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The Birmingham Eccentric

PART TWO

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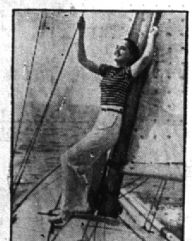

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Believes Church Won't OK U. S. in New War

Writer Declares That Christians Should Not Fight

(Editor's Note: How should a Christian look at the European war and at this nation's entering the conflict? A good many people are looking to their churches for guidance on this vital subject. In this week's Forum, Miss Virginia Burkhardt, director of Christian Education at the First Presbyterian Church, gives her outlook.)

BY VIRGINIA BURKHARDT

When I was asked to write an article on the subject of a Christian looking at the war and the possibility of our nation being brought into it, I felt that there could be only one possible reaction for a Christian to have in this war discussion: A Christian does not believe in it; a Christian will

Virginia Burkhardt

not fight. This is a difficult subject to discuss, not for lack of information about what should be done, or rather not done, but because it is something which all of us know since we live in a "Christian" country and practically all of us profess to be Christians.

Christians were called by that name to identify them as the followers of Christ whom they regarded as their Leader in this new Way of Living. Many of the things which Jesus said were considered worth writing down, so we can read His teachings at any time when we are in doubt. As Van Loon suggested last week, we should all take a few moment's spare time to read again the three chapters in Matthew, Chapters V, VI, and VII. We are all able to understand these clear statements. The difficulty is not a lack of understanding of what we should do. We know that war can have nothing to do with the teachings and example given us by Jesus.

Scriptural Viewpoint

Consider a few sentences again: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments the law hangeth." (Matt. xxii. 37-40) "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10) "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v 44) "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." (John xii. 34f)

We pray as we are taught, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and then seem to forget all about it in our relations with other people, particularly those who are doing things contrary to our own ideas of what should be done. It is not always so easy to know just who our enemies are, but there is no doubt even in the minds of the children who "The Enemy" is today. However a Christian has definite orders regarding his enemies: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." (Luke vi. 27f) "Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. v 39) "Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not . . . Render to no man evil for evil . . . Be at peace with all men. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink; . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. xii. 14f)

Chinese Pray For Japs

I have heard reports from missionaries of how the Chinese Christians have been praying for the Japanese. Surely we can do that much and more too for our enemies. Perhaps the best way, by far, is to see that we do nothing to make anyone else our enemy. If the last war (or the first one) had been settled according to Christian principles and adhered to in the same spirit of love toward our neighbors, we certainly would not have had any more wars. Kirby Page says that "Love toward God and love toward man constitute the essence of high religion and the chief purpose of life is to participate creatively in the task of building the divine society." If we are to do this we know that war is out as a method.

People say that the ideas of Christianity are fine but they just aren't practical. They say that the times are different now than when Jesus was on earth preaching and teaching, but I believe that although some of the customs are different, human nature is pretty much the same and the ideas and principles which He taught are just as applicable today, particularly so in times of crisis such as we are going through. These things aren't the easiest things to do, but we should not be afraid to do things the hard way.

Sermon On Mount

Some people also think that there is a double standard in Christianity. They say that Jesus proclaimed one standard for Himself and an entirely different one for his followers. Others feel that the Sermon on the Mount is just a picture of life as it will probably be lived when we have reached the divine society, and that it is not a practical method of conducting human relations on earth. I feel that this is not the true Christian viewpoint and that we must start living now, today, as if the Kingdom of Heaven really was here, else how shall we ever achieve the divine society? If people who were sincerely religious would refuse to support war as a method for safety and justice, our governments would be required to find other ways of settling international controversies. I believe with Kirby Page that the "time to love enemies is when we are threatened by enemies; the time to forgive is when we are subjected to injustice; the time to endure persecution is when we are victimized. Jesus points the way, gives guidance, and presents means of reaching the end.

"Hatred is always wrong and goodwill is always right, even when dealing with enemies. The massacre of populations by high explosive and fire and poison gas and starvation is always wrong and can never be transmuted into right, although the atrocity may be committed in the name of high ideals." We may feel that there are certain times when we must fight to defend those we love or in self-defense, but however noble our aims, it is not right to kill and it never will be.

Other Countries Neutral

It is hard for us as Americans to keep out of any affairs in Europe, particularly a war in which most of the ideas which we believe are worthwhile are being cast aside. It is hard, too, when there are so many interests there. But other countries remain neutral, regardless of the cost; so can we as a nation and certainly as Christians.

All Christians worship and acknowledge one Lord, forming a society with one great loyalty. The first obligation of the church should be to keep these members united in every way and so closely bound together that there will not be differences of opinion over the divisions of race or nation or class. I believe that the church will not again sanction this war as it did the last one and that it is now trying to make church members feel that it is their duty as Christians to help America stay out of the war.

Dr. George A. Buttrick broadcast a plea to the nation for neutrality on behalf of the Federal Council of Churches, of which he is president, in which he summarized perfectly, I think, the attitude of a Christian toward war. He said: "Direct war propaganda has no place in any Christian pulpit. We must be neutral, from high and sacrificial motives—not for physical safety, not in an attempt to maintain an impossible isolation from world problems, assuredly not for commercial gains, but rather because we know that war is futile and because we are eager through reconciliation to build a kindlier world."

People's Column

The Eccentric is pleased to receive communications for this column. All communications must be signed, but signatures will be kept confidential upon request. Letters must be limited to 500 words, and must be in the office by Tuesday noon for publication the following Thursday.

To the Editor:

The article by Mr. Millington in last week's Forum encourages thought concerning the European situation.

For reasons sufficient to itself Germany, gobbled up Poland in line with its program of "Drang Nach Osten" or "Drive to the East." England and France felt forced to act on account of their contractual relations with Poland. Certainly up to this point it is no affair of ours.

Both sides will draw upon materials from the neutrals as needed. If we refrain from selling supplies we will probably be the only nation to do so which has supplies to offer.

From the nature of the combat Germany planned upon limited objectives, a "Blitzkrieg" or "Lightning War," and no interference from the Western Powers. If it drags out into a long war no action or inaction on our part will insure our continued peace." At the same time we should refrain from interference with the warring powers as much as we can.

It is the plan of England to starve out Germany by a blockade. Whether it will be effective is open to question. During the World War Germany was completely blocked in by enemies and yet a week after the first Armistice Day I found plenty of food and supplies for sale in Germany. There is a chance now, however, that the fiscal economy of Germany will be damaged by a blockade and some necessary war supplies may not be available in sufficient quantities for her needs.

If it developes in the end that the Allies will be damaged more by our embargo of supplies than Germany will be by England's blockade, it will be argued by military men that we have committed an unneutral act by establishing an embargo. Otherwise the effect will be less noticeable on the progress of the war.

As it stands, it is a European war, pure and simple, and we should have little or no interest in it. If Germany conquers the Allies and later brings trouble to the Western Hemisphere it will then be our concern if the Monroe Doctrine will be still operative.

Ralph I. Coryell

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United Presbyterians Plan Special Series

Special evangelistic meetings have been planned for the United Presbyterian Church, beginning Monday evening, Oct. 30, and continuing on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights of that week, the pastor has announced.

The speaker will be the Rev. Frank Boyd, D. D., pastor of the United Presbyterian Church at Southfield. Services will begin each evening at 7:45 o'clock. The musical programs are to be augmented by a visiting choir from Detroit and Pontiac churches. These meetings will be climaxed by the Fall Communion to be observed on Sunday, Nov. 5. Detailed announcements concerning these services will be given next week.

CIGARET CAUSE OF FIRE

A minor grass fire occurred Saturday afternoon near Hunter boulevard south of Bowers. Firemen believe that a cigaret tossed by a motorist was responsible.

WE HEARD IT SAID BY—

J. B. Howarth, 571 South Bates: "Successful marriage depends a good deal on a spirit of give-and-take between husband and wife. Each person must make concessions to the opinions and wishes of the other. I think that the cause of so-called incompatibility is that both husband and wife insist on having their own way."

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