

**THE GOSPEL IN THE
LIGHT OF
THE GREAT WAR**

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The gospel in the light of the great war by Ozora S. Davis

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OZORA S. DAVIS



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PREFACE

This book is not a treatise on formal homiletics. It is designed as a workable manual for the preacher who is facing the opportunities of the pulpit in an age which the writer believes is the most challenging and fascinating in the history of the Christian church. The Great War not only raised tremendous questions with which the preacher must deal, but it called a literature into being which is throbbing with life and power. The letters and meditations of the soldiers are priceless, and many of them will become permanent possessions of a new world which will discover that these young writers have spoken in free and varied forms the deepest message of this urgent generation.

The great experience through which we have passed has also added a new sense of reality and worth to our appreciation of the Bible. It, too, was born from fierce and long struggle; it is amazing how much of the temper of the war and of the constructive purpose following it is reflected in the Scriptures.

To define the great subjects that have been thrust forward during the last five years, to show how the vital documents of the new literature bear upon them, and chiefly to bring the Bible into use as a source of text and subject and illustration is the purpose of this volume.

The writer has ventured to offer practical suggestions concerning the use of texts and illustrative material. This is designed to be only in the way of suggestion.

The horror of "canned outlines" of sermons or garlands of poetic gems for illustration is unspeakable. The suggestions offered are simply examples of a profitable way to work the rich mine of biblical and recent literature. No plagiarism would be involved in using them; but they are presented to stimulate study rather than to stifle it.

The writer is a preacher. He knows the hardship and the splendor of the task. These pages have been written in a temper of grateful regard for the high quality of the American ministry and a resolute devotion to the work of preaching. He now sends the book forth to his comrades with the earnest hope that it may help somewhat in making the old message of the gospel vibrant with new meaning and power to a confused and yearning age.

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CHAPTER I

NEW CONDITIONS DEFINING THE PREACHER'S TASK

Every Christian preacher is facing the most exigent and commanding situation of human history in these days when the world is simply being re-made through the results of the Great War. Never was there such need of the clear mind and the flaming soul in the pulpits of America. Today the preacher may come to his throne, but he never will arrive there by accident or without preparation adequate to the service that he must render.

But in what spirit is he to preach? What is his distinctive message? How is he to prepare for and discharge his task? These questions surge to the center of our thought. New problems, vaster in their range and deeper in their drive than have ever before demanded solution, are upon us. The minister must be prepared to create and guide public opinion. How profound these changes are is indicated by the following observation from a man who has traveled widely and observed carefully:

Is a new theology, determined by democracy, to emerge from this war? May we look to the consensus of popular opinion, instead of to the theologians, for our great ideas about God and the soul and the future life?

There are clear signs pointing that way. For . . . a really startling radicalism pervades the thinking of the armies, and of the chaplains and of Young Men's Christian Association workers who have been long with the troops. Conventions have lost their