the first place, to minimise the danger of the outbreak of war, and, in the second place, agree to set up such a new international system as will gradually eradicate, or tend to eradicate, the causes of war.

AIMS OF THE LEAGUE.

Physicians, when they come to deal with disease, have two objects—they wish to modify the symptoms, they apply means to take away the pain, and also they wish ultimately to cure the disease. The League of Nations, as devised, aims at doing both these things. It sets out to prevent international disputes leading to the outbreak of war, and, in the second place, aims to bring the nations into closer and closer co-operation and thus make them less likely to wish for war, so that, finally, war between nations in the future may be as uncommon as, say, duelling is among individuals. I am not going—I have done it so often—to describe to you in detail the provisions of the Covenant. I daresay all of you know them quite as well as I do. Broadly, the idea as to disputes is, that no international dispute shall be allowed to lead to war until every means has been tried for settling it by peaceful discussion, and, for that purpose, the necessary machinery is provided. The lesser disputes are to come before an international Court of Justice, and the larger disputes are to be brought before the Council of the nations of the world. The matter in dispute is to be discussed openly, so that the whole world may know what is its nature. In fact, the appeal is to be made, not to a few selected nations, but to the whole conscience and public opinion of mankind. That is the broad idea—the prevention of disputes leading to the outbreak of war. If that functions, if we really see those principles put into operation, then we have done only a part of our job. The great thing really is to prevent disputes, to bring

the nations closer so that they may understand one another better. You know the French proverb, "To know everything is to pardon everything." If you really know why a man does this and that, you go a long way in discovering how many excuses he has to offer for his action. It is the same with nations. It is the tragedy of international life that nations so constantly misunderstand one another. Therefore, the Covenant has a number of provisions for facilitating and urging close co-operation in a number of important matters—in Labour legislation, in health legislation, in questions regarding great social problems, such as the opium traffic, the drink traffic, the white slave traffic, questions affecting the welfare of native and other races—a number of questions of that kind. Also, such questions as transit over international rivers and waterways, trade considerations, and matters of that kind. A group of provisions occurs at the end of the Covenant which provides for the setting-up of commissions to facilitate and encourage all these and other things. That part of the Covenant is now operating, and I venture to say, operating successfully. Of course, there are many other provisions which I have neither the time to mention nor you the patience to hear about.

THE CRITICS.

However, I have given you the broad idea of the League. I am told, and the Bishop tells you, that "distinguished people" sneer at it. It is a comfort for me to remember how often distinguished people have been wrong. But there are a large number of people who, without sneering, say "The League is a fine idea, and all that, but do you really believe it can ever succeed? It will fail, of course, and we shall go back to the old system." If we do, then Heaven help humanity! If the League fails I say there is no prospect for the continuance of what we call "European civilisation," unless we can find some remedy for war. I admit the difficulties. I am going to state some of them, because I want to help you to overcome them.

THE DIFFICULTIES.

There is the defection of the United States. This is a terrible disappointment, and adds enormously to the difficulty of our task, but I think every man who has the idea of the League of Nations really at heart will only think of this defection as an urgent call for fresh exertion. Let us admit, also, that many things in the present international horizon are not very attractive. There is the

greed of some of the new States, there is the economic chaos, with all its terrible sufferings all over Central Europe; there is not only the "distinguished people"—those who sneer—of whom the Bishop speaks, but there is the great inertia, indifference, and apathy of the whole Bureaucratic machine of the Governments of the world. These are great difficulties, and do not let us under-rate them. We are in for a tremendous effort, for a gigantic prize, and we have not much time.

A PERTINENT QUESTION.

Our great asset, next to Christianity itself, is the recollection of the sufferings and cruelty of the war. That is still fresh in our minds, though not so fresh as a year ago. How fresh will it be in five years' time? How strong will that force be in five years' time? I do not know. It would be unsafe to rely upon that force being then anything like so strong as it is now. If we want to do anything we must get, at once, the League of Nations on its feet, and with an established reputation and power within the next five years. What is our hope? Our hope, the hope of every one of us who was engaged in, or had any part in the framing of the Covenant, is not in the terms of the Covenant. We did our best to make what we hoped would be a workable scheme, but we recognised that these terms were mere machinery, and that whether they worked or not altogether depended on the spirit of the people, inspired by Christianity. That is the great force we must rely on, and none other. It is a great test. We pray for peace constantly, and in the great State prayer we ask that "peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established"—peace, you will observe, is the foundation on which all else must be based. You will remember that nearly all of the Epistles in the New Testament begin by praying for "grace, mercy, and peace." You also will recall, more than all, that the announcement of our Saviour was that He came to bring "Peace upon the earth." In the Old Testament, if you carefully read it, you will observe the like insistence on peace. David, for example, was not allowed to build the Temple, because, though a man "after God's own heart," he was one who had been fouled and soiled with blood and war. We pray, I repeat, for these things, and here, through the League at any rate, as it seems to me, we have the only chance of really advancing this cause. If there is any other way, a better way, and people put it forward and convince us that it is a better way, then, in Heaven's name, let us take

it. But there is no alternative! No one can seriously advocate any other plan. This is our only chance. Are we going to take it?

AN APPEAL.

I venture to appeal to you, members of this great society, members of my own Church, fellow-members, so be it, I am bound to say something to you that I would not state except to friends, and it is this. I have received in this great enterprise more offers of assistance from other Churches than from my own. Not a day passes but that I receive a communication from some Free Church Council, some Brotherhood, some Nonconformist Brotherhood, offering to assist. I believe they are assisting and doing splendid work. I have spoken to many assemblies on this great theme, and I want to appeal to you not to be behind these other Churches. Here you are, delegates from all parts of the country. You are going back, each to your own district. You can find a nucleus of people really prepared to work for this great object, peace, on which everything material, moral, and spiritual—all that we care about most—must be built. Will you respond? Time only can show, but of this be certain, that if you do not respond, and if, in consequence of our failure in this country to respond—for on this country the great part of the responsibility rests—we shall have missed a great opportunity, a greater opportunity than has ever fallen to mankind in such matters, an opportunity as far as human foresight can see, which, if once missed, is never likely to return.