

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—THE PROBLEM
STATED

“On all great subjects much remains to be said.”—
J. S. MILL.

“Humanity is a man who lives for ever, and who
learns continually.”—PASCAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE subject which it is proposed to study in the following pages is the title of patriotism to rank as a Christian virtue, and a few words may profitably be said at the outset regarding the *why* of the undertaking. The British temperament is healthily antagonistic to needless uncovering of the springs of sentiment, and there may be a half-resentful feeling in the minds of readers that love of country is an instinct so simple and so sacred as to elaim exemption from analysis. "What can you find to say at length about patriotism?" said a friend to the writer, when these chapters were in lecture-form; "I always thought that patriotism just meant 'God save the King.'" Such resolute under-statement is a characteristic of our Northern race, and others may agree with the speaker of the words that the matter should be "left at that." Nevertheless the solid importance of the subject is not to be denied, and stands out in specially strong relief against the background of recent events.

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If the reader will cast his mind back to the history of the last decade, he will discover that there is a disconcerting tendency on the part of love of country to be dedicated with equal facility to the highest good or the sorest hurt of mankind. Let him, for instance, consider the probable contrast in his own mind between the implications of the word "patriotism," according as he is thinking of Great Britain or of Germany. He will doubtless feel that the achievements of patriotic ardour in his own country have made his heart beat quicker and the blood flow faster through his veins; he can hardly doubt the virtue, or question the validity of an instinct so formative. All the more, it is disquieting to realise that in another country, geographically near, and akin in racial origin, an instinct called by the same name, and presumably of the same kind, has plunged the world into a war which is now generally held to have been as needless as it was destructive, and has led to the costliest sacrifice ever laid on the altar of a false god. Obviously, our suggested subject raises questions that are neither unreal nor unimportant.

The conviction which has prompted the choice of the subject, and has steadily grown stronger in the writer's mind during its study, is that patriotism of a certain quality is one of the most urgent needs of the world in our time. The quality

we are thinking of will emerge as we proceed. It lies in the neighbourhood of obedience to the condition that love of country shall be dedicated to a love higher than itself. Argument will be offered to show that the various objections which have been urged against patriotism on the ground of religious principle are valid only as against perversions of the instinct. While, on the other hand, the power of a noble love of country to raise the individual above self-interest and the community above class-interest, and at the same time to offer to the wider service of mankind an instrument of rare efficiency—this power places patriotism in the forefront of the virtues to be coveted for modern Christendom. Since, however, this contention has itself been vigorously contested, it is necessary to indicate some of the problems which arise when Christianity and patriotism are placed side by side in the field of view.

I.

The broad general fact seems to lie on the surface of life and of experience that there is in every normal human breast a sentiment of love of country, wearing the look of innocence, and presenting itself unabashed at the court of conscience. To no man does it readily occur to think this sentiment wrong ;

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it is entwined with gentle memories, and with some of the most sacred of earthly ties; it is rather an instinct than an acquirement. Just as a man does not reason or become explanatory as to why he loves his mother or his brother, but assumes that he cannot do otherwise, so he may find it hard to explain why he loves his mother-country, or feels as a comrade to his brother-citizens, while yet he is conscious of this duty as an intuition. All men know what patriotism is, says Bagehot—as long as they are not asked to tell. "Ithaca," said Odysseus to King Alcinous, "lies low, furthest up the sea-line toward the darkness—a rugged isle, but a good nurse of noble youths; and for myself I can see nought beside sweeter than a man's own country. Verily Calypso would fain have kept me with her in her hollow caves, and likewise too the guileful Circe. But never did they prevail. So surely is there nought sweeter than a man's own country and his parents, even though he dwell far off in a rich home, in a strange land, away from those that begat him." There is hardly a country in the world, however arid and unattractive to the eye of a stranger, that has not proved able to awaken this sentiment in the hearts of those to whom the country belongs. The inhabitants of the island of Crete had a word for patriotism which indicated a mother's love for her children. The Maltese distinguish their little

island by the name of "the flower of the world." Hans Elgede tells us that Greenlanders brought to Denmark by a well-intentioned king, bent on their rescue from the rigours of icy mountains, sought with entire absence of gratitude to escape to the dear land of snows. "The catch in the throat came on the word Italia," says a historian, speaking of modern Italy. Even the tiny republic of San Marino looks complacently on the motto of its seal, "In Smallness there is Safety."

Furthermore, it will be at once conceded that this instinct of love of country has been the source of some of the most self-forgetting thoughts, of the most kindling words, and of the most potent loyalties known to history. The exploits of patriotism shine out very bright in the book of golden deeds. We need not go further afield for proof of this statement than to the record of the recent war. It appears in the retrospect as though national life in all lands had been built on a crust covering a lake of liquid fire, whose potency was unsuspected until in burning jets it leaped to the surface. Love of country, deemed by many an emotion meet only for the childhood of the world, turned out to be the reinvigorating passion of its old age. The eye of the latest patriotism was in no wise dim, nor its natural force abated, when from some mount of vision there was beheld the glory or the peril of a land of national inheritance.

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To certain observers—let it be clearly noted—this phenomenon was entirely distressing and unwelcome. Many Socialists had prophesied that the world was on the verge of a new stage of progress, wherein the narrower love of the patriot would be superseded by the broader activity of the “international,” concerned for the rights of his class, and not for the interests of his nation. So competent an observer as Karl Marx had foretold the near advent of a day when wars would be fought, not between country and country, but between class and class. Labour and capital, he said, were to be the world-wide antagonists; the clefts were to be “horizontal, not vertical.” But when the European war broke out, it appeared that, for the moment at least, these notions were erroneous. In the plaintive words of an influential organ of communist opinion: “we had forgotten or ignored the tremendous force of nationality; internationalism went under.” Thus, at the centenary of Marx’s birth in 1918, the dramatic contrast was unfolded between the views of the prophet and the facts of the hour. He had foretold the horizontal cleavage; and the cleavage was still vertical, and more wide than ever. He had indicated war between classes and unity between nations; and while nations were sundered, the classes within each nation were at one. The assertion of Nationality had brought about the

suspension of class antagonisms. Like Antæus of old, patriotism had seemed near to perish when lifted into the thin air of abstract discussion; but with the shock of war she touched her mother-earth again, and was quickened into new life. Moreover, if the question be asked concerning the European war, which Little Peterkin put to Kaspar—"what good came of it all at last?"—the answer for those who believe in a happier reply than that of Southey must lie in the neighbourhood of principles that are dear to the patriotic heart, such as "the liberty of nations," "national self-determination," "justice to the weak." Thus a first general outlook upon patriotism beholds it as at least a sentiment of notable power, speaking with the accent of authority, and capable of bringing forth fruits of courage, fellowship, and sacrifice in every land.

Yet again, the fact needs no proof that patriotism and religion have often entered into the most intimate alliance. In Scotland least of all is this circumstance likely to be forgotten. Our northern land, which in secular life has shown a singular power of winning the love and securing the active devotion of her children, and also of kindling a beacon-light of liberty for other nations—the land, that is to say, of Wallace and Bruce, of Bannockburn and Flodden Field, of the Highland clan and the Border ballad, of Burns and Scott—is also the

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land where patriotism has to a rare extent been informed and energised by religion—the land of Columba and the Culdees, of Knox and Andrew Melville, of the Covenants and the ‘Cottar’s Saturday Night.’ “He is a bravely foolish man,” it has been justly said, “who would recite our annals without intimate knowledge of our Church.” And the best-equipped of recent Scottish historians has declared that “Scotland has no history apart from the history of the Scottish Church.” The Reformation in Scotland was to a large extent a patriotic movement; and since the Reformation, Scotland’s chief national institution has been the General Assembly. One does not perhaps think of the Covenanters as lying specially open to the appeal of patriotism on the sentimental side; yet so typical a man of the covenant as Samuel Rutherford wrote to a friend, “I had rather be in Scotland with an angry Jesus Christ than in any Eden or garden in the earth.” On a first casual view of the facts, therefore, it might appear that no possible doubt could arise as to the entire congruity of patriotism with religion. Love of God and love of country seem well matched—brethren who may dwell together in unity.

II.

Nevertheless there is undoubtedly another side to the shield, and we are bound in honesty to turn to what seems a debtor's page in patriotism's account with religion. Due weight must be given, to begin with, to the patent fact that some of the most devoted of Christian believers and some of the most consistent of Christian thinkers have held nationalist sentiment suspect, from a sense of loyalty to their faith. So ardent an admirer of the human Jesus as Tolstoi banned patriotism utterly from his list of Christian virtues; so competent a student of history as Lord Acton held it to be a root of all evil; so orthodox a book as 'Paley's Evidences' accepts the statement that patriotism is no part of the Christian character. When, to test this view, we consult the authoritative sources of historic Christianity, the books of the New Testament, we find (as we shall see more fully later) that their teaching is by no means free from apparent ambiguity. Different opinions have been held as to what this teaching is, and not on one side of the debate only have men been ready to contend and suffer. It is undeniable—to mention only a few points at this stage—that

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in the direct teaching of Christ and His apostles, little or nothing is said about the deep-grained instinct we tend to find so attractive and so formative; and, on the contrary, a good deal is said which might appear at first sight inconsistent with or destructive of it. Our Lord's bitterest enemies were the men of His own race, and they hated Him precisely because they were of His own race, and resented His apparent detachment from nationalist bonds. "We do not enough realise," says a recent student, "the utterly unpatriotic aspect which the attitude of Christ must have taken in the eyes of His fellow-countrymen." The Cross itself stands out in the Gospel story as the issue and climax of a nationalist demonstration. In the immediately subsequent history of the apostolic Church, we find that our Lord's most influential follower lived in lifelong antagonism to the men of his own blood, and deliberately turned from them to preach in other lands a Gospel without distinction of birth. We observe the first Christian disciples forsaking the closest ties of fatherland, bidden to regard all men as brethren, and instructed that in Christ "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." We discover, moreover, that the Church of the early centuries was cosmopolitan rather than national in its sympathies; so that, to give only one instance out of

many, Christians did not enlist in the army till the time of Constantine.

In later epochs, we find that certain Christians and certain communities of Christians have persistently tended to frown on patriotism. The more extreme among them have argued like Reginald Pole—traitor to England for the sake of Rome—that love of country is only “engrafted by nature,” while love of Church is “given by the Son of God.” The more reasonable have echoed the sentiment of Sir Thomas More: “In what country soever we walk in this world, we are but pilgrims and wayfaring men; and if I should take any country for mine own, it must be the Country to which I go, and not the country from which I come.” What has Christianity—an inquirer may ask, emboldened by so many allies of the past—to do with patriotism, which, after all, is largely a matter of prejudice and mental inertia, or of custom and education? Is not the Christian bound to value far more highly his fellowship with brother Christians than his connection with even the most illustrious of his own nation if they do not share his faith? Is it a defensible thing, from a religious standpoint, that nations, while filled with jealousy against one another, should claim to be inspired with a common sentiment, so that the very sentiment which is a binding force within the community is a disruptive force as between the com-

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munities? And then, suppose that patriotism should provoke to war, as in the past it has often done. Is it not

“queer that the Almichty’s plan
Should set oot man to fecht wi’ man,
For the same luvè—their native lan’
And wife and weans?”

When Tertullian was writing in the second century of victory in battle against foreigners, he put some questions which may well be held to wake an echo in the world still: “Is the laurel of triumph made of leaves, or of the dead bodies of men? With ribbons is it adorned, or with graves? Is it bedewed with spices, or the tears of wives and mothers—perhaps, too, of some who are Christians, for even among the barbarians is Christ?”

III.

Such questions as we have indicated evoke an odd medley of discordant reply. On the extreme edge of the debate on one side, we shall observe the zealous patriot, who can conceive no religion higher than love of country, and would cheerfully echo the spirit of the statement made by a high ecclesiastic in a recent French story: “it is impossible to be a good Frenchman without thereby being a good Christian.” To him, patriotism is an

innate and innocent instinct, planted in our hearts by the Creator, and given to be a ray of that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. On the extreme fringe of conviction on the other side, we shall observe the zealous Christian, who in real sorrow of heart has come to suspect patriotism as a chief instrument of evil, and who, in justification of his view, points to the wars it has begotten, the perilous pride it has engendered, and its apparent inconsistency with the Sermon on the Mount. Almost at the moment of writing, a prominent English Nonconformist is reported in the daily press to have used these words: "Patriotism has wrought great things, and produced some magnificent results, but its day is over. It fosters narrowness, bigotry, selfishness, greed, and hatred. Its perils have been exposed by the war, and the Spirit of God is creating a new humanity." To such a man, the elimination of patriotism from the list of Christian virtues would greatly simplify a complex situation, remove at once the most fruitful motive of war, and set the Christian Church free for its proper task—the establishment in the wide world of a kingdom that is of heaven, not of earth. He will probably emphasise the fact that neither Catechism nor Confession speaks of any duty we owe to our country.

It is evident that between the extreme view on one side, that a good Christian can never be a

patriot, to the extreme view on the other side, that a good patriot can never fail to be a Christian, there is room for abundant variety of outlook. Many who are resolved to be in earnest with their Christianity find it hard to make room within it for their patriotism. Some who are in deadly earnest with their patriotism find it hard to persuade it to live on friendly terms with their Christianity, and still harder to bring it into due subordination. Confusion springs up in religious minds. There are questions to be ventilated before they can be deemed to be settled. In a church at Rome, there is an inscription to an English refugee of about 1600 : " Here lies Robert Pecham, an English Catholic, who, after the disruption of England and the Church, quitted his country, unable to endure life there without the Church, and who, coming to Rome, died, unable to endure life here without his country." It may appear to some minds that the world would be well rid of the source of such a troublesome dichotomy.

IV.

It may be profitable at this stage to interject a brief allusion to facts which seem to the writer to make our subject of quite special importance at this precise juncture of history.

In every era of the world's progress there may

be held to be a discoverable "line of advance," predetermined by the Almighty for the onward march of His hosts, and pointed to by the finger of His providence; so that it is a greater thing to gain a yard of movement in that significant direction than to make facile progress to an end less fraught with destiny. Bengel used to say, "*Deus habet horas et moras.*" It were better worth the while of an engineer to achieve a minor improvement in an aeroplane, than a revolutionary reform in a stage-coach; and on the same principle it may be more profitable for Christian thought to gain a gleam of new insight into the particular problem presented to the hour, than to wrestle mightily with outworn or academic issues. There is a "drummer in every age"—to employ another expression of the same idea—whose drum-beats sound on the path of the advancing army, and set the time to which all do wisely to keep step.

Now it may be maintained without extravagance that the specific ethical task whereto God is calling Christendom in this particular era is the discovery and fostering of a noble patriotism—capable on the one hand of stirring into action all that is best in human nature for the good of the land wherein it dwells, and of vitalising the "nationalism" whose awakening in the world is the most conspicuous tendency of our times; and yet capable also, on the other hand, of being purged from

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“frantic boast and foolish word,” and of being dedicated to the glory of God and the good of mankind. For if such a patriotism be really possible and can be made available among men, Christianity may behold without dismay the various “nationalistic” uprisings which play so large a part in present-day history, and may regard them as only tending to illustrate the saying of Mazzini, that God has written one line of His thought upon each people. And, as part of the same hopeful outlook, Christianity can also wait with patience for the subsidence of the class-strife which is so marked a feature of our time in every Western nation—a strife determined by no natural cleavage, and energised on both sides by mere motives of class-interest. Almost at the moment of writing, an American labour leader has called off a strike which had begun to wear the aspect of incipient civil war. “We are Americans,” he has said, “and we cannot fight our country.” If patriotism bring about such subdual of a lower motive by a higher, such submergence of a narrow class-interest in a broad generous love of the fatherland, then obviously patriotism is a force to be greatly coveted by every nation which aims at solidarity.

The writer would like in this connection to indicate a line of thought which has led his own mind to an optimistic view of the possible influence of Christian teaching upon the quality of patriotism.

This line of thought finds its starting-point in the reflection that Christianity has already in the past shown itself to possess precisely the authority necessary for the transformation of instincts originally selfish; so that in respect of other instincts to be presently adduced, the same uniform message has been given, the same pathway has been followed, and the same end has been reached. Let the reader consider three key-words—"Individual," "Family," "Clan."

(1) The simplest case is that of the individual. With regard to the individual, Christian men have now become thoroughly familiar with the significance of the watchword, "Whoso loseth his life for my sake and the Gospel's shall find it." The individual, living at the outset for himself alone, is confronted with the demand of Jesus Christ that he should yield himself to a higher service, and prove the constraint of a higher love. Let it be supposed that he yields to this demand, as thousands in Christian history have undoubtedly yielded to it. What is the result with regard to the personality thus surrendered? Is it enfeebled or submerged? On the contrary, experience shows that it has in general been enormously enriched, has become after a new fashion a potency of good, and is capable of a future only describable in such words as these: "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In sober truth, the Chris-

tian individual by losing his life has found it. "By an evil loving of myself," says Thomas à Kempis, "I lost myself; and by seeking Thee alone, I found both myself and Thee."

(2) With this achievement in our mind, we pass to the family—the fundamental social unit. Here again, the supreme Teacher begins by speaking strong and startling words. He declares that family life must be surrendered, if it is to be worthily retained. He says: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." "Whosoever will do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother." He sends his chief apostle and many others to a life that is quite justly described in words put by poetic imagination into the lips of St Paul:—

"Yes, without cheer of sister or of daughter,
Yes, without stay of father or of son,
Lone on the land and homeless on the water,
Pass I in patience till the work be done."

At this point also, it may be said that Christendom has theoretically learned the lesson. No Christian dreams of saying that the welfare of the family can supply the chief end of man. Christian men and women in innumerable cases have surrendered all that is most precious in family love for the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel.

With what result? With this result—that family life has come to its kingdom more completely than ever before, has assumed aspects of beauty unknown till the Son of Mary was born, and has justified all that is implied in the old saying, “The Christian Home is the masterpiece of the Gospel.” The thing dedicated has become the thing won—and ennobled. By losing its life, the Christian “family” has found it.

(3) There is some pale reflection of this principle even in the more complex but less fundamental relation of clan to clan, or tribe to tribe. Primitive man could not conceive a loyalty to his own tribe which did not lead him to fight with other tribes. He had no vision of a tribal loyalty swallowed up in a national or patriotic loyalty. But partly, as we may believe, through the permeation of social life by Christian principle, we have reached a higher view than that of our ancestors. We see that the service of the clan can be dedicated to the good of the commonwealth, without itself being completely lost. Chattan no longer fights with Kay on the North Inch of Perth; nor does Red Rose in England war against the White. Nevertheless lesser tribal loyalties have not perished, but are only submerged in the greater national loyalty to which they are dedicated. There is still impulse in the motto so eloquently amplified by Ruskin, “Stand fast, Craigellachie”; still in-

spiration in the historic tartan worn by Seaforth's or Camerons; still exhilaration, we may assume, in the singing of the March of the Men of Harlech. A great advance was made in civilisation when the nation was substituted for the clan as the object of patriotic sentiment. But it does not follow that clan loyalty has lost its beauty in our modern time, or that the self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice born of the clan spirit have lost their power of appeal. Who does not thrill to the power of clan sentiment, as depicted in 'Waverley,' when Evan Maccombich appeals to the Judge, during the trial of his clansman Fergus M'Ivor?

“Evan Maccombich looked at him with great earnestness, and, rising up, seemed anxious to speak; but the confusion of the court, and the perplexity arising from thinking in a language different from that in which he was to express himself, kept him silent. There was a murmur of compassion among the spectators, from an idea that the poor fellow intended to plead the influence of his superior as an excuse for his crime. The Judge commanded silence, and encouraged Evan to proceed.

‘I was only ganging to say, my Lord,’ said Evan, ‘that if your excellent honour and the honourable Court would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France, and no’ to trouble King George’s government again, that ony six o’ the very

best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye mysel', to head or hand, and you may begin wi' me, the very first man.'

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, a sort of laugh was heard in the court at the extraordinary nature of the proposal. The Judge checked this indecency, and Evan, looking sternly around, when the murmur abated, 'If the Saxon gentlemen are laughing,' he said, 'because a poor man, such as me, thinks my life or the life of six of my degree, is worth that of Vich Ian Vohr, it's like enough they may be very right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word, and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman, nor the honour of a gentleman.'

There was no further inclination to laugh among the audience, and a dead silence ensued."

If it be urged that loyalty of this particular kind no longer exists in our modern world, and cannot therefore illustrate the principle embodied in the words of Jesus, "he that loseth his life shall save it," it may be admitted that the objection has force. Still, even in 'Waverley,' Fergus M'Ivor and Evan Maccombich had found an additional bond of brotherhood in the dedication of the courage and sacrifice of the clan to a Chieftain

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nobler than Fergus, and to a Cause higher than that of any local patriotism.

(4) Now, in our view, the question of the hour is this: Can the vital forces of Christianity deal with love of country, as they have already, in some measure, dealt with love of self, love of family, love of clan? Can Christendom face a task scarcely as yet attempted, and persuade her sons and daughters of all nations to dedicate their patriotism to an end far beyond its own advantage—the glory of God, and the good of mankind? If so, we may be sure, in the light of past analogy, that patriotism will find such “death” lying very near to “resurrection.”¹ She will give away her life, only to find it returned to her in fuller measure. Seeking “first the kingdom of God,” she will find the ancient loyalties “added” to her. The land that is loved as an instrument rather than as an end, and cherished for the good that it can do rather than for the gain that it can win, will become ten-fold dearer, lovelier, more delightful to her children. In the worship of her sanctuaries, an old psalm will be sung with new spirit and understanding:—

“Lord, bless and pity us,
Shine on us with Thy face;
THAT TH’ EARTH THY WAY AND NATIONS ALL
MAY KNOW THY SAVING GRACE.”

¹ “‘Dead, dead, and buried,’ cried Roderick (speaking of his own moral despair). ‘I am glad to hear it,’ said Rowland, ‘death of that sort is very near to resurrection.’”