

THE WAR  
AND THE CHURCHES

JOSEPH McCABE





W J Livermore

July 1926

THE WAR  
AND THE CHURCHES

## WORKS BY THE AUTHOR

- Modern Rationalism* (Watts), 2nd ed. 1/-  
*Peter Abelard* (Duckworth), 2nd ed. 3/6.  
*Saint Augustine and his Age* (Duckworth), 2nd ed. 3/6.  
*Twelve Years in a Monastery* (Smith Elder), 3rd ed. 6d. and 1/-  
*Life in a Modern Monastery* (Grant Richards). 6/-  
*Life and Letters of G. J. Holyoake* (Watts), 2 vols. £1/1/-  
*Talleyrand* (Hutchinson). 14/-  
*The Iron Cardinal* (Nash). 12/-  
*Goethe* (Nash). 15/-  
*A Candid History of the Jesuits* (Nash). 10/6.  
*The Evolution of Mind* (Black). 5/-  
*Evolution* (Twentieth Century Science Series). 1/-  
*Prehistoric Man* (Twentieth Century Science Series). 1/-  
*The Principles of Evolution* (The Nation's Library). 1/-  
*The Decay of the Church of Rome* (Methuen), 2nd ed. 7/6.  
*The Story of Evolution* (Hutchinson), 2nd ed. 7/6.  
*The Empresses of Rome* (Methuen). 12/6.  
*The Empresses of Constantinople* (Methuen). 12/6.  
*Church Discipline* (Duckworth). 3/6.  
*Can we Disarm?* (Heinemann). 2/6.  
*In the Shade of the Cloister* (pseudonymous—Constable). 6/-  
*The Bible in Europe* (Watts). 3/6.  
*The Religion of Woman* (Watts), 2nd ed. 6d.  
*Woman in Political Evolution* (Watts). 6d.  
*Haeckel's Critics Answered* (Watts), 2nd ed. 6d.  
*From Rome to Rationalism* (Watts), 4th ed. 4d.  
*The Origin of Life* (Watts). 1/-  
*Secular Education* (Watts), 2nd ed. 1/-  
*The Martyrdom of Ferrer* (Watts), 2nd ed. 6d.  
*The Religion of the Twentieth Century* (Watts). 1/-  
*A Hundred Years of Education Controversy* (Watts). 3d.  
*The Existence of God* (Watts). 9d.  
*Shakespeare and Goethe* (Cole). 6d.  
*George Bernard Shaw* (Kegan Paul). 7/6.  
*The Religion of Sir Oliver Lodge* (Watts). 2/-

# THE WAR AND THE CHURCHES

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.

17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1915



## PREFACE

THE searching crisis through which the nation is passing must have the effect of securing grave consideration for many aspects of our life and institutions. We have already traversed the acute stage of suspense, and are gradually becoming sensible of these wider considerations. It was natural that for a prolonged period the disturbance of our economic conditions, the anxiety for the safety of our nation in face of an appalling menace, the personal concern of millions about the lives of sons or brothers who have bravely responded to the call, should keep our thoughts enchain'd to the daily or hourly fortunes of the field of battle. Now that the initial disorder has been allayed and we have attained a quiet and reasonable confidence in the issue, we turn to other and broader aspects of this mighty event of our generation. How comes it that the most enlightened century the world has yet seen should be thus darkened by one of the bloodiest and most calamitous wars that have ever spread their awful wings over the life of man ? Where is all the optimism of yesterday ? Must we reconsider our reasoned boast that our civilisation has lifted the life of man to a level hitherto unattained ? Is there something entirely and most mischievously wrong with the foundations of modern civilisation ?

A dozen such questions will press for an answer, but it will be granted that one of the most urgent and most interesting of the many grave considerations which the war suggests is its relation to the prevailing creeds and standards of conduct. The war coincides with an advanced stage of what is called the spread of unbelief. In each of the nations of Europe which are engaged in this awful struggle complaints have been made every year for the last two or three generations that Christianity is losing its moral control of the white race. In the cities, especially in the capitals, of Europe there has been a proved and acknowledged decay of church-going; and, however much we may be disposed to think that these millions who no longer attend church retain in their minds the beliefs of their fathers, the slender circulation of religious literature makes it plain that the vast majority of them do not, in point of fact, receive either the spoken or written message of the Christian Church. In the great cities—and it is undoubted that the life of a nation is mainly controlled by its cities—there has been an increasing reluctance to listen to the authoritative exponents of the Christian gospel.

A number of the clergy have very naturally noticed and stressed this coincidence. Prelates of high authority have, as we shall see, even declared that the war is a scourge deliberately laid on the back of mankind by the Almighty on account of this spreading infidelity. As a rule, the clergy shrink from advocating a theory which has such grave implications as this

has, and they are content to submit the more plausible suggestion, that the decay of the Christian standard of conduct in the mind of a large proportion of our generation accounts for this tragic combat of nations. A distinguished Positivist writer, Mr. J. Cotter Morison, commenting in the last generation on the decay of Christian belief, expressed some such concern in the following terms :

" It would be rash to expect that a transition, unprecedented for its width and difficulty, from theology to positivism, from the service of God to the service of Man, could be accomplished without jeopardy. Signs are not wanting that the prevalent anarchy in thought is leading to anarchy in morals. Numbers who have put off belief in God have not put on belief in Humanity. A common and lofty standard of duty is being trampled down in the fierce battle of incompatible principles."<sup>1</sup>

It is true that in the work from which I quote<sup>1</sup> the learned, if somewhat nervous, Positivist does not, by his masterly survey of the moral history of Europe, afford us the least reason to think that we have really deteriorated from the standard of conduct set us by earlier generations, but his words do tend to press on our notice the claim of many writers, clerical and non-clerical, that we are returning from Christianity to Paganism, from a settled moral discipline to an unhealthy moral scepticism. Can one entirely and safely reconstruct the bases of personal and national conduct in one or two generations ?

<sup>1</sup> *The Service of Man* (6d. edition), p. 16.

This very plain and plausible theory is, however, exposed to criticism from other points of view. The clergy as a body are not at all willing to concede that the decay of belief has spread as far as the theory would suggest. In order to suppose that the life of Europe has, in a matter of the gravest importance, been directed by a non-Christian spirit, one must assume that at least the majority in each nation have deserted the traditional creed. It is by no means conceded or established that the fighting nations have ceased to be predominantly Christian. Indeed, if we confine the awful responsibility for this tragedy, as the evidence compels us, to Germany and Austria-Hungary, we are casting it upon the two nations which have been the chief representatives in Europe of the two leading branches of the Church. Most assuredly no prelate of either country would admit that his nation has ceased to be Christian or surrendered its life to non-Christian impulses; and in our own country we have frequently been assured of late years that the real power of Christianity was never greater.

Clearly these conflicting claims and this contrast of profession and practice suggest a problem that deserves consideration. The problem becomes the more interesting, and the plausible theory of non-Christian responsibility is even more severely shaken, when we reflect that war is not an innovation of this unbelieving age, but a legacy from the earlier and more thoroughly Christian period. Had mankind

departed from some admirable practice of submitting its international quarrels to a religious arbitrator, and in our own times devised this horrible arbitrament of the sword, we should be more disposed to seek the cause in a contemporary enfeeblement of moral standards. This is notoriously not the case. Men have warred, and priests have blessed the banners which were to wave over fields of blood, from the very beginning of Christian influence, not to speak of earlier religious epochs. There is assuredly a ghastly magnitude about modern war which almost lends it an element of novelty, but the appearance is illusory. That intense employment of resources which makes modern war so sanguinary tends also to shorten its duration. No military struggle could now be prolonged into the period of the Napoleonic wars; to say nothing of the Thirty Years War, which involved the death, with every circumstance of ferocity, of immensely larger numbers than could be affected by any modern war. Nor may we forget that it is the modern spirit which has claimed some alleviation of the horrors of the field, and that the majority of the nations engaged in the present struggle have observed the new rules.

These considerations show that the problem is less simple and more serious than is often supposed, and I set out to discuss each of them with some fullness. That the war has *no* relation to the Churches will hardly be claimed by anybody. Such a claim would mean that they were indifferent to one of the very gravest

## PREFACE

phases of human conduct, or wholly unable to influence it. Nor can we avoid the issue by pleading that Christianity approves and blesses a just defensive war, and that, since the share of this country in the war is entirely just and defensive, we have no moral problem to consider. I have assuredly no intention of questioning either the justice of Britain's conduct or the prudence of the Churches in adapting the maxims of the Sermon on the Mount to the practical needs of life. If and when a nation sees its life and prosperity threatened by an ambitious or a jealous neighbour, one cannot but admire its clergy for joining in the advocacy of an efficient and triumphant defence. But this is merely a superficial and proximate consideration. Not the actual war only, but the military system of which it is the occasional outcome, has a very pertinent relation to religion; the maintenance of this machinery for settling international quarrels in an age in which applied science makes it so formidable is a very grave moral issue. It turns our thoughts at once to those branches of the Christian Church which claim the predominant share in the moulding of the conduct of Europe.

But these questions of the efficacy of Christian teaching or the influence of Christian ministers are not the only or the most interesting questions suggested by the relation of the war to the prevailing religion. The great tragedy which darkens the earth to-day raises again in its most acute form the problem of evil and Providence. More than two thousand

years ago, as *Job* reminds us, some difficulty was experienced in justifying the ways of God to men. The most penetrating thinker of the early Church, St. Augustine, wrestled once more with the problem, as if no word had been written on it; and he wrestled in vain. A century and a half ago, when the Lisbon earthquake destroyed forty thousand Portuguese, Voltaire attempted, with equal unsuccess, to vindicate Providence with the faint hope of the Deist. Modern science, prolonging the sufferings of living things over earlier millions of years, has made that problem one of the great issues of our age, and this dread spectacle of *human* nature red in tooth and claw brings it impressively before us. Is the work of God restricted to counting the hairs of the head, and not enlarged to check the murderous thoughts in the human brain? Nay, when we survey those horrid stretches of desolation in Belgium and Poland and Serbia, where the mutilated bodies of the innocent, of women and children, lie amidst the ashes of their homes; when we think of those peaceful sailors of our mercantile marine at the bottom of the deep, those unoffending civilians whose flesh was torn by shells, those hundreds of thousands whom patriotic feeling alone has summoned to the vast tombs of Europe, those millions of homes that have been darkened by suspense and loss—how can we repeat the ancient assurance that God *does* count the hairs of the head and mark the fall of even the sparrows? Does God move the insensate stars only, and leave to the less skilful guidance of man

those momentous little atoms which make up the brain of statesmen?

These are reflections which must occur to every thoughtful person in the later and more meditative phases of a great war, when the eye has grown somewhat weary of the glitter of steel and the colour of banners, when the world mourns about us and the long lists of the dead and longer list of the stupendous waste sober the mind. Something is gravely wrong with our international life; and, plainly, it is not a question *whether* that international life departs from the Christian standard, but *why*, after fifteen hundred years of mighty Christian influence, it does so depart. Is the moral machinery of Europe ineffective? One certainly cannot say that it has not had a prolonged trial; yet here, in the twentieth century, we have, in the most terrible form, one of the most appalling evils which human agency ever brought upon human hearts. We have to reconsider our religious and ethical position; to ask ourselves whether, if the influence of religion has failed to direct men into paths of wisdom and peace, some other influence may not be found which will prove more persuasive and more beneficent.

J. M.

*Easter, 1915.*

## CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I	THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES . . . . .	1
II	CHRISTIANITY AND WAR . . . . .	25
III	THE APOLOGIES OF THE CLERGY . . . . .	48
IV	THE WAR AND THEISM . . . . .	70
V	THE HUMAN ALTERNATIVE . . . . .	95



# THE WAR AND THE CHURCHES

## CHAPTER I

### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

THE first question which the unprejudiced inquirer will seek to answer is : How far were the Churches able to prevent, yet remiss in using their influence to prevent, the present war ? There is, unhappily, in these matters no such thing as an entirely unprejudiced inquirer. Our preconceived ideas act like magnets on the material of evidence which is submitted to us, instinctively selecting what bears in their favour and declining to receive what they cannot utilise. Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the field of religious inquiry, nor is it confined to either believers or unbelievers. There has been too much mutual abuse, and too little attention to the fact that the mind no less than the mouth has its palate, its impulsive selections and rejections. One can meet the difficulty only by a patient and full examination of the pleas of both parties to a controversy.

And the first plea which it is material to examine is that, since it is claimed that all the nations engaged in the war are Christian nations, one may accuse them collectively of moral failure. From the earliest days

## 2 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

of the Christian religion it was the boast of those who accepted it that it abolished all distinctions of caste and race. In the little community which gathered round the cross there was neither bond nor free, neither Greek nor Roman. This cosmopolitanism was, in fact, a natural feature of religious movements at the time, and was due not so much to their intrinsic development as to the political circumstances of the world in which they spread. All round the eastern and northern shores of the Mediterranean a great variety of races mingled in every port and every commercial town, and it was the policy of the powerful Empire which extended its sway over them all to overrule their national antagonisms. When, in the earlier period, Jew and Greek and Egyptian had maintained their separate nationalities, hostility to other races had been a very natural social quality, an inevitable part of the spirit of self-preservation in a race. When the great Empires had conquered the smaller nationalities or the decaying older Empires, this mutual hostility was moderated, and, as the vast movements of population which marked the end of the old and the beginning of the new era filled the Mediterranean cities with extraordinarily mixed crowds, mutual friendship became the more fitting and more useful social virtue. A good deal of the old narrow patriotism had been due to the fact that each nation had its own god. In the new Roman world this theological exclusivism broke down, and the priests of a particular god, scattered like their followers among the cities of the eastern world, began to seek a cosmopolitan rather than a nationalist following. In the temple of each of the leading gods of the time—Jahveh, Serapis, Mithra, and so on—people of all

races and classes were received on a footing of equality. The doctrine of the brotherhood of man spread all over that cosmopolitan world.

When the old world, to the south and east of the Mediterranean, was blotted out of history, and Europe in turn became a group of conflicting nationalities, racial hatred was revived and in its political and social aspects the doctrine of the brotherhood of man was virtually forgotten. But the Christian Church had embodied that doctrine in its sacred writings, and was bound to maintain it. In its ambition of a universal dominion it was the direct successor of the Roman Empire. All the races of Europe were to meet as brothers under the one God of the new world and under the direction of his representatives on earth. It was this change in the features of the world which gave a certain air of insincerity to the Christian gospel. In the older days there had been political unity with a great diversity of religions; now there was religious unity spread over a great diversity of antagonistic political bodies. Men were brothers from the religious point of view and, only too frequently, deadly enemies from the political point of view. The discord was made worse by the feudal system which was adopted. Even within the same race there was no brotherhood. In effect the clergy as a body did not insist that the noble was a brother of the serf, and did not exact fraternal treatment of the serf. Thus the phrase, "the brotherhood of man," which had been a most prominent and active principle of early Christianity, became little more than a useless theological thesis.

The solution of the difficulty would, of course, have been for the clergy, as the supreme representatives of the doctrine of brotherhood, to apply that doctrine

#### 4 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

boldly to every part of man's conduct; to pronounce that all violence and bloodshed were immoral, and to devise a humane means of settling international quarrels. I will consider in the next chapter why the Christian leaders failed even to attempt this great reform. For the moment it is enough to observe that the conditions of modern times favoured a fresh assertion of the doctrine of brotherhood. Great as the power of sincere moral idealism has always been, the historian must recognise that economic changes have had a most important influence upon the development or acceptance of moral ideas. Just as in earlier ages the development of forms of life was conditioned by changes in their material surroundings, so man's moral development has been profoundly influenced by industrial, commercial, and political changes.

The destruction of feudalism and the development of the modern worker were notoriously not due to religious influence, yet they had an important relation to religious doctrines. Once the new spirit had asserted its right, the clergy recollect that all men are brothers from the social as well as the religious point of view. Many of them, and even some social writers of Christian views, maintain that the new social order is itself based on or inspired by the religious doctrine of brotherhood. This speculation is entirely opposed to the historical facts, but it will easily be realised that when the workers had, in their own interest, asserted afresh the doctrine of human brotherhood, the Churches had a new occasion to preach it. How timid and tentative that preaching was, and even is, we have not to consider here. On the whole the brotherhood of men was re-affirmed by the Churches both in the social and religious sense.

This situation makes more violent than ever the contrast between the political and religious relations of men, and gives a strong *prima facie* case to the charge against the Churches which I am considering. It is wholly artificial and insincere to say that men are brothers socially and religiously, yet are justified in marching out in millions, with the most murderous apparatus science can devise, to meet each other on the field of battle. We condemn crime for social reasons. We have relegated to the Middle Ages, to which it belongs, the notion that the criminal is a man who has affronted society, and that society may take a revenge on him. In the sane conception of our time the criminal is a mischievous element disturbing the social order, and, in the interest of that order, he must be isolated or put out of existence. It is not the *guilt*, but the *social effect*, which we regard. And from this point of view a single great war is far more calamitous than all the crime in Europe during whole decades. It is estimated by high authorities that if the present war lasts only twelve months it will cost Europe, directly and indirectly, including the destruction of property and the loss to industry and commerce, no less a sum than £9,000,000,000; and it will certainly cost more than a million, if not more than two million, lives, besides the incalculable amount of suffering from wounds, loss of relatives, outrages, and the incidental damage of warfare. The time will come when historians will study with amazement the wonderful system we have devised in Europe for the suppression of breaches of the social order at a time when we complacently suffer these appalling periodical destructions of the entire social order of nations.

It is quite natural to arraign the Christian Churches

## 6 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

in connection with this disastrous outbreak. Unless they discharge the high task of the moral direction of men, in international as well as in personal conduct, they have no *raison d'être*. Few of them to-day will plead that their function is merely to interpret to their fellows what they regard as the revealed word of God. In face of the challenging spirit of our time they maintain that they discharge a moral mission of such importance that society is likely to go to pieces if Christianity is abandoned. We therefore ask very pertinently where they were, and what they were doing, during the months when the nations of Europe were slowly advancing toward a declaration of war.

In examining the charge that, for some reason or other, they neglected their mission at a crisis of supreme importance, we must recall that few of us believed that a great war would occur until we actually heard the declaration. No indictment of the clergy is valid which presupposes that they are more sagacious or far-seeing than the rest of us. Yet, however much we may have doubted the actual occurrence of war, we have known for years, and have quite complacently commented upon, the danger that half of Europe would sooner or later be involved in the horrors of the greatest war in history. Now it is notorious that the Christian Churches have done little or nothing, in proportion to their mighty resources and influence, to avert this danger. No collective action has been taken, and relatively few individuals have used their influence to moderate or obviate the danger. The supreme head of the most powerfully organised and most cosmopolitan religious body in the world, an institution which has its thousands of ministers among each of the antagonistic peoples—I mean the Church

of Rome—gave his attention to minute questions of doctrine and administration, and bemoaned repeatedly the evil spirit of our age, but issued not one single syllable of precise and useful direction to the various national regiments of his clergy in connection with this terrible impending danger. The heads or Councils of the various Protestant bodies were equally remiss. Here and there individual clergymen joined associations, founded by laymen, which endeavoured to maintain peace and to secure arbitration upon quarrels, and one Sunday in the year was set aside by the pulpits for the vague gospel of peace. But in almost all cases these movements were purely secular in origin, and the few movements of a religious nature have been obviously founded only to keep the idealism linked with a particular Church, have had no great influence, and have been too vague in their principles to have had any effect upon the growing chances of a European war. There is no doubt that the Churches have remained almost dumb while Europe was preparing for its Armageddon.

I speak of the clergy, but in our time the responsibility cannot be confined to these. Even in the Church of England the laity have now a considerable influence, and in the other Protestant bodies they have even more power in the control of policy. No doubt the duty of initiative and of work in such matters lies mainly with the more leisured and more official interpreters of the Christian spirit, yet it would be absurd to restrict the criticism to them. The various Christian bodies, as a whole, have confronted a very grave and imminent danger with remarkable indifference, although that danger could become an actual infliction only by seriously immoral conduct on the part of some

## 8 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

nation. They saw, as we all saw, the vast armies preparing for the fray, the diplomatists betraying an increasing concern about the relations between their respective nations, the press embittering those relations, and a pernicious and provocative literature inflaming public opinion. We all saw these things, and knew that a war of appalling magnitude would follow the first infringement of peace. Yet I think it will hardly be controverted that the Churches made no serious effort to avert that calamity from Europe. They were deeply concerned about unbelief, about personal purity, about the cleanliness of plays and books and pictures, even about questions of social reform which a rebellious democracy forced on them; but they took no initiative and performed no important service in connection with this terrible danger.

That is the indictment which many bring against Christianity, and we have now to consider the general defence. I will examine later a number of religious pronouncements about the war, and will discuss here only a few general pleas which are put forward as a defence against the general indictment.

It is, in the first place, urged that the moral and humanitarian teaching which the Christian Churches never ceased to put before the world condemned in advance every departure from the paths of justice and charity; that it was not the fault of Christianity if men refused to listen to or carry into practice that teaching. But at no period in the history of morals has it sufficed to lay down general principles. Everybody perceives to-day, not only that slavery was in itself a crime, but that it was essentially opposed to the Christian morality. Yet, as no Christian teacher for many centuries ventured to apply the principle

by expressly denouncing slavery, the institution was taken over from Paganism by Christian Europe and lasted centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. The Church itself had vast numbers of slaves, and later of serfs, on its immense estates. Leo the Great disdainfully enacted that the priesthood must not be stained by admitting so "vile" a class to its ranks, and Gregory the Great had myriads of slaves on the Papal "patrimonies." So it was with the demand for social reform which characterised the nineteenth century. To-day Christians claim that their principles sanctioned and gave weight to those early demands of reform, yet their principles had been vainly repeated in Europe for fifteen hundred years, and, when the people themselves at last formulated their demands in the early part of the nineteenth century, it is notorious that the clergy opposed them. The teaching of abstract moral principles is of no avail. Man is essentially a casuist. Leave to him the application of your principles, and he will adapt almost any scheme of conduct to them. The moralist who does not boldly and explicitly point the application of his principles is either too ignorant of human nature to discharge his duty with effect or is a coward. The plain fact is that the preaching of justice and peace throughout Europe has been steadily accompanied by an increase in armaments and in international friction. It had no moral influence on the situation.

A more valid plea is that we must distinguish carefully between the nations which inaugurated the war and the nations which are merely defending themselves, and we must quarrel with the Christian Churches only in those lands which are guilty. It may, indeed, be pleaded that, since each nation regards itself as

acting on the defensive and uses arguments to this effect which convince its jurists and scholars no less than its divines, there is no occasion at all to introduce Christianity. Most of us do not merely admit the right, we emphasise the duty, of every citizen to take his share in the just defence of his country, either by arms or by material contribution. Since there seems to be a general conviction even in Germany and Austria that the nation is defending itself against jealous and designing neighbours, why quarrel with their clergy for supporting the war?

When the plea is broadened to this extent we must emphatically reject it. There has been too much disposition among moralists to listen indulgently to such talk as this. When we find five nations engaged in a terrible war, and each declaring that it is only defending itself against its opponent, the cynic indeed may indolently smile at the situation, but the man of principle has a more rigorous task. Some one of those peoples is lying or is deceived, and, in the future interest of mankind, it is imperative to determine and condemn the delinquent. There is no such thing as an inevitable war, nor does the burden of great armaments lead of itself to the opening of hostilities. It is certain that on one side or the other, if not on both sides, there is a terrible guilt, and it is the duty of Christian or any other moralists, whether or no they belong to the guilty nations, sternly to assign and condemn that guilt. It is precisely on this loose and lenient habit of mind that the engineers of aggressive war build in our time, and we have seen, in the case of neutral nations and of a section of our own nation, what chances they have of succeeding. They have only to fill their people and the world at large with counter-charges, resolutely

mendacious, and many will throw up their hands in presence of the mutual accusations and declare that it is impossible to assign the responsibility. That is a fatal concession to immorality, and we must hold that in some one or more of the combatant nations the Churches have, for some reason or other, acquiesced in a crime.

The plea is valid only to this extent, that the guilty nations in this case were notoriously Germany and Austria-Hungary, and therefore one cannot pass any censure on British Christians for supporting the war. I have in other works dealt so fully with the guilt of those two nations that here I must be content to assume it. The general and incessant cry of the German people, that they are only defending their Empire against malignant enemies, must be understood in the light of their recent history and literature. No Power in the world had given any indication of a wish to destroy Germany; there were, at the most, a few uninfluential appeals in England for an attack on Germany, but solely on the ground that it meditated an attack on England, and the accumulated evidence now shows that it did meditate such an attack. England did not desire an acre of German ground. France had assuredly not forgotten Alsace and Lorraine, but France would have had no support, and would have failed ignominiously, in an aggressive campaign to secure those provinces. On the other hand, an immense and weighty literature, which is unfortunately very little known in England, has familiarised Germany for fifteen years with aggressive ideas. The most authoritative writers claimed that, as they said repeatedly, "Germany must and will expand"; and leagues which numbered millions of subscribers propa-

## 12 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

gated this sentiment in every school and village. A definite demand was made throughout Germany for more colonies and a longer coast-line on the North Sea; and it was in relation to this ambition that England, France, and Russia were represented—and justly represented—as Germany's opponents. England, in particular, was described as the great dragon which watched at the gates of Germany and grimly forbade its "development." It is in this sense that the bulk of the German people maintain that their action is defensive.

In passing, let me emphasise this peculiar economic difference between the four nations. Russia had a vast territory in which her people might develop. France had no surplus population, and had a large colonial field for such of her children as desired adventure abroad or would escape the competition at home. England had, in Canada and Australasia and South Africa, a magnificent estate for her surplus population. None of these Powers had an economic ground for aggression. Germany was undoubtedly in a far less fortunate position, and had an overflowing population. Six hundred thousand men and women (mostly men) had to leave the fatherland every year, and, as the colonies were small and unsatisfactory, they were scattered and lost among the nations of the earth. The proper attitude toward Germany is, not to gratify the cunning of her leaders by superficially admitting that she was not aggressive, but to understand clearly the very solid grounds of her desire for expansion.

Into the whole case against Germany, however, I cannot enter here. Familiar from their chief historical writers with the supposed law of the expansion of powerful nations, convinced by their economists that

the country would soon burst with population and be choked by their own industrial products unless they expanded, knowing well that such expansion meant war to the death against France and England (who would suffer by their expansion), the German people consented to the war. Their official documents absolutely belie the notion that they were meeting an aggressive England. But the Christians of Germany were utterly false to their principles in supporting such a war. I do not mean merely that they set aside the precept or counsel to turn the other cheek to the smiter, for no one now expects either nation or individual to act on that maxim. They were false to the ordinary principles of Christian morals or of humanity. Even if one were desperately to suppose that learned divines like Harnack were unable to assign the real responsibility for the war, or that the whole of Germany is kept in a kind of hot-house of falsehood, it would be impossible to defend them. The Churches of Germany have complacently watched for twenty-three years the tendency which William II gave to their schools; they have passed no censure on the fifteen years of Imperialist propaganda which have steadily prepared the nation for an aggressive war; and they have raised no voice against the appalling decision that, in order to attain Germany's purposes, every rule of morals and humanity should be set aside. They have servilely accepted every flimsy pretext for outrage, and have followed, instead of leading, their passion-blinded people. It was the same in Austria-Hungary. Austrian and Hungarian prelates have passed in silence the fearful travesties of justice by which, in recent years, their statesmen sought to compass the judicial murder of scores of Slavs; they raised no voice when,

## 14 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

at the grave risk of a European war, Austria dishonestly annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina; they gave their tacit or open consent when Austria, refusing mediation, declared war on Serbia and inaugurated the titanic struggle; and they have passed no condemnation on the infamies which the Magyar troops perpetrated in Serbia.

I am concerned mainly with the action or inaction of the Churches in this country, but it is entirely relevant to set out a brief statement of these facts about Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Christian religion was on trial in those countries as well as here. It failed so lamentably, not because there is more Christianity here than in Germany and Austria, not because the national character was inferior to the English and less apt to receive Christian teaching, but because the temptation was greater. Until this war occurred, no responsible traveller ever ventured to say that the German or Austrian character was inferior to the British. It is not. But the economic difficulties of Germany and the political difficulties (with the Slavs) of Austria-Hungary laid a heavier trial on those nations, and their Christianity entirely failed. Catholic and Protestant alike—for the two nations contain fifty million Catholics to sixty million Protestants—were swept onward in the tide of national passion, or feared to oppose it.

One might have expected that at least the supreme head of the Roman Church would, from his detached throne in Rome, pass some grave censure on the outrages committed by Catholic Bavarians in Belgium or Catholic Magyars in Serbia. Not one syllable either on the responsibility for the war or the appalling outrages which have characterised it has come from

him. The only event which drew from him a protest—a restrained and inoffensive remonstrance—was the confinement to his palace for some days of my old friend and teacher, Cardinal Mercier! To the stories of fearful and widespread outrage, even when they were sternly authenticated, he was deaf. One knows why. If Germany and Austria fail in this war, as they will fail, the Catholic bodies of Germany and Austria, the strongest Catholic political parties in Europe, will be broken. Millions of the Catholic subjects of Germany and Austria will pass under the rule of unbelieving France or schismatical Russia. So the supreme head of the Roman Church wraps himself nervously in a mantle of political neutrality and disclaims the duty of assigning moral guilt.

On us in England was laid only the task of defending our homes and our honour. It is in those other countries that we most clearly see Christianity put to the test, and failing deplorably under the test. I do not mean that there was no opportunity here for the Churches to display their effectiveness as the moral guides of nations. In those fateful years between 1908 and 1914, during which we now see so plainly the preparation for this world-tragedy, they might have done much. They did nothing. They might have seen, at least at the eleventh hour, the iniquity of sustaining the military system, and have cast the whole of their massive influence on the side of the promoters of arbitration. I do not mean that any man should advocate disarmament, or less effective armament, in England while the rest of the world remains armed. As long as we retain the military system instead of an international court, the soldier's profession is honourable, and the man who voluntarily faces the

## 16 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

horrors of the field is entitled to respect and gratitude. But in every country there was an agitation for the *general* abandonment of militarism and the substitution of lawyers for soldiers in the settlement of international quarrels. Had the Churches in every country given their whole support to this agitation, and insisted that it is morally criminal for the race as a whole to prolong the military system, we might not have witnessed this great catastrophe.

Before, however, I press this charge against the Christian bodies, let me discuss the third plea that may be urged in defence of the Churches. It is the plea of those who are so eager to disclaim responsibility that they are willing to allow an enormous decay of religious influence in the modern world. You have repeatedly told us, they say to the Rationalist, that Christianity has lost its hold on Europe. You speak of millions who no longer hear the word of Christian ministers, but who *do* read Rationalist literature in enormous quantities. Very well, you cannot have it both ways. Let us admit that the nations of Europe have become non-Christian, and we cast on your non-Christian influence the burden of responsibility for the war.

This language has been used more than once in England. It leaves the speaker free to assume that in England, whose action in the war we do not criticise, the nation remains substantially Christian, while in Germany and Austria the Churches have lost more ground. Indeed, one may almost confine attention to Germany. Profoundly corrupt as political life has been in Austria-Hungary for years, there is no little evidence in the official publications of diplomatic documents that at the last moment, when the spectre of a general war definitely arose, Austria hesitated

and entered upon a hopeful negotiation with Russia. It was Germany's criminal ultimatum to Russia which set the avalanche on its terrible path. Now Germany is notoriously a land of religious criticism and Rationalism. Church-going in Berlin is far lower even than in London, where six out of seven millions do not attend places of worship. It is almost as low as at Paris, where hardly a tenth of the population attend church on Sundays. In other large towns of Germany the condition is, as in England, proportionate. Almost in proportion to the size of the town is the aversion of the people from the Churches.

It is absolutely impossible in the case of Germany to determine, even in very round numbers, how many have abandoned their allegiance to Christianity, though, when one remembers the enormous rural population and the high proportion of believers in the smaller towns, it seems preposterous to suggest that the country has, even to the extent of one half, become non-Christian. But I am anxious to do justice to this plea, and would point out that it is the educated class and the men of the large cities who control a nation's policy. The rural population—the general population, in fact—follows its educated leaders. Now there is no doubt that in Germany, as elsewhere, this body of the population—the middle class and the workers of the great cities—has very largely lost the traditional belief. The workers of Berlin are solidly Socialistic, which means very largely anti-clerical. And I would boldly draw the conclusion that the responsibility for the war is shared at least equally by Christians and non-Christians. The stricture I have passed on the Churches of Germany is based on the fact that they, being organised bodies with a definite moral mission,

## 18 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

were peculiarly bound to protest against the obvious political development of their country, and they entirely failed to do so. But I should be the last to confine the responsibility to them. Not only religious leaders like Harnack and Eucken, but leading Rationalists like Haeckel and Ostwald, have cordially supported the action of their country. So it was from the first. Of that large class of men who may be said to have had some real control of the fortunes of their country a very high proportion—I should be disposed to say at least one half—are not Christians, or are Christians only in name.

While we thus candidly admit that non-Christians as well as Christians in Germany bear the moral responsibility, we must be equally candid in rejecting the libellous charge that the principles, or lack of principles, of the non-Christians tended to provoke or encourage war, in opposition to the Christian principles. This not uncommon plea of religious people is worse than inaccurate, since it is quite easy to ascertain the principles of those who reject Christianity. In Germany, as elsewhere, the non-Christians are mainly an unorganised mass, but there are two definite organisations, which, in this respect, reflect or educate the general non-Christian sentiment. These are the Social Democrats, a body of many millions who are for the most part opposed to the clergy, and the Monists, an expressly Rationalistic body. In both cases the moral principles of the organisation are emphatically humanitarian and opposed to violence, dishonesty, or injustice; in both cases those principles are adhered to with a fidelity at least equal to that which one finds in the Christian Churches. It is little short of monstrous to say that the moral teaching of Bebel and Singer

and Liebknecht, or of Haeckel and Ostwald—all men of high moral idealism—gave greater occasion than the teaching of Christianity to this atrocious war. The Socialists, indeed, were the strongest opponents of war and advocates of international amity in Europe. How, like the Evangelical and the Christian Churches, they failed in a grave crisis to assert their principles may be a matter for interesting consideration, but it would be entirely dishonest to plead that the substitution of the influence of Rationalists and Socialists for Christian ministers has in any degree facilitated the war.

The Christian who regards all these non-Christian influences as “Pagan,” and feels that a “return to Paganism” explains the essential immorality of Germany’s conduct, usually has a grossly inaccurate idea of Paganism. Whatever may be said of sexual developments in modern and ancient times, we shall see that the Roman writers held principles which most decidedly made for peace and brotherhood and justice. In point of fact, the majority of the German writers who have been responsible for the education of Germany in war-like ideas have been Christians. The Emperor himself, who is mainly responsible because of his deliberate prostitution of German schools to militarist purposes since 1891, will hardly be described as other than Christian; certainly every prelate or minister in Germany would vehemently resent such a description. Treitschke, who is probably the best known in England of the Imperialist writers, definitely bases his appalling conception of life on Christian principles, and claims that he is acting from a sense of the divine mission of Germany. General von Bernhardi uses precisely the same Christian language. But these are only two in a hundred writers who, for

more than half a century, have been educating Germany in aggressive ideas, and, speaking from personal acquaintance with their works, I should say that the overwhelming majority of them are Christians. Not a single Socialist, and not a single well-known Rationalist, has contributed to their pernicious gospel.

Probably the one German writer in the mind of those English people who speak of Germany's return to Paganism is Friedrich Nietzsche. It is true that Nietzsche was bitterly anti-Christian, and he has probably had a greater influence in Germany, in spite of his strictures on the country, than many seem disposed to allow. German booksellers have recently drawn up a statement in regard to the favourite books of soldiers in the field, and it appears that Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is second on the list—leagues ahead of the Bible. But to conclude from this that the anti-moral doctrine of the Pagan Nietzsche is the chief source of the outrages committed is one of those slipshod inferences which make one despair of Christian literature.

In the first place, Goethe is even more popular with the troops than Nietzsche, and, although Goethe too was a Pagan, his teaching was the very antithesis of crime, violence, injustice, or hypocrisy. No nobler human doctrine was ever set forth than in the pages of his *Faust*, the first on this list of favourite books. In the second place, this fact at once warns us of a circumstance which we might have taken for granted : in the knapsacks of the overwhelming majority of the soldiers there are no books at all. It is the minority who read ; and it is quite safe to assume that this thoughtful minority are not the minority who have disgraced German militarism. Thirdly—and it should hardly be necessary to make this observation—the

sensitive and high-strung Nietzsche would have regarded with shuddering horror these outrages which some ignorantly attribute to his influence. It is indeed probable that, if he still looked from his hill-top upon the fields of Europe, he would pour out his most volcanic scorn upon the warring nations, and especially upon Germany and Austria. In fine, it is necessary to remember that Nietzsche was violently anti-democratic. For the mass of the people he had only disdain, and it is folly to suppose that his aristocratic philosophy has been accepted among them as a gospel.

Nietzsche has had a considerable influence on the more thoughtful reading public in Germany, yet even here one has to make reserves in charging him with a part in the preparation of the country for an aggressive war. His peculiar art and temperamental exaggerations make it impossible for any but a patient few to grasp his teaching accurately, and are peculiarly liable to mislead the less patient. When, therefore, he stresses—as most anti-Socialists do—the Darwinian struggle for existence, when he assails the humanitarian and Christian doctrine of helping the weak, when he calls into question the received code of morals, and when he extols self-assertion and strength of will, his fiery words do lend some confirmation, which he assuredly never intended, to the Prussian ideal of a State. Nietzsche was too much averse from politics to intend such an application of his teaching, which is essentially individualistic, and he had nothing but contempt for the bluster and philistinism of the Prussian State in particular. We must admit, however, that in this unintentional way he contributed to the formation of that German temper which led to the war. General von Bernhardi's admiring references to his philosophy sufficiently show this.

## 22 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

But Nietzsche's very limited influence on German thought cannot reasonably be quoted as justification of the common saying that Germany had deserted Christianity for Paganism. Had such a statement been made before the war began, our divines would have indignantly repudiated it. The truth is that all classes—Christian and non-Christian—have yielded fatally to the pernicious interpretation which interested politicians, soldiers, manufacturers, and Jingoistic writers have put on the real economic needs of the country. Of the Socialist and Catholic parties, in particular, the two most powerfully organised bodies in Germany, we may say that, in deserting their ideals, they have been partly deceived into a real belief that Russia and England sought their destruction, and they have partly yielded to that very old and familiar temptation—the desire to retain their numerical strength by compromising with their principles. In justice to the Socialists it should be added that that party has furnished the only men and journals in Germany to raise any protest against the madness of the nation. One of the most repulsive moral traits in Germany to-day is, even when we have made the most liberal allowance for the painful and desperate circumstances of the people, the astounding expression and cultivation of hatred. It has transpired time after time that the *Vorwärts* has protested against this. Not once has it been reported that the religious press or religious ministers have protested. The new phrase that is officially sanctioned, "God punish England," is a religious phrase that no Neo-Pagan could use. On the very day on which I write this page it is reported that Socialists have protested in the Reichstag against the official endorsement of outrages. We do not hear of any Christian protest, from end to end of the campaign.

Yet I do not wish to disguise the fact that both Christians and non-Christians share the guilt of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The real difference between the two bodies appears when we take a broader view of the war, and only in this way can any general indictment of Christianity be formulated. Important as it is to determine the responsibility for this war, it is even more important to conceive that the war is the natural outcome of a system which Europe ought to have abolished ages ago. We are not far from the time when, in spite of the official teaching of the Churches, every Christian nation maintained the practice of the duel which the Teutonic nations introduced fourteen centuries ago. Although in Germany the Christian clergy have not the courage to assert their plain principles in opposition to the Emperor's barbaric patronage of the duel, the people of most civilised countries now regard the duel as a crime. No one who surveys the whole stream of moral development can doubt that a time is coming when war, the duel of nations, will be regarded as an infinitely graver crime. The day is surely over when sophists like Treitschke and callous soldiers like Bernhardi could sing the praises of war. The pathetic picture drawn by our great novelist of a worthless young lord lying at the feet of his opponent touched England profoundly and hastened the end of the duel in this country. If England, if the civilised world, be not even more deeply touched by the descriptions we have read, week after week, of tens of thousands of braver and more innocent men lying in their blood, of all the desolation and sorrow that have been brought on whole kingdoms of Europe, one will be almost tempted to despair of the race. War is the last and worst stain of barbarism on the escutcheon of civilisation.

The question of real interest is, therefore, the historical question. Those of us who did not foresee this war until we were in the very penumbra of the tragedy cannot complain that our Christian neighbours did not foresee and prevent it. Those of us who feel that the participation of our country is just and necessary may, with no strain of imagination, conceive the men of other countries equally persuading themselves that the action of their country is just and necessary. But from the day when we awoke to an adult perception of the life of the world we have been aware that the established system of settling international quarrels was barbaric and might in any year lead to just such a catastrophe. How comes it that such a system has survived fifteen hundred years of profound Christian influence? Whatever we may think of the clergy of to-day, with the more powerful clergy of yesterday we have a grave reckoning. The Rationalist is a new thing in Europe. The very name is little more than a century old, and until a few decades ago only a few thousand would accept it. Not from such a new and struggling movement do we ask why this military system has dominated Europe for ages and has only in recent times been seriously challenged. During those ages the Churches suffered none but themselves to pretend to a moral influence over the life of the nations, nor were there many bold and independent enough to make the claim. It is of the Churches we ask why this appalling system has taken such deep root in the life of Europe that it resists the most devoted efforts to eradicate it. It is not *this* war, but war, that accuses the Churches. We are entangled in a system so widespread and so subtle that, when a war occurs, each nation can persuade itself that it is acting on just grounds. It is the system which interests us.

## CHAPTER II

### CHRISTIANITY AND WAR

THE day will come when the student of human development will find war one of the most remarkable institutions that ever entered and quitted history. Civilisation took it over from barbarism; barbarism from the savage; the savage from the beast. So we are accustomed to argue, but we must make a singular reservation. The lowest peoples of the human family, which seem to represent primitive man, do not wage war, and are little addicted to violence. They seem by some process of natural selection to have obtained the social quality of peacefulness and mutual aid. There was, in a sense, a stage of primitive innocence. As, however, these primitive peoples grew in numbers and were organised in tribes, as they obtained collective possessions—flocks and pastures and hunting grounds—they came into collision with each other, and all the old pugnacity of the beast awoke. Skill, and even ferocity, in war became a valuable social quality, and we get the stage of the savage. The barbarian, or the man between savagery and civilisation, was still compelled to fight for his possessions. He was usually surrounded by fierce savage tribes. The civilised man in turn was surrounded by savages and barbarians, and needed to fight. So through thousands of years of development of moral sentiment and legal procedure the primitive method of the beast has been preserved.

But I am not writing a history of warfare, and need not describe these stages more closely, or examine the new sentiment of imperialist expansion which gave civilisations a fresh incentive to develop methods of warfare. The point of interest is to determine at what stage it might have been possible for the moral element to intervene and bid the warriors, in the name of humanity, lay down their arms; at what stage the tribunal which men had set up to adjudicate between the quarrels of individuals might have been enlarged so as to be capable of arbitrating on the quarrels of nations.

Now this was plainly impossible in the early centuries of the present era, and it is therefore foolish to ask why Pagan moralists did not do what we expect Christian moralists to have done. I have already mentioned, and have fully described elsewhere, how humanitarian sentiments were generally diffused throughout the old Græco-Roman world. There is not a phrase of the New Testament which has not a parallel among the Jews, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. The great fusion of peoples in the Roman Empire begot a feeling of brotherhood, and, by a natural reaction on years of vice and violence, there was a considerable growth of lofty and tender, and often impracticable, sentiments. Moralists urged men to avoid anger, to bear blows with dignity, to greet all men as brothers, even to love their enemies. Plato and Epictetus and Plutarch and Seneca and Marcus Aurelius urged these maxims as forcibly as Christ did. The Stoic religion or philosophy, which guided Emperors and lawyers, and had a very wide influence in the Roman world, was intensely and quite modernly humanitarian. Its principal expo-

nents condemned slavery and promoted a remarkable spread of philanthropy.

It was, however, not possible for the Stoics to condemn war. Some of the more ardent and less practical humanitarians of the time did this, but no alert Roman citizen could advocate the abolition of the legions. The Empire was completely surrounded by barbarians who would rush in and trample on its civilisation the moment the fence of spears was removed. From the turreted walls in the north of England, where men watched the Picts and Scots, to the deserts of Mesopotamia—from the banks of the Danube and Rhine to the spurs of the Atlas—it was essential to maintain those bronzed legions who guarded the civilised provinces from marauders. With those outlying barbarians no treaty was possible or sacred; no legal tribunal would have protected those frontiers from the men who looked covetously on the fertile fields and comfortable cities of the Roman provinces. From the first to the fourth century Rome fought, not for its expansion, but for its preservation against these increasing enemies; and it was the final intensification of the pressure in the Danube region by the arrival of enormous hordes of barbarians from Asia which precipitated the final catastrophe. Paganism had never the slightest opportunity to abandon the military system, and only those who are totally unacquainted with Roman history can wonder why it did not make the attempt. It would have been a crime to abandon the civilised provinces to barbarism.

This was the essential position of the Roman Empire: the civil wars of the fourth century, by which its military system was abused, need not be

considered here. And the student of history must recognise with equal candour that the new Christianity, which succeeded Paganism in the fourth and fifth centuries, was equally powerless to abolish warfare. What we may justly blame is that the triumphant Christianity of the fourth century did not merely sanction the use of arms in defence of civilisation; it employed them in its own interest. The earlier Christians had exasperated the Romans by refusing to bear arms in the service of the Empire, plain as the need was. To a slight extent this was due to an aversion from the shedding of blood; for the most part military service was refused because it was saturated with Pagan rites. When the Empire became Christian, this objection was removed, and the Christians freely entered the army. Unhappily, the Christian body deteriorated with the new prosperity and base instincts were indulged. It is an undoubted historical fact, recorded by St. Jerome himself, that the election of Pope Damasus, his friend and benefactor, was accompanied by bloody and fatal riots. From undoubted historical sources we know that the Christian mob compelled the Prefect of Rome to fly from the city, and there is very serious evidence (in a document written by two Roman priests) that Damasus employed the swords and staves of his supporters to secure his position. Damasus and subsequent Popes then obtained or sanctioned the use of the Roman soldiers for the suppression of heresy and schism and Paganism, and Christianity was installed by violence throughout the Empire. In the Eastern Roman Empire things were even worse. Violence became the customary device in the seething religious quarrels of the time, and, literally, tens of thousands lost their

lives. The Byzantine or Greek Christianity entered upon a record of crime and violence which disgraced it for many centuries.

This development did not augur well for the application of Christian principles to warfare. We may, however, observe at once that for many centuries the Roman Church had not the slightest chance of establishing peace in Europe. The destruction of the Roman Empire and disbanding of its armies made an entirely new situation in Italy. The Popes were, for the most part, good men, but they did not dream at that time of controlling the counsels of kings and dictating affairs of State. Even the story of Pope Leo the Great overawing the King of the Huns, Attila, and turning his army away from Italy, is a mere legend of medieval writers, and is at variance with the nearer authorities. The northern tribes themselves were to a great extent, and for some centuries, of the Arian faith, and took no advice from Rome. In a word, it would be stupid to expect Christian leaders of the early Middle Ages to press the cause of peace. The northern peoples, who would in time form the nations of Europe, were essentially violent and warlike, and would have recognised no pacific counsels in that imperfect stage of their religious development.

Where the historian may and must censure the Church is in its adoption of militarism for its own purposes. Pope Gregory the Great found Italy in a chaotic and pitiful condition, and no doubt he acted, on the whole, rightly in organising its military defence. The more serious circumstance was that he began to receive immense estates, as gifts or legacies, in all parts of Italy as the property of the Roman Church, and from that time either a Papal army or the employ-

ment of the army of some friendly monarch was necessary in order to protect these estates. With the confirmation and consolidation of these estates into a kingdom under Charlemagne in the ninth century the Papacy completed its moral aberration. Most of the Popes were still men of good character, and they no doubt persuaded themselves that, since the income of these estates was needed for the fulfilment of their spiritual task, it was proper to defend them by the sword. But casuistry of this kind has never prospered indefinitely, and few historians will doubt that this temporal development led directly to that degradation of the Papacy which rendered it unfit to exercise moral influence on Europe. The Papacy became a princedom to attract the covetous and the ambitious, and the line of Popes sank so low by the tenth century that the grossest characters were able to occupy the chair of Peter at a time when the nations of Europe were sufficiently advanced to be susceptible of a sincere moral influence. The record of the Papacy, from the ninth century to the nineteenth, contains on almost every page a bloody struggle for the temporal power. The most religious and most eminent of the Popes, such as Gregory VII and Innocent III, were the most prompt to set in motion the machinery of war in defence of their territories or in punishment of rebels against their authority. Not one of them was in a position to bid kings disband their armies, or ever dreamed of enjoining them to do more than observe a few days' truce or keep their swords from each other in order to save them for the common enemy of Christendom.

It would be useless to speculate about the date when the new nations of Europe had become sufficiently

civilised to hear a gospel of peace. The idea of superseding the military system of Europe by a juridical system occurred to no Christian leader, and therefore we need not consider what prospect it might have had of realisation. The Christian gospel of meekness had become a mockery : even the great abbeys, in which the gentler and more religious were supposed to be immured, had their troops, and abbots and bishops, and very often Papal Legates, appeared at the head of armies. Two Popes, John X and Julius II, marched themselves at the head of their troops. Cardinals had their suites of swordsmen, and the castles of the Roman aristocracy were at times strong fortifications from which war of the most ferocious and unscrupulous character was waged. Christendom was steeped in violence ; only a gentle saint or bishop here and there caught a futile vision of a world of peace. Every man was armed against possible trouble with his neighbour ; every noble had his retainers and kept them well exercised ; every prince was free, as far as the spiritual authorities were concerned, to covet and bloodily exact the lands of his neighbour. The noble, of either sex, found supreme delight in jousts which the modern sentiment finds as inhuman as a sordid quarrel of *Apaches* over a mistress ; the peasants found a corresponding pleasure in the play of quarter-staves or the combats of dogs and cocks.

It is, as I said, little use to speculate about the chances of a gospel of humanity in such a world. The overwhelming majority of priests and prelates made no effort whatever to restrain the prevailing violence. The elementary duty of any profound moral agency was to protest without ceasing, even if the protest was unavailing. It is not at all clear that it would have

been unavailing. The power of the Popes was beyond that of any other hierarchy known to history, and at least the moral education of Europe would have proceeded less slowly, and war would have been abolished centuries ago, if there had been any serious, collective, and authoritative enforcement of Christian principles. There was not, and to this silence of the clergy during those long ages of their power we owe the maintenance in Europe to-day of the regime of violence. They were so far from enjoying moral inspiration in this respect that they were amongst the first to bless the banners and swell the coffers of an aggressive monarch, and they gave the military system a final consecration by employing it repeatedly in the interests of the Church.

All that one can plead in mitigation of this deep historical censure of the medieval Church is that the frontiers of Christendom were for centuries threatened by the Turk and the Saracen. The old need of protecting civilisation by arms had almost disappeared. Few and feeble peoples remained outside the range of Christian civilisation after the tenth century. Armies were maintained only in the interest of criminal ambition or for the settlement of disputes which ought to have been submitted to judges. The menace of the Turk, with his hostile religion, was, of course, a just ground for armaments, but a few nations generally bore the whole brunt of his onset. Whatever religious feeling may make of the great Crusades, which drew to the east armies from all parts of Europe, secular history must dismiss them as appalling blunders. The few advantages they brought to European culture cannot seriously be weighed against the terrible sacrifice of lives and the even more terrible consecration of militarism. In a word, the menace of the Turk

could have been met admirably by such an arrangement as we are advocating in Europe to-day: the maintenance of a small force by each nation for common action, under the direction of a supreme legal tribunal, against nations which would not obey the common law of peace. But we need not seriously discuss the influence of the Turk on the system. The last phases of the struggle, when the selfish nations and the ambitious Papacy spent their time in idle mutual recrimination and left the Hungarians and Poles to do all the work, justify us in dismissing that element. Kings and republics maintained armies for purely selfish purposes, for brutal aggression and defence against aggressors; and not a prelate in Europe had any moral repugnance to the system, or ventured to condemn it, especially as the Church used the same agency in defence of its own temporal interests.

With the development of the Papal power and the advance of the peoples of Europe the opportunity of peace became greater, but the spiritual authority pledged itself more and more deeply to the military system. The Popes aspired—as Gregory VII and Innocent III repeatedly state—to control the temporal as well as the spiritual affairs of Europe, to transfer crowns when they thought fit, to direct invasions and military expeditions against any who questioned their authority. Hildebrand boasts (*Ep. vii, 23*) that, when William of Normandy sent envoys to ask Pope Alexander to sanction his unscrupulous invasion of England, and the Papal Court was itself too sensible of the enormity to give its sanction, he (Hildebrand) overbore the wavering Pope and forced him to bless the enterprise; and, when he had in his turn mounted the Papal throne, he vehemently claimed that his

action had made England a fief for ever of the Holy See ! Gregory VII and Innocent III are the two greatest and most sincerely religious of the medieval Popes, and they carried the power of the Papacy to a height which excites the amazement of the modern historian. But they were at the same time the most militant of the Popes, and on the least provocation they set armies—even the most barbaric and ferocious troops in Europe—in motion to carry out their imperial commands. They arrogated the power of deposing monarchs, and thus encouraged civil war and the ambitions of neighbouring kings.

The rise of heresy and of protests against the corruption of the Papacy was another very grave pretext of the Church to support the military system. In the days of Gregory VII a body of Puritans known as the Patareni spread over the north of Italy, and Rome encouraged a few soldiers to lead armed mobs against them and drown their idealism in blood. Innocent III has a more terrible stigma on his record. The Albigensians, an early type of Protestants, were spreading in the south of France, and the Pope sanctioned a "crusade"—an expedition, largely, of looters and cut-throats—against them from all parts of France. The appalling deceit practised by the Papal Legate and sanctioned by the Pope, the ferocity of the campaign, and the desolation brought on one of the happiest and most prosperous provinces of France, may be read in any history of the thirteenth century. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children were savagely put to death. And this was only the beginning of the Papal war on heresy, which from the thirteenth century never ceased to spring up in Europe until it won its right of citizenship in the Reformation.

Even more vehemently was war urged against the Moors, then the most civilised people in Europe.

In face of this notorious history of Europe during the long course of the Middle Ages it is now usual for Catholic apologists to plead that the blood of the barbarian still flowed in the veins of the Christian nations and men were not yet prepared to listen to the message of peace. This plea cannot for a moment be admitted in extenuation of the Church's guilt. The clergy had themselves no conception of the criminality of war, and did not rise above the moral level of their age. Here and there a saint or a prelate raised a feeble voice against the violence of men, but we do not estimate an institution by the words of an occasional member, especially if they are at variance with the official conduct and the general sentiment. On the other hand, to boast that the clergy at times enforced a temporary cessation of fighting (the "Truce of God") only increases our appreciation of their guilt. The men who enforced that Truce gave proof at once of their power and of their perception of the un-Christian nature of warfare. But they were unwilling to condemn outright a machinery which they might employ at any moment in defence or advancement of their own interests. Had the Church been a serious moral influence in Europe, had it been true to the message in virtue of which it had grown rich and powerful, it would have protested unceasingly against this reign of violence. It was not a great moral influence. The grossness and illiteracy of the people, the appalling immorality of the clergy and monks and nuns, and this almost entire failure to apply Christian or ordinary human principles to the worst feature of the life of Europe, are terrible offsets to the little good

it achieved. Europe was steadily educated and encouraged, century after century, in the shedding of blood.

The Protestant is at times disposed to dismiss the whole sordid story with the remark that this Roman Church was not Christianity at all. He contrives to overlook the serious difficulty that, if the Roman Church did not represent Christianity from the sixth century to the sixteenth, there was, contrary to the promise of Christ, no Christianity in Europe for a thousand years; and he surrenders all the wonderful art of the Middle Ages (as he ought) to entirely non-Christian forces. That, however, does not concern me here. The slightest recollection of history would warn the Protestant that the Reformation brought no improvement whatever, as far as this reign of violence is concerned. The forces set up by the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation fought each other for some decades with the comparatively peaceful weapons of mutual abuse and heated argument. When it was perceived that these weapons were of no avail, there was the customary appeal to the sword. In the historical documents which tell the life of Pope Paul IV we see the Papacy and the Jesuits urging the Catholic princes to lead out their armies. Heresy was to be extinguished in blood; and, seeing how many millions in the north had by that time embraced the heresy, there can have been no illusion as to the magnitude of the oceans of blood that would be required to drown it. So Europe entered upon the horrors of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), which put back the civilisation of Germany for more than a hundred years and utterly ruined some of the small principalities. The population of Bohemia alone fell from three millions to less than a million. Nearly every nation in Europe was

involved, and the war was conducted with all the brutality of the older medieval warfare.

The fact that political as well as religious ambitions were engaged in the Thirty Years' War does not affect my argument. In so far as religious sentiment was responsible—and it will hardly be questioned that it had a large share in the Thirty Years' War—we find a fresh consecration by Christianity itself of the use of the sword. But the main point we have to consider is that the new spiritual authorities were no more inclined than the old to declare that warfare was opposed to Christian principles. The last three centuries have been as full of aggressive war as the three centuries which preceded, but there was no protest by Christian ministers either in Protestant England and Scandinavia or in Catholic France and Austria. It was the period when the modern Powers of Europe were building up their vast dominions, and no one who is acquainted with the story can have any illusion as to the application to that process of what are now described as clear Christian principles.

This is precisely the plaint of modern Germany. We seek, they say, to do merely what England and France—it were indiscreet to mention Austria—did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were vigorous peoples with an impulse to expand and to extend their civilisation over backward lands. They appealed solely to the right of the sword, and all the Christian authorities in Europe—the bishops of William and of Anne, the bishops of Louis XIV, the bishops of Peter the Great—had not a single syllable to say against the right of the sword. The various branches of the Christian Church were at that time singularly unanimous in accommodating their principles to imperialist and aggressive warfare. Now that you have

obtained all that you need—the aggrieved Teuton says—now that I in turn would expand and colonise, you discover that this imperialist aggression is supremely opposed to Christian principles.

On some such meditations, in part, the German bases his conviction of the hypocrisy and perfidy of the English character. He is, of course, entirely wrong. A real change has taken place in the moral sentiment of this country; a change so real that when, in South Africa, the nation entered upon a war which many regarded as aggressive and merely acquisitive, there was a very widespread revolt. The cynic might genially observe that it is not difficult to retire from evil-doing and cultivate lofty principles when your fortune has been made, but it is important to realise this change and understand its significance. There is, no doubt, a sound human element in the cynic's observation. It is easier to recognise moral principle when the period of temptation is over. Every thoughtful and humane Englishman will make allowance for the less fortunate position of Germany, and not foolishly pride himself on his own superiority of character. The fact remains, however, that there has been a real moral improvement in England and France, and it would now be impossible for those nations to enter upon the aggressive and nakedly ambitious wars which they were accustomed to undertake before the nineteenth century. We have a genuine abhorrence of the "lust for land" which has impelled Germany to plunge Europe into war. But until a century or two ago that lust for land was considered a legitimate appetite in Europe, and the clergy crowded with the people to greet the warriors who came home with the news that they had added, by the sword, one more province to our spreading Empire.

That this change of heart is not merely a feeling that we have no further need of aggression, and would ourselves suffer by the aggression of others, could easily be proved, if it were necessary. In the same period of change we abolished the duel, and there was no material advantage in discovering the immorality of the duel. We abolished dog-fighting, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, and other brutalising spectacles. We undertook a reform of our industrial and penal systems which, however imperfect it be, was very considerable in itself, and was inspired solely by motives of humanity. There was a general and marked improvement of public sentiment, and it is as part of this improvement that we now find a universal condemnation of aggressive war and a widespread demand for the entire abolition of war. The construction of English history and English character on the lines of Mr. G. B. Shaw may be entertaining, and may save considerable trouble of research, but it does not conduce to sound judgment. The laments of social pessimists and of certain religious controversialists are never supported by accurate knowledge. Every social historian who gives evidence of knowing the evils of the England of a century ago as well as the England of to-day admits that there has been a great moral advance.

I will examine in the next chapter certain comments of religious writers and speakers on this advance. Here I wish to determine the facts with some clearness. It has not been necessary for me to discuss the medieval and the early modern period with any fullness. There is no dispute about the features of those periods. They were ages of violence, of incessant and frankly aggressive war, of unrestrained ambition. The smallest pretext sufficed for a monarch, if his forces and finances were in order, to invade his neighbour's territory and

annex as much of it as he could hold by the sword. Frederic the Great and Napoleon did not introduce new ideas into Europe; they attempted to revive medieval ideas in a changing world. Austria in its annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany in its ambition to annex Belgium and the colonies which other Powers have laboriously cultivated, are following their example. They are not inventing new forms of criminality; they are not returning to Pagan ideals : they are reverting merely to ideals which were accepted throughout Europe for more than a thousand years. In the more brutal features of war to which they have descended they are even more emphatically reverting to the Middle Ages. The Romans did not commit such outrages at the command of educated officers. Medieval Christians did : the record of Papal warfare, down to the "Massacre of Perugia" in 1859, is as deeply stained as any by these abominable methods.

My further point, that the Christian Church or Churches made no serious resistance to the prevailing brutality, is just as easy to establish. It is a sheer travesty of argument to put forward the gentle exhortations of a Francis of Assisi as characteristic of the Christian Church when the Pope of the time, one of the most powerful and conscientious Popes of all time, Innocent III, was threatening or directing the movements of ferocious armies all over Europe. Most assuredly there were among the numbers of fine characters who appeared in Christendom in the course of a thousand years many who deeply resented the prevailing violence. But when we speak of the Church, we speak of its official action and its predominant sentiment. The official action of the Popes was, during all that period, to make the same use as any terrestrial monarch of the service of soldiers ; they

failed, from Gregory the Great to Pius X, to recognise one of the supreme moral needs of Europe. The bishops of the Church of England and the heads of the Lutheran and Calvinistic Churches did not prove to have any sounder moral inspiration in this respect. It was left to despised bodies like the Friends, who were hardly recognised as Christians, and to rare individuals to protest against the system which has brought such appalling evil on Europe.

In the nineteenth century the moral sentiment of Europe began to advance more rapidly than it had previously done, and the idea of substituting arbitration for war began to spread. The history of this reform has not yet been written, as far as I can discover, but it is hardly likely that any will be bold enough to suggest that the idea was due to Christianity. After the Napoleonic wars, at least, Europe was ripe for such a reform. I do not mean that public feeling in Europe was prepared for the idea. It would have met with a very considerable degree of resistance, and would have generally been conceived as the dream of an amiable fanatic. Such resistance makes the duty of the moralist or the reformer all the more pressing, and it is merely amazing to hear the earlier Christian clergy exonerated on the ground that the world was not prepared to receive a message of peace from them. They did not try the experiment because it did not occur to them, or because they were too closely dependent on the monarchs of the earth to question the wisdom of their arrangements. Europe was, in point of fact, quite ripe for the change in the second decade of the nineteenth century, and there would assuredly be no war to-day if the Churches had had the moral inspiration and the moral courage to insist on it. The frontiers of the nations were (except in

the case of Italy and Poland) defined with a fair show of justice, and the time had come to disband armies and submit any future quarrel to arbitration : to retain only a small standing army in each country for the defence of its colonial frontiers against tribes which do not respect arbitration, or for the enforcement of the decisions of the central tribunal. The conditions were almost as favourable for such a change in 1816 as they are to-day, or will be in 1916, and it is another grave point in the indictment of Christianity that it had no inspiration to demand that change. The bishops of England no less than the bishops of Rome were deeply concerned about the rise of democracy and the spread of unbelief, and they joined with the monarchs in enforcing a system of violent repression. For the larger and more real need of Europe they had no feeling whatever, and militarism entered upon its last and most terrible phase : the stage of national armies and of means of destruction prepared with all the fearful skill of modern science.

As the nineteenth century proceeded, humanitarianism attained clearer conceptions and more articulate speech. The scheme of substituting legal procedure for military violence was definitely put before the world. It is not necessary, and would be difficult, to trace the earliest developments of this idea. On the one hand, I find no claim that it was put forward by representatives of Christianity ; on the other hand, literary research among the records of the early Rationalist movements in this country has shown me that the idea was familiar and welcome amongst them. No doubt the aversion of the Friends from bloodshed had some influence, and we find representatives of that noble-minded Society active in more than one of the early reform-movements. But, as far as I can

discover, it was Robert Owen who first definitely advanced the idea of substituting arbitration for war, and it was repeatedly discussed among the "Rational Religion" Societies—which were not at all religious—that he founded or inspired in various parts of the country. The immense influence which he obtained in the thirties and forties enabled him to direct public attention to the reform.

This early history is, however, as yet vague and unstudied, nor do we need to enter into any ungenerous struggle about priority. It is enough that the idealist scheme was well known in England long before the middle of the nineteenth century. Did the Christian Churches adopt and enforce it? Here, at least, no minute research is needed. The Christian bodies failed lamentably and totally (apart from the heterodox Friends) even to recognise the moral and humane greatness of the idea when it was definitely presented to them. It is only in the last few years that a Peace Sunday has—at the suggestion of lay associations—been adopted in the churches and chapels of England. It is only in quite recent times that bishops and ministers have stood on peace-platforms and advocated the reform. And even to-day, when peace associations founded by laymen have been endeavouring for decades to educate the country, no branch of the Christian Church has officially and collectively decreed that Christian principles enjoin the reform; no Pope or Archbishop or Church Council has supported it with a stern and official injunction that Christian and moral principle demands that all the members of the particular Church shall subscribe to and work for the reform. Even at this eleventh hour, when the issue of peace or war confronts the whole of mankind, one notices hesitation, reserve, ambiguity. During the

fateful years between 1900 and 1914, when the nations were, in the eyes of all, preparing the most appalling armaments ever known in history, when men were speaking freely all over Europe of "the next war" and the terrific dimensions which modern science and modern alliances would give to it, the various branches of the Christian Church adhered to their ancient and futile practice of preaching general principles (as far as national conduct is concerned), and had little practical influence on the development.

I am not unaware of the small movements among the clergy for cultivating international clerical friendship, or of the extent to which individual clergymen have co-operated in the various arbitration movements. That is only a feeble discharge of a small part of their duty. Had Leo XIII or Pius X issued a plain and explicit Encyclical on the subject, and directed his vast international organisation of clergy to labour wholeheartedly for its realisation, who can estimate what the result would have been? Had the clergy of Germany issued a stern and collective denunciation of the Pan-German and Imperialist literature which was instilling poison into every village of the country, can we suppose that it would have been without avail? Had the Archbishops and Bishops of England, and the leaders of the Free Churches, definitely instructed their people that the pacifist ideal was not merely in accord with Christian principles, but was one of the most urgent and beneficent reforms of our time, would the English people have passed as inobservantly as it did through the five years of preparation for a great war?

It is no part of my plan to analyse this deplorable failure of the Churches as moral agencies. The explanation would be complex, and is now superfluous. The clergy were, like the majority of their fellows,

obsessed by the military system and unable to realise the possibility of a change. In part they were deluded by the catch-words of superficial literature. They had an idea that we were asking England to lower its armament while the rest of the world increased its armament. They muttered that "the time was not ripe," not realising that it was their business to make it ripe. They had been accustomed for ages to preaching a purely individualist morality, and they felt ill at ease in the larger social applications of moral principle which our age regards as more important. They feared to offend military supporters, and did not realise that one may entirely honour the soldier as long as the military system lasts, yet resent the system. They felt that this new movement was suspiciously hailed by Socialists, and that to denounce armies had an air of politics about it. They were peculiarly wedded to tradition, on account of the very nature they claimed for their traditions, and they instinctively felt that to denounce war would be to attempt to improve, not merely on their predecessors, but on the Old and the New Testaments. They solaced themselves with the thought that unnecessary violence was condemned in their general teaching, and that, if it eventually transpired that war was unnecessary, they could point out once more the all-embracing character of the Christian ethic. In fine, they were for the greater part, like the greater part of their fellows, mentally indolent and indisposed to think out or fight for a new idea.

Whatever the explanation, the fact remains. By the tenth century Christianity was fully organised, and all the peoples of Europe were Christian; by the thirteenth century the power of the Church was enormous and the nations of Europe were settled and

civilised. But neither then nor at any later period did Christianity perceive the crime and stupidity of the prevailing system. The perception is even now only faint and partial. It is this long toleration of the military system, the thousand-year silence on what is now acclaimed as one of the greatest applications of Christian principle, that one finds it difficult or impossible to forgive. The zeal of some of the modern clergy is open to a certain not unnatural suspicion : in view of their shrinking authority and the growing indifference of the world to dogma and ritual, they have been forced to take up these new and larger ideas of our time.

Even if one lays aside that suspicion, and in many cases it is quite unjust, the clergy must realise that the indictment of Christianity is grave, and is almost unatonable. Those thousand years of conflict, during which they sanctioned every variety of war and initiated many wars in their own interest, have given the military system such root in the hearts of men that it will require a supreme and prolonged effort to destroy it. The proverbial visitor from Mars would not be so much amazed at any feature of our life as at this retention amid a great civilisation of the barbaric method of settling international differences. He would ask in astonishment how an intelligent and generally humane race, a race which raises homes for stray cats and aged horses, could cling to a system which, on infallible experience, plunges one or more countries in the deepest suffering every few years. He would learn that there has not been a war in Europe for a hundred years the initial cause of which would not have been better appreciated and adjudicated on by a body of impartial lawyers ; and that, if the quarrels had thus been submitted to arbitration,

we should have saved (including the annual military expenditure and the cost of the present war) some three million lives and more than £15,000,000,000—since the end of the Napoleonic wars. In answer to the amazement of this imaginary critic, we could reply only that Europe has grown to regard the military system as so permanent and unquestioned an institution of our civilisation that it simply cannot imagine the abolition of that system.

For this incapacity, this widespread inertia, this blundering idea that there is some serious intrinsic difficulty in the matter, the Churches are responsible. If they had directed to war the smallest particle of the ardent rhetoric they have poured on disbelief in dogmas which they are to-day abandoning, the public mind would have awakened long ago. There is no intrinsic difficulty in substituting arbitration for war. There are technical difficulties which the great lawyers and statesmen of the peace-movement have given ample promise of surmounting, but the overwhelming obstacle is merely this—the peoples of Europe do not insist on the reform. Of all the large problems which confront the modern mind this is incomparably the simplest. We are hopelessly divided as to the nature of the remedy for most of our social ills. Here the remedy is acknowledged : the plan has been elaborated almost in entirety : the international tribunal already exists, and awaits only its executive, which the nations of Europe could supply to-morrow. It is the will, the demand, that is wanting. For that lack we charge the utter failure of the Churches during the ages of their power to enunciate a plain moral lesson, and their positive encouragement of an evil system. That is the real indictment. It affects the Christian Church in every nation.

## CHAPTER III

### THE APOLOGIES OF THE CLERGY

ANY person who cares to read the reports of the utterances of our clergy in the current religious periodicals will recognise that they are painfully conscious of the reproach which this war implies. One constantly finds them repeating that in this year of tragedy "Christianity has failed" and "the gospel has broken in our hands." It had been their boast that Christianity had civilised Europe, and none of them has the audacity or indecency to claim, as some writers have done, that such a war is in harmony with the principles and ideals of civilisation. They have preached brotherhood and peace, and the greater part of Christendom is engaged in a strife of the most terrible nature. It is not a struggle of Christian and infidel; it is a struggle of Christian and Christian, and one or several of the Christian nations involved are guilty of a crime greater in magnitude than all the murders in Europe during a decade. Above all patriotism, above all immediate anxiety, above all argumentation about responsibility, this grim fact stands out and reproaches them : after fifteen hundred years of Christian preaching Europe is locked in the bloodiest struggle of all time.

During the last fifty or hundred years the clergy have developed some expertness in making apologies. They have lived in a world of anxious questions and

heated charges, and a special department called Apologetics has been added to theology. They are, it is true, sorely perplexed, divided in counsel, uneasy as to their procedure. Some would ignore the pertinacious outsider and persuade their followers that he is negligible; others would sustain an energetic campaign against him. Some would openly and candidly meet the questions of their followers; others would prefer not to unsettle the large number who never ask questions. At the present juncture it is impossible to be wholly silent. Some of the clergy, it seems—I learn this from the recorded words of eminent preachers—wish to ignore the war and go on with their business as usual. But the majority feel that such a procedure is dangerous. This violent breach of Christian principles by Christian nations requires some explanation. Where is the long-boasted moral influence of Christianity? Where is the all-loving ruler of the universe? Let us examine some of the apologies of the preachers.

Let me confess that, from a long experience of this apologetic branch of theology, I am not surprised to find that not a single speaker or writer—as far as my reading of their utterances goes—fairly meets the main difficulty. Most of them, naturally, are content to plead that the war has been forced on Europe by Germany, and that therefore no responsibility lies on Christianity as a whole for the tragedy and the moral failure it involves. A large number of them go even farther. They point to the heroic sacrifices made in defence of an ideal by France, Belgium, England, and Russia—the millions of men streaming to the battle-field, the millions of women bravely enduring the suspense and the loss, the millions who generously open their purses to every philanthropic

enterprise—and they acclaim this as a triumph of Christian civilisation. As to the failure of Christianity in Germany to stand the test, they either point superficially to the growth of Rationalism, Biblical Criticism, and Socialism in that country, or they take refuge in the confusions of the extreme pacifists and refuse to assign responsibility at all, or they persuade themselves that a small minority of men who were not Christians deluded the German people into consenting to the war. In any case, they insist that Christianity as a whole is not impeached. Assume that Austria was dragged into the war by Germany, and you have four Christian nations—five, if one includes Serbia—behaving with great gallantry and entire propriety, and only one Christian nation misbehaving.

There is no doubt that this is the common religious attitude, but it does not satisfy some of the more thoughtful and earnest preachers. This optimism seems to them rebuked by the very fact that Christendom is in a state of war to which Paganism can offer no parallel. They think of the lands beyond the sea to which they have been sending the Christian message of peace and brotherhood. They fancy they see China and Japan smiling their faint but distressing smile at the situation in Christian Europe. They have assured all these distant peoples that their faith has built up a shining civilisation in Europe, and now there flash and quiver through the nerves of the world the daily messages of horror, of fierce hatred, of appalling carnage, of the wanton destruction by Christians of Christian temples. The Gospel has, somehow, broken down in Europe, they regretfully admit.

But they never go beyond this vague admission and boldly state the sin of the Churches. One would

imagine that, in spite of its obvious and lamentable failure, they still thought that their predecessors had been justified in preaching only the general terms of the Christian gospel and never applying it to war. One would fancy that they are so unacquainted with history as to suppose that during the long ages of the past the Churches were really frowning on violence and warfare, instead of blessing and employing it. They fear to draw out in its full proportion the inefficacy (because of its vagueness) of the gospel and the long perversion of its ministers. Yet we cannot evade this fundamental fact of the situation, that this particular war is an outcome of a general military system, and the Churches have a very grave responsibility for the maintenance of that system until the twentieth century. We all know how the technical moral theologian of recent times has glossed the complacency of his Church. He has drawn a distinction between offensive and defensive war, and, since the latter is obviously just, he has maintained that armies are rightly raised to wage it when necessary. On this petty fallacy the Churches have so long reconciled themselves to militarism, and have, in fact, been amongst its closest allies. The clergy did not, or would not, see that the retention of the military system was in itself the surest provocation of offensive war; that ambition or covetousness could almost always find a moral pretext for aggression, and that there have been comparatively few priests in the history of Europe who ever stood out and unmasks the hypocrisy of such monarchs. As long as the military system lasted, it was certain that wars would take place, yet they never denounced the system. The great conception of substituting justice for violence, law for

lawlessness, did not enter the mind of Christianity. It was born of the secular humanitarian spirit of modern times.

For any serious person this is the gravest charge which the clergy have to meet, and they one and all evade it. The civilisation of Europe has a unique greatness on its material side; in its applied science, its engineering, its industries, its commerce. For that, assuredly, the Churches are not in any degree responsible. Our civilisation is unique also in its political power, its mastery over other peoples; and for that again the Churches are not responsible. It is great on the intellectual side, in its science and philosophy, its art and general culture; and that greatness, too, has been won independently of, or in defiance of, the clergy. On the moral side only it may plausibly be connected with its established religion, and here precisely it fails and approaches barbarism. I do not wonder that the Churches are troubled, and do not wonder greatly that they are silent.

But while they are silent on the main issue, they have a vast amount to say about minor issues and secondary aspects. They console and reconcile their people in a hundred ways. Actually they seem, in a great measure, to entertain the idea that the Churches are going to emerge from this trial stronger than ever, and to witness at last that religious revival which they had almost begun to despair of securing. Let me examine a few of these clerical pronouncements. I do not choose the eccentric sermons of ill-educated rural preachers, but the utterances of some of the more distinguished preachers, reproduced with pride and honour in the leading religious periodicals. Yet no person can coldly reflect on these pronouncements and

fail to realise that our generation acts not unnaturally in passing by the open doors of the Churches; that the clergy are, as usual, shirking the most serious questions of the modern intelligence, and trusting mainly to profit by the heated and disordered and confusing emotions of the hour.

One of the most extraordinary of these deliverances reaches me from Australia, but as it comes from one of the leading prelates of the Commonwealth and does assuredly express what multitudes of preachers are saying everywhere, I do not hesitate to give it prominence. Archbishop Carr, of Melbourne, set out in the middle of the war to enlighten his followers, and his words are reported with great deference in the *Melbourne Age* (December 28th). The prelate observed that he had "very strong ideas about the war" (I quote the words of the *Age*), and "did not believe it had happened by accident, or by the chance action of some king or emperor." He believed that "the great God who provided for all human creatures, through the war was punishing sin that had prevailed for a long time, particularly in the shape of infidelity." The Archbishop proved from history and the Bible that war did come sometimes as a punishment of sin, and he concluded, or the journal thus summarises his conclusion :

"The reason that God was using the present war for the punishment of the nations was that for a very considerable time there had been not merely neglect of the worship and service of God, which had always existed to a greater or less extent, but a regular up-raising of human light and human understanding and human will against the existence of the providence of God. It was not so common among us here [it is just as common], but there were countries in Europe in

which the spirit of infidelity and the absence of supernatural faith had been increasing for many years. Men were coming to think they were quite sufficient in themselves for the working out of their own destinies, but the war had come, and it was humbling such men."

Archbishop Carr is not adduced here as a representative type of clerical culture. On what grounds the Roman Catholic authorities select men like him and the late Cardinal Moran to preside over the destinies of their Church in our great and promising Commonwealth is not clear. In the course of this important sermon, in which he is delivering his very personal and mature conclusions on the greatest issue of the hour, the Archbishop observed that "the Roman Empire had been attacked by Attila" and "Attila scourged the Romans for the crimes of which they had for a long while been guilty." One is surprised that he did not add the pretty legend of the awe-stricken Hun retreating before the majestic figure of Pope Leo I. However, most of us are aware that, as a student in any college of Australia ought to be able to inform the Archbishop, Attila never reached within two hundred miles of Rome, and that the Pagan Romans, whom the Archbishop obviously has in mind, had been extinguished long before the monarch of the Huns was born. There is no greater historical scholarship in the other proofs which the prelate brings in support of his thesis that war is often deliberately sent as a punishment.

But what are we to make of the moral standards of an eminent prelate of the Roman Church who can hold and express so appalling a theory? It is based on the moral standard of the Prussian officer, of the

medieval torturer. The majority of clergymen have at length come to realise, tardily and reluctantly, that the man or woman who rejects the creeds they offer may quite possibly not believe in them. The practice of describing a refusal to assent to the doctrine of hell and heaven as a wilful rebellion of passion against the restraining influences of Christianity is going out of fashion. Christian people were meeting too many heretics in the flesh, and did not recognise the thing described from the pulpit. The sturdy Archbishop will have none of this pampering. Unbelief is a matter of the will as well as the understanding. And he actually believes that God guided the thoughts of William II in engineering this war—believes it for a reason a hundred times worse than the Kaiser's idea. He believes that God sent on Europe a war that will cost £10,000,000,000, that is blasting the homes and embittering the hearts of millions, that mingles the innocent and guilty in one common and fearful desolation, that sends millions to a premature death amidst circumstances which do not lend themselves to a devout preparation, that is raising storms of hatred and perverting the souls of millions, because a few other millions refuse to go to church. It would be difficult to conceive a cruder and more barbarous idea. Attila did not scourge the Romans, but he did scourge other peoples; and we hold him up to execration for ever for it. But Archbishop Carr, and many other preachers, think that an all-holy and all-intelligent God can do infinitely worse than Attila. He is going to punish the unbelievers in eternal fire when they die: meantime he will make a hell on earth for the innocent as well as the supposed guilty, the child and the mother as well as the free-thinking father.

Of a truth, it is not surprising that a reluctance to listen to sermons has spread to Melbourne, and that men are wondering whether they had better not take in hand their own destinies rather than entrust them to such spiritual guides as this.

Note, particularly, in passing the emphasis which the Archbishop puts on the determination of our generation to control its own destinies. Until the nineteenth century men entrusted their destinies, on the moral side, to guides like Archbishop Carr. I have described the result. In the nineteenth century there began this practice, which the Archbishop thinks worthy of so inhuman a chastisement, of men attending to their own moral interests. Of this also I have described the result. The moral sentiment of Europe has greatly improved, and there is at least a widespread revolt against warfare and a prospect of abolishing it. For this God, the more than human, scorched Europe with the horrible flames which Archbishop Carr thinks he keeps in his arsenal of torture-implements. The Archbishop says that infidelity has not spread so much in Australia. I should, if I were not well acquainted with the Commonwealth, be disposed to see in that the reason why eminent prelates can still utter such gross medieval nonsense in that country.

In England this particularly crude type of nonsense is not usually uttered by preachers of distinction,<sup>1</sup> though it is common enough among less responsible preachers; but there is a dangerous approach to it in some of the sermons which the religious periodicals

<sup>1</sup> As I write, the Press describes Canon Green of Burnley as saying that "the war is a divine judgment on the world—England for the last ten years has been God-forgetting, drunken, immoral."

regard as important. Looking over the current issues of the religious press, I notice a sermon on the war by Professor Clow, in which the Allies are, in harmony with his test, described as "the vultures of God." Germany, it seems, is the prey, and Germany's sins are painted black. Professor Clow, it is true, shrinks from the very natural implication of his words, but he clearly intimates that he sees the action of God in the military conduct of the Allies, and to that extent he is hardly less revolting, in view of his culture, than the archbishop. Could the God of Professor Clow find no other way of removing Germany's arrogance than to sear and blast it with a world-war and involve millions of innocent along with the guilty in his lakes of fire and blood?

More important, however, is a sermon delivered before the recent National Free Church Council by one of the most esteemed Nonconformist preachers, the Rev. J. H. Rushbrooke, and reproduced admirably in the Nonconformist journals. The cloud of war, naturally, brooded over this gathering of ministers. Some of them heroically closed their eyes to it and went on with their clerical business as usual. But most of the speakers seem to have felt that all other issues were thrust aside in the minds of their followers just now, and that a grave and soul-shaking question possessed them. As a result we have, I suppose, the finest efforts of Nonconformity to meet that question and save the prestige of the Churches.

Mr. Rushbrooke frankly described the war as an overwhelming catastrophe, gravely disturbing the religious mind. It bore witness, he said, to "the failure of organised, or disorganised, Christianity." He conceived it as "God's judgment upon the Church's failure

seriously to devote herself to the great cause of peace on earth and good-will among men.” With all their boasts of what Christianity had done in Europe, it now appeared that that civilisation was raised upon “foundations of sand.” The preacher claimed that much was being done in modern times by the clergy to promote international amity, but he seemed to feel that it was little and was *very* recent. The spectacle unfolded before us in Europe to-day is a sufficient proof of its inadequacy. And, as Mr. Rushbrooke said, we now see how little use it is to preach ideals at home and not apply them to the common life of the world.

These words are the nearest to wisdom that I have found among a large collection of pulpit-utterances and religious articles. The preacher plainly sees, and with some measure of candour confesses, that long remissness of Christian ministers in applying their principles to which the war, and all wars, are fundamentally due. The record which he carefully makes of recent efforts to redeem the failure is paltry in comparison with the resources even of the Free Churches, and only serves to bring out more clearly the awful neglect of Christian ministers during the long ages when they had a mighty power in Europe. But Mr. Rushbrooke makes one grave error. He feels that not merely the relation of the war to Christianity, but its relation to God, is engaging public attention, and he stumbles into the theory that God sent the war. It is “God’s judgment on the Church’s failure.” We must suppose that Mr. Rushbrooke did not literally mean what he said. His words imply a theory of the war more monstrous even than that of Archbishop Carr. To punish Europe for the sins of unbelievers has at least a genuine medieval plausibility about it; but to send this in-

describable plague on the nations of Europe because the clergy failed to do their duty. . . . One must really assume that Mr. Rushbrooke did not mean what he said, and leave the sentence unfinished. What he meant it is impossible to conjecture. To the religious mind "God's judgment" means a chastisement sent by God. But, whatever Mr. Rushbrooke meant, he had been wiser to leave the idea of God out of his comments on this war, and to say frankly that it would bring on them and on their predecessors, on the whole of Christianity, the judgment of man and the judgment of history for their neglect of their opportunities.

The Rev. A. T. Guttery addressed the Council in a more cheerful mood, and his reflections are characteristic of a large group of the clergy. He would not for a moment allow the failure of Christianity. The Churches had, he said, been so successful in compelling the world to recognise the evil of aggressive warfare that even the Germans were eager to describe their action as purely defensive. "The Pagan glory of war for its own sake was gone." And when we acknowledge the comparative failure of religion in Germany, and restrict our attention to the sphere of our own clergy, we find that they have created an entirely new spirit. The lust for territory and for gold is felt no more in England. Here there is no mafficking over victories, there are no hymns of hate. The British nation has been sobered by the influence of Christianity. We may regret that the German people has not proved equally susceptible, and its pastors equally energetic, but we cannot bear their burden. Their naughtiness alone has disturbed the moral progress which, even in this department, Christianity was fostering.

This is, I think, a very usual attitude of the clergy,

and I have already appreciated the sound element of it. There is no comparison between the behaviour of the two nations. Whether England deserves quite all the compliments which Mr. Guttery showers upon it may be a matter of opinion. We have as yet little cause for "mafficking," but there is very little doubt that it will occur on a grandiose scale before the war is over. We do not sing hymns of hate; but it might be hazardous to speculate what we would do if some nation drew an iron ring round our country and reduced us almost to a condition of starvation. We have no lust for territory—I am not sure about the lust for gold—because we have in our Empire territory enough for our population; and we may wait to see if England does not annex any part of Germany's African or Pacific possessions. Mr. Guttery's contrast is crude and superficial. He ignores the economic and geographical conditions which give us a feeling of content and Germany a profound feeling of discontent and a dangerous ambition. The German character is not in itself inferior to ours, and it were well for us to fancy ourselves in Germany's position and wonder if we would have acted otherwise.

On the other hand, I have freely acknowledged, or claimed, that there has been a great improvement in the moral temper of Europe, and that this is especially seen in the odium that is now cast on aggressive or offensive war. But to claim this improvement for the credit of religion is, to say the least, audacious. The more simple-minded of Mr. Guttery's hearers would imagine that the change set in with the fall of Paganism. "The Pagan glory of war for its own sake is gone." When clerical writers speak of Paganism they think that any evil deed ever done by a Pagan is

characteristic of the whole body; they ask us to apply a different standard to their own body. Plato and Socrates were Pagans; Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius—to speak of warriors and statesmen—were Pagans. The truth is that a glory in war for its own sake was no more generally characteristic of Paganism than it was of Christian Europe until a century ago: it was probably less. Most of the German Emperors and of the Kings of England, France, and Spain would fairly come under the description which Mr. Guttery calls Pagan. One hardly needs to know much of history to perceive that this moral improvement in the conception of war belongs to the last century and a half, and it is somewhat bold to claim that a change which made no appearance during a thousand years of profound Christian influence, and did begin to appear and make progress as that faith waned, can be claimed for Christianity. I do not forget that the theologian began long ago, in the seclusion of his cell or study, to condemn offensive warfare. But there have been hundreds of offensive wars waged by Christian monarchs since that date, and we do not read of any instance in which the clergy failed to endorse the thin casuistry by which the offensive was turned into a defensive or a preventive war, or refused to sanction an entire neglect of the principle.

Dr. Scott-Lidgett followed on somewhat similar lines. The whole trouble, he protested, was due to an anti-Christian, illiberal, and inhuman system. It seems that he was referring to Prussia, and it is regrettable that he did not feel called to explain why that system prevails in the year of the Lord 1915, or how it finds an instrument of its ambition in a militarism that ought to have been denounced and abolished

centuries ago. Mr. Shakespeare, another distinguished Nonconformist, follows the same facile course—casts all the responsibility on Germany—and equally fails to explain how Germany came to find the machinery of destruction at its hand in our age.

In fine, Dean Welldon, one of the most energetic spokesmen of the Church of England, addressed this Free Church Council, and imparted an element of originality. He used the inconclusive and dangerous argument of *tu quoque*. If, he said, you claim that this war exhibits the failure of Christianity, you must admit that it shows equally the failure of science and civilisation. Nay, he says, growing bolder, if your contention is true, Christianity has done no more than supply the instrument of its own destruction, but science and civilisation have brought us back to savagery.

It is, of course, difficult to follow a man's rounded thought in the crabbed phrases of an abbreviating reporter, but it is plain that Dean Welldon has here been guilty of a confusion which only betrays his apologetic poverty in face of this great crisis. Science—and it is especially science that the clergy conceive as the rival they have to discredit—has no concern whatever with the war. Science, either as an organised body of teachers or as a branch of culture, has never discussed war, and never had the faintest duty or opportunity to do so. Economic science may discuss particular aspects of war, but the economist deals with things as they are, not as they ought to be. Moral science even is not a preaching agency, desirous of dividing with the clergy the ethical guidance of the people. When men pit science against religion, they usually refer to its superior power of explaining reality.

And if it be objected that therefore no morally educative agency would remain if religion were discarded, the answer is simple. A system of moral idealism founded on science—it is absurd to call it science—does exist, and might at any time be enlarged to the proportions of a national or international educative agency. As yet it is left to individual cultivation or crystallised in a few tiny associations, such as Ethical and Secularist and, partly, Socialist Societies ; and I venture to say, from a large experience of these bodies, that, apart from the professed peace societies, they have been more assiduous than any religious associations in England, in proportion to their work, in demanding the substitution of arbitration for war, and that the overwhelming majority, almost the entirety, of their members are pacifists. To speak of this small organised force, with its slender influence, as equally discredited with the far mightier and thousand-year-older influence of the Churches would be strangely incongruous ; and it is hardly less incongruous to drag science into the comparison.

A somewhat similar distinction must be observed in regard to civilisation. The antithesis of religion and civilisation is confused and confusing. Christian ministers have claimed that *they* are the moral element of civilisation, and they have jealously combated every effort to take from them or divide with them that function. They resist every attempt to exclude their almost useless Bible-lessons from our schools, and to substitute for them a direct and more practical moral education of children. They have for fifteen hundred years claimed and possessed the monopoly of ethical culture in European civilisation, and we are a little puzzled when they turn round and say, with an air of

argument, that if Christianity has failed civilisation also has failed. There is only one civilisation in Europe that has attempted to substitute a humanitarian for a religious training of conduct; one nation that is plainly and overwhelmingly non-Christian. That nation is France. And France has one of the best moral records in modern Europe, and has behaved nobly throughout this lamentable business. In fine, if we take Dean Welldon's words in the most generous sense, if we assume that he refers to the whole body of culture and sentiment which, in our time, aspires to mould and direct the race apart from Christian doctrine, the answer has already been given. Christianity is, as a power in Europe, fourteen centuries old; this humanitarianism is hardly a century old. But there has surely been more progress made during this last century toward the destruction of the military system, and more progress in the elimination of brutality from war, than in the whole preceding thirteen centuries. Does Dean Welldon doubt that? Or does he regard it as a mere coincidence?

Thus, whether we turn to Churchman or Nonconformist, to cleric or layman, we find no satisfactory apology. I have before me a short article by Mr. Max Pemberton on the question, "Will Christianity survive the war?" He uses the most consecrated phrases of the Church, and leaves no doubt whatever that he writes in defence of Christianity. But Mr. Pemberton practically confines himself to a very emphatic personal assurance that Christianity *will* survive the war, and does not honestly face a single one of the questions of "the Pagan" against whom he is writing. He does make one serious point of a peculiar character. There are, he says, "23,000 priests

fighting for France in the trenches." Mr. Pemberton seems to find it easy to accept the interested statements of those Roman Catholic journalists who make sectarian use of some of the London dailies. There are only about 30,000 priests in France, and, since none of them are younger than twenty-three, to suppose that seventy-five per cent. of them are of military age is to take a remarkable view of the population of France. In any case, there is no special ground for rhapsody. They are not volunteers; in France every man must do his civic duty. We may appreciate their devotion to their religion on the battle-field, but Mr. Pemberton must be imperfectly acquainted with the French character if he supposes that the thirty-four million unbelievers of France are going to return to the Church because the younger *curés* did not try to evade the military service which the State imposed on them.

Another document I may quote is a manifesto issued by the "Hampstead Evangelical Free Church Council," a joint declaration of the principal Non-conformist ministers of that highly cultivated suburb. It does not purport to vindicate the Churches, yet some of its observations in connection with the war open out a new page of apologetics. These clergymen invite all the citizens of their district, on the ground of the war, to attend church, even if they have not been in the habit of doing so. On what more precise ground? The able lawyer who received this invitation, and forwarded it to me, thought it, not the most ingenious, but the most curious, piece of pleading he had ever known. The citizens of Hampstead were invited to go to church "to offer up to God a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for his goodness to us as a nation"! At the very time the eminent preachers were writing

this, the darkened city still cowered under the threat of a horrible outrage; the shattered homes and fresh graves of Scarborough and Whitby reminded us faintly of the horrors beyond the sea; the maimed soldiers all over the country, the sad figures of the bereaved, the anxious hearts of a million of our people, were but a beginning of the evil that had fallen on us. We had in fourteen years, since the last war, been obliged to spend a thousand millions sterling in preparation for a war we did not desire, and we were entering upon an expenditure of something more than a thousand millions in a year. All this we had incurred through no fault of ours. And these clergymen thought it a good opportunity to invite us to go to church to thank God for "his goodness to us as a nation."

Another manifesto is signed by a body of archbishops and bishops of the Anglican Church. It enjoined all the faithful to supplicate the Almighty on January 3rd to stop the war. This was to be done "all round the Empire." I will not indulge in any cheap sarcasm as to the result, though one would probably be right in saying that, if the end be deferred to the year 1917, they will still believe that their prayers had effect. What it is more material to notice is that the prelates think that "these are days of great spiritual opportunity." It seems that "the shattering of so much that seemed established reveals the vanity of human affairs," and that "anxiety, separation, and loss have made many hearts sensible of the approach of Christ to the soul." It is, perhaps, unkind to examine this emotional language from an intellectual point of view, but one feels that there is a subtle element of apology in it. These spiritual advantages may outweigh the secular pain; may even justify God's share

in the great catastrophe. I have examined, and will discuss more fully in the next chapter, the theistic side of this plea. Intellectually, it borders on monstrosity : it is the survival of an ancient and barbaric conception. The notion that "the approach of Christ to the soul" is felt especially in time of affliction is merely a statement of a certain type of emotional experience, while the revelation of "the vanity of human affairs" is sheer perversity. Human affairs have for ages been so badly managed, in this respect, that we cannot in a decade or a century rid ourselves of such a legacy. The real moral is to discover who were responsible for that legacy of disorder and violence, and to put our affairs on a new and sounder basis.

A considerable number of clerical writers proceed on the suggestion discreetly advanced by these Anglican prelates. Let us wait, they ask, until the clouds of war have rolled away, and then estimate the spiritual gain to men from the trial through which they have passed, and the closer association of the Churches which it may bring about. Now I have no doubt that many who really believe the doctrines of Christianity, yet have for years neglected the duties which their belief imposes on them, will be induced by this awful experience to return to allegiance. The number is limited, and an equal or greater number may be, and probably will be, induced to surrender religion entirely, and with good reason, by the reflections with which this war inspires them. But to insinuate that this spiritual advantage, if it be an advantage, of the few is justly purchased by the appalling suffering and disorder brought about by the war is one of those religious affirmations which seem to the outsider positively repulsive.

I do not speak merely of the deaths, the pain, the privation, the outrages, the flood of tears and blood over half of Europe. This, indeed, is of itself enough to make the theory repellent to any who do not share the ascetic views taught in the Churches. The notion that an evil is justified if good issue from it is akin to the notion that the end justifies the means. But I would draw attention to an aspect of the war which is almost ignored by these eloquent preachers. They eagerly record every flash of heroism, every spark of charity and mercy, that the war evokes. They refer sympathetically to the dead and the bereaved, the outraged girls and women—whom, in the narrowest Puritanism, they forbid to rid themselves of the awful burden laid on them by drunken brutes—the shattered homes and monuments. But there is a side of war which they must know, and it demands plain speaking. It relaxes the control of moral restraints even where it was before operative. The illegitimate-birth rate of England and France will faintly tell the story before the year is out. Inquiry in any town where our soldiers are lodged, or in the rear of the French and English (or any other) trenches, will tell it more fully. I do not speak of crime and violence, but of willing sexual intercourse where it was never known before. These things, and the increased drunkenness and the stirring of old passions, are regarded by the clergy as amongst the most evil things of life. Do they seriously suggest that they have been brought in to secure, or are justified by, the spiritual advantage of the refined and emotional few whose religion is only deepened by affliction ?

In short, I find not a single phrase of valid explanation or apology in these and other prominent clerical

pronouncements I have read. They are superficial, contradictory, and vapid. Nothing is more common than for religious writers to protest that the conception of reality which is opposed to theirs is shallow. What depth, what sincere grip of reality, does one find in any of these pulpit utterances? Yet I have taken the pronouncements of official bodies or of distinguished preachers who may be trusted to put the Christian feeling in its most persuasive form. One thinks that God sent the war; another attributes it to German rebels against God. One regards it as a spiritual agency devised for our good; another says that it is an unmitigated calamity sent for our punishment. One sees in it the failure of Christianity; others find in it precisely a confirmation of Christian teaching. Some think it will draw men to God; others that it will drive men from God. Unity, perhaps, we cannot expect; but the empty rhetoric and utter sophistry of most of these utterances reveal the complete lack of defence. On the main indictment of the Christian Church, its failure to have condemned and removed militarism long ago, all are silent; or the one preacher who notices it can only dejectedly confess that it is true.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WAR AND THEISM

IN the leading Catholic periodical of this country there has been some nervous discussion of the attitude of the Pope. A new man, a strong and enlightened man, happens to have mounted the chair of Peter in the midst of the war. For more than a century his predecessors have bemoaned the increasing wickedness of the world : Pius VII, tossed like a helpless cork on the waves of the Revolution ; Leo XII and Pius VIII, the associates of the Holy Alliance ; Gregory XVI, eating sweetmeats or mumbling his breviary while young Italy sweated blood ; Pius IX, grasping eagerly his tatters of sovereignty ; Leo XIII, the unsuccessful diplomatist ; Pius X, the medieval monk. They saw their Church shrink decade by decade, and they witnessed the prosperity of all that they denounced. Benedict XV came to save the Church, and a great moral opportunity awaited him. But, while claiming to be the moral arbitrator of the world, he avoids his plain duty, and is content to repeat the worn phrases about the iniquity of the modern spirit. His apologists say that the war is politics, and that Popes must not interfere in politics.

I have earlier explained in what sense this war presents a political aspect to Benedict XV, and given the reason for his reluctance. It is typical of the whole failure of Christianity. A little over nineteen centuries

ago, it is said in the churches, a star shone over the cradle of the Saviour, and choirs of angels announced his coming as a promise of "peace on earth and goodwill among men." I am not in this little work examining the whole question of the influence of Christianity. But it is well to recall that, according to its own records, its first and greatest promise to the world was peace; and to that old Roman Empire, and to Europe at any stage in its later history, no greater blessing could have been brought. Has Christianity succeeded?

But the religious interest of the war is by no means exhausted when we have concluded that it marks, in one of the most important departments of human action, the complete failure of historical Christianity. My purpose is to discuss this relation to the Churches, and it would not be completed unless I considered the war in relation to their fundamental doctrine, the moral government of the universe by a Supreme Being. In a few months, we hope, the war will be over: the Allies will have triumphed. We know, from experience and from history, what will follow in the Churches. From end to end of Britain, from Dover to Penzance and from Southampton to Aberdeen, there will rise a jubilant cry that God has blessed our arms and awarded us the victory. Now that we are in the midst of the horrors and burdens of the war God is little mentioned. One would imagine that the great majority of the clergy conceived him as standing aside, for some inscrutable reason, and letting wicked men deploy their perverse forces. When the triumph comes, gilding the past sacrifices or driving them from memory, God will be on every lip. The whole nation will be implored to come and kneel before the altars. Royalty

and nobility and military, judges and stockbrokers and working men—above all, a surging, thrilling, ecstatic mass of women—will gather round the clergy, and will avow that they see the finger of God in this glorious consummation. The relation of the war to God will then become the supreme consideration for the Christian mind. It may be more instructive to consider it now, before the last flood of emotion pours over our judgments.

I have already discussed some of the clerical allusions to the share of God in the war. They are so frankly repellent that one cannot be surprised that the majority of the clergy prefer to be silent on that point. They prefer to await the victory and build on its more genial and indulgent emotions. The war is either a blessing or a curse. One would think that there was not much room for choice, but we saw that some are bold enough to hint that the spiritual good may outweigh the bodily pain. They remind us of a Treitschke or a Bernhardi writing smugly of the moral grandeur of war, the need to brace the slackness of human nature periodically by war, the chivalry and devotion it calls out, and so on.

Still worse is the theory of those who regard war frankly as a curse, yet put it to the direct authorship of the Almighty. This theory is natural enough in the minds of men and women who believe in hell. In earlier ages men could not distinguish between the law of retaliation and the need to deter criminals by using violence against them when they transgressed. In many primitive systems of justice the law of retaliation is expressly consecrated. It is even introduced, inconsistently and as a survival of barbaric times, in the Babylonian and the Judaic codes, side by side with

saner views. It is, of course, merely a systematisation of brute passion. In the beginning, if a man knocked your tooth out, you knocked one of his teeth out. With the growth of law and justice, the barbarous nature of the impulse was recognised, and the community, by its representatives, inflicted a "punishment" on the offender instead of allowing the offended to retaliate. With the modern improvement of moral sentiments we have realised that this is an imperfect advance on the barbaric idea. The community has no more right to "punish" than the offended individual had. We now impose hardship on an offender only for the purpose of intimidating him from repeating the offence, or of deterring others from offending. The idea is still somewhat crude, and a third stage will in time be reached; but it is satisfactory that we now—not since the advent of Christianity, but since the rise of modern humanism—all admit that the only permissible procedure is deterrence, and not punishment as such.

It may seem ungracious to be ever repeating that these improvements did not take place during the period of Christian influence, but in the recent period of its decay. There is, however, in this case a most important and urgent reason for emphasising the fact. I say that we *all* admit the more humane conception of punishment, but this must be qualified. In human affairs we do: Carlyle was, perhaps, the last moralist to cling to the old conception. But in the religious world the old idea has been flagrantly retained. The doctrine of eternal punishment is clearly based on the barbaric old idea that a prince whose dignity has been insulted may justly inflict the most barbarous punishment on the offender. Theologians have, since the

days of Thomas Aquinas, wasted whole reams of parchment in defending the dogma of hell, because they knew nothing whatever of comparative jurisprudence and the evolution of moral ideas. To us the development of the doctrine is clear. In the Christian doctrine of hell we have a flagrant survival of the early barbaric theory of punishment. Modern divines—while continuing to describe the non-religious view of life as “superficial” and the Christian as “profound”—have actually yielded to the modern sentiment, and in a very large measure rejected one of the fundamental dogmas of the Christian tradition. In order to conceal the procedure as far as possible, some of them are now contending brazenly that Christ never taught the doctrine of eternal punishment, and are deluding their uncultivated congregations with sophistical manipulations of Greek words.

This does not mean that Christians have lower moral sentiments than non-Christians, but that the rigidity of their traditions, which they regard as sacred and unalterable, imposes restrictions on them. Hence the fact that, while Protestants have so very largely rejected the doctrine of hell, Roman Catholics, with their more rigid conservatism and claim of infallibility, still cling to it, and offer the amazing spectacle of a body claiming to possess the highest ideals in the world, yet actually cherishing an entirely barbaric theory. There is probably not a Catholic lawyer in the world who does not reject the old idea of punishment as barbaric, yet he placidly believes that God retains it. That is why we find a Catholic archbishop like Carr putting forth so revolting an idea of the war, while Protestant preachers as a rule shrink from mentioning God in connection with it. These things

make it impossible for one to understand how non-Christians can say, as they do sometimes, that if they *were* to accept a creed, it would be the Roman creed.

Any theory of the war which proceeds on the lines of the hell-theory is simply barbaric, and is beneath serious discussion. We know to-day that both ethics and religion are in a state of constant evolution. We look back over a stream of several thousand years of historically traceable development; we follow that stream faintly through earlier tens of thousands of years in the ideas of primitive peoples; and we see the evolution going on plainly in the creeds and ethical codes of our own time. But the practice of registering certain stages of this evolution in sacred books or codes, which are then imposed on man for centuries or millennia as something unalterable, has been and is a very serious hindrance to development, both in ethics and religion. It is all the worse because these codes and sacred books always contain certain elements which belong to even earlier and less enlightened stages, and whole regiments of philosophers or theologians are employed for ages in putting glosses on ancient and barbaric ideas at which the world eventually laughs. However, we need not linger here over these ancient ways of regarding life. The man who keeps his God at a moral level which we disdain ourselves rarely listens to argument. He protects his "faith" by believing that it is a mortal sin (involving sentence of hell) to read any book that would examine it critically. It is a most ingenious arrangement by which the doctrine of a vindictive God protects itself against moral progress.

Now any suggestion that God sent this war upon Europe—whether as a judgment on the clergy, or a

judgment on unbelievers, or a judgment on the arrogance of the Germans, etc.—is part of this old barbarism, and may be disregarded. It conceives that God is vindictive, and at the same time assures us that Christianity sternly condemns vindictiveness. It allows God to deal mighty blows at those who affront him, and tells men to bear affront with patience and turn the other cheek to the smiter. It is simply part of that mixture and confusion of old and new ideas which a codified religion always exhibits. We pass it by, and turn to more serious considerations. I pass by also eccentric ideas of Deity like those of Sir Oliver Lodge or Mr. G. B. Shaw—two oracles who have been singularly silent on the religious aspect of the war. Let us examine the main religious problem as broadly and as honestly as we can.

The first and chief reflection that occurs to any man who does thus seriously examine the relation of the war to theism is that, after all, it is not so easy to disentangle theology from the crude old doctrines which our more liberal divines think they have abandoned. They tell us that they do not believe in a vindictive Deity, they disdain the doctrine of eternal punishment, they smile at many of the Judaic conceptions of Jehovah in the Old Testament. God is the all-holy and benevolent ruler of the universe. They refuse to believe that the souls of sinners and unbelievers are tortured for ever after death, and trust the whole scheme of things to the love and justice of God.

The grave difficulty of this enlightened theology, indeed of all theology, is the immense amount of pain and evil in the universe, and this mighty war we are considering puts it in a very acute form. It is

amusing to look back on some of the lines of apologetics in recent years. There was a school of people, following some "profound" religious thinker, who held that evil was "only relative." They made the wonderful discovery that everything real is good, in the metaphysical sense, and evil is unreal. Evil, they said, is merely the negation, the falling-short, of good; and you do not ask for the creator or cause of a negative thing. More recently a school endeavoured to come to their assistance with the discovery that pain does not really exist at all. One did not need to know philosophy or science in order to realise that a sensation of pain is just as positive and real a thing as a sensation of pleasure; or that, although death is *only* the negation of life, one is really entitled to ask why one's dear child is thus "negated" at the age of six or twelve. Then there came this new school with its discovery that pain does not exist. Death, of course, is an entry into a more glorious life beyond; pain is an illusion to be banished by resolute thought. These childish symposia were interrupted every few years by some disastrous earthquake, the sinking of a great liner, an epidemic of disease, a famine, and so on; but the pious philosophers bravely struggled on. One may trust that the war has reduced them to silence, and that we need not linger over them.

Then there was the school which sought desperately to find good in evil. A man or woman is stricken with disease. Very often it brings with it a softening, an improvement, of character; either in the patient or in the nurses, or in both. Our religious philosophers fancied they caught in this a glimpse of the divine plan: cancer was an instrument of righteousness in the hands of the Almighty, the bacillus of tuberculosis

was a moral agency. They detected cases in which adverse fortune had sobered and softened a man : the finger of Providence. In France there was a very considerable return to the Catholic Church, and recovery of its power, after the disastrous war of 1870. In the south of Italy there is always much less sexual freedom for a time after an earthquake has buried a few tens of thousands under the ruins of their houses. I would undertake to fill a quarto volume with instances of good things which arose out of or followed upon evil experiences. We saw that the present war is being examined in the same respect. There are "great spiritual opportunities": hundreds of thousands of young men are being compelled (by the authorities) to go to church who had not been for years; the different denominations are fraternising as they never did before; the churches are rather fuller than they had been of late; charity is awakened on a prodigious scale; zeal for an ideal (the violated peace of Belgium) is dragging men even from our slums to the colours. Here again one could at least fill a moderate treatise with the things achieved; and beyond them all is the unuttered vision of the crowded churches at the triumphant close of the war, perhaps that long-coveted religious revival.

There is no doubt whatever that this theory of the war will be assiduously pressed when nature has drawn her green mantle once more over the blackened area of the war and our hearts are lifted up by thought of victory. It is already being urged, and I would add a little to the comments I have already passed on it.

The clergy would do well to realise that, whatever virtue this theory may have in soothing the minds and dissolving the doubts of their followers, to an outsider

it seems monstrous. In the first place, it includes no sense of proportion, and amounts to a colossal untruth. We must surely take into account the amount of evil inflicted and the amount of good that ensues. Take sickness, for instance. One would imagine that, if Christians seriously believe that illness is sent by God to achieve certain salutary modifications of character, they ought strenuously to oppose the modern determination to reduce disease to a minimum. They do not, and would, on the contrary, soon reduce to silence any religious crank who proposed it. They know perfectly well that the cases of "spiritual advantage" from illness bear no proportion whatever to the amount of suffering in the world. Slight but painful illnesses rarely have any beneficent effect on character; very frequently the reverse. Any large city, at any given moment, is racked with pains which do but give rise to curses, or a polite equivalent. Most of the irritation and perversion of character is due to morbid influences. And for every case in which a long illness issues in some signal advance of character, a hundred others could be quoted in which the illness was an unmitigated calamity. So it is with bereavement and with adversity of fortune. Look honestly into the experience of any class of the community, and ask in what *proportion* of cases narrowness of means, especially after comfort, brings a "spiritual advantage."

So it is above all with this war. Any man who thinks that the awful perversion of the character of a great European people, the death of such vast numbers in such painful circumstances, the ruin of further millions, and all the innumerable ugly results of a great war, were worth bringing about in order to secure a few spiritual advantages has neither sense

of proportion nor sense of decency nor sense of humour. The theory would be too repulsive if it were put in this plain form, and it is more usual merely to point out these good results and hint that war is not absolutely and in every respect an evil. As if any person ever said that it was. The point is simple, and ought not to be obscured. A few incidental advantages do not reconcile us to this colossal misery, suffering, and waste, and do not in the slightest degree alleviate the position of the man who thinks that God directed human events to this awful consummation. If an earthly ruler employed such agencies to educate his subjects, with such an extraordinary disproportion between the suffering inflicted and the results attained, what should we think of him?

The parallel reminds us that of infinite wisdom we expect infinitely more than of a human ruler. Once unintelligent nature had a crude, wasteful, hard method of producing new and higher types of life. Man, having intelligence, produces the same result without waste or suffering. We expect immeasurably higher procedure of such an intelligence as Christians ascribe to God. One can understand the man who says that the plan of such an intelligence might be beyond human ken, but I am discussing the opinions of people who contend that they bring it within human ken. In fact, there is no need here to remind us of the mysteriousness of the ways of an infinite intelligence. If the war was designed for certain practical uses, such as those we have had suggested by various divines, one may reply at once that a more brutal and unjust way of attaining those ends could not have been devised. It is almost impossible to conceive any man seriously entertaining the notion.

Yet all the jubilation and thanksgiving that will follow the war, all the supplication that accompanies its fortunes to-day, and the whole teaching of Christian theology, imply that God did direct the political movements and military ambitions which have culminated in the war. Even a human statesman could have devised a less terrible method of attaining any end that has yet been conceived for the war. The idea of the war as a punishment is quite logical and intelligible, though five hundred years out of date. But the idea of the war as a medicinal or an educative process has neither logic nor intelligibility, and does not even attain that consistency with modern ethical sentiments which it seeks. The colossal amount of suffering inflicted on innocent people and on children puts it entirely out of court.

Thirdly, this theory, as I said, raises the question whether the end justifies the means. Here we have another illustration of the way in which Christian dogma keeps the Christian conscience in many matters behind the ethical sentiment of the age. Many liberal divines would express genuine repugnance at Archbishop Carr's view of the war; yet some of the most liberal of these divines and laymen are almost as backward in another direction. They justify the world-process through which we are struggling on the ground that it will, we hope, issue in a nobler order of things : of the war, in particular, that hope is entertained, and to the war, accordingly, this theory of justification is applied. That is a case of the end justifying the means. Christian thinkers are advancing so rapidly and erratically that in some cases we are not clear whether the writer does or does not regard God as infinite in power and intelligence. We may

ignore these few cases. The vast majority emphatically hold that view. In their regard we can say only what has been said a hundred times. Whether you speak of the world-process in general or any particular cruel phase of it, such as this war, you maintain that God chose, out of many conceivable ways, the one way that is marked by cruelty and suffering. An infinite God is not so confined in the choice of means. And just as we say of the world-process in general, that to build the sunnier lives of a remote generation on the sufferings of this and earlier generations implies a grave injustice to *us*, so we must say of the war. No spiritual advantages to those who survive will reconcile us to the suffering and the loss of those who fell in the tragic combat. I speak impersonally. It happens that I have no near relatives of military age, and neither I nor any near relative is likely to suffer by the war. But when I brood over the agony of the less fortunate millions, over the harrowing experience of Belgians, Poles, and Serbs, over the whole ghastly orgy of blood and tears in Europe, I feel unutterable disdain of these paltry efforts to justify the ways of God to man.

Let us look a little deeper into the matter. No doubt the plain statement that God "sent" or caused this war will excite a certain repugnance in many Christian minds. They will prefer to say that God "permitted" it. Man has "free will," and it is the plan of providence to give a certain play to this free will. When man has bruised his shins—more frequently the shins of other people—God may, on being supplicated sufficiently, issue his veto and put matters right. I am quite acquainted, from a severe theological education, with the more learned language in which this theory is expressed by theologians, but I

prefer to deal with it as it exists in the words of most preachers and the minds of most Christians.

It would be impossible here to deal at any length with the doctrine of free will. Unless you conceive it in some novel and irrelevant sense, as Professor Bergson does, it is a very much disputed thing amongst the experts whose business it is to inform us on the subject—our psychologists. The majority of modern psychologists seem to reject it altogether. On the other hand, no theologian has ever yet reconciled it in any intelligible scheme with the supposed omnipotence of God. But it is not necessary to enter into these abstruse considerations. Let us take the matter in the concrete.

We look back to-day on a long series of processes and circumstances which culminate in the war. There is the whole history of Germany for a hundred and fifty years inspiring the German people with a bias toward aggressive war; there are the economic and geographical circumstances which, at the end of the nineteenth century, begin to make it think again of aggressive war; there is the overflowing population, bred by order of the clergy who stupidly condemn an artificial restriction of births; there is the coincident trouble of Austria with the Slavs, of England with its subject peoples, and so on. In the eyes of the careful student a hundred lines of circumstance and development have led to this war. The melodramatic idea that it all springs from the free will of the Kaiser, or of a group of soldiers and statesmen, need not be seriously considered. Moreover, even when we introduce the personal element—and the personality of the Kaiser has had a very considerable influence—it is foolish to throw the whole burden on free will.

The mood and outlook and ambition of the Kaiser take their colour from his notoriously morbid nervous frame. In a word, you have a mighty concurrence of movements, whether acts of will or otherwise, converging in all parts of Europe toward this war. Was God indifferent to the whole of those movements?

Those movements are particularly traceable in Europe during the last fourteen years. Before that there was a similar concurrence of movements eventuating in the South African War; and in the meantime a series of processes and circumstances had given us the Russo-Japanese War and the Balkan-Turkish War and the Mexican War. So we might go over the wars of the nineteenth century and all earlier wars. The "permissiveness" or indifference of the ruler of the universe grows amazingly. In the meantime we had mighty catastrophes like the sinking of the *Titanic* and other ships, the earthquakes at Messina and elsewhere, famines and epidemics and floods in various places, and great numbers of murders, railway and other accidents, etc. We begin to ask *where* the ruling of the universe comes in at all, and, as far as human events go, all that we can gather in the way of reply is that sometimes individuals who pray very fervently get their diseases healed or their coffers filled; and even these claims do not pass rational inquiry.

Now here is the precise difficulty of the unbeliever, and this present tragedy makes it acute. We ask our neighbour, or seek in some learned theological treatise, what are the indications of this government of the universe, and we are told about the making of stars and the decoration of flowers and the putting of instincts into animals or pretty patterns on their skins. But when we point out that the really im-

portant thing in our part of the universe is this human life of ours, imperfectly protected as yet against disease and malice (which is largely disease) and natural forces, the theologian has no clear evidence to produce. Even the evidence he draws from stars and flowers and peacocks' tails and sunsets, with which he is, as a rule, very imperfectly acquainted, is, of course, heatedly disputed, and the proper authorities on these subjects are, on the whole, not well disposed toward his interpretation. But we need not consider that here. Where we should most logically expect the hand of Providence is in the human order, because in that order catastrophe is infinitely more important, in view of man's capacity for pain. Yet it is precisely in regard to this order that the theologian is vaguest and least satisfactory. He talks grandly of God moving every atom in the universe, counting the hairs of our heads, numbering (but not preventing) the fall of the sparrows, and so on; but when we ask for the evidence of God's concern with contemporary human events he is very vague if they are good events, and, if they are evil, he hastily disclaims any interference of the Deity. Some of our more advanced theologians are claiming that the finest improvement they have made in their science is to have brought God from *without* the universe (where no theologian had ever put him) and make him *immanent* in it. But they seem just as incapable as the others to trace his interposition in human events.

Theologians still maintain a valiant and stubborn fight against scientific men, but they do not fight historians. They are very keen on maintaining the influence of God over atoms and stars and roses and birds, but not half so keen to vindicate it in the life

of man. The story of the world, *our* world, may be divided into three chapters: a chapter describing the moulding of the globe and the rocks, a chapter describing the slow evolution of the plants and animals, and a chapter describing the antics and fortunes of man. Some may surrender the first chapter to science, some the second chapter, but it looks as if they all surrender the third. They have long been accustomed to surrender the early part, and very much the longer and more laborious part, of man's story to natural forces, or the devil. Then there was a melodramatic notion that God, after the lapse of hundreds of thousands of years, began to take an interest in one very small people and kept revealing things to it, and smiting its enemies, until Christianity was given to the world. History tells the story in a totally different way. We find the stream of moral and religious evolution flowing steadily on nineteen hundred years ago, much as we do to-day. At this point, of course, the theologian does make a struggle with the historian. In proportion to the imperfectness of his culture and the backwardness and conservatism of his Church, he fights for miraculous interpositions in human events nineteen hundred years ago. But we need not delay to examine that difference of opinion, because the later period suffices for my purpose.

A few theologians, not well acquainted with history, see another miraculous interposition in the fourth century, when Christianity was established; and the Roman Catholic—in the intellectual rear, as usual—believes in hundreds of miraculous interpositions, in small matters, as late as the year 1914. But in order to take a broad view of the matter we may leave these controversies with the more reactionary on one side.

The history of Europe for the last fifteen centuries at least is now entrusted to able laymen, and it has been purged of divine interpositions. Innumerable myths and legends, often based on what are now acknowledged to be spurious documents, have been cast out of the science, and we are presented with a quite continuous and purely natural sequence of events. Religious historians like Bishop Creighton or Lord Bryce do not find their periods broken by divine interpositions; the writers of the Cambridge History do not occasionally arrest us before some great event and warn us that the chain of human causation seems to be obscure or discontinuous. There are, of course, problems of history, but they are not obscurities which, like the obscure places in science, tempt the theologian to enter and claim a divine interposition. The story is from beginning to end—to use Nietzsche's phrase—"human, all too human." On the whole, as it has been hitherto written, it is a story of wars, and, though patriotic piety puts its gloss on the issue of a war here and there, the historian does not find any serious problem in them. No French historian will now claim divine action in the Napoleonic wars, and assuredly few of us are prepared to see the finger of God in the fortunate issue of Prussia's many campaigns since Frederick the Great.

Whatever we may think of the cosmic process generally, the human part of that process does not encourage a theological interpretation. Man is working out his own destiny, and doing it ill. We see him, like some pedlar plodding along a country road under his burdens, carrying through whole centuries institutions and ideas and follies that he will eventually shed. When he drops them, there is no more element

of miracle or revelation in his action than when he discovers the use of steam or of aluminium or of the spectroscope. His mind expands and his ideals rise. It is a little incongruous to suppose that some infinitely wiser and affectionate parent was looking on all the time and giving no assistance. In the dialogue between Mephistopheles and God which Goethe prefixes to his *Faust*, the devil obviously scores. In the sight of such an intelligence man must have made a pretty fool of himself during the last 1500 years. We human beings are more charitable. Take the whole story as the gradual development of human intelligence and emotion under unfavourable political conditions, hampered by a despotic and perverse clergy, and it seems natural enough.

This is the impression one gets from history, and the nearer history is to our own time and the better we know it, the less it suggests a divine guidance. There is something parochial or rural about the average Christian way of looking at events. One day the German Christian goes to church to thank God for driving the Russians out of East Prussia; the next day the English Christian thanks the same God for killing or wounding 20,000 Germans at Neuve Chapelle—with the help of 350 guns. Yet such things as these are the only claims we have offered to us of the action of God in human events. Neither the steps that man takes onward nor the steps that he takes backward are ascribed to divine influence. All that is claimed is that when a ship goes down, for instance, he saves the saved, and “permits” the rest to be drowned; when a war has been raging for a few months by his “permission,” he puts a stop to it when one army is worn out. The unbeliever is really

entitled to a good deal of sympathy for his inability to follow this tortuous reasoning with confidence. One cannot entirely blame him for being more interested in the heart of man than in the petals of a rose.

These considerations are, of course, not novel. I am only applying to this special case of the war a difficulty that has been discussed in all ages, and has been acutely felt by very able religious thinkers. How a group of bishops can sit down to write, in very deliberate and elegant language, that such a calamity as this makes the soul more sensible of "the approach of Christ" is one of the many little mysteries of the clerical mind. It has precisely the opposite effect in any logical mind. When the way of life is smooth, and our nation or home is prospering, we may be genially disposed to think that God is near and is looking after us as well as the sparrows. But when a black storm bursts suddenly and disastrously on us; when the earth shakes their roofs on ten thousand of our fellows, or a great ship strikes a rock and pours a laughing crowd suddenly into the lap of death; when vast provinces are laid desolate by war, and we see the tens of thousands clasping the hand of their loved ones for the last time, it seems rather uncanny that this should suggest to any person the approach of Christ. To very many people it is a confirmation of the general impression they get from the world-process and the story of man: that these great forces deploy and interlace and build up and destroy without the slightest intervention from without.

In our time, we must remember, this difficulty had already been enormously increased. St. Augustine, who felt the problem acutely in the prime of his intelligence, had really a very much lighter task than

the modern divine. He had merely to suggest why evil was permitted in the narrow world he knew; and he had the great advantage of being able to appeal to a primitive sin and primitive punishment of the race. The problem became more serious when original sin, or at least the notion that the race might justly be damned for one man's fault, was abandoned. It became graver still when science discovered the tombs of inhabitants of this globe who had lived during millions of earlier years, and showed that the very law of their life and progress was struggle against evil. Every attempt to minimise the struggle of those earlier ages has failed. At a time when there was no possibility of "spiritual advantage" there was acute consciousness of pain, the struggle and suffering were prodigious. Theistic literature of the last half century, growing more weary and more wistful in each decade, reflects the increasing difficulty. If any man can see in this war a relief of the difficulty, and not an appalling accentuation and illustration of it, he must be gifted with a peculiar type of mind and emotion. It is more probable that an increasing number will conclude that, if God is indifferent to these things, they will be indifferent to him. Professor William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, declared that the only gods the men of the new generation would recognise would be gods of some use to them. The war does not encourage the chances of the Christian God.

A few modern religious thinkers seem to imagine that they have found some relief by devising the formula that God's plan is to "co-operate with man," and in those modern advances which I have freely admitted they see indications of this co-operation.

This new formula is not a whit better than the other phrases which have, at various stages, been regarded by religious people as profound thoughts. In the recent history of moral progress we have, as a rule, a minority of high-minded men and women struggling to impress their sentiments on the inert majority. The new theologian is not daunted in the application of his theory by the fact that a large proportion of these pioneers did not believe in God at all, so I will not discuss that aspect; though no doubt the plain man will find it interesting to trace how, in the earlier and more difficult days of modern humanism, so few of the reformers were Christian ministers and so many Rationalists. From the historical point of view, however, we find this line of development quite intelligible. We find, for instance, Robert Owen (a great Rationalist) advocating the substitution of arbitration for war nearly a century ago, and we discover the earlier sources of Owen's enthusiasm in English Radicals like Godwin, who were affected by the early French Revolutionaries, who had been influenced by Rousseau, and so on. It is a quite natural evolution of ideas, as they find a congenial soil in each generation in certain types of temperament. But where are the traces or what was the nature of God's co-operation with these men? Looking to their generally heterodox character and the hostility of the Churches to them, the idea is not without humour; but, even if we reconcile ourselves to this peculiar feature, anything in the nature of positive evidence of divine action is wholly lacking, and we can understand the whole process without it. The theory is merely a desperate and unfounded assertion of men who are determined that God shall not be left out.

There is a further grave difficulty. One would imagine that the kind of paternal affection which is ascribed to God would have induced him to intervene at an earlier stage. The kind of father who co-operates with the more gifted and ambitious of his children, and does nothing for the less gifted and sluggish, is a narrow-minded and narrow-hearted man. Affection turns rather to those who cannot help themselves, or who need judicious and constant inspiration. This view we are considering is even less flattering to God, because the aspiring children of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem able to dispense with his co-operation, while the ignorant and priest-ridden children of earlier ages could do little of themselves. The theologians who have found this new formula are of the more liberal school. They do not attribute all the blunders and crimes and failures of the Middle Ages to free will, to a sheer and deliberate obstinacy in clinging to evil. They realise the overpowering nature of the environment and the drastic discouragement by the clergy of anything like novelty or initiative in ethics. It was then that man needed God, if there is a God. But, on this theory, God argued with the academic wisdom of a medieval theologian; he concluded that medieval men were quite capable of originating modern ideas, and he would not co-operate until they did. The theory is preposterous in every respect.

Finally, we have the very large class of candid or of hopelessly puzzled Christians who give up the matter as a mystery. They do not understand how this ruling of the universe which they seem to see clearly in stars and flowers should become so obscure or disappear altogether in the human order. They

realise that, if this war were an isolated occurrence, they might imagine God holding his hand for a season, for some reason unknown to us; but they know that it is not an isolated occurrence: it is part of the human order of things. It has been preceded by other wars at intervals of every few years, and war itself is only one of a series of catastrophes and calamities that splash the human chronicle with innocent blood. They give it up, sorrowfully, and find a thin consolation in learned formulæ about the impossibility of a finite mind understanding an infinite mind, and so on: which give, as I say, thin consolation, for one may at least see that an infinite benevolence ought not to act worse than a moderate human benevolence.

Now if there were any very strong evidence of divine ruling outside the human order, we might find a certain amount of logic in this position. The mystery of a God who moves the stars and inspires the bees, yet leaves man to his own unhappy impulses (after putting those impulses in him), would be, one imagines, painful enough; but if there were irresistible evidence that God does move the stars and quicken the bird and beast, we might be compelled to reconcile ourselves to that unhappy dilemma. There is, however, no such irresistible evidence. This is not the place to examine such evidence as is adduced. I must be content to recall the fact that it is all highly controverted; that theologians tear to pieces each other's " proofs " of the existence of God; and that a large and increasing body of cultivated men and women discard the evidence entirely. So that, in the last resort, the situation is this: on the one hand we have a number of very disputable suggestions, which are growing fainter in proportion as science investigates these matters, of

divine action in stars and rocks and reptiles, and on the other hand we have a stupendous mass of suffering, starting millions of years ago at the very birth of consciousness and piled up mountains high in this year 1915, which no thinker has ever yet reconciled with the notion of a divine ruling of the life of man. This is a very grave and plain situation, and if the clergy have nothing more to say about it than to borrow from an ancient Hebrew certain offensive gibes at the unbeliever, or to offer us the kind of apologies we examined in the last chapter, one must conclude that they do not realise the situation. The war has terribly accentuated the most terrible difficulty they ever had to face. Whether there is intelligence manifested in nature is, after all, an academic question which does not profoundly stir the modern world. Whether there is benevolence, a moral personality, reflected in the course of man's history is the much more important question. And this appalling calamity will induce many to take a more candid view of the world-process and conclude that, as far as the critical eye can see, man's world seems to be left entirely to his own efforts, to his own crimes and blunders and aspirations.

## CHAPTER V

### THE HUMAN ALTERNATIVE

If the observations I have made in the preceding chapters are even approximately just, the hope which many of the clergy express, that there will be a religious revival at the close of the war, is very singular. No doubt it means, on the whole, that some advantage to religion will be sought in the flood of genial and generous emotion which will surge through the country. In Germany and Austria, one imagines, religion will have a rough experience. The people who wrote and repeated constantly, "Gott strafe England"—which, by the way, is another proof that the general German attitude is theological rather than humanist—will have a few serious questions to put to the clergy, as well as to their secular rulers. In France, despite the reports of interested people, there will be little change. The nation, being overwhelmingly Rationalistic, relied on its 75-centimetre guns rather than on prayer, and will find its wisdom justified. But in England and Russia, and in the backward Slav countries, there will be mighty flag-waving in Church, and no doubt a great number of not very thoughtful people will conclude that the clergy and the Y.M.C.A. and the Salvation Army have behaved very nicely over the whole affair, and there will be, for a time, an increased attendance at church.

We may suppose that this emotional storm will not

last long, and the nation will settle down to face the bill, the empty chairs at home, and the disorganisation of its industries. Then will arise the questions I have been endeavouring to answer in this little book. The clergy behaved very well during the war, short of volunteering in any conspicuous number for active service; but what is the sense of this lofty message of "peace on earth and good-will among men" which never produces any result? The Churches are fairly eager to join in the work of peace now that it is being promoted by large associations of laymen; but where, in the name of heaven, were they during these "ages of faith" which they bemoan? God may conceivably have been at work somewhere among the batteries or the infantry of the Allies—it is so very difficult to analyse these things—but we should be infinitely more grateful if he had asserted his power earlier and spared us all the bloodshed. He may be a very stern school-master, teaching us a valuable lesson by means of this war; but we were really quite open to conviction if he had sent us the lesson in a more humane form. A great many good people may have derived spiritual advantages from the war, but the price was stupendous, and we would rather they got their spiritual advantages in another way.

These questions and reflections must surely arise, and they will lead to larger reflections. Men will perceive the antithesis I pointed out between all that is claimed for Christianity in Europe and the actual condition of Europe; between the supposed luminous traces of the finger of God in the non-human world and the complete absence of them from the human world. From the samples of clerical eloquence which we have examined, we can hardly suppose that the

clergy will have great success in meeting the inquirers. An enormous proportion of their followers, of course, will not ask questions, or will be satisfied with anything in the nature of an answer. I heard a group of men discussing the subject in a rural ale-house, and the most intelligent man in the group, to whom, as an educated visitor, the natives looked up with respect, said : "War is God's way of purifying and bracing nations from time to time." This sort of stuff pacifies hundreds of thousands : like the stuff that Archbishop Carr found it possible to put before his Australian Catholics. But inquiry and reflection grow among the adherents of the Churches, and, although the Press generally refuses to bring books of this character to the notice of the public, and clergymen often stoop to the most despicable means to exclude them from bookstalls and shops, they seem to find a fairly large public to-day. Thinking is as needful an exercise for the mind as work is for the body, and the only plausible ground on which you can seek to suppress thinking about Christianity is the fear that it will not be good for Christianity.

Then we shall have the next and inevitable question : What would you put in the place of Christianity ? Young men in various parts of the country hurl that question at one as if it were really very serious, putting an end to all dispute. Any person who is quite candid and sincere about these matters can find the material for an answer easily enough. Take France. Forty years ago the nation was overwhelmingly Christian ; to-day it is overwhelmingly non-Christian. It has not put anything in the place of Christianity, and has prospered remarkably. There is a legacy of what is called vice which comes down from earlier religious

times, but any person who cares to examine criminal and other statistics, the only positive tests of a nation's health, will find that France has been extraordinarily successful without Christianity and without putting anything in its place. There are, it is true, moral lessons in its schools, but I would not claim that they are much responsible : the system is imperfect, and the teachers not well equipped. Take our ally Japan. The moral discipline of the nation, which, in spite of some recent deterioration through Western influence, is admirable, does not rest on religious foundations. Take London or any metropolis of modern Europe. The bulk of the people have ceased to receive any influence from the representatives of Christianity, yet there has been moral progress instead of deterioration. Those who speak of degeneration in London or Paris do not accurately know and estimate the state of those cities in more religious times.

This experience might be enlarged indefinitely, but one or two instances will suffice for my purpose. The soundness of these instances which I quote I have established elsewhere, and the general truth to which I refer may be sufficiently gathered from the words of the clergy themselves. The rhetorical way in which they characterise our times is more or less typical of the carelessness of their judgments and the strength of their prejudices. One group of clerical writers, which generally includes the reigning Pope, speak in the darkest terms of our age and suggest that a sensible degeneration has followed the decrease of the influence of the Churches. Another group, considering the remarkable spread of idealism in our generation, the growing demand for peace, justice, and sobriety, claim that this moral progress, which they cannot deny, is

due to some tardy recognition of the spirit of Christ : a strange contention, seeing that our age is less and less willing to hear the words of Christ and ascribes its sentiments to entirely different inspiration. Hence there are a few who frankly admit that the idealism of modern times is to them a rebuke and a mystery. One of these more sensitive religious writers once confessed to me that the fact that the times became better while the influence of Christianity grew less was to him a perplexing truth.

The really honest social student, who does not measure his age by his prejudices, but fashions his theories according to the carefully ascertained facts, will try to discover the causes of this phenomenon. In those wide and varied areas where it is observed, we cannot say that anything has taken the place of Christianity. The Press sometimes flatters itself that it has taken the place of the pulpit, but opinions will differ in regard to its efficacy as a moral agency. On the whole, it is too apt to reflect the moral sentiments of the more reactionary, who are generally the most self-assertive, and it has no moral, as distinct from political, leadership. Then there are Ethical and kindred societies which hold "services" of a humanitarian character, and are to many people a substitute for the Christian Churches. Their influence is, however, restricted to a few thousand people in the whole country, and signs are not wanting that their usefulness will be only transitory. The experience of any careful observer is that the mass of people who cease to attend church desire and need no substitute whatever for Christianity. The Rationalist literature which many of them read is, as a rule, of a high idealist character; but here again the influence is very re-

stricted. No organised influence is at work to any great extent as a successor to Christianity, yet it is indubitable that, as Christian influence wanes, the temper of the age improves.

This improvement must have an adequate cause, and it would be merely another form of crude social reasoning and of sectarian prejudice to say, in the rich language of the older anti-clericals, that breaking “the fetters of superstition and priesthood” led of itself to such a result. But this sanguine rhetoric does contain or obscure a certain truth. In plain human language, when you prevent a man from relying on the old traditional inspirations, he may for a time be tempted to act without inspiration. In the matter of his dealings with his fellows it is an undeniable fact that, on the whole, he has not been thus tempted. It is absurd to heap up all the contemporary instances of corruption in trade and politics, looseness in domestic life, and so on, unless you make a similar study of the vices and crimes of an earlier and more Christian generation, and carefully compare the two. It is not a question whether there is evil in our generation; it is a question whether there is more or less evil than in earlier generations. I must be pardoned for reiterating this, because, although this comparison is essential for forming an accurate judgment on the moral effect of the decay of Christianity, it is rarely instituted with the least pretence of rigour. I have sufficiently studied it in earlier works (especially *The Bible in Europe*), and will not repeat the facts. Cotter Morison, whom I quoted on an early page, was wrong in his expectation. The change from Christian to humanist inspiration is taking place without disorder and with increasing advantage.

The solution of this apparent problem is really not obscure. If the genuine basis of human conduct needed an elaborate search—if it had to be revealed by a Deity or laboriously established by moral theologians or moral philosophers—no doubt the age of transition would be an age of disorder, and a very comprehensive educational organisation would be needed. But the true basis of human conduct is simple. There are, of course, Rationalists who feel that some very abstruse “science of ethics” has to be constructed as the solid foundation of conduct; but this has as little relation to the conduct of ordinary men as the learned pedants of the science of prosody have to ordinary speakers of prose. Experience is the real base and guide of conduct, and it forces itself on every man and woman, even on the child. “Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you” is the first principle of morals; and to inculcate it you need neither the thunders of Jupiter nor the impressive abstractions of a science of ethics: nor do you need any moral genius or philosophical skill to discover it. It is a rule of life that suggests itself spontaneously. It is a natural and prompt expression of the fact that our life is social: our acts have the closest relation to others besides ourselves. Now and again, perhaps, a man is tempted to assert his own personality, or seek his own gratification, in such a way as to ignore his fellows; but he is usually arrested before long by the simple experience that he himself suffers from the actions of others just as they may suffer from his conduct. It is a lesson of life which one needs no power of analysis to learn.

And the chief reason why the abandonment of the old doctrines is proceeding without any moral

degeneration is that this experience was really always the basis of general morality. We need not question—it would be absurd to question—that refined natures have received moral aid from their belief in the presence of God, or in a desire to please God by accepting the law of virtue as a declaration of his will; though we must be equally candid in admitting that men and women of this nature have not been observed to deteriorate when they sacrifice their religious beliefs, as thousands of them have done. On the other hand, we will hardly question that numbers of people of coarser nature have been deterred from evil-doing by dread of supernatural punishment. It is, however, notorious in the moral history of Europe that these religious beliefs have been consistent with a vast amount of transgression of the decalogue: more than we witness in any civilised country in our own time. How, then, are we to discover what were the real springs of conduct in the mass of ordinarily decent people? It seems to me that the only accurate method is to avoid theories and consider people in the flesh. Do our Christian friends—did we ourselves in Christian days—refrain from lying, dishonesty, injustice, cruelty, and injury, solely or mainly because God forbids them or will punish them? I have not met the man, except in the imaginative pages of religious controversy, who confessed that he would stoop freely to these things if there were no Christian prohibition. The mainspring of ordinary decent conduct in any educated community has always been a perception of its human and social value.

The only line of the decalogue about which there is likely to be any dispute in this regard is that putting restraint on sexual relations. I have not to consider

here a subject so remote from my immediate interest, and will observe only that any act which hurts either an individual or the social interest will as plainly come under a humanitarian law as the practice of lying : acts which inflict no injury and have been forbidden only on mystic grounds are not likely to remain on the moral code of the future. But I am concerned here with a definite issue, and need discuss general morality only in so far as that issue is affected.

Here, at least, the way of the humanitarian is plain. Sermons on the brotherhood of men under the fatherhood of God have been totally ineffective to prevent war and abolish militarism. There is something incongruous in the introduction into a modern peace-meeting of some clerical speaker who talks unctuously about the great promise and precept of Christianity. The meeting itself, being held nineteen centuries after the promise was made, is a sufficient indication of its futility. No progress was made or seriously attempted in the work of peace until a genuine human passion was substituted for that empty phraseology. The brotherhood of men was, in the Christian sense of that phrase, too abstruse and precarious a conclusion to be of use in such a struggle. The plain fact is that it was of no use, and is of no use to-day. There is, indeed, reason to think that we should make more progress if we entirely discarded figures of speech like "the brotherhood of men." The fact that we are all children of God, or children of Eve, or children of some Tertiary anthropoid, does not very obviously impose on us the duty not to take up arms in an international quarrel.

The ultimate basis of morality is, as Schopenhauer said, sympathy, though in an advanced social order

this sentiment approves itself to the intellect, and its requirements may be precisely formulated by reason. One is not sure whether there will not be more morality in the world when the word "morality," with all its mystic entanglements, is discarded, and we speak plainly of social law. Violence, the infliction of pain and injustice, is one of the most obvious infractions of social law, quite apart from any religious commandments. Its social evil is so obvious that the community has, at an early date in its development, elaborated a special machinery for restraining it, and has imposed penalties in this world, whatever it thinks about the next. There may be questions raised, and one can understand people who are confined to a religious environment feeling a genuine concern, about other sections of moral law; but it would be obviously absurd to think that a humanitarian ethic would fail here. There have been attempts in modern times to question the validity of ethical law altogether. In so far as this movement aims at stripping moral law of its mysticism and fearlessly investigating its traditional content, it is admirable and will grow; but in so far as these moral rebels would resent restraint of any kind, and pronounce the freedom of every individual impulse, they seem to overlook a factor of great importance—the impulse of retaliation. A pretty state of society we should have if such a theory were generally, or largely, carried into practice.

But these are academic vagaries, like those of the mystic or the moral theologian. Whatever be the future fortune of Christian legends, men are not likely to sacrifice the peace and security of social life to such theories of freedom any more than they are likely to expose property to a general scramble. The instinct

of sympathy is now growing deeper in every century. Most of the great improvements of social life (in its widest sense) during the nineteenth century, which we have inherited, were due to that development of sympathy. It matters not whether the reformer was Christian or non-Christian—Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale or Robert Owen and John Stuart Mill—the impulse was sympathy with suffering fellow-humans. All the hope of improvement in the twentieth century looks to a continued growth of that sentiment. It becomes a veritable passion in certain natures, as long as there are large and cruel evils to redress; and this passion of a few leading spirits, communicating something of its fire to the colder mass, is the great cause of progress. Surely that is the correct interpretation of the progressive life of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries? Men realised that to cultivate sympathy because it was enjoined by religion was a more or less mercantile procedure: it was worth cultivating for its own sake.

Here we have the reply to those who, unfamiliar with any but their own religious environment, ask what place there will be for sympathy in an intellectual or Rationalistic age. It is a very grave error to suppose either that our age is becoming less emotional or that Rationalism has no place for emotions. In pursuing its task during the nineteenth century Rationalism was an intensely emotional movement. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his *Victorian Age in Literature*, speaks of J. S. Mill's "hard rationalism in religion" and "hard egoism in ethics." Like very many other statements in that lamentable book, these are inexplicably unjust. Mill was so far from being "hard" in religion that he ended his days in a kind of senti-

mental theism; he was so far from being a "hard egoist" in ethics that he declared that he would burn in hell for ever rather than lie at the supposed bidding of a Deity. Robert Ingersoll, the most popular Rationalist of that age, was—I judge from his private letters, not his ornate speeches—a man of the most tender and fine sentiment. It is simply ludicrous to suppose that, because we do not admit emotion to be a test of the accuracy of statements of fact (as all religious dogmas claim to be), we do not find any room for emotion in life. Is the whole of man's life an affirmation about reality or criticism of such affirmation? This supposed "hardness"—I detest these vague phrases, but one knows what is meant—of the Rationalist temper is one of the strangest myths the clergy have invented.

Reason not merely approves, but enjoins, the cultivation of sentiment. When the sentiment in question is one that shows a power of transforming life and impelling men to struggle against pain and evil, reason applauds it as one of the most valuable forces we can cultivate. Such, plainly, is the sentiment of sympathy. We look back to-day with horror on the industrial and social condition of England in the earlier part of the nineteenth century: the burdened lives and few gross pleasures of the workers, the horrible cellar-homes of the poor, the ghastly treatment of child-workers, the stupid and brutal herding of criminals, the tragedies of asylums and workhouses, the fearful political corruption and despotism, the subjection of women, the revolting proportions of the birth-rate and death-rate. We have still much to do to redeem our civilisation from medieval errors, but when one contemplates the social revolution that human sympathy has brought about in the life of England, one feels

that this, and not the long-futile teaching of Christianity, is the hope of the future. Christian preaching of virtue has been individualistic. Even in our time the clergy hesitate and are divided in face of social problems which plainly involve moral principles. But the humanitarian ethic is essentially social, and this passion of sympathy is its chief root.

We wish, then, not to substitute any creed or organisation for Christianity, but to sweep away these primitive or medieval speculations about life, and let the human mind and human heart increasingly devote themselves, directly, to human interests. In discussing the question of peace and war, the application is obvious. We enclose or dispatch the murderer, lest some fresh grave act of violence be perpetrated. We agree that the violent and premature termination of a life is the most serious transgression of social law that a man can perpetrate. Next to it we put rape, mutilation, the destruction of a man's home or fortune; all acts, in a word, that come nearest to it in threatening or causing the greatest desolation. Yet we have suffered, age after age, that every few years all these acts should be gathered into one mighty outrage and showered upon whole populations. The time will come when men will read with bewilderment the things that have been written about warfare in the nineteenth, and even the twentieth, century. The men of clear judgment and sound emotion of some coming age will see anguish rising, as vapour does from some tropical sea, from our vast battle-fields. They will read of Cats' Homes, and Anti-Vivisection Societies, and Homes of Rest for Horses, and a hundred such institutions, and they will find contributors to these institutions stirring not one finger when hundreds of thousands of men writhe

under hails of shrapnel, and crowds of homeless women and children fly in terror before the unavoidable calamities or the superfluous brutalities of war. They will see a generation shaken and shuddering as the ghastly picture is daily unfolded before it, and they will see that same generation in a few months grow dully indifferent to, if not actively supporting, the military system which invariably brings these horrors every few years upon the world. They will read of social aspiration spreading through our civilisation, and statesmen regretting that want of funds alone prevents them from remedying our social ills; and they will read how Europe in one year wasted in butchery the resources that might have renovated its disfigured civilisation, and the next year complacently shouldered its military burden, its annual waste of a thousand millions sterling, with the prospect of a costlier war than ever.

In face of this situation the question, What would you put in place of Christianity? is a mere mockery. One can see some pertinence and use in the question: How shall we induce the Christian Churches to employ their still great resources in helping to bring on the reign of peace? But it is not to them that we now look for redemption. It is to the humanitarian spirit, the clearer reason, of our age. I have described the situation in terms of emotion, because thus it spontaneously rises before me; but it may be recorded in terms of pure reason. We maintain in Europe a machinery for settling international quarrels which costs us more than a thousand millions sterling annually, while we could erect at a cost of a few thousands annually an efficient machinery for dealing with those quarrels, and for a few millions we could add the

machinery for carrying out its decisions. We boast that our civilisation is founded on justice; yet, of the two types of machinery for adjusting quarrels, we retain the one that is the least possible adapted for securing the triumph of justice and discard the one that is pre-eminently fitted to secure it. We flatter ourselves that we rise above the savage in enjoying security of life and property, and we retain this system though we know that, periodically, it will invade life and property on a scale that surpasses the experience of the savage as much as a Dreadnought surpasses a canoe.

It is just as easy to state our situation in terms of reason as in terms of sentiment: it would not be easy to say in which guise it is ugliest. Let us talk no more nonsense about needing religion to help us to get rid of this atrocious nightmare. It drives both reason and sentiment to the brink of insanity. Both protest against it with every particle of their energy. Why Christianity failed to protest against it in fifteen hundred years may or may not be obscure; but there is no obscurity whatever about the probable effect on militarism and war of a cultivation of reason and sympathy.<sup>1</sup>

Many a reform has been actually retarded by the use of rhetoric. An outpour of vehement language seems to release, both in the speaker and in the assenting audience, a part of that energy which ought to issue in action. It has been one of the grave blunders of the Churches that they thought their function ended with the eloquent announcement that men were

<sup>1</sup> Let me again guard myself against misrepresentation. Were I of military age, I should to-day be in the trenches. The men who, as long as the military system is retained, expose their lives in our defence have my entire respect and gratitude. It is the system I impugn.

brothers. We must be more practical. Now, while the imagination of the world is filled with the horrors of war, and sympathy is ready to fire us with a mighty energy, is one of the great opportunities of peace. One may trust that, after this experience, the Churches will awaken to the implications of their moral doctrine and set to work to impress it emphatically and repeatedly, as a moral duty, on their followers. It is, however, not impossible that, with all their scout-masters and chaplains and services of thanksgiving for victory, a very large part of the clergy will find themselves so closely allied with militarism when the war is over, so confused in their appreciation of what it has done for us, that they will continue to mumble only general principles and halting counsels. In any case, in the cities and large towns of this kingdom, where are found the effective controllers of our destiny, the majority do not any longer sit at the feet of the clergy. Precise statistical observation has shown this.

Let us remember that the one task before us is to inspire the *majority* in each civilised nation with a determination that the system shall end. The only practical difficulty of considerable magnitude is the economic difficulty: the disorganisation of the industrial world by suppressing war-industries and large standing armies. It is, however, foolish to regard this as an obstacle to disarmament, since—to put an extreme case—it would be more profitable to a nation to maintain these men in idleness than run the risk of another war. For disarmament itself what is needed is that half a dozen, at least, of the great Powers shall agree to submit *all* quarrels to arbitration, and reduce their armies to the proportions of an international police, at the service of the international tribunal and

for use (under its permit) against lower peoples who turn aggressive. No one doubts that this can be done when the Powers agree to do it. But for one reason or other, which I need not discuss, the Governments will probably not do this until a majority of the electorate indicate a resolute demand for it. The immediate task is to secure this majority by education; and the work of education will be best conducted by vast non-sectarian peace-organisations. The mixture of futile Christian phraseology and genuine humanitarian interests in some of these movements has been hitherto a grave disadvantage. The movement has been compelled to split into sectarian branches, and has proportionately lost efficacy. If the clergy insist on winning prestige for themselves, or respect and recognition for their doctrines, by acting in these bodies, they are again hampering the work of reform. A great national agitation, linked with similar agitations in other lands, avoiding Christian formulæ as well as anti-Christian reproaches, will alone secure the object.

I confess—with ardent hope that I may be wrong—that I expect no immediate realisation of the reform. It may take years, even after the grim lesson that militarism has given us, to inspire the majority of our people with an unsleeping and irresistible demand, and the work will grow more arduous as the memory of the hardships of the war fades. On the day on which I write this I have listened to the conversation, in a train, of a wealthy, refined, and cultivated Church-woman. “I said to my son when he set out,” she observed, with a laugh, to her neighbour, “that it was far better for him to get shot than to die of diphtheria or something at home.” If that sentiment, that

obtuseness to the massive horrors of war even when a son was involved, is widespread, the outlook is dark. One fears that it is not very promising.

The lady I quote would read these pages, if she could constrain herself to do so, with a genuine shudder. Abandon Christianity ! She would volubly reel off the eloquent forecasts of the doom of society which she has heard from a hundred pulpits. Meantime she is one of the gravest obstacles (as a type of her class) to the removal from society of one of its most crushing burdens and most criminal usages. To me her class illustrates the limitations of Christianity, and it confirms me in the belief that we shall make more rapid progress without it. She was a lady of keen sympathies and of great activity for others : the kind of woman who, as she would put it, practised her Christianity. Yet in face of this mighty disorder she showed at once the failure of Christianity and the reason of it. Her genuine human sympathy was directed by an ancient and outworn code of duties. Where Christianity had delivered no clear message, the expanding of her sympathy was barred. War was part of the established order of things. She could even cheat her maternal sentiment with thin fallacies, because they reconciled her to what the Church had not condemned. She had never seen the vision of peace, never grasped the comparatively easy alternative to war.

This, in general terms, is what one means by the expectation that a surrender of Christian doctrines will certainly not check the growth of sympathy, and is more likely to promote it. It will direct itself spontaneously to departments of suffering to which the Church had not directed it. But we should be

foolish to rely on this free growth and spontaneous application of sympathy. It must be cultivated : our generation must be educated to a sense of its value. As far as the child is concerned, the need is plain. Children do not merely have veins of cruelty ; they have, as comparative psychology knows, the blood and impulses of primitive man. The general impulse of a healthy boy is to exact an eye for an eye : the impulse which it is the supreme care of a modern State to curb in its citizens. To educate such children in military history, whether of ancient Jews or medieval Englishmen or modern Germans, is, as William II knows, the best means of maintaining war. As to the New Testament, its language is not addressed to children, its sentiments are often so obviously impracticable that it defeats the end of education, and its precepts and counsels are so emphatically based on a disputable reward in heaven that their ethic savours of a risky commercial speculation. We must abandon "Bible lessons," and teach children to be human.

But for the work of education to end when the child leaves the school is one of the crudities of our elementary civilisation. The human material is just becoming fit for the efforts of the educator when the child leaves school, yet from that moment we leave it to the casual and largely pernicious influences of its environment. Some day, perhaps, our education department will be more seriously concerned about the youth and the adult than about impressing a few facts of history and geography on the memory of the child : even if it did no more than organise and direct the innumerable foundations and voluntary organisations which actually exist, and bring them into living and practical contact with our splendid museums and

libraries and art-collections, a vast amount could be done in the education of the adult. Meantime a persistent, comprehensive, intensely earnest propaganda of peace is needed. Since I wrote a little work on those lines in 1899 I have had fifteen years' experience of preaching the gospel of peace, and know well how convincing are its arguments and how little it has to overcome except inertia. We need only to help the imagination of the mass of people; to put clearly before them the comparative easiness and the incalculable value of the change. Christianity has not tried and failed; it has not even tried. It has wasted its resources in generalities which have proved wholly futile. We must speak as men to men; and men will be more open to conviction when we plead that, not the supposed commands of a Galilean preacher of nineteen hundred years ago, but their own highest and most sacred instincts, bid them lay down their arms and inaugurate the age of international peace.





SPEC  
①  
524  
M3



# GretagMacbeth™ ColorChecker Color Rendition Chart

