

Lord Jesus Christ—no ordinance, no priest, no church. Baptists put baptism behind faith, not before it.

Dr. Pitt and Dr. Shakespeare are the Secretaries of the Alliance, but the Congress being in Europe the arrangements have in large measure fallen to the European Secretary. By nature and by grace he is well fitted to carry the burden, and, enthusiastically seconded by the Swedish brethren, he will no doubt carry it successfully through. To Stockholm then!

W. Y. FULLERTON.

A Baptist Doctor with the Prussian Army.

The writer of the following article, Dr. Herbert Petrick, is at present taking a theological course at Regent's Park College, London, with a view to work amongst Continental Baptists. His article, studiously sober and impartial, is at once a "human document" of the deepest interest, and a powerful indictment of warfare, which is here forcefully depicted in its mass effect on men.

IN writing the following, I should like to indicate that it is wholly a record of personal impressions. The experiences described went so deep, and were so overwhelming, that it is impossible to express them with the clearness of analysis. They are experiences and not conclusions. Since then, moreover, new experiences have intervened of a quite different character, belonging to the period of the Revolution, and of the great spiritual and economic distress which followed upon the close of the war.

In the fateful weeks of July, 1914, I happened to be working for my doctorate in natural sciences, and was on a geological expedition in the Alps. I remember clearly how a small group of strangers of different nationalities found themselves brought together by chance one day at the Grimsel Hospice. For some days I had been climbing mountains with several companions, without hearing anything of the world. But here we heard the latest news; Austria, in consequence of the murder of the heir-apparent to her throne, had declared war on Serbia. Every one of us realized that this was the prelude to greater events. None of us knew what war meant, but we felt ourselves already in the grip of strange powers. None knew the others, yet we all thought of the same thing. We talked of nothing else but the meaning of this, and its consequences. There was no spirit of

animosity. When one sat down at the piano, and played the *Marseillaise*, all of us joined in, and it was the same when another, later on, played *Die Wacht am Rhein*. On the next day we hurried off, and the Swiss mountains became forsaken and desolate.

Events followed in rapid succession. I knew that it was my duty to report myself to the military authorities in Berlin within twenty-four hours of an outbreak of war. I had, therefore to travel at once to Berlin. The established means of communication were already getting out of hand, and all the stations were besieged by helpless and complaining men, who had been abruptly frightened out of the peace of their summer holidays. I arrived at Berlin on the second of August. First of all I was trained in a fortress for six weeks as an ordinary soldier, to acquire something of military "polish." Then I was employed in the East for two years as an assistant-surgeon in different hospitals, prisoners' camps, and medical quarters. During the last two years of the war I served as a doctor with the Prussian Guard in Macedonia and Albania, and subsequently at the front in France. When the Revolution threatened to break out in Germany, in November, 1918, our detachment was suddenly despatched thither, to nip the Revolution in the bud, but it was already too late. On November 11th we were disarmed by the revolutionaries at the Leipzig railway station. With this, the war for me was over, and a new period began, which has made a deep impression on my life.

If I am to speak here of religious experiences with the army, we must not forget one thing—that the Church, and consequently Christianity, do not play the same part in the life of the German people as they do in England. For generations the State has lost its influence on the people. "Throne and Altar," "Capitalism and Church"—these two associations of ideas characterize the two chief preconceptions of Germans in relation to the Church. In accordance with the political preconception, the Church, and even the clergy, were regarded as the faithful servants of the State, or even as an instrument for the brutalization or spoilation of the people. Conservative circles, which extended from the nobility down to the lower "middle" classes (as a result of the numerous military and official castes), took an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Church; that is to say, they concerned themselves with the Church only so far as was absolutely necessary, at the chief festivals and public celebrations. Regular church-going, such as is customary in many English circles, was to be found only in the country, if at all. The ranks of political

Liberalism, which before the Revolution were confined chiefly to the working classes, took a hostile attitude towards the Church. The German working-class movement is, moreover, consciously built on an anti-ecclesiastical foundation. The idea of "church" and "state" is quite different in Germany from that which prevails in England. The origin of this difference may lie in the idea of the "Holy Roman Empire" of the German nation, in the mediæval conflict for centuries between the Papacy and Imperialism, and in the compromise of the Lutheran Reformers on the basis of an established Church. The Free Churches play no public part in Germany. They are small, and have still too much to do on their own account, before they can think of exercising influence in public affairs.

The result was that the Established and Free Churches did what has always been done hitherto, in case of war—they christened it "holy." They gave their benediction to men setting off, and preached sermons about the punitive and avenging God, instead of the God of love.

In the first weeks the people streamed to the Churches, even in Germany. They were taught that their fathers also, at such times, went to Church. They did not know what the Church stood for, because the last time they had been to a service was at their confirmation. For a time the new and unfamiliar held them captive. But they soon found out that what the preacher had to say could be read to much greater advantage in the leading articles of newspapers. Church-going dropped off. There followed the very grievous material distress of the blockade, and the endless duration of the war. Men became more and more weary. The agitation of men's minds increased to an enormous extent, up to the Revolution.

I do not believe that it was a genuine search and inquiry after God which drove people to Church at the beginning of the war. Why God? Our cause was the right one, and if there was a God at all, He would naturally be on our side. Church-going was an accompaniment of the great "mass-suggestion" which possessed Europe at that time. It was the old herd-instinct which massed men together. At a time when all standards of good and evil were changing, men sought to attain certainty by substitution of the judgment of the crowd for the judgment of tradition. The Church was unprepared, and therefore incapable of raising this primitive "urge" of men to the heights of conscious religious experience. What a different world we should be living in to-day if the Church of 1914, by its prophetic power, had been able to transform and ethicize the longing of the crowd! Infinite resources for the building of the Kingdom of God would then have been released.

This was the religious atmosphere (if we can call it that at all) from which the German soldier came. He had no consciously religious experiences, no clear Christian ideas, to take with him to the war. Consequently, the inner experiences which were his in the war could only exceptionally shape themselves into a personal relation to God or to Christ.

It was not light-heartedness, and it was not over-weening confidence, which led men to offer themselves voluntarily for military service. They knew that nothing beckoned them but deprivations, hunger, pain, and, finally, death as deliverance. They "knew" this, but a deeper power, working at the back of their consciousness, drove them forwards. This power became stronger from month to month, the further behind us lay the home-life. War-enthusiasm soon evaporated, but something else, something deeper, occupied its place. The more we were assimilated to the unique life of the trenches, the more we became different men. Hitherto we had been accustomed to make our brains the centres of our lives. Every act of ours had to have a purpose. Our thought had to have a meaning. Even our emotions had to have a rational cause. But now we were suddenly transplanted into another world, and the brain lost its controlling value. It became an organ working automatically, like the stomach. Suddenly the brain no longer sufficed to assimilate our new experiences, or even to organize them. We lived a life infinitely removed from all "understanding." We asked no longer for the causal connection; for us it was no longer there. If a particular event suddenly cut into this life of unreality, we were not surprised, but took it as something of which we had known for a long time. So also in a dream, nothing seems wonderful.

This dream-state was the characteristic feature of life during war-service. The unconscious partly below, partly above the level of consciousness, stepped into the place of conscious life. Consequently, the religious experience of the soldier on campaign worked itself out in this realm of unconsciousness. Is it not impressive when we, who are so often conscious of the conflict of the animal and the human within us, and of the triumph of the animal, have moments at which the animal, the impulses of cowardly egoism, are subdued? When we achieve something of which we are no longer capable in our normal rationality? When it is no longer *we* who act, but some higher power of which we are but the instrument?

Because I served as a doctor I have nothing to tell about heroic and gallant deeds. But the significance of life lies in the small occurrences of day after day. In March, 1917, I was at the battles near Monastir in Macedonia. There were only a few German doctors amongst us, and the losses in those battles were

heavy. Germans, Austrians, Bulgars, and Turks came to my dressing-station, sometimes bringing wounded Italians and French colonials with them. For twenty-seven hours without break I was kept busy with the wounded, until I could do no more through fatigue, hunger, thirst, and mental exhaustion. I sent a messenger to the nearest medical post, which was about six hours' ride away, asking for reinforcement. On the next day the messenger returned with the news that some hours before his own arrival the doctor at that post had shot himself. Why? Nothing more than that his nervous system had given way. Can anyone imagine the extent of the loathing, the pain, the misery, accumulated in the soul of a service doctor through four long years of war? The common soldier experienced the delivering intoxication of an attack. We doctors had to drink the bitter dregs of disenchantment. We were constantly surrounded by lacerated, broken-down men, living corpses. It involved an enormous nervous effort to stand firm against the misery continually accumulating. Every one on service experienced hours of the deepest depression; alas for him, if he did not find again the way to life! I know a number of doctors whose nerves gave way, and who had to be sent to the asylum. Suicide amongst soldiers and officers was not infrequent. Such hours as these have hardly led men to God. An inner desolation was the fundamental note of our service-life, called out by the senselessness of our occupation. Why should we restore to health these sick and wounded men? Either they remain life-long cripples, or they are cured and sent again into the mill that crushes men, till they are dead or incurably crippled. The best is, after all, to make an end as quickly as possible. Is it not more desirable to pass from life into unconsciousness?

In the Balkans there was no hope for those seriously wounded. I fell ill myself in inner Albania in the autumn of 1917, through simultaneous infection by malaria, dysentery, and typhus. It took nineteen days for me to reach the nearest German hospital, accompanied only by a soldier. Every day I had high fever, but in the mornings conditions were better, and we could ride for some hours. Then from exhaustion I had to rest amongst the shrubs, or in a native hut, until the next day. I received great kindness from a Turk, into whose house we went one day when I was very ill. When we reached the hospital after nearly three weeks of hard toil, the doctors shrugged their shoulders and, after examination, said, "You know we cannot do anything for you. Your heart is too weak for you to come through. Will you have an injection of morphia? Anyhow, write at once a good-bye letter to your sweetheart." I had no injection of morphia. I lay there for weeks, incapable of being sent on. By my side the wounded and the sick died almost hourly. Some had an injection of morphia

and all their pain was past. Was it murder? I have done the same myself. No, it was less a murder than throwing a hand-grenade!

There is blood on the hands of us all, though it is invisible to-day. But the red drops have burnt themselves into our souls. Men stood above those views of right and wrong that belong to peace. The life of war has its own inner laws. But it was a hard fight, of which those at home had no suspicion before we had overcome the old ideas. Much in war-morality which seemed terrible to those at home, loses its terrible character when we remember that it was not egoistic, and not utilitarian. To be self-centred, and to be greedy for gain, these are the two sins which penetrate so deeply into the life of the common man, and which emerge in their most repulsive form in the type of the war-profiteer. We had looked on the Gorgon face to face, on life in its most naked form, and to many a man the price was life.

At the Macedonian front we had to suffer for a time from the fact that groups of Serbians had formed in our rear, and were carrying on an extremely stubborn and pitiless guerilla warfare against us. In one village a Serbian peasant was captured, who was said to belong to such a group. He had come secretly into the village to visit his sick child. The trial was short. A German soldier received the order to take the man out of the village and shoot him. When the German did not return a search was made. The fettered Serbian was found shot in a field of maize. Not far from him lay the German, with shattered head. He had shot himself.

What had gone on in this German's soul? He went with the fettered man, whom he had to shoot. What evil had he done? Had he not simply defended his right? What was *he*, a German, doing there in a strange village? Would he not have done just the same in his own home-land? Had he also not a wife at home whom he loved? Why was this Serbian father torn from the sick-bed of his child? Was it for this that he had to shoot him, like a mad dog? Worlds divided these two men from each other, and yet they became brothers, and went together along the road to the eternal Beyond. As soldier, he knew, "I must obey orders." But, "I will expiate the deed with my own blood." Certainly these were not "Christian" thoughts, which drove this German peasant to suicide. But on the short road from the village to the field of maize he was conscious of that ancient religious command which required an eye for an eye, and blood for blood. Was not his death a confession and a sacrifice, something which is held to be the highest, even in Christianity?

In February of 1915 Hindenburg drove the Russians once for all off German soil by a wintry battle for ten days at the

Masurian Lakes in East Prussia. Our troops had to suffer heavily through the extraordinarily severe cold and the snow-storms. We had our dressing-post at a railway station. The severe frost-bites with which we had to deal were terrible. One day they brought us a young volunteer, still almost a child. He was in great danger, for both his arms and legs had been so affected by the cold that they were black with gangrene. Both legs and arms called for amputation. It was just the time when our ambulance corps changed duty, and those who had been on duty could lie down to sleep for a few hours, whilst others took their place. Suddenly there was a commotion amongst them. As I ascertained, one of our old orderlies recognized this youth, the volunteer at the point of death, as his own son. A peculiar emotion thrilled all of us as we looked on this scene of recognition, this happiness of the two men. What were the thoughts in the father's heart? Unexpectedly, and in the midst of all that wretchedness, he held his child in his arms. How must his heart have been torn by the thought, "Found, to be lost"! (As a matter of fact, the operation was successful, and the son recovered, after a long and severe illness; he was restored to his parents, though as a life-long cripple.) You might suppose this father's experience of the highest joy and the deepest grief to be the path to lead a man to God. But is it not just as easily possible that this experience of simultaneous joy and sorrow should so tear and benumb the heart that a man should not reflect about it at all—that is, should not think about God?

I believe that remarkable occurrences of this kind on service but seldom raised the question about their originator, about God. Life there moved in extremes. The prophet found God only in the gentle murmur of the wind, but our life was only storm, earthquake, and fire, and "God was not therein."

We certainly had, whilst on service, hours of exultation and hours of spiritual need. But this was not Christianity in the historical sense of the word. It was rather a primitive religion, such as perhaps the men of the ice-age may have known. It was rather the preliminary stage to a religion. We had the consciousness of being set free from the bonds of our own small personality. A sense of the absolute and the eternal enveloped us. An enormous intoxication came over us sometimes, which the ancients named "enthusiasm," a being possessed by God. We were moved by horrible things, the thirst for blood, sensuality, powers which stand on the border between the demonic and the divine.

The Christianity to which we were accustomed had little to offer us, there on service. Its forms were fashioned for the relations of home-life. We could do nothing with it in the

trenches. It was fine, when we were on leave, to go to church on Sunday, after a good sleep, freshly bathed and in clean clothes, and to sing the old well-known hymns, and to listen to the familiar words of the preacher. But that was "leave"; that was not our true life. It was fine, but it had nothing to do with the trenches. We did not want anything that had; we wanted to forget them in these few days of leave.

And there on service? In the German army there were chaplains of the Established Church only, Protestant, Roman-Catholic, and some Jewish; none from the Free Churches. Free Church ministers were either absorbed as ordinary soldiers, or were in the Ambulance Corps. I have often had the feeling that the so-called field-services were out of place. In the front line I have myself never met a clergyman. They emerged only in quiet times. They were well-clothed, chatted pleasantly with the men, and told the officers the latest stories from headquarters. They did not touch our inner life. They were figures from a world foreign to us.

It was different in the hospitals at home. There they were able to do a great deal of good, though less through official preaching than through a friendly word of sympathy. Their best service was rendered by some friendly act, a flower which they brought, a good book from which to read, a letter which they wrote to relatives. Here, in the security of the homeland, whilst a man was chained for weeks to his bed, many a word sown may have begun to germinate. Here a good pastor was often in his right place.

As I look back I see no occasion for the ordinary man to have had religious experiences whilst on service. War is something so opposed to God. It is so full of the Satanic—that is, of the consciously evil—that a pure experience of God can be possible only in the most exceptional cases. Of course, God stands ultimately behind all that happens, and so behind the happening of evil. It is, therefore, possible for man to experience God even through evil. But this can be only in quite exceptional circumstances. I believe that most of the so-called experiences of God whilst on service are sprung partly from what has been planted in the soul already in times of peace, partly from the subsequent operations of memory. Most men have seen in war-experience nothing but evil in its nakedness, and so far as they have thought about it at all, have been led to the conclusion that there is no God of truth, good, and beauty.

For ever stand those words over war which Dante placed over the entrance to Hell—

All hope abandon ye who enter here!

HERBERT PETRICK.