

Second Series

PAPERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 24

Biology and War

By

J. ARTHUR THOMSON. LL.D.

Price Twopence

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK
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1915

BASIS OF PUBLICATION

This series of Papers is based on the following convictions :

1. That Great Britain was in August morally bound to declare war and is no less bound to carry the war to a decisive issue ;
2. That the war is none the less an outcome and a revelation of the un-Christian principles which have dominated the life of Western Christendom and of which both the Church and the nations have need to repent ;
3. That followers of Christ, as members of the Church, are linked to one another in a fellowship which transcends all divisions of nationality or race ;
4. That the Christian duties of love and forgiveness are as binding in time of war as in time of peace ;
5. That Christians are bound to recognize the insufficiency of mere compulsion for overcoming evil and to place supreme reliance upon spiritual forces and in particular upon the power and method of the Cross ;
6. That only in proportion as Christian principles dictate the terms of settlement will a real and lasting peace be secured ;
7. That it is the duty of the Church to make an altogether new effort to realize and apply to all the relations of life its own positive ideal of brotherhood and fellowship ;
8. That with God all things are possible.

BIOLOGY AND WAR

WHEN a mason builds a wall he continually tests his work with a plumb-line, a level, and a square. He applies three different tests to make sure that he is building well. Similarly in more complex social affairs where the issue is not clear, it is useful to apply several tests. When they confirm one another they strengthen our resolution ; when they are discrepant, they show us that there is need for further inquiry.

Three familiar tests are to be found in the ideas of the conservation of energy, the conservation of life, and the conservation of moral values—physical, biological, and ethical respectively. The first test condemns an undertaking that is wasteful or that attempts to get more work done than the available energy allows ; and the useful criticism that a business man expresses when he calls a scheme unsound is often based on his discovery that physical principles are being ignored. The biological test asks whether the activities in question are consistent with the health of the individual and with the welfare of the race. The third test asks if the line of action makes for the conservation of what we hold to be most precious and most beneficent in our social heritage—the traditions of civilized behaviour, the standard of conduct, and the ideal of goodwill among men.

WAR BROUGHT TO THE TEST

We are as a nation practically unanimous that after a certain, or rather uncertain, date, war was inevitable unless we were prepared to sacrifice honour and our traditions of championing justice and liberty. But this does not affect the fact that to have thousands of wholesome men in the prime of life mowed down with machine

