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SLAUGHTER OR SACRIFICE?

THE RELIGIOUS RHETORIC OF BLOOD SACRIFICE IN THE BRITISH AND GERMAN ARMIES, 1914-1919

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Conditions of the Board of the Faculty of Modern History for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the religious rhetoric of blood sacrifice in the British and German armies, between 1914 and 1919, from a comparative perspective. It compares the responses of military chaplains and pious combatants from the Anglican, Lutheran and Calvinist churches. When war broke out in 1914, the churches predominantly interpreted it as a redemptive event. Not only was it a just war for national defence and world order, it was also a struggle with domestic war aims, in which self-sacrifice and suffering would uplift their nations from internal division and materialist corruption. This thesis examines how participants related these ideas to the war, and how they derived meaning from the war experience. It asks what this rhetoric meant, how it evolved, how it was challenged, and ultimately how it endured.

This thesis challenges the 'disillusionment hypothesis', which depicts patriotic Christian rhetoric of sacrifice as an intrinsically duplicitous or naïve discourse, produced by an innocent prewar generation, and rejected by combatants who became disillusioned by the realities of the battlefront. It also questions the thesis that the German Lutheran churches were uniquely bellicose in revering the ideology of sacrifice as an example of German 'peculiarity.' It argues that instead of being an obsolete language at odds with reality, the language of sacrifice was a dynamic way of understanding the world. It was not necessarily built on unrealistic combat expectations or images of warfare. While the war posed profound challenges to their world-view, their religion often adapted itself to the conditions, enabling them to place the war's horrors in familiar contexts. Over time, the desire to show loyalty to

the rhetoric and the sense of obligation to the dead usually reinforced the rhetoric, rather than undermining it. It could even accommodate defeat as a religiously meaningful event. As a comparative study, it weighs the commonalities and differences of responses on both sides of the front. It argues that despite their political differences, participants from the churches shared a common moral language that transcended the frontiers, a language which evolved in a parallel process.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWSCF	*Archives of the World Student Christian Federation*
BL	*Bodleian Library, Oxford*
BZ	*Bibliothek Zeitgeschichte*
DTA	*Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Emendingen*
EZA	*Evangelische Zentral Archiv*
FMA	*Freiburg Militärarchiv*
IWM	*Imperial War Museum*
LKAN	*Landeskirchliches Archiv Nürnberg*
LKAS	*Landeskirchliches Archiv Stuttgart*
LPL	*Lambeth Palace Library*
UBSP	*University of Birmingham, Special Collection*

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Historiographical Introduction

Before the 7th Cheshire Regiment landed in the Gallipoli peninsula in August 1915, it had already seen intense and exhausting fighting. In his last letter from billets before departure, Captain Charles T. Cooke wrote to his vicar:

> I am sure we shall be a stronger and a better Nation after this war. Germany, with her Sunday amusements, has got much to answer for, and although we in Britain have not been blameless in this respect I was always thankful we had not reached the pitch that Germany did. Everyone ought, if he is a Briton, to be making sacrifices now, down to the very poorest…I hate to hear of strikes and lock-outs while men are laying down their lives for their friends and their country. People must learn that wages cannot economically increase during war and that prices of food are higher.[1]

Cooke's letter summarises the themes and argument of this thesis. Firstly, he interprets the war in religious terms as an event that will strengthen and improve the nation, a redemptive event. He represents it as a panacea for social ills, claiming that the war had a domestic purpose. That rhetoric was not confined to cloistered intellectuals or ideologues remote from the realities of combat. As in Cooke's case, it was used by combatants who had intimate knowledge of the fighting front.

Confronted with the bitter conditions and losses, Cooke still affirmed the meaning of sacrifice and the war's national benefits. Secondly, Cooke interpreted war in the tradition of St. Augustine, as both a result of sin and its cure. He alleged that Germany was responsible for the war because of its materialist corruption, and its growing disrespect for the Sabbath, and that Britain was also tainted. These claims reflect how the religious discourse of war was shaped by a set of reciprocal judgments about the

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[1] The 7th Cheshire Regiment was part of the 53rd (Welsh) Division. Cooke's letter, undated, cited in A. Clayton, *A Cheshire Parish at War: St. Chad's, Over, Winsford 1914-1925* (Liverpool, 1998), p.51.

enemy and about one's own society. Finally, his complaints about wartime strikes and wage claims reflect how religious rhetoric evolved. Instead of pursuing their self-interest, civilians had to complete blood sacrifices with material sacrifices. Soldiers' blood sacrifices had to be validated and supported by the homeland. Death in battle was no longer redemptive on its own. It had become part of an economy of sacrifice.

The history of religion during the war has attracted a large historiography. Much of it debates the extent and variety of religiosity in the war, the impact of war on belief, and the effectiveness and popularity of military chaplains and the churches in the armed forces. This historiography attempts to interpret the fate of spirituality amongst armies of millions, who were fighting an industrial modern war. It is part of the larger 'secularisation' debate, a social-scientific agenda for research which measures the decline of institutional religion in the modern world. The issue of the war's impact on the extent of religion has produced conflicting interpretations. They range from the portrayal of widespread alienation from the churches and a demystification of the masses, to the argument that war stimulated innovation or even popular religious revival. [2]

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[2] The most recent study of religiosity in the American and British military is Richard Schweitzer, who argues against the stereotype of irreligious armies: *The Cross and the Trenches: Religious Faith and Doubt among British and American Great War Soldiers* (Connecticut, 2003). See also A. Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England and the First World War* (Durham, 1974), who primarily focuses on church failures through their bureaucratic undermining of chaplains' ministry. Institutional failure is also the concern of S. Mews, 'Religion and English Society in the First World War' (Unpublished Cambridge University Ph.D. Thesis, 1973). Both Hartmut Lehman and Nicholas Hope portray institutional and moral failure in the case of German Protestant churches: H. Lehman, 'In the Service of Two Kings: Protestant Prussian Military Chaplains, 1713-1918' in D. Bergen, (ed.) *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the Roman Empire to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame, 2003), pp. 125-141; N. Hope, 'Prussian Protestantism' in P.G. Dwyer (ed.) *Modern Prussian History* (Harlow, 2001), pp.188-208. For general institutional histories, see J.G. Smyth, *In this sign conquer: the story of the army chaplains* (London, 1968) and A. Schübel, *300 Jahre Evangelische Soldatenseelsorge* (München, 1964). On the Scottish Protestant churches in wartime, see S.J. Brown, 'A Solemn Purification by Fire' Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches, 1914-1919' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45:1 (Jan.1994), pp.82-104; C. Brown, 'Piety, Gender and War' in C.M.M. Macdonald and E.W. McFarland, *Scotland and the Great War* (East Linton, 1999), pp.173-191.

This thesis does not try to amend or alter these different interpretations. Nor is it an exhaustive study of the religiosity of the armies. Methodological difficulties make these projects problematic. On an empirical level, there is insufficient data to measure with any precision the extent of religious belief of the masses, or the appeal of the clergy amongst them. Many people did not talk or write much about their faith. The history of the extent of religiosity in the army is partly the story of an interior world that lies beyond historians' reach. As a letter from a censors' report suggests, 'As you know, I never did make a big show of being religious, but it is in my heart all the same.'[3] Some observers claimed wishfully that many were secretly pious. A Scottish artillery officer recalled seeing men reading scripture inside a newspaper or book.[4] We cannot know how far there was a world of private faith that silently persisted beneath the surface. This is compounded by the problem of measuring faith, a highly definitional and subjective exercise. Then and now, prejudices about what constitutes 'true' religion are inevitable. Even practices that might appear to be straightforward manifestations of religiosity were interpreted in conflicting ways. For example, it was frequently asserted that combatants prayed before battle. Some observers were encouraged by the sight, while others dismissed their piety as a superficial reflex to an emergency, which would quickly evaporate once danger receded. Religiosity is less an objective social fact than a value judgment, and where studies exist, the nature and extent of people's piety is mediated through the intentions and biases of observers. The arbitrary nature of death and survival on the frontlines blurred institutional religiosity with popular fatalism, causing many to embrace unorthodox pseudo-pagan

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[3] Imperial War Museum 84/46/1 [Henceforth abbreviated 'IWM'] (Captain Hardie, Censors' Reports), 'Report on Complaints, Moral, Etc.' Section III, 23 Nov. 1916, p.10.
[4] 'Jottings from the Spiritual Side of the Army' printed in appendix, R.R. Caseby, *Going with God: The Biography of Reverend Alexander Caseby From 1898 until 1991* (Lewes, 1993), p.395.

practices, such as 'superstitious' talismans or good luck charms, deemed heterodox by some and quasi-Christian by others. What is a proper index of religion is ambiguous. While communion attendance and discussion about religion were not always extensive, religious rites of passage such as Sunday School and marriage were gaining in importance at this time.[5] People at war sometimes attended church with their families before departure, were still being confirmed, and still expected that funerals would be conducted by clergymen or chaplains. Again, distinguishing real faith from social convention is extremely difficult.[6]

Instead of contending with these issues, this thesis addresses a separate set of questions, shifting attention away from measuring religiosity and towards the language of war and faith. How and why did Christian soldiers and their chaplains talk of the Great War as a sacred undertaking? What happened to that rhetoric? This thesis examines the religious rhetoric of blood sacrifice in the British and German armies from 1914-1919. It examines what this language meant, how it evolved, how it was threatened and how it ultimately survived the war. It cannot claim to provide a systematic or complete study of all the actual inner convictions of religious participants throughout the war, which often lie beyond documentary proof. It does, however, try to reconstruct their motivations and test their sincerity on occasions where this is possible, while elsewhere acknowledging the possible gap between outward statement and inner response. It is primarily a study of rhetoric, its logic and development, and how those involved in the war related it to their experience, and

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[5] See J. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth 1870 – 1930* (Oxford, 1982).
[6] For the 'secularisation' debate, see S.C. Williams *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c.1880-1939* (Oxford 1999); A.D. Gilbert, *Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740 –1914* (London 1976).

how they used it to give the war meaning. As I argue, reports of its quick death at the front have been exaggerated.

While its long-term implications and place in history continue to be debated, the war's central fact is beyond dispute. It inflicted unprecedented destruction. It was made extremely lethal by a combination of demographic, military and cultural developments. Europe's population explosions, combined with political and medical revolutions, made possible vast citizen armies that were rapidly transported and returned to the battlefield. Those forces were fitter, better fed and less diseased than their forbears, and fought battles that were measured in months rather than days. The application of industrial technology to warfare created a *Materialschlacht*, a war of machines. New weapons multiplied the costs and lethality of war, such as rapid-firing artillery, machine-guns, high explosives, and quick-firing breech-loaded rifles. To this deadly arsenal the war added poison gas, grenades, trench mortars, flamethrowers, and tanks. Fighting reached new levels of intensity. Where it was mobile, it was lethal and exhausting. Where it became immobile, the western front with its protective trench system became a charnel house of mechanised slaughter. As millions of men fought in a small space, the compressed nature of the front and the lack of speedy communications systems and mobility made it difficult to exploit offensive opportunities and achieve decisive military victory on a conflict of such scale. It may be that the war is now 'etched in the popular imagination as a futile and pointless conflict.'[7] But it was fought by consenting populations willing to endure it for years, who were able to interpret and frame it as an event with coherent meaning, with objectives worth dying and killing for.

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[7] G. Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 225.

Was it a war of faith? The conflict was not straightforwardly a sectarian struggle. It defied the divisions spawned by the Protestant Reformation, creating alliances that did not divide along neat confessional lines. Military alliances brought together unheard-of coalitions of confessions and faiths. In the case of the Entente, Roman Catholic France aligned with Protestant Britain, Orthodox Russia, and Shinto Japan. As for the Central Powers, Protestant Germany with a large Roman Catholic minority aligned itself with the Islamic Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary, an empire and army that was multi-ethnic and multi-confessional. Churchmen on both sides despaired that war between Britain and Germany was a fratricidal bloodletting between kindred nations. A joint declaration at the visit of German churchmen to England in 1908 had proclaimed that 'Our nations are closely allied by the stock from which both peoples spring, by the kinship of our Sovereigns, by our history, our long friendship, our mutual indebtedness in Art, Literature, and Science, and…by our common Christianity.'[8] Britain's intervention on the side of Germany's enemies disappointed both German theologians and the German professoriate, which declared in its manifestoes that the war had violated their kinship of 'blood and history and faith,' renting 'Teutonic Protestantism.'[9]

Within the armies themselves, if piety in some cases deepened, it was doubtful how much it widened. Large swathes of the armed forces of both Germany and Britain were not ostentatiously pious, at least to the degree that it worried the two post-war church investigations in Germany and Britain, the inter-denominational inquiry of

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[8] *Peace and the Churches: Souvenir volume of the visit to England of representatives of the German Christian Churches* (London, 1908), p.61.
[9] 'Address of the German Theologians to the Evangelical Christians Abroad.' *Oxford Pamphlets 1914* (Oxford, 1914), p.23.

1919 chaired by Professor David Cairns, and General Superintendent Martin Schian's official church history of 1921-5, commissioned by the Prussian Evangelical Church.[10] If the soldier had got religion, quipped one officer, he may not have got Christianity.[11]

But the rhetoric that accompanied the war was nourished by concepts that had inspiration in the scripture, liturgy and concepts of the Judeo-Christian tradition. War aims were often publicly defined by monarchs, statesmen and clergy in explicitly religious terms that presented the conflict as a spiritual struggle, before they later asserted war aims that were territorial, economic or diplomatic. The causes they fought for were represented in rhetoric that borrowed heavily from a Christian vocabulary of sacrifice, suffering, and salvation. Advocates of the war effort reached out for apocalyptic grammar to express its historic importance and its finality as the 'last war,' to give meaning to its intensity, and its global reach. The devout were also over-represented in both participation and on the casualty lists. While there was always a strand of pacifism and dissent within the churches, pious families and parishes continued to donate soldiers and chaplains to the war effort. They gave the war financial and material backing in national efforts to mobilise resources. In terms of the war's representation and its butcher's bill, both faith and the faithful were at the forefront.

This thesis compares German Lutheran, English Anglican and Scottish Calvinist responses. In Britain, the Church of England was the national established church and

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[10] Committee of Enquiry upon the Army and Religion, *The Army and Religion: An Enquiry and its bearing upon the religious life of the nation* (London, 1919); M. Schian, *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche im Weltkriege* (i) *Die Arbeit der evangelischen Kirche im Felde* (ii) *Die Arbeit der evangelischen Kirche in der Heimat* (Mittler, 1921-5).

[11] Cited in B. Mathews (ed.) *Christ: and the World at War* (London, 1917), p.42.

the major denomination in the armed forces, co-ordinating all other confessional chaplaincies. Formally a Protestant church, it had evolved over centuries to become both catholic and reformed, with evangelical and Anglo-Catholic wings. In Scotland, the two major Presbyterian Churches, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, were represented by chaplains. In Germany, there was no single national church but 4 major churches with military orders: the Prussian Union (Berlin) based on orders of 1832 and 1902, Lutheran Saxony (Dresden) on the order of 1911, Lutheran Württemberg (Stuttgart) and Protestant Bavaria divided into Lutheran and Reformed Bavaria (Munich and Speyer) on the order of 1863. Most German chaplains came from the Prussian army, which formed 19 of Germany's 25 army corps.

Similar themes can also be found among Roman Catholics in arms. They also often represented war as a healing moment of social harmony. As one German Catholic soldier wrote, 'No differences, no party, all help each other, Germany is one.'[12] In their case, war provided an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to nation, their legitimacy as citizens of the state, after decades of sectarian suspicion towards their ultramontane allegiances. This applied in the setting of the German *Augustgemeinschaft*, the French *Union Sacrée*, and in British constructions of wartime social unity.[13] This thesis examines how the established or dominant Protestant churches, who had not entered the war on the receiving end of a recent *Kulturkampf*, interpreted the war in their different contexts.

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[12] Deutsche Tagebucharchiv, Emendingen [Henceforth abbreviated DTA], Reg. Nr. 260, Eugen Miller ('Kriegstagebuch eines Kriegsfreiwilligen 1914-1918'), 7 Aug, 1914.
[13] See A. Becker, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930* (Oxford, 1998); K. Finlay, 'British Catholic Identity in the First World War: The Challenge of Universality and Particularity' (Unpublished DPhil Thesis, Oxford University, 2004).

What do we mean by a religious language of blood sacrifice? For the purposes of this thesis, I define religion as belief in a deity or supernatural being that willed and ordered the cosmos, which prescribes a certain relationship with that deity, and which provides believers with both a sense of truth about the world (*logos*) and a sense of meaning (*Mythos*). I define the Christian faith as a belief that fallen humanity can only be saved by faith in the incarnate, crucified and resurrected God.[14] By the 'language of sacrifice', I mean a code of values and a grammar that consecrated the act of suffering and dying in war. The rhetoric endorsed the polity being defended with words like 'Fatherland,' 'King and Country', *Kultur* or a 'world made safe for democracy.' It also valourised the dead in a martyrology, calling them the 'glorious dead', who had died an heroic death (or *Heldentod*). The code contained the promise that dying for the polity was a regenerative act that would give the nation life. As the French soldier George Morillot wrote, the dead had 'given their blood that France may live.'[15] These concepts and terms were not exclusively religious, but borrowed heavily from Christian grammar, enabling secular and spiritual readings of the war to overlap and transfer.

The language of sacrifice was inflected in many different forms. It was not exclusively monarchist or politically conservative, as the sanctity of sacrifice for French soil were also themes taken up by French republican patriots. It was deployed by new nations as well as old, in both successful and failed military campaigns. The

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[14] I have been helped by the definitions of K. Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London, 2000), pp.xiii-xvi; K. Barnes, *Nazism, Liberalism and Christianity Protestant Social Thought in Germany & Great Britain 1925-37*, (Lexington, 1991), pp.6-7.

[15] Cited in M. Barres, *The Faith of France: Studies in Spiritual Differences and Unity.* (Boston, 1918) p.54. See also R. Koenigsburg, 'As the Soldier Dies, So Does the Nation Come Alive', article published online, http://home.earthlink.net/~libraryofsocialscience/as_the_soldier.htm.

campaigns by Dominion forces at the failed Gallipoli and the triumphant Vimy Ridge offensives were represented as the baptism of their countries into nationhood.[16]

In much of the historiography of wartime culture and discourse, it is assumed that the language of sacrifice was discordant with the experience of the battlefront and its horrific conditions, and incongruous with the war's realities. The rhetoric, it is argued, was either naïve or duplicitous. It was premised upon unrealistic combat expectations and false images of fighting. According to Leo Braudy, in wartime 'the medieval language of Christian redemption and warrior honour' worked to 'gloss the world of blood, filth and futility.'[17] Because of this problem, such values and sentiments were too innocent, inflexible and idealistic to survive attritional conflict. For Eric Leed, the environment became a landscape of 'alienation'[18] while Peter Parker claims the war exposed the inadequacy of 'an outmoded set of ideals' and an 'archaic and optimistic' concept of warfare.[19] For Robert Wohl, the combination of physical conditions, military stalemate and dislocation from home was the matrix of disillusionment.[20] Conditions stripped the living soldier of valour and the dying soldier of dignity. The overwhelming assault of artillery firepower undermined the combatant's agency, turning him a cowering target. Individual heroism itself, claim Brocks and Ziemann, was rendered obsolete.[21] Because combat dismembered bodies so that their physical remains were often irrecoverable, death could no longer be given a sacred meaning.

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[16] See M. Lake, 'Mission Impossible: How Men gave Birth to the Australian Nation – Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts' *Gender & History* 4:3 (1992), pp.305-319; for the way these themes were anticipated before the event itself, see B.R. Penny, 'The Age of Empire An Australian Episode' *Historical Studies* 11:41 (1963), pp.32-42.

[17] L. Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing nature of Masculinity* (New York, 2004), p.382.

[18] E. J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1979), p.109.

[19] P. Parker, *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos* (London, 1987), p.18.

[20] R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London, 1980), p.51.

[21] C. Brocks, B. Ziemann, 'Vom Soldatenleben hätte ich gerade genug.' Der Erste Weltkrieg in der Feldpost von Soldaten', in R. Rother (ed.), *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit. Bilder des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 1994), pp.109-120, p. 118.

Such shocks discredited the rhetoric, leading participants from naïve enthusiasm to a despairing sense of meaninglessness. Though these commentators give the argument different shadings, their positions can broadly be summarised as the 'disillusionment hypothesis.'

This theme became powerful in collective memory. Many representations of the western front with its pattern of entrenched and sustained killing, derived iconic status from their power to evoke the notion that the war had 'no meaning at all.'[22] It shaped a genre of literature. Tobey Herzog argues that twentieth century war memoirs are dominated by 'the tension between the soldier's romantic expectations of war and the harsh realities of battlefield', which rob the soldier of his 'youthful naiveté as they acquire a battlefield education.'[23] It also continues to thrive outside the academy. In his sermon at the 2005 Trafalgar Day Service, the Bishop of Oxford claimed that the 'cultural world' of Horatio Nelson's patriotic piety was 'essentially destroyed' by the war.[24]

Why have commentators made these assumptions? One reason is that they themselves regard the rhetoric with distaste. This is clear from their dismissive descriptions of the language, as a set of hollow 'platitudes', that were 'tripe' or 'outmoded,' that were foisted on an 'innocent, gullible generation.'[25] They regard the rhetoric as perverse.

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[22] J. Winter, 'Representations of War on the Western Front, 1914-1918: Some reflections on cultural ambivalence' p.1. Paper given at the 19th International Conference of Historical Sciences, Oslo, (10 Aug. 2000).

[23] T. Herzog, *Vietnam War Stories, Innocence Lost* (London, 1992), p.13.

[24] Sermon preached by the Bishop of Oxford at Exeter Cathedral, Sunday 16 Oct. 2005, sermon published online, http://www.oxford.anglican.org/page/2381.

[25] Eg: M. McKernan, 'Michael McKernan on the Australian Churches and the Great War' *The Religion Report* (4 Aug. 2004) www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories/s1168711.htm:

From that starting value judgement, it follows that to believe that sacrifice was meaningful was to be naïve, ignorant, dishonest or in denial at some level. Applying these presumptions to the history of wartime religion, one would assume that the terrors of combat, the sheer scale of bloodshed and the gulf between rhetoric and reality, extinguished faith in God and the notion of a sacred meaning in war. The bulk of the evidence, however, does not support this narrative.

In revisiting the relationship between rhetoric and the material circumstances of war, this thesis challenges the disillusionment hypothesis. It argues that the religious rhetoric of sacrifice adapted to make sense of the extreme conditions of the war experience, proving resilient to its shocks. The archetypal Christian grammar, of fall and destruction as prelude to renewal, was renegotiated rather than abandoned. Because it did not necessarily rely on false images of modern warfare, the rhetoric was not intrinsically incongruous with the war's brutal realities. Where it had been premised on romantic conceptions of combat, it was capable of flexibility. It helped recast wartime death as a sacred undertaking that would change the nation, so that the conditions and experiences of the front were not interpreted as raw data or as meaningless trauma. Its vocabulary fitted the circumstances men found themselves in

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> the clergymen, the churchmen who were trying to articulate the meaning, came up with the worst types of platitudes, and served the Australian people very poorly indeed. The meaning that they gave the war and that sustained so much of Australian thought about the war, was this was an event that was pre-ordained, possibly by God, to call the nations, but most particularly the Australian people, to a higher path, to a more moral type of living, and to regenerate the world. In other words, in an almost complete confusion of Christianity, these clergymen, these spokesmen for war, were looking at war as a redemptive factor, as a means of purging and making clean a society that might slightly have lost its way.

G. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the era of the Great War* (London, 1996), pp.9, 53:

> This was, of course, a lot of tripe, but the British are fond of tripe. Precisely because the British had lived in sheltered valleys (or rather empires), they still naively believed that everlasting values like honour, duty and patriotism mattered in a struggle between industrial nations…This innocent, gullible generation still believed in heroes, duty and the glory of war.

and evolved to meet the anxieties that war created amongst believers. Most religious participants who fought or ministered and articulated an interpretation of the war did not undergo a unilinear disillusionment. Instead, ambiguity and adaptation were the dominant pattern in their responses.

In explaining why this was the case, I identify four interlocking attitudes and influences. Firstly, most did not enter the war in a state of 'illusion' about the prewar world in the first place. Looking back in 1920, one Scottish regimental history contrasted the prewar world of 'sunshine and laughter, of beauty and courage', from post-war class politics and economic distress.[26] In contrast, the devout entered the war from churches that articulated a cultural despair before the war, predisposing them to judge the war as symptomatic of a dysfunctional fallen world rather than an interruption of progress. Secondly, their deployment of the rhetoric of sacrifice did not necessarily disguise the war's conditions and heavy losses. It often recognised these realities and made a virtue of them, representing the willingness to withstand high casualties and suffering as emblems of faith, and as the necessary precondition of national rebirth. Muddy battlefields, destroyed buildings or field hospitals became stations of the nation's Calvary. The next two factors intensified over time. By interpreting the war as a personal test of faith, participants were able to find value in the struggle itself, to internalise the sacred meaning of the war as a moral test of the combatant. The more passive stance of endurance and willingness to sacrifice was represented as sacred, even when their efforts were deprived of immediate military breakthroughs. The combatant's wounds, his homesickness, his regiment's casualties, his exhaustion or even boredom could be recast as meaningful trials. Even if the more

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[26] J.W. Arthur, I.S. Munro (eds.) *Seventeenth Highland Light Infantry (Glasgow Chamber of Commerce Battalion) Record of War Service 1914-1918* (Glasgow, 1920), p.77.

florid version of the rhetoric was not always embraced, combatants expressed more subtly a commitment to the 'Christian nation.' This nation was embodied in their local community with its parish church, as both a place to be defended and as a community that would judge the virtue and calibre of its defenders. Whatever doubts they entertained, they also wanted to prove their calibre to their family, vicar and neighbours. Their investment in these ideas was often strengthened by bereavement. The cumulative impact of the loss of comrades turned soldiers into an armed community of the bereaved who were reluctant to disown and cheapen the sacrifices of the dead. Even for those who questioned the language, it was rarely in terms of nihilistic irony that saw deaths as meaningless. Far from the cataclysm bearing no meaning, the more iconoclastic responses gave war a bleak set of meanings, as a damnation from God. Above all, the language of sacrifice derived its power from something that was underway before the war, as dying on the battlefield for others became an extension of the quest for social harmony and Kingdom of God on earth, earning redemption from godless materialism through blood. This could sit alongside recognition of the war's brutality.

Deaths and privations are rarely interpreted in a vacuum. Though some kind of emotional response to loss is universal, the meanings attached to it are not. Whether or not suffering, loss and death are accepted as legitimate and worthwhile depends upon the wider cultural and circumstantial framework in which it is interpreted. Such ordeals are experienced in interaction with a host of variables that participants bring to the front from their parent societies.[27] This is especially applicable to the First World War, where many participants were not a separate caste of professional

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[27] As Gat argues, A. Gat, *Fascist and Liberal Visions of War: Fuller, Liddle-Hart, Douhet, and other modernists* (Oxford, 1998), p.136.

soldiers but civilians entering a citizen army. In the context of religious participants, this shaped the way they defined the problems raised by the bloodshed they witnessed. If there was a 'crisis' they identified, it was not usually about high casualties and conditions in isolation. Instead, it was more often the growing anxiety that sacrificial death was not transforming society as desired. This proved to be an ambivalent mindset, as the various chapters demonstrate.

Chapter 1 examines how the wartime faith was defined in the opening year of the war, and where it came from. At its inception, the religious rhetoric was much more adaptable to the conditions of the battlefront than has been assumed. The rhetoric of sacrifice was generally not spawned in naïve enthusiasm, in obsolete and romanticised expectations of what war would entail, even if few people could fully grasp the scale of the war to come. Instead, it was used with the realisation that the war could be dangerous, and sometimes that it might be long, and the hope that its galvanising and unifying effect could restore social harmony and piety to politically fractured nations. Nor was it a later invention used to justify sacrifices in hindsight. Both churches drew upon an inherited rhetoric that had grown incrementally during the nineteenth century.

Chapter 2 examines a case-study of one of the most prominent segments of the population that suffered relatively high casualties, Christian university students at war. It revisits two battles that have been treated as seminal occasions of disenchantment in the historiography, Langemarck and the Somme. I argue that the attempt to find a single point of disillusion is ill-founded. There was a pattern of adaptation. Young pious men were able to draw on their religious heritage to place the terrors (and tedium) of war in familiar contexts. The Old Testament emphasis in

Pietism, which was for German students a dominant force, was particularly influential in this regard. Their rhetoric evolved along a spectrum. While initial hopes that the war would consecrate their societies were challenged, they were constrained from disillusionment by a pre-existing view of national suffering as benign punishment. They were also constrained by other forces that grew stronger over time, such as a sense of obligation to dead comrades, and a desire to be seen to be faithful to the rhetoric in the eyes of their family and friends. Depending on their rank, age, nationality and the longevity of their military service, they moved along the spectrum according to different timetables. The minority that did disown the language of sacrifice, rarely did so in terms of nihilistic irony that saw deaths as meaningless.

Chapter 3 shows how religion enabled combatants to personalise the war, making it possible to give meaning to sacrifices that seemed to lack immediate military value. In the face of overwhelming firepower and frequent immobility, the virtues of courage and piety were remoulded around the passivity of the frontline. Instead of being obsolete, religion and its discourse of character furnished a language that could cope with the artillery barrage. Exposure to the destructive combat environment also personalised the conflict by prompting combatants abroad to imagine similar destruction of their own revered homeland, a sacred memory embodied in the local community, parish church and family. Anxious to defend their homeland and to be seen as faithful to it, combatants gave an everyday expression to concepts that were preached in the pulpits in more elevated terms.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I examine how the churches in the field responded to fears that military service was corrupting and brutalising men. As both the War Roll Movement

and the Soldiers' Home Project show, churchmen on both sides of the front began to fear the impact of military service was having on combatants, and on the 'national character' as a whole. Serving the nation potentially entailed the brutalising of the soldier, creating contempt for civil authority, the discipline and nervous strain of the front encouraging the loosening of restraint at the rear, with the baneful temptations of alcohol, sex and gambling. The claims of Christ and of the state on the soul of the soldier, which marched in lock-step in the sermons in 1914, now threatened to break apart. Though lauded as Christian martyr-soldiers, the return of soldiers to the civilian world, in which they crossed the threshold transformed, was a frightening transition. Apprehension of postwar chaos threatened perceptions of war as a struggle for a Christian civilisation. If civilisation was a nexus of restraints, these could be destroyed by the demobilised soldier. To address these anxieties, the British Protestant denominations attempted to create a vanguard of future Christian veterans, which within the minority who were deemed to be 'churched' met with a significantly large response. German Soldiers' Homes, fearful of the effects of foreign cultures on their invading forces, attempted to replicate the interior of the German house to insulate its soldiers from the corrupting effects of cultural dislocation.

On both sides, as Chapter 5 illustrates, the churches collaborated with soldiers and grieving parents to create a pantheon of Christian heroes and reconcile the potentially degrading business of warmaking with Christian purity. Hagiographies of dead combatants promoted the ideal of Christian valour and sought to influence living combatants to fight out of motives higher than hatred. While it is likely that there were often gaps between these representations and the authentic feelings of participants, and that the notion of a civilisational war could fuel hatred, the

persistence of the theme of Christian valour suggests that it had authority, for both clergy and men who wished to represent themselves or their comrades as virtuous warriors. This casts doubt on interpretations that dismiss the discourse of wartime religion as a vehicle for hateful violence.

Chapter 6 shows how in 1916-17, the rhetoric of sacrifice was reformulated in another way, around two dynamics that had already been anticipated. Firstly, concerned that the soldier's blood sacrifice could not in itself transform society positively, and could not in itself bring victory in a 'total' war, the churches reconfigured the language around civilian material sacrifices. Secondly, bereavement at the front reinforced the appeal of sacrificial rhetoric, as combatants reaffirmed the duty to ensure that their comrades sacrifices were not made in vain.

The final chapter examines how chaplains and soldiers interpreted victory and found meaning in defeat. I argue that the year 1918, despite seeing some of the heaviest fighting in the war, and despite the collapse of the German army, did not represent a downward spiral into alienation from religious readings of the war. For many participants, the return of mobility to the battlefield strengthened the view that the final judgment was arriving, even as a deserved defeat. Even as defeat threatened and escalating casualties occurred, the prayers of pious soldiers continued to frame the war in coherent religious ways, sharing their chaplains' conviction that God was arbitrating over the final outcome of the war. The rhetoric became a body of ideas and semantics that shaped post-war commemoration around the concept of the unfulfilled sacrifices of the dead.

I argue that the similarities, overlap and convergences outweigh the differences between the churches' rhetoric of sacrifice. Many differences were differences of form, temperature, or circumstance, rather than substance. To be sure, differences existed. Lutherans were more narrowly authoritarian and illiberal in their politics, and had a more historically deferential relationship with the state. Scottish Presbyterians who entered the war more sympathetic towards social reform, found their churches increasingly hostile to it at home, while Anglican social Christianity more often viewed socialism as the embodiment of Christian fellowship. Anglicans from the more Catholic wings of the Church of England were less iconophobic than evangelicals and Presbyterians, and were therefore more likely to revere the mystique, crucifixes and wayside crosses of French Catholicism. However, Presbyterians and evangelicals could derive sacred meaning from the analogy of the soldier's death with their stress on atonement and the expiation of sin through sacrifice. Because both high Anglican and Lutheran traditions had featured commemoration and prayers for the dead, they made the transition more easily towards accepting that the soldier's sacrifice brought him salvation, or alternatively to adopt a modified 'Protestant purgatory.' But under the same pressure to assure soldiers that their deaths would atone for their sins, even Calvinist participants outside the Free Presbyterian Church innovated, embracing the notion of an intermediate state after death. The convergence of theologically dissimilar strands of Protestantism in a common language is one demonstration that the wartime language of sacrifice could have different politics and world-views projected onto it. In turn, the rhetoric helped to dissolve differences between denominations.

This thesis draws on sources that were left behind by clergy and combatants. It includes censors' reports, diaries, sermons, leaflets, church and trench newspapers, tracts, and papers in state and church archives and university collections. The sources of the state church archives outside Prussia are rich, preserving reports and sermons in abundance. In the case of Prussia, there is an imbalance. While it produced much published material, the Prussian archives were destroyed by the Allied bombing of Potsdam in April 1945. I have tried to compensate for this gap through three sources: Martin Schian's multi-volume study, though apologetic, which summarises chaplains' reports, an invaluable 1926 survey of unpublished study of students' field letters, in Hermann Cron's *Studentenarchiv*, compiling quotations from Reichsarchiv letters that were later lost, and a neglected trench newspaper, the *Kleine Akademische Feldpost*, which gathered responses from widely scattered soldiers.

These sources are used here for two purposes. First, to examine how the rhetoric of sacrifice was constructed and how it evolved, and secondly to assess the more problematic issue of its relationship with the participants in the field. Even where the sources are plentiful, historians have to look through a glass darkly. The limits to historical knowledge mean that sometimes the individual's motivation and inner conviction are irrecoverable. Where it is possible, I have tested the authenticity of the individual's convictions in the context of the source material. The willingness of some participants in their letters home to question and alter the language of sacrifice, while still trying to uphold it, suggests a real engagement with it, and that they were probably not just posturing for a homefront audience. At other times it is impossible to test sincerity. But even so, the responses of participants in the field still tell us

much about how they wished to be seen, about the terms in which religious faith and doubt were framed, and about the logic and nature of the rhetoric as it unfolded.

Indeed, one of the arguments of this thesis is that the rhetoric had such authority that religious people wished to be seen to be living up to it, so that discourse had its own self-fulfilling logic. The exchange between speaker and audience can itself show how the language endured. To pose as the man faithful to the code of Christian valour, one had to be prepared to live and die with its demands.

As a study of the relationship between rhetoric and experience, I have been influenced by the agenda of cultural history, which reconstructs systems of representation and asks how culture relates to social practice, such as prewar evangelism as a symbolic system in this case.[28] But I have also avoided an overly deterministic interpretation, either of language merely as an expression of a pre-existing material circumstance, or of behaviour purely as a product of pre-existing cultural discourses. I have also eschewed the extreme forms of the 'linguistic turn', where only language matters. This thesis argues instead for a more dynamic interplay between the events and conditions of the war and the ideas and rhetoric of the faithful, asking how each affected the other. This follows the approach of Gareth Stedman Jones, whose study of Chartism treats language seriously as a framework of interpretation with consequences for how actions in the world are interpreted, as well as a rhetorical expression of class consciousness.[29] Likewise, the sacrificial language used by the faithful in the Great War was not just an obsolete rhetoric at odds with 'reality', but a dynamic method of understanding the world.

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[28] See R. Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge, 1988).
[29] G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.90-179.

For example, I argue that the prewar value system propagated by the churches around 'character', which asserted the need to prove one's self-worth through endurance and self-sacrifice, helped to create a framework in which combatants could draw meaning from the passive situation of withstanding artillery bombardment. Because it framed physical and mental strain as a virtuous necessity, and found value in the physical and mental strain that accompanied the soldier's defensive pose, it could survive contact with the brutal realities of the front. There are also examples of how the relationship between discourse and behaviour could be reversed. The material circumstances that the German army found itself in, as a hostile occupier of foreign lands, shaped its religious 'mindscape' around the danger of cultural dislocation and the theme of the chosen people in exile, in a way that was far less emphatic in British rhetoric.

Several other source problems also confront this investigation. In reconstructing the religious interpretation of the war, two facets of the combatant's and chaplains' experience are not well-represented in the sources. If warfare can be divided into separate phases, such as 'initial', 'sustaining' and 'combat' motivation, the overriding emphasis in religious responses falls into the gap, into the pre-battle or pre-combat phase.[30] The war involved many phases of activity and inactivity, but combatants made sense of the war by reordering their experience around the focal point of the soldier's preparation for battle. The churches worried most about what men did behind the lines, in brothels and bars. Conversely, pledges of faith, declarations of 'willingness to sacrifice', contemplation of salvation, were most intense before going to the front, or before battle, and men were most susceptible to religious response in

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[30] J. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivations and Tactics in the army of Revolutionary France 1791-1794* (Urbana, 1984), pp.35-36, 177-82.

this phase. While this reflects an imbalance in the sources, it also shows that combatants made sense of the conflict in their representations of it, by giving weight to the battlefield, and censoring out the moral perils of life behind the line.

The main rhetorical contact between military chaplains and combatants came through sermons. Yet chaplains' war sermons, that are preserved in large numbers, were largely printed, edited and collected for the consumption of a reading audience. There are few first-hand copies of sermons, and the relationship between speaker and audience is not always fully retrievable. For example, the belligerent 'wind-up' sermons that some chaplains delivered in the field, which exhorted combatants to 'scrag the Bosch' are mostly absent from edited and printed accounts.[31]

But this thesis does not try to reconstruct the full material reality of what happened in the field, or the entirety of the relationship between clergy and men, but how both represented reality, and how this in turn enabled them to give the war an intelligible meaning. Although there are few direct accounts of what was preached at the front, there is evidence of the impression sermons made, and how religious combatants processed what chaplains said.[32] Likewise, there are no direct contemporary accounts of the perceptions and thoughts of a combatant during combat itself, only what they wrote before and after. So in the case of chaplains and soldiers who uttered belligerent and hateful statements, or who might have felt aggressively hateful during battle, they also showed an awareness that they were expected to make Christian valour rather

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[31] Cited in A. Simpson (ed.) *Hot Blood and Cold Steel Life and Death in the Trenches of the First World War* (London, 1993), p.111.

[32] This methodological approach is adopted also by G. de Groot in his examination of the impact of Padre Duncan's sermons on Field Marshal Haig, 'We are Safe whatever happens' – Douglas Haig, The Reverend George Duncan, and the Conduct of War, 1916-1918' in N. Macdougall (ed.) *Scotland and War: A.D. 79-1918* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 193-211, p.199.

than hatred must their prime impulse, and their responses reflect a complex dialogue between how they felt, how they were supposed to feel and how they wanted to be seen in the eyes of the audiences that would judge them, from their own military unit to their family, friends and local community on the home-front. How the reality was mediated through representation, and how representations affected their approach to the war's demands, is the recurrent theme of the thesis.

Where does this thesis fit in with the prodigious amount of scholarship about the war? As a comparative cultural history, this thesis has a bearing on two historiographies, the debate over the war's 'cultural' impact, and the *Sonderweg* debate. A sophisticated and wide-ranging literature debates the relationship between the war and the different facets of 'traditional' culture, such as rhetoric, art, faith, and literature. Historians conventionally depicted the war as a fundamental break with the past. Paul Fussell's literary study, still lacking a German equivalent, stressed how the incommunicable agonies of war created a revolt from the lexicon of romantic 'Big Words' and the authority of the old order. The distance between the hopes invested in war and war's reality made acid irony the new language of war and modernity itself.[33] Another approach, championed by Jay Winter, contests the 'watershed' notion of the Great War as a cultural disjuncture. According to this view, popular responses to the Great War across Europe, such as war memorials and the resurgence of spiritualism, show that older languages, motifs and values survived as therapeutic ways of comprehending loss. Motifs of meaningful or glorious sacrifice survived because they

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[33] P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London, 1975). Discontinuity is at the core also of Samuel Hynes' study of the evolving 'myth' of the war experience in S. Hynes, *A War Imagined The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1990).

fulfilled a healing function.[34] Laurinda Stryker similarly argues that there was a continuity of 'traditional culture' through the war, including religion as one of its pillars.[35] Looking backwards from the context of later fascist hyper-nationalism, George Mosse also traces a cultural survival through war commemoration. He stresses the reactionary nature of such practices and ideas, seeing in the remembrance of the Great War a legacy of murderous nation-worship that was manipulated by extremist politics. Even though these scholars contend that the rhetoric lived on, they also argue for its essential duplicity, its incompatibility with the 'real' nature of warfare. In contrast to the 'disillusionment hypothesis', they argue that the language was not made redundant, but was an effective strategy of denial, precisely because it glossed over the war's brutality and psychological distress.[36] The persistence of tradition as a source of healing is also central to the study of neo-medievalism during the Great War by Stefan Goebel, where the chivalric idioms of 'sleeping' knights who fell gallantly for noble causes was embraced as a soothing form of commemoration that also promised reunion with the dead, both in victorious Britain and defeated Germany.[37] From a different direction, localized studies of war commemoration also argue for a cultural continuity, as the assertion of local identity made sacrifice and victory meaningful and enduring ideas.[38]

This thesis steers a middle path between the 'radical discontinuity' and 'cultural survival' interpretations. By showing that religion provided combatants and chaplains

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[34] J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995).
[35] L. Stryker, 'Languages of Sacrifice and Suffering in England during the First World War' (Unpublished Cambridge Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1992).
[36] G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990).
[37] S. Goebel, 'Medievalism and commemoration of the Great War in Britain and Germany 1914-1939' (Unpublished Cambridge Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 2002)
[38] M. Connelly *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916-1939* (Woodbridge, 2002); K. Grieves *Sussex in the First World War* (Sussex, 2004).

with a framework that could interpret and accept high levels of loss and trauma, it refutes the assumption that patriotic and religious 'high diction' was an obsolete archaism. On the other hand, this thesis also resists the interpretation of religion as a monolithic manifestation of 'traditional culture.' While religion espouses doctrines and practices that are claimed to be fixed and eternal, historically it is something continually remade. As a widespread religious view of war, sacrifice through blood was an evolving concept revived in the nineteenth century. And it worked not because it was a form of 'false consciousness', but because its meaning did not have to depend on false images of war.

The *Sonderweg* question revolves around the notion of modern Germany's alleged peculiarities, its misdevelopment towards Nazism and the Holocaust. Part of this debate is the question whether the 'war theology' of Germany's Protestant pastors was a unique response to war, or whether it expressed a more pan-European phenomenon.[39] Much of the original thesis has been challenged, but the supposed 'peculiarity' of the Lutheran churches has been less thoroughly questioned. German Lutheran theology had been hammered out by a compact with the secular princes, ensuring the churches were quiescent to the established monarchical order, and preached unquestioning obedience to divinely appointed earthly authority. Even Pietism with its revolt from dogma, which had been strongly opposed initially by official state church, had been absorbed in eighteenth century into politically

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[39] For some of the major challenges, see D. Blackbourn, G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History.* (New York, 1984); Weisbrod, Bernd, 'Der englische "Sonderweg" in der neueren Geschichte', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 16 (1990), pp. 233-52; T. Nipperdy, 'Wehlers Kaiserreich. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung,' in T. Nipperdy, *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte*, (G öttingen, 1976) pp. 360-389. R.J. Evans, 'Whatever became of the Sonderweg?' in R. J. Evans, *Rereading German History 1800-1996* (London, 1997), pp.12-23.

deferential Prussian Protestantism.[40] The militarist, authoritarian Kaiser Wilhelm was the *summus episcopus* of the largest Protestant church, the Old Prussian Union. As some argue, such tendencies manifested a pathological national consciousness that were echoed in the bellicose, imperialistic and authoritarian utterances of Lutheran pastors, expressing an illiberal divergence from the liberal, parliamentary west.[41] Hans-Ulrich Wehler stressed the *Obrigkeitsideologie* (ideology of authority) of the Lutheran state-church, 'the functional importance of the Evangelical sermon, of Evangelical religious instruction, of Evangelical military chaplains for the stabilisation and legitimation of the Hohenzollerns' Caesaro-papism is not to be underestimated,' though Wehler's later work has accepted some of the criticisms against the *Sonderweg* thesis.[42] British Anglicanism, by contrast, saw the church as the national conscience, as the slavery debate had signified, while Scottish Protestants had embraced Calvin's doctrine of resistance to an oppressive state.

Germany's Protestant churches had a different relationship with the state, and were more politically illiberal and deferential. While acknowledging this, I argue that the language of sacrifice they embraced represented a similar impulse, the pursuit of

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[40] See M. Fulbrook, 'Religion, Revolution and Absolutist Rule in Germany and England', *European Studies Review*, 12:3 (1982), pp.301-321.

[41] These arguments have been made by: F. Fischer, 'Die Auswirkungen der Reformation auf das deutsche und westeuropäisch-amerikanische politische Leben' (Antrittsvorlesung, 1948), 'Der Deutsche Protestantismus und die Politik im 19. Jahrhundert' ('Vortrag auf dem Deutschen Historikertag in München am 14. September 1949) in Fischer, *Der Erste Weltkreig und das deutsche Geschichtsbild: Beiträge zur Bewältigung eines historischen Tabus* (Düsseldorf, 1977), pp.37-46, 47-88; K. Sontheimer, 'Der "Deutsche Geist" als Ideologie: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie vom deutschen Sonderbewußtsein' in M. Funke, H.A. Jacobsen, H.H. Knütter, H.P. Schwarz (eds.) *Demokratie und Diktatur: Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa: Festschrift für Karl Dietrich Bracher* (Düsseldorf, 1987); J. Moses, 'Justifying War as the Will of God: German Theology on the Eve of the First World War' *Colloquium* 31:1 (May, 1999), pp. 3-20; J. Moses, 'State, War, Revolution and the German Evangelical Church 1914–1918,' *Journal of Religious History* 17:1 (1992), pp.47–59; J. Jenkins, 'War Theology, 1914 and Germany's *Sonderweg*: Luther's Heirs and Patriotism', *Journal of Religious History* 15:3 (June 1989), pp.292-310; in contrast, Karl Hammer identifies their pronouncements with a common European nationalism: K. Hammer, *Deutsche Kriegstheologie 1870-1918* (Frankfurt, 1971).

[42] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Göttingen, 1973), pp. 118-119.

social harmony through national rallying and the overcoming of materialism and the divisiveness of class consciousness. Both world views came under similar challenges during the war, the fear that blood sacrifice would not transform the nation, that soldiers returning from the front might be brutalised, that war accelerated rather than stopped materialist corruption. It also evolved in similar ways to meet these anxieties, becoming a duty of civilians in the postwar world to complete and perfect the sacrifices of the dead.

Why comparative history? This thesis argues that commonalities outweighed differences in their attempt to salvage meaning from the dislocation and distress of wartime, that German and British religious participants embraced a common moral language of war that transcended the frontiers, that there were common trans-national religious responses to war which were intertwined. Despite this, the agenda of this thesis is not to provide a comforting vision of a common European past to nourish a contemporary European identity, 'a more European history of the First World War, which one day must be written if Europe is ever to forge its own identity.'[43] Whatever the political merits of such a project, the concept of a common twentieth century European past is ahistorical. It is firstly Eurocentric, omitting the war's colonial and transatlantic dimensions. Even more fundamentally, it founders on the fact that for the belligerent nations like Britain and Germany, there were radically different postwar outcomes and paths. Some countries won, others lost and lost their empires and political systems with it. To show commonalities and convergences in the cultural history of the Great War should not be to play down the tragic fact that postwar belligerents diverged radically in their destinations, some later embracing totalitarian

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[43] J. Winter, A. Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2005), p.4.

extremism. These divergences culminated in another internecine bloodletting, erupting less than twenty years afterwards.

If not to forge a universally common history, why is comparative history desirable? Firstly, comparative history helps to check the distortions of arguments that are only implicitly comparative, written in narrowly national histories. It shows that belligerent adversaries can hold similar world-views, even on either side of the front. And with the history of only one nation, it guards against the temptation to read history backwards by projecting different postwar destinations back into the war. If Germany succumbed to Nazism, the assumption might be, its churches must have been uniquely enthusiastic in their rhetoric of sacrifice, setting its youth on a war-enthused *Sonderweg* to totalitarian nightmare. Conversely, if Britain's post-war destination was political moderation, and the growth of a maudlin 'lost generation' memory, which blamed the war for the contraction of its global, imperial and economic power, its culture might be assumed to have been more resistant to wartime religious rhetoric, disavowing in wartime the cause of God, King and Country. A proper comparison of both cases demonstrates that German clerics were not appreciably more committed to the mystique of blood sacrifice than their British counterparts. Nor did Britain's post-war disappointments negate the persistent identification of the devout with sacrificial values during the war itself. A parallel history is a reminder that their divergent postwar histories were not written in stone before the war's outcome was known.

Secondly, an advantage of comparative history is reciprocity. If the war was a reciprocal activity between participants, their discourse of war was also shaped by a reciprocal relationship. Wartime religious discourses of Britain and Germany were

not just self-directed sets of ideas and languages but shaped by a conscious relationship between German and British churches and their competing claims to be fighting a just war. They were acutely aware of each other with prewar association and conscious of a shared heritage. As this thesis shows, the need to counter the enemy's allegations was an engine that shaped their war theologies. Lutheran sermons and literature insisted that soldiers must disprove British accusations of barbarism by fighting honourably. British claims that their war was an antimilitarist crusade were heightened to counter German allegations that they were merely a grasping merchant empire, and to distinguish their armies and their mission from the primitive 'Prussianism.' Other facets of the religious response to war were also shaped by this mutual awareness. Even the rhetoric about domestic war aims was shaped by the perception of the enemy. As the letter of Captain Cooke above illustrated, the enemy was frequently said to embody evils that were also present in different form on the home front. British clergy represented German militarism as a manifestation of predatory industrial competition at home. German pastors warned that the materialism of Britain's commercial empire was also a domestic threat that might erode the heroic German spirit. As war intensified, so too did the idea that if war was a judgment, God was weighing each sides' cause in the balance. That theme ran through appeals for war loans, as citizens were exhorted to invest in order to prove they were more self-sacrificing than the enemy. These were highly mutually conscious adversaries. Comparative history is especially valuable in this case, because their stories are so entangled.

Some important caveats should be observed. This thesis does not make claims about the responses of the bulk of participants in either army. It focuses on the devout who

left behind a record. Even then, the record is incomplete. Within the source material that preserves religious uses of rhetoric, the testimonies of military chaplains and officers are the most frequent. Religiosity existed outside these segments of the military, but the sources are weighted towards the 'self-recording' middle classes. The body of evidence yields glimpses of the way some working-class combatants and infantry privates approached the language of sacrifice. Their reactions and responses are partly recoverable through censors' reports, trench newspapers, the reports of the War Roll movement, the popularity of books they read, and collections of letters. The responses of those who left a record, at least, can be analysed. For that minority, some patterns of adaptation can be discerned, suggesting possibilities for how their undocumented comrades might have responded, but not always supporting final conclusions about the dominant patterns of response.

In arguing against the dismissal of the rhetoric, and in suggesting that religious frames of reference proved to be adaptable, I am not trying to replace one rigid interpretive framework with another. In a war that engaged millions of people, it would be absurd to suggest that religion always 'worked' as a way of finding meaning in the event. The language clearly could be saccharine in its treatment of war and death. 'For the Fallen', the canonical memorial poem written in September 1914 by Lawrence Binyon, spoke of death 'august and royal', depicting men going 'with songs to the battle,' while even some of those with a deep investment in the language, were not able to come to terms with their wartime losses. Rudyard Kipling, the embodiment of Britain's Edwardian patriotism, declared himself inconsolable after the death of his

son John in 1915.[44] As the final chapter makes clear, some military chaplains eventually revolted from the code of values after the war, unable to find sufficient meaning in the war to justify it in hindsight, while a minority of religious soldiers rejected the marriage of Christianity and national wars. And while the causes of psychiatric casualties are complex and still disputed, at least part of post-traumatic stress disorder can be attributed to the inability to reconcile pre-existing constructions of the world with distressing information.[45] Bearing in mind these limitations, if the responses to war can be described as a 'cacophony', as a war that was handled in many cultural ways, this thesis revisits one neglected part of that cacophony.[46]

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[44] As Kipling wrote, 'All the empty-heart and ache/ That isn't cured by grieving.' *The Times* 10 Nov. 1923, p.10.

[45] There is an extensive literature on psychiatric and nervous casualties: B. Shepherd, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists 1914-1994* (London, 2002); P. Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry and the politics of trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca, 2003); P. Lesse, *Shell shock, traumatic neurosis and the British soldiers of the First World War* (New York, 2002).

[46] This description was made by Robert Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German victims of the Great War* (Cornell, 1984), p.31.

CHAPTER 1

Defining the Faith: Codes of Patriotism and Piety, 1914-1915

In 1914, Britain and Germany went to war. Except for a beleaguered minority of dissenters and pacifists, the war won overwhelming consent in the Protestant churches of Britain and Germany. Its impact was felt strongly in religious households. The conflict was entered as a liturgical and family event. As war was declared and men prepared to enlist, couples hurried to get married, baptise newborn children only hours old, before accompanying their family to farewell services at the local church, some arranging private family communion.[1] The faithful left churches and theological colleges to enlist as combatants and military chaplains. Weekly obituaries and honour rolls of the dead contained the names of Altar boys, ordinands, boy scouts, teachers at church schools, clergy and the children of clergy. By February 1916, 13 Anglican bishops out of 38 had lost sons, the Bishop of Buckingham losing three of his four.[2] German theologian Adolf von Harnack's son-in-law died in the opening campaign on the western front, while the author of a compendium of inspirational letters illustrating German 'war piety' was a pastor whose seventeen year-old son was killed in Russia.[3] Chaplain Siegfried Eggebrecht promoted in his field sermons a war that would claim the life of his own twin brother, killed in June 1916 at Verdun. 'It was

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[1] M. Schian, *Die Evangelischen Kirchengemeinden in der Kriegszeit* (Leipzig, 1918), pp.21, 24f.
[2] As far as can be determined, no Church of England diocese kept a complete official record of the clergy or their sons and daughters who served or perished in the war. This was discovered by Richard Ussher in his incomplete *Roll of the sons and daughters of the Anglican Church Clergy throughout the world and of the Naval and Military Chaplains of the same who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-1918* (London, 1926). For the Bishop of Buckingham, see 'Fallen Officers: The Times list of Casualties' *The Times* Friday, Oct 13, 1916, p. 11.
[3] Friedrich Schwenker, whose son was Gottfried, (ed.) *Kriegsfrömmigkeit: Zeugnisse aus dem großen Kriege für Kirche, Schule und Haus* (Gütersloh, 1915 & 1916).

my blood', he later wrote, 'that flowed from you.'[4] Because their own menfolk were risking death, parish communities, churchgoing families and participants had a strong emotional investment in that rhetoric. The producers of religious rhetoric also had to live with its consequences. For them, sacrifice began at home.

No comprehensive or exactly comparable records were kept of wartime participation statistics of churchgoers. Some records are incomplete, some measure only casualties, others include participation rates. Yet most fragments suggest above-average levels of involvement and loss, even in a war which killed around 11.8 per cent of those mobilised in Britain (nearly one in eight), and 15.4 per cent in Germany (nearly one in seven).[5] Within their own communities the impact was high, while they were overrepresented in the context of the national war effort. By May 1915, almost 90 per cent of all Scotland's 'sons of the Manse' had volunteered for active service in the navy or army.[6] By January 1916, it was claimed that clergy sons supplied approximately 30 per cent of commissioned British army officers, a segment of the military that suffered higher rates of casualties than the rest of the infantry.[7] According to one polemic written in 1917 against the alleged reluctance of the Norfolk tenant farmers to enlist, clergy sons enlisted at a rate of 33 per cent, above sons of tenant farmers (15 per cent) though below lawyers (42 per cent).[8] Britain's

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[4] Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Emendingen [Henceforth abbreviated DTA] Signatur: 424/1,3. (Siegfried Eggebrecht, Kriegstagebuch) 12 June, 1916.
[5] For overall casualty figures see War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* (London, 1922), pp.237, 352-7; J. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London, 1986), p.75; Heeres-Sanitätsinspektion des Reichswehrministeriums, *Sanitätsbericht über das Deutsche Heer im Weltkriege 1914/1918,* 3 vols. (Berlin, 1934-5); N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), p.299.
[6] See D. Cameron, *Muster Role of the Manse* 1914-1919, (Glasgow, 1919), 'Editors Note to Second Edition.' Cf. The report of Chaplain-Colonel Dr. Patrick R. Mackay at the United Free Church General Assembly of 1915, that over 91% of the sons of United Free manses were serving, G. M. Reith (ed.) *Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assembly (1900-1929)* (Edinburgh, 1933), p.165.
[7] Figures for clergy sons as officers derived from T.G. Clarke, *Record*, 6 January 1916.
[8] W. Rye, *The Great War: Statistics of Recruiting in East and North Norfolk Among Tenant Farmers and Their Sons* (Norwich, 1917).

first Victoria Cross winner was an Anglican priest's son, a Bishop's son was the only man to win two, while the martyred nurse Edith Cavell was a vicar's daughter.[9] While parallel nationwide figures for German clergy sons are unavailable, fragments of data suggest the impact on pastors' families. 423 of the 1055 serving pastors' sons and theological students from Württemberg were killed, or 40.16 per cent, over twice the average proportion of fatalities within Germany's mobilised population and higher even than the death rate amongst serving 20-25 year-olds, the state's most depleted age group (33 per cent).[10] In the Berlin academy, by the end of 1915 alone the number of its theological graduates killed was 12 per cent, compared to 9 per cent of other graduates.[11]

The clergy rallied for war intensively. German churches felt greater strain because pastors were permitted far earlier to enlist as combatants.[12] Over half the Prussian pastors (1179, or 55.4 per cent) who served won decorations. Though the German army awarded Iron Crosses promiscuously, this was considerably higher even than the

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[9] 2nd Lieutenant G.H. Woolley, 9th Battalion, the London Regiment, and medical officer Noel Chavasse, the Liverpool Scottish. Edith Cavell's father was the Vicar of Swardeston, Norfolk, who had died in 1910.

[10] Württemberg figures: Württ. Evang. Landeskirche Der Oberkirchenrat, *Gedenktafel für die Kriegsopfer des Württ. Pfarrhauses und Pfarrstandes* (Stuttgart, 1936); see also W. von Hippel, 'Wirtschafts und Sozialgeschichte 1800 bis 1918' in E. Naujoks (ed.) *Handbuch der baden-württembergischen Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1992) iii. p.768; H. Wicki, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Bern, 1984), p.22. Of approximately 13,250,000 people mobilised by Germany, it is estimated that 2,044,000 were killed, a percentage of 15.43%. German enrolment and casualty figures derived from: L. Grebler, W. Winkler, *The Cost of the War to Germany and Austria-Hungary* (New Haven, 1940), pp.76-7.

[11] *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 1918, p.398.

[12] The date when clergy were formally permitted to bear arms by their supreme church council varied between the different *Landeskirchen*: in Baden-Württemburg a resolution of the Stuttgart Konsistorium on 3 August allowed them to fight. The Prussian Oberkirchenrat reversed its initial prohibition and permitted them to bear arms on 20 October, 1914. See A. Vogt, 'Militärseelsorge im Wilhelminischen Reich (1888-1918) Grundlagen und Struckturen aus Militärgeschichtlicher Sicht' (unpublished dissertation, Wesfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster, 1982), pp.562-3.

overall rate (45.25 per cent).[13] Low percentages of military chaplains were killed, approximately 88 (or 4.5 per cent) of British Anglican chaplains, and only 19 Prussian military chaplains, (1.42 per cent).[14] But those who were soldiers or aides suffered higher than average death rates. 2128 pastors and pastoral candidates from the Old Prussian Church served in the war (15.97 per cent of the total clergy), 1213 as chaplains or field hospital workers and 915 as combatants.[15] Of the 201 who were killed, only 19 were chaplains, but those who were soldiers were overrepresented within the ranks of the dead: 182 out of 915 (or 19.89 per cent) were killed, higher than the average rate of loss. Saxony and Württemberg show similar patterns of bereavement. Saxony lost a relatively low proportion of participating clergy (3.78 per cent), most of whom were chaplains or first aid workers, but lost 20.71 per cent of participating assistant clergy, curates and candidates for ordination, most of whom were soldiers.[16] Württemberg lost only 1 of its 51 field chaplains, but 64 of its 170

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[13] The Iron Cross was awarded to almost 6,000,000 out of approximately 13,250,000 combatants: http://www.firstworldwar.com/atoz/ironcross.htm. There are no collected figures for the medals awarded to British clergy who served as combatants.

[14] This comparison is likely to be distorted by the fact that the German churches fielded 'visiting chaplains' (theologians and court chaplains) whose visits were short, making them far less likely to be killed, as well as regular chaplains. 89 of the 1985 serving Church of England chaplains were killed in action or as a result of wounds, a percentage of 4.48%, compared to 36 of the 651 Roman Catholic chaplains (5.53%). Figures derived from J.G. Smyth, *In this sign conquer: the story of the army chaplains* (London, 1968), pp. 202-3. Figures for the Prussian army derived from M. Schian, *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche im Weltkriege* (i) *Die Arbeit der evangelischen Kirche im Felde* (Mittler, 1921-5) (appendix).

[15] Prussian Figures derived from the transcripts of the General Synod, *Verhandlungen der Generalsynode*, 2 (1920), p.249; Martin Schian records a higher number of Prussian chaplains, 1338. According to Schian, of the almost 2000 Protestant pastors serving as chaplains in the war, Prussia had 1338 volunteers as well as 127 regular staff, while Bavaria right of the Rhine provided 242 Protestant pastors and 37 left of the Rhine, Saxony 74 and Wuerttemberg 42. M. Schian, *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche*, appendix: 'Verzeichnis der während des Krieges in der evangelischen Militärseelsorge hauptamtlich beschäftigten Geistlichen.'

[16] In Saxony, 132 pastors served, while 140 curates, 'Hilfsgeistliche' (assistant clergy) and candidates for ordination enlisted. Of the 132 pastors, 50 served in arms, 64 as military chaplains, 18 in first aid. Of the 140 others, 124 served in arms, 4 in the military chaplaincy, 12 in first aid. Of all these, 5 pastors out of 132 were killed (only 3.78%), yet 29 out of 140 Hilfsgeistliche, curates and candidates were killed (about 20.71%). The overall death rate, out of 272 serving, 34 killed, was 12.5%. *Statistischer Bericht über die Zustände in der ev.luth. Landeskirche Sachsens in den Jahren 1911-1918. Zusammengestellt für die 10. ord. Landessynode*, p.13.

clergy combatants, a strikingly high rate of 37.59 per cent.[17] Proportions of German clergy enlisting as chaplains were highest amongst smaller pools of clergy, in Hamburg, where 26.31 per cent (30 of 114 clergy) enlisted as chaplains, Bremen (24.39 per cent), and Frankfurt am Main (16.28 per cent).[18] Anglican clergy, forbidden to enlist as combatants until April 1918, applied so much for chaplaincies that by December 1914, there was higher demand than available places.[19] Their 1985 padres represented roughly 12-14 per cent of the total Anglican clergy as recorded in 1914.[20] In some dioceses like Bristol, few clergy of military age had not enlisted. By May, 1918 Bristol's 310 Anglican clergy were so depleted by the 25.48 per cent who had enlisted as chaplains or volunteers, that only 41 men of military age were left.[21]

In the first months, chaplains and soldiers consecrated the war in sacred language. They did so on departure, as one young English soldier claimed 'entering in this war seems to me like entering some vast cathedral, full of God's presence and of prayer and praise,'[22] while an officer in Bonn wrote on 4 August that Germany's cause was 'sacred' as well as 'just.'[23] They were sentiments that persisted after the exhausting baptism of the first mobile battles and the emergence of static warfare, one Scottish soldier writing to the Presbyterian chaplain to the Glasgow Highlanders in December

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[17] Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg und dem Landeskirchlichen Museum Ludwigsburg, *Mit Gott für Volk und Vaterland: Die Württembergische Landeskirche Zwischen Krieg und Frieden 1903-1957*, (Stuttgart, 1995), p.40.

[18] Though the number of clergy volunteering for other roles from these cities is unknown: Schian, *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche* ii. (Mittler, 1921-5), pp.67-8.

[19] 900 more clergy had applied for commissions than were required on September 1, 1914: G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson* (London, 1952), p.739. The number of Anglican candidates who enlisted as combatants and aides is unknown.

[20] *The Official Year-Book of the Church of England*, (1915) p.xxx, records 14,057 incumbent clergy for the year 1913-14.

[21] 71 were already chaplains, 4 had become combatants and 4 worked for the Church Army, figures derived from Bell, *Randall Davidson* (London, 1952), pp.887-890.

[22] Cited in A. Wilkinson, 'Changing English Attitudes to Death in the Two World Wars' in P.C. Jupp, G. Howard (eds.), *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp.149-163, p.149.

[23] *Mit Gott für Kaiser und Reich: Feldpostbriefe von Franze Koeppe* (Stuttgart, 1917), Letter, 4 Aug. 1914.

that 'in His hands…this awful struggle will result [in the] advancement of His Kingdom.'[24] Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy and Fritz Philippi, poets as well as chaplains, continued to give their armies a messianic purpose, the BEF becoming the 'Army of Redemption', German armies representing 'crucified humanity' achieving the 'German redemption.'[25] The war, they insisted, was a legitimate war of national defence, a war not of their own making that self-preservation and honour obliged them to wage. German or British, they defended the same sacred trinity: God, monarch and nation, as well as their homestead, families and church. The aggression meted out in the first offensives of the war, Russia's invasion of East Prussia, Austrian attacks on Serbian civilians, Germany's invasion and pillage of neutral Belgium, persuaded populations that they faced an existential crisis. In strategically vulnerable Germany, their nation besieged by a hostile coalition to the west and east, *Feinde Ringsum*, 'surrounded by enemies', was a slogan that rang through sermons.[26] Russian assaults on Prussian churches and pastors' houses hardened Lutheran identification of church with state, of homeland with ancestral faith.[27]

But beyond the cause of self-preservation and tribal patriotism, more was being claimed of this war. Churches at the front were instructed to define the war in terms of universal values. Field Marshal Haig would urge British clergy to preach the 'great

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[24] Imperial War Museum [Henceforth abbreviated IWM] 87/10/1, (The Reverend J.M. Connor, Diary), 10 Dec. 1914.

[25] G.A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Rough Talks by a Padre* (London, 1918), p.131; F. Philippi, *An der Front Feldpredigten* (Weisbaden, 1916), p.9.

[26] German 'clerical nationalism', defining the war as a just war of defence, has already received extensive scholarly treatment. See especially A. J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism: German Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart, 1986) and *God, Germany and Britain in the Great War: A study in clerical nationalism* (New York, 1989).

[27] Martin Schian catalogues these incidents: In East Prussia 19 churches were allegedly destroyed, 136 damaged, 23 pastors houses destroyed, 311 damaged, 65 other buildings destroyed, 229 damaged, Schian, *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918*, (Berlin, 1925), pp.341-2; Gabriel Liulevicius examines how the Russian occupation was represented in German propaganda, 'Representations of War on the Eastern Front, 1914-1918' (Unpublished Paper given at 19th International Congress of Historical Sciences, Oslo, March 30, 2000).

object of the war', which was 'the freeing of mankind from German tyranny.'[28] The mystique of sacrifice struck deep chords in the British and German public. Popular British poet John Oxenham, whose anthem 'For the Men at the Front' sold seven million copies, would proclaim '...not one soul has fallen in vain / Here was no useless sacrifice / From this red sowing of white seed/New life shall rise.' Oxenham, aligned the soldier's sacrifice and suffering with Christ's.[29] Likewise, Leo Sternberg's popular 'Heldenblut' portrayed rivers of heroes' blood flowing homeward to revitalise the nation.[30] As though it were a fertility rite, religious rhetoric at the start of the war represented the soldier's death as a resurgent force. Sacrifice would give the nation life through death.[31]

People were driven to war by a myriad of forces often irrecoverable, such as social and family pressure, patriotism, boredom or unemployment. Instead of trying to recover the totality of their motivation, this chapter re-examines the ways they talked about it, and the surrounding climate, how the religious 'ideas of 1914' were conceived at the beginning of the war, and as they grew at the frontline. By taking a closer look at their semantics and their context, the 'mental furniture' they had inherited from the nineteenth century, we can explain why the language of the sacred was widespread in the rhetoric that accompanied the eruption of war in 1914.

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[28] Diary, 13 Jan. 1916, in R. Blake, (ed.) *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig 1914-1919 Being Selections from the private diary and correspondence of Field-Marshal the Earl Haig of Bermersyde* (London, 1952), p.124.
[29] See M. Stephen, *The Price of Pity: Poetry, History and Myth in the Great War* (London, 1996) p. 139, pp.138-147.
[30] Leo Sternberg, 'Heldenblut', in A. Biese, *Poesie des Krieges*, (Berlin, 1916), pp.93-4.
[31] For a study of the etymology of religious ideas of sacrifice, see J. Bowker, *The Meanings of Death* (Cambridge, 1991), p.41.

What made modern, mechanised, attritional warfare sacred? There are several competing explanations. One argues that rhetoric was a creation of the trench slaughters of the opening months, as elevated ideology became necessary only after it was belatedly realised that the war would be bloody and protracted. Another sees sacrificial language as a duplicitous discourse, used by people who were unaware of war's realities or by participants to disguise its realities. A third thesis asserts that the war was defined as a sacred struggle because the enemy was made to look demonic. In this Manichean process of demonising the opponent, enemy atrocities against civilians made them appear to embody a pure evil that had to be eradicated.

As this chapter argues, the reactions and rhetoric of the faithful at war cannot be dismissed as a retrospective attempt to justify an unexpectedly bloody slaughter on a paralysed battlefront. The rhetoric predated the emergence of trench warfare. Nor can it be reduced to a surge of naïve jingoism, or a form of false consciousness. When war erupted, their responses were more sombre than celebratory, and justifications of the war as a meaningful sacrifice were often built on recognition of the war's horrors. Neither can assertions that the war had a sacred purpose be easily dismissed as a demonising of the 'other.' They often did not define the conflict in simple Manichean ways. I argue that the rhetoric of war as a sacred undertaking was founded on an inherited language from the nineteenth century. It projected onto the war effort prewar anxieties, and claimed that the call to sacrifice in a just war was creating a more moral, more spiritual, more united and more cohesive community at home. If they defined the war as an instrument of restoring lost social harmony, much of the language of sacrifice can be understood as part of a dialogue between the war abroad and its perceived domestic significance and impact.

According to Adam Gopnik, intensely ideological justifications for war were invented only after the first months of bloody, inconclusive battles, to fortify public support. For Britain, 'it was only after the first battles of the trenches that this became 'the war to end all wars'', a war for liberal freedoms against authoritarianism and militarism. In Germany, it became a war not for French territory but for organic *Kultur* against cosmopolitan *civilisation.*'[32] That the intensity of the conflict helped to radicalise and intensify the rhetoric is undeniable. But the rhetoric was not merely a desperate response to the first months of trench warfare, invented to give the first battles a grandiose purpose commensurate with their scale. The first public statements that defined the war as an historic spiritual struggle were made before the first major clashes. This timing suggests the opposite causality: pre-existing rhetoric helped to define the coming war, conditioning participants to accept the future bloodletting. Court chaplain Ernst Dryander preached in the Berlin Cathedral on 4 August, 1914 to mark the opening of the Reichstag session. Well before the western front locked into brutal siege and stalemate, Dryander declared

> we know that we are going into battle for our culture against the uncultured, for German civilisation against barbarism, for the free German personality bound to God against the instincts of the undisciplined masses. And God will be with our just weapons! For German faith and German piety are ultimately bound up with German faith and civilization. [33]

As this demonstrates, the stakes were already very high. Dryander conceived the struggle as a cultural war as well as an existential war, defined as a struggle for a

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[32] A. Gopnik, 'The Big One: Historians rethink the war to end all wars' *The New Yorker*, 23 Aug. 2004, pp.78-85, p.83. For a similar argument, see S.T. Bontrager, 'The Imagined Crusade: The Church of England and the Mythology of Nationalism and Christianity during the Great War' *Church History* 71:4 (Dec. 2002), pp. 774-798.

[33] Quoted in K. Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich* Bd. I. *Vorgeschichte und Zeit der Illusion 1918-1934* (München, 2000, originally Berlin 1977), p.17; first printed in B. Doehring, *Ein feste Berg – Predigten und Reden aus eherner Zeit* (Berlin, 1914), i. pp.14f.

Christian civilisation ordered by a social elite, against both the barbaric and the revolutionary. The previous day, the rectors and senates of Bavarian universities publicly appealed to academic youth to rally to the 'holy war.'[34] In Britain, the crusade against militarism and against the doctrine that 'might is right' was present in the first days. Like Germany, its imagery and themes cut across secular and sacred boundaries. The normally antireligious utopian H.G. Wells advocated an eschatological 'war to end war', declaring on 7 August that the 'defeat of Germany may open the way to disarmament and peace throughout the earth.'[35] Wells wrote this on the day Lord Kitchener called for the first volunteers to join the British Army, approximately two weeks before the British Expeditionary Force even arrived in France (on 22 August). The following day, the campaign to 'expel the dogma that might is right' was reiterated by one preacher in Westminster Abbey.[36] These statements, uttered in and beyond the pulpit, employed an archetypal millenarian language of the 'last war.' The rhetoric of a final historic struggle to defend and save civilisation was sanctioned at the highest level by the clergy and echoed in the public sphere before the shooting war began. Trench warfare may have intensified the search for ambitious ideological justification, but it did not cause it.

These utterances about an epochal struggle for absolute objectives predated the first official formulations of war aims by the state. Britain's antimilitarist crusade was in place before the British government formally codified it in its first official declaration of war aims on 9 November 1914, identifying the end to Prussian military domination

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[34] *Vossische Zeitung* 4 Aug. 1914, n.391.
[35] H.G. Wells, 'The Sword of Peace', *Daily Chronicle* Aug. 7, 1914; see further I.C. Willis, *England's Holy War A Study of English Liberal Idealism during the Great War* (New York, 1928), pp.88-91.
[36] *Sermons for the Times: Four Sermons on War* (London, 1914), Rev. G. H. Box, 'God's Over-Ruling Providence' Westminster Abbey, 23 Aug. 1914, p.25.

of Germany as one of the four conditions of peace.[37] In the more complicated context of German military-civilian relations, wherein war aims were negotiated, the clergy articulated a civilisational set of war aims well before territorial objectives were adopted. The defence of the spiritually pure, heroic *Kultur* against a predatory triad of empires, that Germany aimed to weaken for its own security, was preached in sermons before the 'September programme' of war aims was secretly authorised by Chancellor Bethmann Holweg on 9 September 1914, and well before the belated adoption of annexationist aims by the General Staff in 1916.[38]

Domestic war aims were also articulated before fighting began. Even before military operations began, clergy found sacred meaning in the moment of unifying for war, as did statesmen who employed religious language. In Lutheran sermons, 'The hour of the rebirth of our peoples' was 'God's thunderstorm', a 'purifying fire' or 'invigorating flood', purging a fallen people. One pastor likened Germany's day of mobilisation, 4 August, to Pentecost.[39] The *Times* editorialised in mid-August that war was 'a painful, but salutary, remedy for softness, slackness, sensuality' to correct that 'growing incapacity for self-sacrifice.'[40] When Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, chapel-goer David Lloyd George, declared in September 1914 that the war had scourged an overly comfortable and indulgent Britain to 'the high peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle

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[37] See M.L. Sanders, P.M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War 1914-1918* (London, 1982) p.138.

[38] For the 'September programme' see D. Stevenson, 'War Aims and Peace Negotiations', in H. Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), pp.204-216, esp. pp.205-207; for Holweg's authorisation of the September Programme, see F. Fischer, *War of Illusions German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (London, 1975), pp.534-541. For the adoption by the German General Staff of territorial war aims in 1916, see H. W. Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West* (Baltimore, 1966), pp.10-11; I. V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Cornell, 2005), pp.210-11.

[39] Gustav Freybe, cited in W. Pressel, *Die Kriegspredigt in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1967), p.17.

[40] 'The Discipline of War' *The Times*, 16 Aug, 1914, p.3.

of Sacrifice, pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven,'[41] he was building on an established rhetoric.

For German Protestants, the foundational text uniting their allegiance to God and Nation was the speech of Kaiser Wilhelm II from the palace balcony on 1st August. The speech was printed in the official field calendar of German soldiers.[42] As King of Prussia and Germany, *summus episcopus* of Prussia's Evangelical Church, he proclaimed Germany's blood brotherhood. 'I see no more parties in my *Volk*. Among us there are only Germans, and if some of the parties in the course of past differences turned against me, I forgive them all. All that now matters is that we stand together like brothers, and then God will help the German sword to victory.'[43] Solidarity with the monarchical state, the rejection of class conflict, was the purpose of war and the precondition for God's protection. The speech had a distinctly anti-democratic twist. More than the suspension of domestic politics, it proclaimed a new German polity, denying the legitimacy of parties and asserting the nation's essential homogeneity.[44]

Theologian Adolf von Harnack, an intimate of the Kaiser and one of Germany's premier divines, helped to draft the speech.[45] In turn, Harnack had been influenced by theologian Albrecht Ritschl, who had developed an interpretation of Christianity in which 'God worked immanently through history and culture to liberate men from materialism in order to realise His moral kingdom on earth.'[46] As Germany overcame

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[41] *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1914, pp.3-4.
[42] It is printed in the Feldkalendar found in the Freiburg Militärarchiv [Henceforth abbreviated FMA] Msg. 2/2165, 'Feldkalendar aus dem ersten Weltkrieg.'
[43] 'Eine neue Rede des Kaisers' *Kreuz-Zeitung*, 2 Aug. 1914, no. 358 (Morgen), p.1.
[44] As also argued by P. Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (London, 1999), p.58.
[45] K. Hammer, *Deutsche Kriegstheologie 1870-1918* (Frankfurt, 1971), p.374.
[46] D.R. Borg, *The Old-Prussian Church and The Weimar Republic A Study in Political Adjustment 1917-1927* (Hanover, 1984), p.38.

its internal divisions to defend itself, it seemed this 'moral kingdom on earth' was being realised. As a sign of this, socialist deputies voted war credits in the *Reichstag*. Pastors, such as one chaplain at the farewell service of his regiment, praised it as symptomatic of the solidarity and 'willingness to sacrifice' aroused by the national emergency.[47]

As organised anticlericalism was more intense and widespread in Germany, the theme of war as a means of restoring internal social harmony had even greater urgency. The suspension of internal conflict for the German churches meant relief from conflicts they had been directly involved in. The feared anticlerical socialists were gaining strength, emerging from the 1912 elections as the largest party in the Reichstag. Between 1906 and 1914, prominent Social Democrats were involved in a renewed campaign of mass resignations from churches (*Austrittsbewegung*), which in Berlin alone had grown in the years before the war, rising to 10,000 people each year for 1912 and 1913. In Germany overall, they fell dramatically from approximately 20925 resignations in 1914 to 1678 in 1915, once its leaders suspended the movement in 1914.[48] The devout feared that Lutheran Saxony, the birthplace of the Reformation, was also a hotbed of revolutionaries. After undergoing especially intensive industrialisation, it became the site of a strong workers' movement, where the prewar

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[47] *Feinde ringsum! Gott mit uns! Ansprache des Militärgeistlichen bei der Abschiedsfeier der Ergaenzung des 2 Kurhess. Inf.-Regts. Nr. 82 am 5 August 1914 und Predigt in der Albanikirche am 9 August 1914.* (Göttingen, 1914)

[48] Berlin figures cited in H. McLeod *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York* 1870-1914 (New York, 1996), p.25; overall German figures cited in M. Schian *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918* (Mittler, 1925), p.294. These figures do not include those who formally left the churches for other confessions or Judaism, and exclude Hamburg. For the prewar background on the conflict between the churches and social democracy, see J. Rohde 'Streiflichter aus der Berliner Kirchengeschichte von 1900 bis 1918' in G. Wirth (ed.), *Beiträge zur Berliner Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin, 1987), pp.217-243, esp. 219-222.

secular movement for resignation from the churches was particularly strong.[49] This accentuated their churches' stress on wartime repentance from godlessness. The day before Germany mobilized, a Saxon teetotalling junior officer marching to the border hoped that the 'terrors of the trial' would bring antireligious satirists to their knees.[50] In other biconfessional regions, the meaning of the 'spirit of 1914' was associated also with confessional reconciliation. In Stuttgart on 6 August, Roman Catholic 'Feldpropst' Otto von Blum and 'Militärpfarrer' Otto Rieger shared a platform to bid farewell to the infantry regiments 119 and 125 in the Rotebühl barracks.[51]

If the soldier's death is said to give life to the nation, religious rhetoric added a second form of salvation. Sacrifices transformed the nation as well as preserving it. German student Emil Alefeld's letter of October 1914, reprinted in a memorial volume to the dead youth of Langemarck, lauded the struggle for 'a pure, loyal, honourable Germany' that must 'improve our people spiritually' to be worthwhile.[52] This repertoire predated the war. In the story one German chaplain told about the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, a farmer on being told of his son's death replied that he would not object provided that the *Volk* was reborn through war.[53] In extreme cases, even defeat was justified if it provided that 'in the process human nature is

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[49] Other than Prussia, the *Landeskirchen* of Saxony and Hamburg had the two highest rates of resignation, and the Saxon church also suffered one of the highest rates of conversions to other Protestant churches: Table 'Austritte aus den evangelischen Landeskirchen 1913 bis 1918, in M. Schian *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918* (Mittler, 1925), p.11.

[50] R. Becker (ed.) *Mit Gott ins Feld: Kriegsbriefe eines Frühvollendeten: Zur Erinnerung an Kurt Becker, c. th. Unteroffizier im Bautzener Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 103, gefallen im Kampf f ür das Vaterland am 8 September 1914* (Herrnhut, 1915), letter, 30 July, 1914.

[51] Photograph depicted in Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg und dem Landeskirchlichen Museum Ludwigsburg, *Mit Gott für Volk und Vaterland:Die Württembergische Landeskirche Zwischen Krieg und Frieden 1903-1957*, (Stuttgart, 1995), p.38.

[52] Letter, cited in M. Wehner, *Langemarck. Ein Vermächtnis* (München, 1932), p.23.

[53] C. Shepers, *Bilder und Eindrücke aus einer achtwöchigen Dienstzeit als freiwilliger Feldprediger im Sommer 1870* (Bonn,1871), p.4.

transformed.'[54] Thus the acceptance of destruction and loss was provisional, based upon the promise of a utopian future.

If clergy and laity expected such great things, was it because they entered the war in an 'illusory national euphoria', carrying unrealistic combat expectations, with no conception of what warfare would be like?[55] In folk memory, populations supported the war jubilantly in a carnival atmosphere, out of innocent longing for romantic adventure, duped by official propaganda that the war would be glorious, bloodless and 'over by Christmas.' Recent historiography has refined this overblown image of 'war enthusiasm.'[56] That genuine patriotic fervour and a degree of popular excitement was aroused is undeniable. But images of the masses joyfully celebrating war were selective images manipulated by the state. After the conflict, popular 'war fever' became a convenient alibi for cabinets that had decided for war. Actual public responses were more diverse. Anti-war demonstrations also took place in capitals, while working-class and rural populations were less than festive. Of those who willingly went or supported the war and left a record of their response, apprehension

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[54] This was the view of English chaplain Oswin Creighton *Letters of Oswin Creighton 1883-1918* (London, 1920) 23 April, 1917, p.182.

[55] As Nicholas Hope argues, 'Prussian Protestantism' in P. G. Dwyer, *Modern Prussian History* (Harlow, 2001), pp.188-205, p.199. Bernd Ulrich also juxtaposes romantic and heroic expectations of war with the disillusioning reality of combat, B. Ulrich, 'Die Disillusionierung der Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914' in W. Wette, *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militaergeschichte von unten* (München, 1992), pp.110-116. James Macleod claims that Julian Grenfell's description of the war as a 'big picnic' was representative of wider opinion, J.L. MacLeod, 'Greater Love Hath No Man Than This': Scotland's Conflicting Religious Responses to Death in the Great War.' *The Scottish Historical Review* 81:1, 211 (April 2002), pp.70-96, 71.

[56] In the British case see A. Gregory, 'British 'War Enthusiasm' in 1914: A Reassessment' in G. Braybon, *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-1918* (Oxford, 2003), pp.67-86; For Germany see M. Stöcker, *"Augusterlebnis 1914" in Darmstadt: Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Darmstadt, 1994); T. Raithel, *Das 'Wunder' der inneren Einheit Studien zur deutschen und französischen Öffentlichkeit bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Bonn, 1996); J. Verhey *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilisation in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000). For comparative overviews, see L.L. Farrar, 'Villain or Scapegoat? Nationalism and the Outbreak of World War I' *History of European Ideas* 15:1-3 (1992), pp. 377-381; H. Strachan *The Outbreak of the First World War*, (Oxford, 2004), pp.131-141.

and a stoic sense of duty rather than ignorant euphoria were the more pervasive reactions.

Likewise, many church congregations before and during the first days of mobilisation were not expecting a picnic. During the July Crisis, the petition of one Anglican church anticipated that if war erupted, it would be 'the biggest war that there had ever been.'[57] 'Grave news' reported one Anglican priest to his parish on Sunday 2 August, after Germany declared war on Russia, while three days later a parish newspaper foretold 'bloodshed and misery.'[58] Both preachers who warned against war, and those who issued the call to arms, predicted that the war might be destructive and prolonged. The Church of Scotland's journal anticipated 'much suffering,' a preacher in St. Paul's quoted Lord Kitchener's parliamentary statement that sacrifices 'beyond any which have been demanded will be required,' while another presciently forecast losses in one month 'comparable to that sustained in all Napoleon's campaigns.'[59] German pastors reported from throughout Germany about the impact of the day of mobilisation on their congregations. In Dresden and Hesse and anonymous Prussian parishes, a 'depressed and anxious' mood was reported, of hanging heads, tearful eyes, depressed and solemn faces, as though anticipating a 'terrible fate,' especially from the parents of men of military age. Parishioners in the packed churches were 'full of misery and seriousness.'[60] As psychological surveys of volunteers attested, a

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[57] Similarly, a Prebendary of Salisbury predicted 'the most terrible war she has witnessed since the fall of the Roman Empire.' Both quotes from P. Street, 'God and Country' *Church Times*, 20 Aug, 2004, p.16.

[58] Diary of Rev. Andrew Clark, in J. Munson (ed.) *Echoes of the Great War: The Diary of The Reverend Andrew Clark 1914-1919* (Oxford, 1988), p.5; R. Sawyer (ed.) *Bowerchalke Parish Papers: Collet's Village Newspaper 1878-1914* (Gloucester, 1989), p.113.

[59] *Life and Work* Sept. 1914, p.260; *Sermons for the Times: Four Sermons on the War* (London, 1914), pp.13, 5, Rev. Canon B.W. Randolph, 'Our Refuge and Strength,' and Rev. Canon F.J. Foakes-Jackson 'This thing is from the Lord', both sermons dated 16 Aug. 1914.

[60] The reports are summarised in U. Gause 'In Arbeit und Gebet ein Heer hinter der Front!' Krieg, Kirche und protestantische Christinnen zwischen 1914 und 1918' in F. Boll (ed.) *Volksreligiosität und*

minority expressed the more innocent war enthusiasm, but most expressed a more realist sense of 'duty' and 'defensive patriotism.'[61] The same pattern is evident in responses of volunteers in the state of Baden-Württemberg, amongst whom Protestants were slightly over-represented.[62] Their more sober attitude was accentuated by their proximity to Germany's south-west frontier and Alsace, which had hosted fighting in the Franco-Prussian war. Even some conscripts, such as reservist schoolteacher Georg Kirschmann, articulated the stoic acceptance of duty. Claiming it was stimulating to assemble in camaraderie with other troops at the train station for departure, he expressed elements of the *Augustgemeinschaft* ideology of wartime blood-brotherhood. But his excitement was tempered by the anguish of familial separation. Georg urged his distressed family to prepare for the possibility that God might ordain his death, because war 'claims its sacrifices.'[63] Willing to accept the war and stimulated by the communal nature of the event, participants and onlookers alike were often also apprehensive.

There were public statements that were more confident or even triumphalist, declaring that victory was assured. But even these statements should be treated cautiously. Firstly, victory, even quick victory, was usually prophesied as an ultimate victory that would come after heavy sacrifices, rather than a cheap triumph. To envisage a short war was not necessarily to promise a war without suffering. One of the most notorious

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Kriegserleben Jahrbuch für Historische Friedensforschung 6 (1997), pp.90-116, at pp.93-4, n.15. The reports are: *MPTh* (*Monatschrift fuer Pastoraltheologie*) 11 (1915), p.64; 'Bericht einer Dresdner Pfarrers', *CW* (*Christliche Welt*) 2 Aug. 1915, p.29; the diary of Rudolf Schlunk, 2 Aug. 1914, *Ein Pfarrer im Kriege: Kriegserlebnis d. renitenten Pfarrers* (Kassel, 1931), p.9; *Allgemeine Evangelische-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* 47 (1914), p.966.

[61] P. Plaut, 'Psychographie des Kriegers', in W. Stern and O. Lipmann, (eds). *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für angewandete Psychologie 21 Beiträge zur Psychologie des Krieges* (Leipzig, 1920), pp.10-14.

[62] See A. Watson, 'For Kaiser and Reich': The Identity and Fate of the German Volunteers, 1914-1918', *War in History* 12:1 (2005), pp. 44-74, esp. pp.46, 62.

[63] DTA Reg. Nr. 9/II (Georg Kirschmann 'Zeitdokument 1905-15') Letter, 10 Aug. 1914.

assurances was made by Kaiser Wilhelm, who promised that the armies would return before Autumn. But he also claimed in his decree of 31 July, announcing an imminent state of hostilities, that war 'requires enormous sacrifices of blood and property,' urging his subjects to pray for God's protection, announcing again on 6 August that with Britain's entry into the war, surrounded Germany faced 'a heavy struggle' of 'great sacrifices.'[64] The war's duration belied the Kaiser's promise of a short conflict. But the results of the first months of fighting, with nearly a million dead on both sides by Christmas, vindicated his assumption that short wars can also be destructive.[65]

Speakers in August 1914 who might go down in the historical record as guilty of complacency and hubris could also entertain private fears. Avowed Protestant general August von Mackensen, for example, publicly declared outside a church after communion on 9th August that God would not abandon his chosen people or allow the destruction of the Fatherland. Only six days before, however, he privately predicted that the campaign would be a prolonged struggle that would determine whether

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[64] Decree, 31 July 1914,: 'A war requires from the German people enormous sacrifices of blood and property, but we will show our adversaries what it means to attack Germany. And I now commend you to God. Now go to church, kneel before God and ask him for help for our brave Army.' Speech, 6 August 1914: 'Enemies surround us! That is the nature of the situation. A heavy struggle, great sacrifices stands before us. Cited in F. Schwenker, *Kriegsfrömmigkeit* (Gütersloh, 1915 & 1916), pp.1, 3.

[65] Even if the war had finished by autumn or Christmas 1914, it had already claimed devastating losses. The combat strength of the BEF was seriously depleted within months. Of the 84 infantry battalions of the British Army, already by November 1 49 were either very weak or at cadre strength, while 26 were weak, the remaining 9 only middling: A. Farrar-Hockley, *Death of an Army* (London, 1968), pp.168-9. By the end of 1914, its first Expeditionary Force of around one hundred thousand soldiers had been all but eliminated. Though Germany's larger forces were not eliminated, in August and September, Germany suffered its highest casualties relative to overall army size, losses that were not surpassed in absolute terms until March/April 1918: Heeres-Sanitätsinspektion des Reichswehrministeriums, *Sanitätsbericht über das Deutsche Heer im Weltkriege 1914/1918,* 3 vols. (Berlin, 1934-5) iii. table 147; for the British figures see War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War, 1914-1920* (London, 1922).

Germany existed, that annihilation was distinctly possible. Privately, he feared war could lead to Germany's extinction.[66]

The dominant pattern in public rhetoric, however, was to predict probable losses and trials and to make a virtue of them. Through the bloodletting, the nation would be redeemed. Two days before Britain declared war, the Archbishop of Canterbury claimed that if the storm broke, it would discipline and strengthen Britain's 'careless, self-indulgent, easy-going' youth.'[67] As well as affirming the righteousness of their cause, clergy were preparing congregations for hardships. The Militaröberpfarrer of the First Army Corps declared in a service on the day of mobilisation in Königsberg that wars brought 'misery, afflictions and tears over many houses and hearts and demands sacrifice, heavy sacrifice in possession and blood' but that they would gladly make sacrifices for the 'honour, freedom and greatness of the fatherland.' He used the word *Gottesgericht*, encompassing both divine justice and suffering, to warn of the judgment to come, hoping not all the *Volk* would be punished after 'the falling off from belief in the Father by so many children of our people.' [68]

In the next phase, once the fighting began, even recruiting sermons often built their appeal on the war's severity. On Sunday 30 August, one rector at Fairstead preached 'on the horrible scenes of the battlefield and exhorted all the young men to join the

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[66] As Theo Schwarzmüller shows, *Zwischen Kaiser und Führer: Generalfeldmarschall August von Mackensen: Eine politische Biographie* (Paderborn, 1996), p.93, speech dated 9 Aug. 1914, private correspondence dated 3 Aug. 1914. According to Stig Förster, there are few traces of Germany's army officers predicting a short war: 'The Nation at Arms: Concepts of Nationalism and War in Germany, 1866-1914' in H. Lehmann and H. Wellenreuther (eds.), *German and American Nationalism* (Oxford, 1999) pp.233-262, p.262, n74.

[67] Archbishop Randall Davidson, Sermon 2 Aug. 1914, 'The Eve of a Great War' Westminster Abbey, *The Testing of a Nation*, (London, 1919), p.12.

[68] Militaröberpfarrer Geh. Consistorialrat Bock, 'Der Herr Zebaoth its mit uns', Predigt über Psalm 46, 1-8, in B. Doehring (ed.), *Ein Feste Burg: Predigten und Reden aus eherner Zeit Zum Besten der Nationalstiftung für die Hinterbliebenen der im Kriege Gefallenen*, (2 vols., Berlin, 1914), i, pp.41- 47, p.46.

army,'[69] while another vicar in October claimed they faced the 'most terrible war that the world has ever seen', a war of 'enormous sacrifices of men and money', enduring 'not for a few weeks or months but possibly years.'[70] Their reasoning is revealing, arguing that men must go precisely because the dangerous fighting meant they were needed. In line with this, the greatest recruitment period for the BEF occurred when the war's death toll was known to be high, in September 1914 rather than August.[71] A Lutheran pamphlet for Sunday School children included the following description of combat:

> It seems heavy to me, to lie for weeks and months in the trenches for a long time without being able to attack. By cannons and shotguns and by machine-guns they are covered with bullets. They can be a child of death at the next moment. Remaining courageous and undeterred and with staying power, that must be the hardest, and our brave troops have achieved even that.[72]

That this was addressed to an audience of children is indicative of the candour with which the churches could acknowledge the hard facts of the war experience. It also demonstrates how they framed it ideologically, valourising German troops *because* they faced a dangerous war of endurance.

What is striking is the morbidity, not the euphoria, of early wartime piety. In the biblical tradition of 'chosen peoples', wars were supposed to be harrowing, judging, testing, punishing and purifying the elect. One German pastor who in October would become a soldier, wrote in his diary in early August that because it was God's chosen

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[69] As reported in the diary of Rev. Andrew Clark, in J. Munson, *Echoes of the Great War* (Oxford, 1998), pp.10-11.
[70] Rev. A.H. Walker, 'The Call,' cited in J. Bell, *Huntingdonshire Heroes of the First World War* (Huntingdon, 1998), p.5.
[71] The figure for September 1914 was 462, 901, higher than August (298, 923). Enlistment figures in the regular army and territorial force, 1914-1918, War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* p.364.
[72] Evangelische Zentral Archiv [Henceforth abbreviated EZA] P. Conrad *Das Eiserne Jahr 1914: Ein Büchlein für Kinder* (Berlin, 1914), (no page no.).

nation, Germany was doomed to be disciplined by war before victory, stepping 'into Israel's place. With that we must win. But…we must go through a terrifying heavy time, so that we humble ourselves thoroughly.'[73] Some participants even expressed hope for a terrible war. One young chaplain on embarking framed the war within the biblical cycle of God bringing nations to penitence, 'we in England need such a frightening in these days. Fear for our country ought to lead us to repentance.'[74] As the British Army engaged in its first battles, the Dean of Norwich preached on 6 September 1914 that suffering was necessary to replace militarism with a system of peaceful arbitration. 'Let us not expect to avoid suffering. Europe cannot be saved without suffering. We are signed with the Cross, and the Cross means suffering.'[75] Christian readings of the war required suffering as the necessary precondition for the vast dividends and transformations that the war would yield.

What of those who enlisted in the next phase, after the first months? Did those arriving later enter the war ignorantly? Recent research has refuted the assumption that civilian populations were wholly unaware about the nature of the unfolding conflict, or that a 'gulf of perception' opened up between physically and culturally separate fronts.[76] Interaction, rather than separation, was the dominant pattern. The traffic of information through the constant stream of letters and periods of leave made

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[73] W. Schüßler *Willi Schüßler, Pastor von Kunzendorf, Kr. Glogau, gefallen am 12 Juli 1915 als Leutnant d.R. bei S. in Nordfrankreich* (Breslau, 1916), Entry, Aug. 1914 (no date).
[74] W.D. Geare, *Letters of an Army Chaplain: The Rev. William Duncan Geare* (London, 1918), Letter, 14 Aug. 1916, p. 28.

[75] H.C. Beeching, *A Sermon Upon the War* (London, 1914), 6 Sept. 1914, p.15.
[76] For the older view see C. Barnett *The Swordbearers: Studies in Supreme Command in the First World War* (London, 1963, 2000 edn.), p.212; A. Marwick *The Deluge* (London, 1965, 1991 edn.) p.135. For the revisionist critiques, see M. Finn, 'The Realities of War' *History Today* 52:8 (Aug. 2002), pp.26-31; see also E. F. Schneider, 'What Britons were told about the War in the Trenches', (Unpublished Oxford DPhil thesis, Oxford, 1997); D. Englander, 'Soldiering and Identity: Reflections on the Great War' *War in History* 1:3 (1994), pp.300-318.

it increasingly difficult for civilians to hold a sanitised view of life and death at the front. Published casualty lists and wounded servicemen confirmed the lethal or maiming impact of combat. 'Filters' of information such as official censorship and combatants' reluctance to talk, were not all-powerful. State censorship with often reluctant staff could not fully audit the deluge of private correspondence, millions of letters and parcels, weekly flowing homeward. Germany's manpower shortages led to the rotation of men between industrial, agricultural and combat roles, further undermining the separation of fronts.[77] British intelligence reports recognised the impact of letters that escaped censorship, and soldiers' reports to their family and friends while on leave.[78] Ludendorff's tightening of censorship in 1917 recognised that the army could not be hermetically sealed from the homefront, of the symbiotic relationship between civilian and army morale. Philipp Scheidemann told the Reichstag on 17 October 1918 that 'Men on leave come from the Army with ugly stories; returning from home they carry bad news back to the Army.'[79] While Britain's national press was carefully censored, the popular local press, with its close bond to local regiments, carried soldiers' own revealing reports of danger, defeat, and daily life at the front. Even though some returning combatants censored themselves and avoided discussing their experiences, others *were* prepared to communicate their experiences, 'soldiers that come home on leave say they do not want to go back they say it is like Hell.'[80] The state was swamped with representations of the war that it had not generated. It is likely that some tried to ignore this information, and that only

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[77] See R.B. Armeson, *Total Warfare and Compulsory Labour: A Study of the Military-Industrial Complex in Germany during World War I* (The Hague, 1964).
[78] Government reports informed the British Cabinet was informed of the 'vivid realisation of the actual horrors of the war due to the large number of men who have returned home.' Cited in G. Robb, *British Culture* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.126.
[79] R.H. Lutz (ed.) *Fall of the German Empire* (2 vols., Stanford, 1932), ii, p.481. On the mutual impact of declining morale on homefront and army, see H. Strachan, 'The Morale of the German Army, 1917-1918' in H. Cecil, P. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon*, (London, 1996), pp.383-398.
[80] IWM 78/15/1 (Private J. Matthews, Papers) Letter, 22 Aug. 1915.

undergoing combat directly could provide a fully authentic appreciation of its realities. However, chaplains and religious combatants arriving after the initial hostilities probably were not unaware that they were entering a highly lethal terrain of climactic extremes, where death was arbitrary and unceremonious. Departing for the front as a new chaplain on 31 August 1915, Hinrich Lüppo instructed his family that the loss of 'many a flourishing human life' and possible family bereavement meant that they faced a 'heavy time', and 'Now we must go through a purification fire.'[81]

Contemporary accounts of three youths of the Free, Lutheran, and Anglican churches exemplify how the newly enlisting faithful could build their religious patriotisms on a level-headed appreciation of the war's likely horrors. The diary of Presbyterian artillery officer Alexander Caseby, who would enlist in January 1915, records a community spirit in rural Scotland in the first five months of 'grim resolve.' Groups of village people who could not afford newspapers waited to hear whether friends or relatives were on the first casualty lists, before individual telegrams arrived, making their distress and the war's lethality public. Other local men returned home wounded. When he enlisted, his mother and siblings wept. But he hoped that the 'prospect of death in some foreign field brought many soldiers to realise what was important in their lives.'[82] Theology student Gotthold von Rohden had witnessed the First Balkan War (1912-13), with its destruction of villages and slaughters of civilian populations. He wrote to a friend on 5 August 1914 that 'I saw something of war for the first time and of course didn't think Germany would draw its sword so soon and that need and misery would also seize us.' Nevertheless, he enlisted, professing loyalty to the

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[81] DTA, Sig. 683, (Hinrich Lüppo, Tagebuch), Diary, 31 Aug. 1915.
[82] R.R. Caseby (ed.), *Going with God: The Biography of Reverend Alexander Caseby from 1898 until 1991* (Lewes, 1993), pp.83-5, p.401.

Kaiser.[83] Before enlisting, a young High Church Socialist in the foreign office in Constantinople predicted ambivalently that the war would summon national greatness but also trigger revolution, making 'Europe an armed camp for years, broken up, dissolved in final ruin.'[84]

In sacrificial rhetoric, a realist appreciation of frontline conditions did not necessarily preclude an idealistic reading of the war. Many of those with an intimate knowledge of its horrors and who openly acknowledged the harrowing and brutal conditions, also affirmed war's sacred meaning. Thus young officer Harold Macmillan described the act of death in battle as 'noble and glorious' even if its physical symptoms were 'revolting only and horrid.' His letters simultaneously acknowledge the brutish realities of the battlefield and affirmed the sanctity of sacrifice. Firepower had turned terrain into a death zone, clearing the battlefield and secreting thousands of men beneath the surface, 'planning against each other perpetually some new device of death', such as gas with 'its nauseous and destroying fumes.' In the same letter, he described the war as a 'Crusade' and the dead soldier as a 'martyr.'[85] By claiming it was saintly to face such horrors, the rhetoric survived because it had a logic that could accommodate the graphic material realities of the war. A German field hospital chaplain described his medical tent as 'a hell' full of wounded victims from a frontline of 'blood and corpses smell and poison breath.' Their comradeship under

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[83] Cited in G. von Rohden (ed.), *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden* (Tübingen, 1916), Letter, 5 Aug. 1914, p.4.
[84] Cited in C.A. Lister (ed.) *Charles Lister: Letters and Recollections* (London, 1917), 20 Aug. 1914, pp.116-117.
[85] Bodleian Library [Henceforth abbreviated BL] (Macmillan Papers) Harold Macmillan, Letter 13 Sept. 1916. I am grateful to the Macmillan Trustees for their permission to cite these materials.

those conditions exemplified 'the piety of the German spirit.'[86] Physical suffering could give sacrifices greater meaning.

To many Protestants, the suffering of the soldier was patterned on Christ's passion. As an act of atonement, the blood of the soldiers expiated the sins of the guilty nation. The soldier was both an innocent and vicarious offering, dying because of the mistakes of others and for their benefit.[87] Eucharistic Anglicans stressed the sacramental nature of the soldier's blood sacrifice. According to Paul Bull of the Community of the Resurrection, the duty of civilians as custodians of the soldier's death was 'to gather up those bodies broken, this blood outpoured for us, and to offer them in union with the Body and Blood of Christ to the Father.'[88] As will be demonstrated later, some strict Protestants regarded the notion of human blood redeeming society as a heresy. Nevertheless, many Calvinists and evangelicals, especially in Scotland, were attracted to the language of atonement. Two Scottish chaplains claimed the process would restore '…the teaching of blood shed for the remission of sins, and Life given as a ransom' which 'was becoming an attenuated doctrine in the pulpits of Britain.'[89]

If the religious rhetoric of sacrifice cannot be dismissed as the product of innocent expectations of combat or as a duplicitous way of disguising war's realities, how satisfactory is the alternative interpretation, that the rhetoric was instead powered by the image of a demonic enemy? Becker and Audoin-Rouzeau, like Herbert Butterfield before them, attribute the protracted and horrific nature of modern warfare not chiefly

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[86] H. Schäfer, 'Vom Geist unseres Heerens Lazarettpfarrer Schäfer in Rastatt', *Monatschrift für Pastoraltheologie,* (Oct. 1916 – Sept. 1917), pp.90-96.
[87] Eg. J. Burr, 'The Religion of the Soldier' *Life and Work* (Nov.1918), pp.161-2.
[88] P. Bull, *Our Duty at Home in Time of War* (London, 1914), pp.14-15.
[89] N. MacLean, J. R. Sclater, *God and the Soldier* (Edinburgh, 1917), p.80.

to advanced industrial technology but to the return of ideological wars, that eclipsed diplomatic and territorial objectives, tolerating neither limitations nor compromise. A cultivated loathing of enemy atrocities, they argue, were the central drive for people's willingness to wage a long war of immense losses. Atrocities demonstrated the enemy's 'intrinsic malignancy,' created a system of representations that juxtaposed civilisation and barbarity, encouraging exterminationist hatred.[90]

Undeniably, enemy atrocities were seen to threaten Christian civilisation. Violence against civilians played a central role in the propaganda of both belligerents. Germany's brief occupation by Czarist forces in East Prussia helped to unite liberal and socialist opinion with conservative nationalists, while Germany's invasion of Belgium united the state's geopolitical interests with liberal demands for the defence of small nations' sovereign neutrality. But clergy and chaplains often did not conceive of the war only as a binary war of annihilation. As well as a war between nations, it was also a war *within* nations. In Britain war represented, according to the Archbishop of York, a war 'against Germany and another with ourselves.[91] The first blessing of war was domestic armistice, a 'spiritual land of promise' based on self-sacrifice, compared to a prewar culture of 'paralysing commercial wars, civil violence impending,' sectarian divisions, and irresponsible wealthy classes.'[92] It had released Britain from the volatile Irish question, which involved a potential military mutiny, the clash of labour and capital, and the battle over women's emancipation. Two future chaplains drew on the Old Testament to urge a backsliding generation to seek

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[90] S. Audoin-Rouzeau, A. Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War* (London, 2002), pp. 102-103; H. Butterfield, *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* (London, 1953).
[91] Archbishop of York Cosmo Lang, cited in *Honour* 6:22 (June 1916), p.46.
[92] F.R. Barry, *Religion and the War* (London, 1915), pp. 29-30.

atonement.[93] War was a reproach to the amoral will to power, manifested both in German military aggression and in 'the ruthless competition which runs through our industrial system.'[94]

Both defined the 'enemy' as a internal social disorders that were manifest in the armies of the opponent. One day after German troops entered Belgium, the Protestant Press Agency based in Berlin proclaimed '…in the storm of the people's war God, the old ally, with sacred storm sweeps out everything from Germany that is not holy, not noble, or that is ungodly and unGerman.'[95] German preachers hoped the national community would be purged of alien ideologies such as enlightenment liberalism and divisive party politics. The sobering effects of the war on departing soldiers at Waterloo train station in London impressed Anglican chaplain L.L. Jeeves in January, 1915. Writing to his Whitechapel parish, he contrasted the 'quiet order' and 'sobriety' with prewar 'Bank Holiday nonsense,' promising a restored sense of community purpose.[96] The religious expressed their mission not just from a contrast with the demonic 'Other' but from a struggle to transform their sinful 'self.'

The centrality of domestic war aims is demonstrated by the fact that it was frequently espoused by participants who witnessed atrocities, who were exposed most directly to enemy aggression. Chaplain to the Red Cross, Basil Bouchier, witnessed the German occupation of Brussels on 20 August, 1914. Germany's invasion of Belgium brought massacres, house-burning, deportations, and the destruction of the university library

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[93] G. Gordon, *An Interpreter of War: Habakkuk Addresses delivered in St. Margaret's Westminster* (London, 1916), p.25.
[94] F. Macnutt *The Reproach of War: Addresses given in St. Saviour's Cathedral Southwark* (London, 1914), p. 52.
[95] EZA Bstnd. EOK, Gen IX, 51 'Die Krieg in den Jahren 1914-1918', Bd.I, 5 August, 1914. Cited in G. Besier, *Die protestantischen Kirchen Europas im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1983), p.37.
[96] IWM 80/22/1, (Rev. L.L. Jeeves, Letters to St. Mary's Whitechapel Parish Magazine), undated.

of Louvain.[97] Bouchier himself was briefly imprisoned by the German army. He recalled witnessing 'The wholesale murder, fire, rapine and pillage. That night at Louvain was a nightmare.'[98] While he was proximate to the climate of fear and resentment of German war crimes, he also denounced Britain's reactionary aristocracy, its squalid cities, its class divisions, its 'revolutionary' democracy, its partisanship, its lack of any 'spirit of comradeship,' which the war must correct.[99] The German Army nurtured a 'Great Fear' of cruelties being perpetrated by the non-uniformed Belgian resistance fighters, rumoured to decapitate, poison or blind unsuspecting soldiers. Yet the chaplain of the German garrison, Paul Le Seur, sought the war's sacred meaning also in its domestic impact, writing that 'our people…viewed from the Kaiser down to the very last man, after twelve months, are now more devoted, more confident, stronger internally and externally than ever…we German Christians thank our God that he has allowed us to live in the greatness of this time.'[100] The 'greatness' of the time was a theme orchestrated by the Imperial Army, publishing houses and the Protestant Church in the field, shorthand for the forging in war of a collective national identity that would transcend divisions and boundaries of confession, region, and class.[101]

The emphasis on internal and external ideas, as distinct from whole populations, enabled those who had a complex experience and perception of the enemy to maintain

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[97] See J. Horne, A. Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001), pp.74-78.

[98] Letter to the Bishop of London, cited in his sermon, *Sermons for the Times: Sermons on the Holy War, 'The Holy War' Preached at Bisley to the 5th and 28th Battalions of the London Regiment, September 6th, 1914*, in *Sermons for the times, No. 4, Sermons on the Holy War* (London, 1914), p.1.

[99] B. Bouchier, *For All We Have and Are* (London, 1915), pp.48-53.

[100] Yale Divinity School, Archives of the World Student Christian Federation [Henceforth YDS WSCF], Box 131, Folder 997, (John Mott Collection) Letter, Paul le Seur to John Mott, 7 July, 1915 (English translation).

[101] See W. Natter, *Literature at War 1914-1940: Representing the 'Time of Greatness' in Germany* (New Haven, 1999), p.203.

the rhetoric. John Adams, Free Church chaplain to the Scottish 6th Gordons in Flanders, encountered the enemy eyeball to eyeball. On Christmas Day, 1914, as Scots and Germans fraternised over a field of corpses, he persuaded both Commanding Officers to permit a short bilingual burial service with the German regiments. After reading the 23rd Psalm and prayer in English, he 'stepped forward and saluted the German Commander, who shook hands with him and bade him farewell.'[102] He experienced the Germans through common mourning of the dead, but the war retained its meaning. When it came to the German army as an impersonal institution he was outraged by its predations in Belgium, but distinguished between Prussian militarism and the German people it had misled. To combat war-weariness in 1917, he would later translate a French catalogue of German war crimes, demanding that the German people 'solemnly cast from her the scoundrels who dragged her into such decadence.'[103] The nation must 'turn our redemption from Militarism won by the fallen and the wounded' to combat evil 'within us and all about us', such as poverty.[104]

The rescue of the enemy had its parallels in Germany. Church attitudes towards Britain were more complicated than towards the Russian 'hordes.' Indeed, German clergy fully supported the exploitative expansion of German power in eastern Europe during the war, in which populations and resources were severely plundered, although

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[102]D. Mackenzie, *The Sixth Gordons in France and Flanders (With the 7th and 51st Divisions)* (Aberdeen, 1922), pp.23-4. This is verified by the separate account of Lieutenant Arthur Pelham-Burn, who wrote to a friend that Adams 'arranged the prayers and the [twenty-third] psalm etc and an interpreter wrote them out in German. They were read first by our Padre and then in German ["*Der Herr ist mein Hirte...*"] by a boy who was studying for the ministry. It was an extraordinary and most wonderful sight. The Germans formed up on one side, the English on the other, the officers standing in front, every head bared. Yes, I think it was a sight one will never see again.' Cited in S. Weintraub, *Silent Night: The Remarkable Christmas Truce of 1914* (London, 2001), pp.70-71

[103]Adams translated into English the French account of German atrocities by L. Mirman, Prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle, and G. Simon and G. Keller, Mayors of Nancy and Luneville, *Their Crimes* (London, 1917), p. 64.

[104] J. E. Adams, *The Chaplain and the War* (Edinburgh, 1915), pp.52-3.

this was tempered by church efforts to minister to foreign prisoners of war. Chaplain Paul Althaus ministered in Poland from 1915. Russian troops in East Prussia looted and destroyed farms and buildings, driving refugees to Berlin with reports of 'heads being cut off, children being burned, women raped,' leading to a Government inquiry which ascribed 'indisputably barbarous' methods of warfare to the invaders.[105] It kindled memories of Russian occupation in the Seven Years' War and the predations of Napoleon's Grand Army. Yet when it came to Russia's ally Great Britain, war was ultimately an act of creation:

> We are fighting for the nobler England against the moribund, degenerate England, for the victory of what is true and good among our enemies against the mean, ugly and deceitful. This ennobles our anger and sanctifies our acts of destruction. While we are ruthless in our destructiveness we are already re-building.[106]

For the nation to be purified, military enemies were necessary, God's instrument for renovating the Fatherland. In the face of Russia's 'Asiatic hordes' of the east, Chaplain Alwin Backhaus saw the enemy as a stimulus for his own nation's return to God, as he witnessed his soldiers building makeshift chapels in the earth while under fire.[107] German soldiers had embossed on their belts the slogan *Gott mit uns*, but sermons warned that chosen nations could also fall from grace. In Anglo-German war theology, two themes existed in dialectic tension, the conviction that their compatriots had been chosen by God as the redeemer nation, and the warning that the chosen people could be chastised with defeat. War, the 'helmsman' of world history, was testing the nation before it could assume its imperial destiny.[108] The mythology of the

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[105] Cited in J. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914* (Cambridge, 2000), p.91.
[106] W. Pressel, *Die Kriegspredigt* (Göttingen, 1967), p.115.
[107] A. Backhaus, 'Höhlenkirche', in L. Maier *Gottesoffenbarungen im Deutschen Kriege 1914/15 Zuegnisse aus den Feldpostbriefen unserer Soldaten und den Mitteilungen der Feldprediger, sowie Beispiele aus den Erlebnissen in der Heimat* (Stuttgart, 1915), p.96.
[108] Eg. see E. Stange, 'Das Urteil Gottes ueber unsere Predigt vom Kriege', *Pastoralblätter* 62 (1920), p. 175.

apocalypse was now recast to make Germany 'the hammer of God' and in a war that was 'tribunal of the world', imposing God's judgment on the world.[109] Yet the chosen people must continually prove worthy of their special status in God's eyes. As one chaplain later claimed, 'For God's task to reach us, so must God's will be our will,'[110] another that war is 'neither good nor evil, but it is the great test of whether we are good or evil.'[111] Wars were the means of repentance, God's 'heavy punishment' for national sin.[112] One Saxon military chaplain warned his flock against hubris, reminding them of the sudden reversal at the battle of the Marne.[113] Anglican sermons were more divided on the ethnocentric notion that the British were God's 'chosen people', though it was not unknown.[114]

One popular theme was that there existed 'two' Germanies or 'two' Britains.[115] The original innocence of nations could be restored even though each believed the other had betrayed their Protestant heritage. Chaplain Maurice Ponsonby mourned the overthrow of the once civilised Germany 'of music and thought' by a cabal of militarists.'[116] Scottish believers, who were particularly affirming of their Protestant

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[109] As K. Vondung shows, 'Deutsche Apokalypse 1914' in K. Vondung (ed.) *Das Wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum* (München, 1976), pp. 156-7.
[110] D. F. Tahusen, *Werfet euer Vetrauen nicht Weg! Predigt am 6. August 1916* (Berlin, 1916), p. 9.
[111] W. Buder, *Gute Ritterschaft Zwölf Feldpredigten 1914-1916* (Stuttgart, 1916), pp.16-17.
[112] W. Wöhling, *Weltkrieg und Wiedergeburt* (Zwichau, 1915), p.13. For the theme of penance in German war theology, see M. Greschat, 'Krieg und Kriegsbereitschaft im deutschen Protestantismus', in J. Düllfer, Karl Holl (eds.) *Bereit zum Krieg: Kriegsmentalität im wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890-1914*, (eds.) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp.33-51, p.35 and G. Krumreich, 'Gott mit uns? Der Erste Weltkrieg als Religionskrieg', in G. Krumreich, H. Lehmann (eds.), *Gott mit uns: Nation, Religion und Gewalt im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* p.279.
[113] Anonymous author, *'Feldgottesdientst' Sunday 5 September 1915 in Kloserhofe zu Blandain in Belgien Saechsisches Kirchenblatt Leipzig 19 September* pp.596-598.
[114] Such as Bishop John Percival who claimed the Allies were 'the preordained instruments to save the Christian civilisation of Europe from being overcome by a brutal and ruthless paganism.' *Modern Churchman* (May 1915), pp.122-123.
[115] Most prominently the scholar-politician James Bryce who authored the government inquest into atrocities in Belgium, who distinguished Prussia from the German populace as a whole. See S. Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany: British Academics 1914-1918* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.31.
[116] M. Ponsonby, *Visions and Vignettes of War* (London, 1917), pp.1-16.

identity and numbered patriots who had studied in Germany,[117] often argued for a distinction between ordinary Germans and the military and intellectual elite who had whipped up the war. Many alleged that the German people had been duped by the doctrine that 'might is right', commenting generously on Germany's contributions to civilisation and Christianity.[118]

To promote the beneficial effects of sacrifice, chaplains mythologised the memory of the first days of mobilisation in August. The August community, and its 'civil truce' of 1914, became a catechism endlessly recalled. Divisional chaplain C. Eisenberg reminded his troops of the first day of mobilisation, the unity which overcame party division and the willingness to sacrifice, and represented the war's objectives as both an 'honourable peace' and inner uplift of the people.[119]

The accent in German sermons lay particularly with their creation myth, the birth of a chosen people into a new nationhood, consummating the process that had begun with the wars of liberation, and the unification of 1871. 'Children of the light!' preached Friedrich Almer in a field sermon on Christmas Eve, 1915. 'God has let us become more and more a people.'[120] The idea was also inflected in other ways. The language appealed precisely because it was capable of expression in different political forms. It was taken up by monarchist nationalists who urged Christians to strengthen their

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[117] See S. Wallace 'Scottish University Men and German Universities before 1914' in R. Muhs, J. Paulmann, W. Steinmetz, *Arbeitskreis Deutsche England-Forschung Interkultureller Transfer zwischen Deutschland und Grossbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bodenheim, 1998).

[118] Eg. W. Paterson, *In the Day of the Ordeal* (Edinburgh, 1917), p.65; G. Walker *For the Great Cause Ecclesia docens et discens. Some bits of spiritual 'munition work' in Heaven's 'Great Cause' and our own* (Aberdeen, 1915), p.20, W. Paterson, *In the Day of the Muster* (Edinburgh, 1914), pp.69, 90-2. For an overview of Scottish war sermons, see P. C. Matheson, 'Scottish War Sermons 1914-1918' *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 17:3 (1972), pp.203-213.

[119] Felddivisionspfarrer C. Eisenberg, *Zwölf FeldPredigten* (Marburg, 1915), p.28

[120] Landeskirliche Archiv Nuernberg [Henceforth abbreviated LKAN], Sg.2341, p.53 (Friedrich Almer, Papers) 'Weihnachten an der Front Ansprache am Heiligen Abend', 24 Dec. 1915.

allegiance to the monarchy and empire; by both Anglo-Catholics and evangelical Protestants; by Christian socialists who sought in the fraternity of warfare the creation of a new classless social order; to the politically conservative, who hoped the war would reinforce threatened social hierarchies. The Prussian officer class and veterans' organisations had emphasised the necessity of war and sacrifice to cultural regeneration.[121] Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, Prussian Chief of General Staff, architect of the military victory over France in 1870-1, had claimed in 1880 that war was 'part of God's ordering of the world', and was needed to avert 'a quagmire of materialism.'[122] Moltke's view was not peculiar to the Prussian military caste, but was paralleled in the diary entry of the liberal British deputy chaplain Llewellyn Gwynne, who prayed for the 'regeneration of our race,'[123] or the writing of military chaplain, socialist and Anglo-Boer war veteran Paul Bull. Lying in a Brighton hospital, he believed God had told him that the passing parade of recruits were 'lambs for the sacrifice', that would lift the nation out of its manifold sins, of economic exploitation, weakening commitment to breed families, and the neglect of God's worship.[124] His vision of the war combined eugenic anxiety about race suicide, social anxiety about poverty and spiritual anxiety about the flight from faith.

Though it appealed to people of different political persuasions, the process of forming a common repertoire of slogans about the war itself represented the search for convergence. Mutually hostile individuals or groups sought a rhetoric that would unite them. Lutherans disavowed their tensions with German Roman Catholics to affirm

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[121] See M. S. Coetzee *The German Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford, 1990), pp.51-2.
[122] Cited in H. Pross (ed.), *Die Zerstörung der deutschen Politik: Dokumente 1871-1933* (Frankfurt, 1959), pp. 30-31. (My translation).
[123] Birmingham University Special Collection [Henceforth abbreviated BUSC] Acc 18/F1 50-54 (L. Gwynne, Papers) Diary, 14 May, 1916.
[124] P. Bull, *Peace and War: Notes of Sermons and Addresses* (London, 1917), pp.51, 81.

their common nationhood, confining their sectarian war to the external threat of Gallic Catholicism. British Anglican imperialists who had been committed to racial empire and navalism reached out for antimilitarist rhetoric. Conversely, internationalists embraced the claims of the nation. Bishop John Percival, who before the war had campaigned against military and naval spending increases, justified his support for the war in chivalric terms as a reluctant national duty, claiming Britain 'had no choice but to take up the sword' for the cause of 'honourable dealing.'[125] Ecumenist Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, who on the eve of war appealed to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg to prevent the conflict, defended the nation's cause through a similar gentlemanly code of honour, appealing to the Fatherland's 'holy struggle.'[126]

This process was possible because early rhetoric was notable for its vagueness and its silences. Clergy were defining a cause that would generate consensus and marginalise disagreement. Early rhetoric, therefore, often did not expound a programmatic explanation of what precisely the causes entailed, lest it inflame domestic disharmony. In Germany, defending blood brotherhood and overcoming class divisions could better unite socialists with conservative Lutherans if the question of Prussian franchise reform was left unmentioned. The cause of defending the Fatherland's frontiers united disparate parties so long as the rhetoric avoided the issue of how far Germany should secure and expand its territory through annexations. Similarly, it was easier to agree on antimilitarism as a British war aim if its implications were not discussed. Antimilitarism was an elastic idea, ranging from the claim that war could be forever banished by defeating Germany, to the more radical

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[125] *Times*, 12 Aug. 1914, p.7.
[126] J. Jenkins, *Christian Pacifism confronts German Nationalism: the ecumenical movement and the cause of peace in Germany 1914-1933* (New York, 2002), p.148.

position that pacifying the world required a deeper critique of patriotic and military values. Only by initially avoiding such distinctions could antimilitarist rhetoric unite liberal anticonscriptionists with Anglican clergy who were vocal pro-conscriptionists in the National Service League. Britain's pro-war theologians treated militarism as a caste of mind, a pernicious intellectual doctrine of von Treitschke and Bernhardi rather than an institution with mechanisms such as conscription and garrison towns.[127] And about British navalism, which had extensive Anglican support through the Navy League, little was said. By sidestepping such complications, Anglican socialist Conrad Noel could agree with the Tory navalist John Garvin, editor of the *Observer*, that the Prussian war machine embodied the belligerent spirit, so that fighting it would serve the cause of peace.[128] Garvin's statement, written on the day Britain declared war, exemplifies the bipartisan, vague and apocalyptic nature of the credo: 'We have to do our part in killing a creed of war. Then at last, after a rain of blood, there may be set the greater rainbow in the Heavens before the vision of the souls of men. And after Armageddon war, indeed, may be no more.'[129] But when, later in the war, the possibility of a negotiated concrete settlement meant that the question of war aims was revisited, these issues became unignorable, accentuating divisions that the rhetoric of 1914 had helped to suspend.

German and British 'social Christianity' began on the same premise that conflict within the national community was unchristian, but embraced different solutions. German pastors celebrated renewed allegiance to the Kaiser and obedience to God through the anointed Hohenzollern monarchy, a focus for loyalty and solidarity that

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[127] Eg. 'The War of Ideals' in *Life and Work* Nov. 1914, p.323.
[128] R. Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement* (London, 1967), pp.155-6. A vague term, 'militarism' can be defined as the excessive veneration of military virtues and values in governance, public policy and national life, as well as the domination of government and society by military elites.
[129] Quoted in D. Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1950), p.219.

would arrest labour militancy and reconcile 'fatherlandless' secular reformers to the state. Britons were often less antagonistic to social reformers. Britain's Labour Party, unlike Germany's Social Democratic Party, owed more to high Anglican Christian socialism and Methodism than to Marx, and was not overtly anticlerical nor as powerful. Their churches had moved beyond charity and voluntarist philanthropy to a thoroughgoing critique of the social and economic order.[130] From the Evangelical revival and its campaigns to abolish slavery and child labour, to the antimaterialist prophecies of Neville Figgis and William Temple,[131] to the Christian Social Union, churches developed both liberal and socialist critiques of industrialisation with its slums and class conflict.

By contrast, most Lutherans were politically acquiescent, preaching unquestioning duty to Kaiser and nation. They preferred to educate the poor rather than attack poverty as a systemic problem. The social endeavours of German Protestantism, dominated by the Pietist Inner Mission, aimed to Christianise the masses to prevent class consciousness from obliterating a common national identity, and to avert revolution. Its founder, Johann Wichern, advocated religious revival, social regeneration and national unification as an indivisible triad. The destiny of the state and German piety were identified as mutually dependent, tying evangelical Protestants to a larger concern than individual salvation. He hoped that Prussian leadership and unification would combat secularisation and the socialist movement. Pietism had stimulated a prophetic reading of national wars, and had been galvanised by the fear of the atheistic French Revolution. It promoted the political model of

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[130]As K. Barnes demonstrates, *Nazism, Liberalism and Christianity: Protestant Social Thought in Germany & Great Britain 1925-37* (Lexington, 1991), pp.1-40.
[131] See D. Newsome, 'The Assault on Mammon: Charles Gore and John Neville Figgis' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 17:2 (Oct. 1966), pp. 227-241.

Germany the people of the covenant, exhorting them to show the 'fighting spirit of Christian warriors', interpreting success as a vindication of German faith and tribulations or failure as a punishing trial. It interpreted major historical convulsions as the precursors to God's reordering of the world, the coming of his Kingdom on earth, and the time of trial.[132]

Though British war theology was more liberal, the extent to which it was more democratic should not be overstated. In all three confessions, rallying for war was presented as the rejection of a divisive form of democratic politics, a revival of the organic national community. For Anglicans it was not yet a war defined as crusade to defend democracy, but a matter of honour and antimilitarism. The democratic theme awaited America's entry into the war, and President Wilson's campaign to replace warlike monarchical despotism with peaceable democracies. The Church of England was not explicitly opposed to the legitimacy of Parliaments, but feared that the consensual and gradualist mode of politics, government by conciliation and compromise, was being supplanted by continental-style party conflict. Their parliamentary system was an institution centuries old, but popular democracy was still embryonic at best, with a more restrictive franchise than Germany's. One institution, the legislature, was condemned in all three churches as a source of factional bickering and fragmentation, and Britain had just been paralysed by a constitutional deadlock during the 'people's budget' conflict over aristocratic prerogatives in 1909-10, and

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[132] There is an extensive literature on pietism and its relationship with German nationalism: H. Lehmann, 'Pietism and Nationalism: The Relationship between Protestant Revivalism and National Renewal in Nineteenth-Century Germany *Church History* 51 (1982), pp.39-52; 'God our old Ally' The Chosen People Theme in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century German Nationalism' in W.R. Hutchinson, H. Lehmann (eds.), *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp.85-107; H. Lehmann, 'The Germans as a Chosen People: Old Testament Themes in German Nationalism' *German Studies Review* 14:2 (May, 1991), pp. 261-275; K.W. Dahm, 'German Protestantism and Politics 1918-1939' *Journal of Contemporary History* 3:1, (Jan. 1968) pp. 29-49, p. 33.

partisan brinksmanship over the future of Ireland between 1912 and 1914. The call of Empire had 'abolished for the time old and tragic differences…May none be for self or party, but all for the State.'[133] Providence was overruling the nation's 'bitter strife,'[134] and 'embittered class distinctions' among the failures of Britain that had made war possible.[135]

In sum, while German Lutheran ideas about national salvation were more politically illiberal, the wartime piety of Anglicans, Calvinists and Lutherans was more similar than disparate. Their mission was to revive the bonds of fellowship to a corrupt social order at home through a renewed spirit of self-sacrifice and community, and to export those values abroad in a righteous war. For Lutheran prophets this was the world-historical mission of Protestant Germany as they equated the coming Kingdom of God with German hegemony in Europe, which would be the crucible for the spread of *Kultur*. By overthrowing Britain's imperial power, it would dethrone the materialist and mercenary values that had driven the conspiracy of hostile powers to destroy the *Kaisserreich*. It was fighting the legacy of the Enlightenment with its atheistic revolutionary tendencies and British pursuit of commercial hegemony, which it opposed with Germanic idealism and heroism. For British Protestants, Germany's invasions of Belgium, Serbia, France and Luxembourg signified the consequences of a long-term epoch that had violated God's commandments by embracing force and exploitation. Britain's volunteer citizen army was combating the spirit of Prussian

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[133] *Sermons for the Times: Four Sermons on War* Rev. R. Oswald, 'The Song of Deborah' (London, 1914), pp.20-21.
[134] *Sermons for the Times: Four Sermons on War* Rev. G. H. Box, 'God's Over-Ruling Providence' Westminster Abbey, 23 Aug. 1914, (London, 1914), p.24.
[135] Rev. J.N. Bateman-Champain, 'Irresponsibility' in B. Bouchier (ed.) *What is Wrong? 9 Addresses by various authors* (London, 1916), pp.109-110.

militarism at home as well as abroad. Like the Lutherans, the British must also rally together in penitence to deserve the status of 'chosen people.'

If the sanctity of blood sacrifice was not a creation of the trenches but already established and inflected in different cultural and confessional forms, where did the rhetoric come from to find fertile soil in 1914? Military martyrdom became a godly vocation through several interlocking developments. These were the increasing public respectability of armies, the growing attachment of Christianity to national and imperial causes, and the redefining of Christian salvation as an earthly state.

The army became a socially respectable institution. In the early nineteenth century, the British army was widely seen as a disreputable profession contaminating civil society. Garrisons were routinely accused of being enclaves of immorality and indiscipline. This public image changed radically over the century, as the army attracted increasing evangelistic attention as part of a wider series of reforms to its strategy, weapons and discipline. The rising respectability of soldiers within churches and religious literature converged with a growth of voluntary evangelistic work among troops, restoring a consensus that men of war could also be good Christians, even that Christians made the best soldiers.[136] By the Edwardian and Wilhelmine periods, churches looked to the army and military life to raise the calibre of their civilization by inculcating virtues of sobriety and discipline into the nation's

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[136] O. Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain' *English Historical Review* 86 (1971), pp.46-72, p. 66.

manhood. The net result was that the military sphere became the solution, not the problem.[137]

Germany's churches helped to evolve the army into a counterrevolutionary instrument. This was first accomplished through the collaboration between Prussian Kings and military chaplains during the pietist movement of the late seventeenth century. For the mutual advantage of the Hohenzollern monarchy and the churches, military chaplains were appointed to implant discipline and obedience into the army. After 1870, chaplains were appointed to each reserve and regular corps of the Prussian army. While the churches would be able to Christianise the nation's manhood, the state could use clergy authority to lower desertions and strengthen military performance. Under subsequent rulers from Frederick the Great through to Kaiser Wilhelm II, the chaplaincy also developed a patriotic war theology that consecrated the Prussian and then the German nation-state, casting the triumphs over Napoleon (1813-15), Bismarck's wars of unification against Denmark, Austria (1864-6) the defeat of France (1870-1) and the coming of German nationhood as the achievement of God's chosen people that was paving the way for human salvation,[138] all inspired by the biblical example of Old Testament covenant.[139] Since God had

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[137] This argument is developed in A. Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War' *History Workshop Journal*, 2 (1976), pp.104-123, esp. p.112 and in K. E. Hendrickson, *Making Saints: Religion and the Public Image of the British Army 1809-1885* (London, 1998).

[138] See H. Lehmann, 'In the Service of Two Kings: Protestant Prussian Military Chaplains, 1713-1918'. For the fusion of German nationalism with theological doctrine in the nineteenth century see J. Moses, 'Justifying War as the Will of God: German Theology on the Eve of the First World War' *Colloquium* 31:1 (May, 1999), pp. 3-20; D. R. Borg, 'German National Protestantism as a Civil Religion' in M. Mor (ed.) *International Perspectives on Church and State* (Creighton, 1993), pp.255-267.

[139] H. Lehmann, '"God Our Old Ally" The Chosen People Theme in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century German Nationalism', in W. R. Hutchinson, H. Lehmann (eds.), *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 1994) pp. 86-107, p.87.

guided the nation's ascent to the status of major European power, Germany as cradle of the Reformation was God's weapon in the history of human salvation.

In Germany, without a large colonial empire, military service was hammered into a cherished Christian vocation through several national experiences: Napoleon's military occupation, the war of liberation in 1813, national unification and the aesthetic cult of heroic kingship of the *Kaiserreich*. The reputation of the old Prussian army amongst the middle classes had been poor, as it was manned largely by the rural and urban labouring classes, and mercenaries recruited in German-speaking lands, held together by draconian punishments and coercion. Under the French occupation, military service began to become a highly reputed vocation, as a circle of educated aristocrats and bourgeois patriots campaigned for patriotic national uprising. The introduction of universal conscription in February 1813 and the patriotic volunteers movement integrated broader segments of the population into armed service, including educated classes, university students and urban artisans, while an extensive system of 'patriotic charity' for national warriors mobilised women from the middle classes and nobility. The vertical extension of soldiering across the social divide shaped a public discourse of journalistic nationalism, patriotic sermons, lyric poetry and military songs, asserting the honour of armed willingness to self-sacrifice.[140]

The iconography of military heroism was central to the theatrical politics of the 'grand gesture' promoted by Germany's figurehead of imperial ambition, Kaiser Wilhelm II. Heroism, once claimed as a liberal people's mantle by some of the Free Corps in the War of Liberation of 1813, was appropriated by the *Kaiserreich* as an

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[140] See K. Hagemann, 'Of "Manly Valor" and "German Honor": Nation, War and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising Against Napoleon', *Central European History* 30:2 (1997), pp.187-220.

overtly military and monarchist symbol.[141] Germany's middle-class youth were familiarised with attitudes to war as a cleansing force, in schools and youth organisations. In Ernst Jünger's schooldays in the immediate prewar years, senior essay topics in Hanover included 'War is as terrible as plagues from heaven, but it is good, it is a fate like them.'[142] The Hohenzollern dynasty became the focus of this cult, associated with the promise of unity embodied in the mythical king Barbarossa, sleeping beneath the holy Kyffhäuser mountain in Thuringia, who would awaken and reinstate the Reich, mirroring Britain's Arthurian legend and the return of a messianic saviour king.[143] Legitimising his kingship of a newly unified *Reich*, through statues and monuments, and as patron of a vast church building programme, Wilhelm actively merged nation, God, and monarch.[144]

Since the advent of citizen armies, German social militarism viewed the army as school of the nation. Through conscription and the guidance of the chaplaincy, the army should develop not only the body of the soldier but the mind and spirit of the soldier-citizen.[145] The illiberal union of Church and State through the Army was affirmed and strengthened through Bismarck's reforms, where the Prussian officer corps, both its regulars and reserves, was to be indoctrinated because it was now no longer a homogeneous aristocratic caste with assured political loyalties, but drew

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[141] As demonstrated by R. Schilling, *Kriegshelden: Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1813-1945* (Paderborn, 2002).
[142] Cited in T. Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss 1914-1945* (London, 1997), pp.35-6.
[143] S. Goebel, 'Re-membered and Re-mobilised: The 'Sleeping Dead' in Interwar Germany and Britain' *Journal of Contemporary History* 39:4 (2004), pp.487-501, p.497.
[144] E. Fehrenbach, 'Images of Kaiserdom: German attitudes to Kaiser Wilhelm II' in J. Röhl, N. Sombart (eds.) *Kaiser Wilhelm II New Interpretations* (Cambridge, 1982), pp.269-85, p.276.
[145] See N. Stargardt, *The German Idea of Militarism: Radical and Socialist Critics* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 38-9; R. Hoehn, *Die Armee als Erziehungsschule der Nation: Das Ende einer Idee* (Bad Harzburg, 1963), p.181f; D. Fricke, 'Zum Bündnis des preusisch-deutschen Militarismus mit dem Klerus gegen die sozialistische Arbeiterbewegung am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 8 (1960), pp. 1378-1395, esp.1388-94; see also U. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford, 2004), esp. pp.187-8.

from a wider social base. With the infiltration of Germany's educated middle class, feudal honour was redefined as something that flowed from character rather than blood. Veterans' organisations in Germany proclaimed their religious foundations and their belief that faith was a necessary component of patriotism, amplifying the Kaiser's identification of German Christianity with the struggle against social democracy.[146] Pressure groups with Lutheran support, such as the German Army League, identified the army as the 'school of the nation' and a source of cultural rejuvenation.[147] The manifesto of Germany's professoriate on 16 October 1914, signed by Germany's leading divines, claimed Germany's military ethos instilled values of duty, loyalty and honour, and would save 'the entire culture of Europe.'[148]

Religion had shaped and been shaped by the discourse of sacrificial, redemptive death. German national Protestantism asserted that redemption was an historical and earthly thing, and that God worked in history and intervened at decisive points to guide the destiny of the nation, to whom he had assigned a mission.[149] The relationship between God and the covenanted nation was uneasy, as God would bless or punish the nation according to its success in hewing to its mission. To avert the levelling dangers of nationalism, German Protestants predominantly valued an authoritarian government in a hierarchically ordered *Volk*. Inspired by the Old Testament model, their destiny would be marked by critical stages, a foundation, a 'time of testing' in war, then a missionary stage of diffusing values throughout the

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[146] T. Rohkrämer *Militarismus der kleinen Leute: Die Kriegervereine im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914* (München,1990), pp.205-214.
[147] S. Coetzee, *The German Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany* (New York, 1990), p.52.
[148] Quoted in K. Böhme, *Aufrufe und Reden deutscher Professoren im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1975), pp.49-50.
[149] See D. Borg, 'German National Protestantism as a Civil Religion', in M. Mor (ed.) *International Perspectives on Church and State* (Omaha, 1993), pp.255-267.

world. This vision conflated sacred and secular history, reversed Augustine's distinction between city of God and city of Man, and was spawned in the period between Napoleon's defeat of Prussia in 1806 and Wars of Liberation, 1813-14. It shifted the stress of Reformation theology from individualist to national salvation.[150]

Empire underpinned Britain's cult of military heroism. Divines embraced empire as a way to evangelise the heathen world.[151] British churches promoted martial heroes as exemplars of godly values, consecrating fallen missionaries and soldiers as martyrs who had died on the frontiers of empire. These ideas evolved through the Napoleonic wars, the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, through the deaths of Henry Havelock in 1857, missionary David Livingstone in 1874 and General Charles Gordon in 1885. As they became figures of moral stature, military biographies increasingly edited the details of their subjects to show synergy between the purity of their private life and their outward public virtue.[152] The death cult climaxed with the disastrous expedition of Captain Scott of the Antarctic, venerated in 1912 as an exemplar of antimaterialist self-sacrifice. The Church choreographed national mourning after deaths, financing monuments and presiding over funerals.[153] Rising geopolitical tension also linked the hygiene of the population with the security of the empire, especially after the Anglo-Boer war awakened fears over Britain's military manpower and performance. Amidst inquests into 'national efficiency' and the 'national physique', churches advocated the

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[150] These themes are identified by A. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: sacred sources of national identity* (Oxford, 2003), p.230.

[151] For Britain see A.F. Walls, 'Such Boastings as the Gentiles use...Some thoughts on Imperialist Religion' in R.C. Bridges (ed.) *An African Miscellany for John Hargreaves* (Aberdeen, 1983), pp.109-116; see also G. Treloar, *Lightfoot the Historian: the nature and role of history in the life and thought of J.B. Lightfoot* (Tübingen, 1998).

[152] As C.I. Hamilton demonstrates 'Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero' *Historical Journal* 23: 2 (1980), pp.381-398.

[153] This is the argument of Max Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice* (Oxford, 2003), esp. pp.243-4. For coverage of reactions to the deaths of public figures in funerals, see J. Wolffe, *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (Oxford, 2000).

invigoration of a weakened urban population by inculcating young men with martial discipline. Though soldiering could not equal the profile of Britain's formidable naval tradition, it was becoming ever more sanctified. It enshrined a movement away from the earlier ideal, the contemplative inner life, replacing it with a Christian ideal of muscularity and dynamism, the ingredients of the Victorian hero.[154]

The utopian war aims articulated in the churches were also made possible by the growth of Christian liberal theology, meaning the historicised interpretation of scripture, recasting the Kingdom of God as an earthly realm that would arise in historical time. Where once Christian redemption lay outside the terrestrial sphere, in the separate 'City of God', secular and sacred history now became one. War theology had roots in this evolving Christian 'social gospel,' and saw mobilisation as a solution to the social and political fragmentation spawned by the development of an industrial urban civilization. Military chaplains in Germany were already familiar with these themes through the work of the Inner Mission, while Britons such as Donald Hankey and Studdert-Kennedy had been formed through work in urban missions. By replacing the pursuit of self-interest with communitarian duty, war would return the atomised society of individual self-interest and the cash nexus to the organic community based on kinship, neighbourhood and piety. In its more progressivist manifestations, influential in Britain and marginalised in Germany, the vision of an earthly salvation engaged the churches in questions of social reform, public health, the industrial system, and the eradication of poverty through state intervention. It had underpinned Church campaigns against slavery and child labour. In its more conservative Lutheran form, it competed with social democracy to convert the masses. For both, the war was

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[154] See B. Stanley, 'Christian Responses to the Indian Mutiny of 1857', *Studies in Church History The Church and the War* 20 (Oxford, 1983), pp.277-289.

an extension of their prewar social gospel, the pursuit of social harmony by other means.

Many participants claimed the war had a sacred meaning even as they anticipated and recognised the brutal realities of combat. Despite decades of peace within Europe, church people in July and August 1914 were often apprehensive, even realistic, about the nature of the coming war. Neither can the rhetoric be dismissed as a way of rationalising a bloody stalemate in hindsight. It predated the first battles and invested death with a sacred meaning before the shooting war had even begun. A repertoire of prewar images and themes, that was deeply rooted in Edwardian and Wilhelmine cultures, shaped responses on both sides. Talk of sacrifice in these religious circles was the product of their nineteenth century heritage, which had recast salvation as an earthly event, restoring society to social harmony and community spirit via military martyrdom. This context provides another clue about how the rhetoric continued to endure in the face of the realities of warfare. Their prewar discourse of cultural despair at the state of society meant that they were disinclined to contrast the carnage of warfare with a romanticised prewar past. Far from being a unique pathology of Lutheran consciousness, these themes had parallels in Anglican and Presbyterian preaching. Despite the different nuances that differentiated them, they entered the war speaking a fundamentally common moral language that transcended the frontiers.

CHAPTER 2

Keeping the Faith

Religious students at war, a case study

This chapter is a case study of the way religious rhetoric evolved at the front. It compares the responses of university students who professed religious faith, both students who were still enrolled when they enlisted, and recent alumni of the years immediately before the war. It is about two supposed turning points in their attitudes towards war, for German youth, the battle of Langemarck (10 November, 1914), and for British youth, the battle of the Somme (1 July, 1916).[1] In particular, it examines the testimonies of academic youth who were members of the organised Christian, Protestant student movements in Britain (the Student Christian Movement, or SCM) and Germany, (The *Deutsche Christliche Studenten Vereinigung*, or DCSV), both affiliated to the World Student Christian Federation.[2]

Though only a small fraction of the military manpower on either side, for the purposes of this study students were an important segment of the faithful in either army. Firstly, as lettered participants in the war, they left behind a rich archive of writing about the war experience, in the form of letters, tracts, books and diaries. Secondly, the attitudes of youth at war were frequently given a wider importance, receiving attention disproportionate to their numbers. On one hand, when war broke

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[1] Though the Somme battle began before 1 July, with a seven-day British artillery assault, I have used the traditional date given that several commentators have presented that 'first day' as a cultural turning-point.

[2] In wartime, the DCSV produced a semi-independent agency, the Deutscher Studentendienst (German Student Service).

out, youth became shorthand for the idealist spirit of the united war community, or *Augustgemeinshaft*, and all it entailed. Their names and heroic temper were celebrated in countless speeches and engraved on memorials and plaques. Their letters were anthologised in numerous collections. And they were presented as symbolising something larger than a biological generation, as the future of the nation. Captured in urban photography celebrating in the streets, educated youth and academic elites were associated with the will to sacrifice in the name of high ideals. This carried on a legacy from the late nineteenth century, in which observers who worried about the loss of values in the modern world, the weakening attachment to duty or the decline of religious faith, often identified youth as the agent of cultural renewal. Youth were seen as an antidote to bourgeois mediocrity, the desire for material comfort and safety, symbols of innocence and cultural renewal.[3] On the other hand, because they suffered casualties at a disproportionately higher rate than many other parts of the population, they are also seen as exemplifying the trajectory of the 'soldier's tale', that they supposedly lost their ideals at the front and became alienated. This process of disillusionment, and the supposed incongruity between the rhetoric and reality of war, is also often defined in generational terms. In folk memory, youth are associated with the alienation and disillusionment from sacrificial rhetoric, the movement from prewar innocence to bitter experience, as Samuel Hynes summarises:

> a generation of young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance.[4]

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[3] See R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London, 1980), pp.203ff.
[4] S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1990), x.

War novels such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* told of the experience of growing up, and disorientation, while serving in the war, the loss of youthful innocence, and the difficulty of reintegrating into postwar society. For these reasons, they represent a valuable case-study for testing the 'disillusionment' hypothesis.

This chapter refutes the widely-held assumption that sacrificial ideology could not, and did not, survive the first contact with the realities of the front. It demonstrates that for many students, there was no automatic experience of disillusionment. Young pious men were often mentally flexible, able to draw on their religious heritage to place the war's terrors in familiar contexts.[5] Their formation and outlook predisposed them to accept the war's ambitious and utopian purpose, but it also predisposed them to cope with the horrific casualties and conditions of the war, interpreting them not as meaningless suffering, but as a suffering that was the necessary prelude to rebirth. Even for the minority who openly rejected the language of redemptive sacrifice, it was rarely in terms of nihilistic irony that saw deaths as meaningless. As desolate as the war experience seemed, the more iconoclastic students represented the war not as a futile waste but as God's punishment. Not a conflict without meaning, it had taken on an alternative and bleaker set of meanings.

Through military service, logistical support, propaganda and philanthropic care, the student Christian movements of Britain and Germany were intensively involved in the war effort. The British Movement worked through the established organs of the Y.M.C.A, whose volunteers worked in army training centres and army huts for the

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[5] M.R. Habeck, 'Technology in the First World War: The View from Below' J. Winter, G. Parker, M.R. Habeck (eds.) *The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, 2000), pp.99-132.

relief of men behind the lines. The *Deutsche Studentendienst*, the wartime arm of the DCSV, maintained Soldiers Homes, sent out friendship gifts of books, journals, cigars, socks, and pictures to German servicemen and prisoners of war. It was assisted by the German government and Dr. Michaelis, the new President of the student movement, who later became German Chancellor. It established a network of war libraries, which by 1917 had supplied the army in the field with camp libraries, library wagons, box libraries for hospital trains and troops in the field.

Exact comparison of student enlistment and losses is not possible, but it is clear that young men of this social profile participated at a high level, and suffered a disproportionate rate of casualties. Many students were from middle or upper-class families with the financial means and flexibility to enlist immediately and the physical health to pass medical tests. Approximately 15,816 German tertiary students were killed, not including those who had graduated before the war. This represented the equivalent of approximately 20 per cent of the number of students enrolled in the summer semester of 1914, a double decimation higher than the national average of 15.4 per cent of German fatalities. At its highest, the enlistment at Bonn was 78.25 per cent of the male student population.[6] Before the war, many students had served the *Einjahre Freiwillige*, or one year officer trainee, to become German officers.

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[6] The total number of enrolled tertiary students in Germany was 79,225 in the summer of 1914 and 84, 636 in the summer of 1918. Figures taken from P. Ssymank, *Das Deutsche Studententum von den aeltesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (4th edn. Munich 1932), pp.453-4. K. H. Jarausch, 'German Students in the First World War', *Journal of Central European History*, 17 (1984), pp. 310-329, p.318; German national figures from L. Grebler, W. Winkler, *The Cost of the War to Germany and Austria-Hungary* (New Haven, 1940), pp.76-7. The breakdown of student fatalities as a proportion of the total enrolled in each university is unknown.

Germany's active officers suffered a high proportion of fatalities, with 24.7 per cent killed, while the war killed 15.7 per cent of reserve officers.[7]

Parallel figures for British students were not compiled comprehensively, but a tentative impression of their casualty rate can be drawn from the proportion of those killed from the 19 British universities analysed by Jay Winter. The average percentage of fatalities from those mobilised was 14.6 per cent, above the national norm of 11.8 per cent. However, losses suffered by most provincial universities were mostly only slightly above 11.8 per cent. Extremely high death rates were concentrated in the Oxbridge universities, the London universities and the Royal Technical College, Glasgow. A far higher proportion of Oxbridge students (approximately 97 per cent) were already professional soldiers or were volunteers given commissions. As officers, they were more likely to be killed than the rank-and-file. Many of the younger cohorts were subalterns, a particularly dangerous rank. One in four second lieutenants were killed.[8] The officer class of Britain's elite ancient universities sustained a higher share of 'sacrifices' than any other social group. While the death rate was not computed, within theological schools and the Christian student organisations, the enlistment rate of two-thirds was exceptionally high.[9] A report in 1917-18 from a training college reflected the extent of disruption. 'Out of fifteen

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[7] G. Volkmann, *Soziale Heeresmißstände als Mitursache d. dt. Zusammenbruchs von 1918* (Berlin, 1929) xi. 2 Halbband des 11. Bandes des Werkes des Reichstagsuntersuchungsausschusses über die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs im Jahre 1918, p.235.

[8] The British statistics above are drawn from the following sources: British figures from J. Winter, 'Britain's Lost Generation of the First World War' *Population Studies* 31 (1977), pp. 452-456; Of those enrolled students mobilised at Oxford, 19.2% were killed, while Cambridge lost 18.0%; London City and Guilds College lost 20.0%, London Royal School of Mines lost 18%; Royal Technical College, Glasgow lost 19.0%, Winter, 'Britain's Lost Generation', Table 11, p.462. See also J. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London, 1985), pp.76-99.

[9] This placed them higher than Theological schools and the Student Christian organisations, which reported that between 60-66% of the movement had enlisted by October 1915: R. Rouse, *The World Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years* (London, 1948), p.81; see also T. Tatlow, 'The British Student Movement in War Time' *Student World* (Oct. 1915), pp.129-30. For example, from 511 students enrolled in the Theology faculty at the University of Berlin, 60% were serving, as reported by Professor Deissmann in the *Church Family Newspaper* 1 Oct. 1915.

committee members only four remain, and a large proportion of our ordinary members were called away.'[10] Students were a highly bereaved group, as likely as other sections of the armed forces to suffer bereavement from death of friends. Former Captain turned padre W.P. Young reported 'We have seen our friends fall beside us, we have come out of battle to learn that some have fallen unseen by us, we come home to find that two-thirds of the best of our old circle are dead.'[11]

Germany's pious students sprang from universities with large Protestant populations and a corporatist subculture of ritualised associations that reinforced loyalty to the imperial German *Kaiserreich.*[12] Their social composition was increasingly *kleinbürgerlich.* Some came from the lower middle class of white collar workers and public officials, others from more affluent propertied middle classes.[13] Against the *Wandervogel* movement with its rebellious critique of the authoritarian rigidity of Wilhelmine values, German Protestant student Christianity had become deeply committed to the credo of nationalism and social harmony summarised by historian Otto Hintze in 1913, that their mission was to 'counteract divisiveness' and promote the Fatherland above sectional interests.[14] In the same year, the growing nationalism of the student body had climaxed in the festivities at Leipzig, when students converged to commemorate the Wars of Liberation. Christian Students in Germany were active in social movements led by Protestant divines to overcome class conflict,

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[10] Cited in *The Student Christian Movement in 1917-1918: Being the Report of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland for the College Year 1917-1918* (London, 1919), pp.4-5.
[11] W.P. Young, 'The Faith of the Army' *Student Movement* 21:4 (Dec. 1918), pp.59-60.
[12] See K. H. Jarausch, 'Liberal Education as Illiberal Socialisation: The Case of Students in Imperial Germany' *Journal of Modern History* 50 (Dec. 1978), pp.609-630.
[13] See J.E. Craig, 'Higher Education and Social Mobility in Germany', in K. Jarausch (ed.) *The Transformation of Higher Learning 1860-1930*, (Chicago, 1983), pp.219-44.
[14] Cited in K. H. Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, 1982), pp.408-9.

and compete against the materialism of social democracy.[15] German universities then became wartime centres of intellectual mobilisation. The University of Berlin, for example, was styled as the 'spiritual regiment of the Hohenzollern' dynasty.[16]

The outbreak of war disrupted the prewar ecumenical dialogue between the British and German churches, a dialogue in which the student organisations had been active. Amidst international tensions during the meeting of the British branch in Liverpool in 1912, the British and German branches had exchanged cables pledging to pray and work for peace between the nations.[17] Aggrieved at the conflict between the two Protestant nations, the majority of both circles also accepted the war as a justified war of defence, a conflict that also had important domestic war aims. Leaders of the German students' movement, such as General Secretary Gerhard Niedermeyer and Pastor Paul Humbug, accused Britain of being the aggressor. They represented the rallying of their population to defend the Fatherland as a millenarian moment of national unity ordained by God, binding German and Christian ideals.[18] In a later letter to Tissington Tatlow, General Secretary of the British SCM, Gerhard Niedermeyer summarised the stance of the German movement as it had congealed by mid-September: despair that Britain had betrayed the 'white race' and allied with the 'Mongolian hordes' of Russia to fight its kindred Protestant Germany; joy that 'Everyone in Germany who can bear arms now stands under the flag of our beloved

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[15] C. Schubert-Weller, *'Kein schönrer Tod...' Die Militarisierung der männlichen Jugend und ihr Einsatz im Ersten Weltkrieg 1890-1918* (Weinheim, 1998), pp.204-5.
[16] E. du Bois-Reymond, 'Die Universität im Dienste des Vaterlands, *Berliner Tageblatt* 4 Aug. 1914, cited in W. Basler, 'Zur politischen Rolle der Berliner Universität im ersten imperialistichen Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt- Universität zu Berlin. Gesellschafts und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 10 (1961), pp.181-203, p.201.
[17] The prehistory of the international student Protestant movement is elaborated in H. Lehmann, 'International Solidarity in European and North American Protestantism before 1914 and after.' (Unpublished Conference Paper, November 2005), esp. pp.1-12. I am grateful to Professor Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann for alerting me to this paper.
[18] Report of Niedermeyer, cited in K. Kupisch, *Studenten entdecken die Bibel: Die Geschichte der Deutschen Christlichen Studenten-Vereinigung (DCSV)* (Hamburg, 1958), p.91.

and noble Kaiser'; belief that war was an instrument of God's judgment.[19] The pressures placed on German youth were particularly generational, as they were repeatedly reminded of the previous heroic generations of the German wars of liberation and unification, and their obligation to perpetuate their greatness. War represented a sacramental rite of passage into manhood. Their universities hallowed the student corps of the nineteenth century wars, promoting the ambition to live up to their memory. As the rector of Bonn University proclaimed, 'May we be worthy of the generations of 1813 and 1870!'[20] Veterans' organisations, more omnipresent and influential in Germany with its massed conscript armies, actively cultivated the memories of the battle of Sedan, thereby encouraging the desire to emulate their martial ancestors.[21] Chaplain Paul Le Seur later preached that war represented an internal process by which God summoned Germans to revive their forefathers' piety, and transmit it to coming generations.[22] *Deutsche Weihnacht*, a collection of articles by divines, scholars and intellectuals, portrayed the youthful warriors as successors to heroes past. One article claimed that with their ancestors' songs the sons of Germany went to war. It gave pride of place to youth as prophets of rebirth.[23]

The British SCM also represented the war in messianic terms, in both its domestic and global dimensions. It was a trial of rival ideas as well as material strength, the Christian Gospel pitted against Nietzsche's ravings, a campaign to dethrone the

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[19] Letter, 17 Sept. 1914, cited in T. Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1933), pp. 519-20.
[20] *Bonner Universitätschronik* 40 (1914), p. 2.
[21] See T. Rohkrämer, *Militarismus der kleinen Leute* (Munich, 1990), p.62. One student writing in 1915 displayed the anxieties of war enthusiasm, hoping to get to the front before the war ended, impatient at being 'prepared for battle but never in the greatness of battle', that he might miss the opportunity to win honour as a social asset. EZA Bstnd. 34, Nr:13, J. Müller, 25 April, 1915.
[22] As Le Seur claimed in a sermon on 31 April, 1916, recorded by Feldgeistlicher Siegfried Eggebrecht, DTA 424 /1,3 (Siegfried Eggebrecht, Diary).
[23] YDS AWSCF, Box 128, Folder 978, Max Lenz, 'Der Deutsche Gott' in *Deutsche Weihnacht Eine Liebesgabe Deutscher Hochschüler* (n.d.), pp.7-11.

Prussian military oligarchy, and its demonic credo of social Darwinist aggression.[24] The war was also an inner cleansing of the nation. Its spokesmen expected a war of 'terrible losses and social disintegration', in which God 'is trying us as it were by fire, and as we pray purifying us by His searching judgments.'[25]

Wartime student testimonies carried authority, and were therefore invoked to legitimise competing interpretations of the war. Both the Bishop of London and the SCM General Secretary used students' letters to validate their own competing views on the war. According to Tissington Tatlow, later an avowed pacifist, students completely rejected the idea that war could have a sacred meaning. He quoted the single letter of a German student from the front, which lamented that the war produced 'no positive, ethical and religious values', and was 'a triumph of the devil, not a means of grace.' Tatlow concluded that this impression of a 'Satanic' war was 'the view of all Christian students', the consensus of 'French, Russian, Austrian and British student writings.'[26] But from the selective use of field letters of Christian students, one could find quotations to support conflicting views. In the same year, the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, made the opposite claim about student opinion. He concluded, in contrast to Tatlow, that students maintained their faith in the divine or sacred purpose in the war. '"Nothing is of any use, but prayer and trust in God; we all feel it out here; war is a great purge," so wrote an Oxford undergraduate from the trenches to me the other day; and this is only a sample of

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[24] C.L. Drawbridge, *Christianity and the War* (London, 1915).
[25] Lambeth Palace Library [Henceforth LPL] (Davidson Papers), Folder 491, pp.206-7. Student Christian Movement Funding Appeal Letter (undated).
[26] YDS, AWSCF, Box 197, Folder 1466, E518, Pamphlet, T. Tatlow. See also T. Tatlow, *Students, The War and Christianity: A Brief Review of the Student Christian Movement throughout the World* (London, 1916), p.11.

numbers of such letters.'[27] He had declared in June 1915 that the churches' task was to mobilise the nation for a holy war.[28] Both had an interest in representing the opinion of the student body in the way they did. Given the congruence between their personal opinions and the letters they selected to quote, it would be naïve to accept either of their accounts automatically at face value.

How, then, did religious students react to the front experience? A number of historians claim that youth on both sides became rapidly alienated. For those overwhelmed young men, Wilhelmine and Edwardian cultures with values and sentiments that were chivalric, religious and patriotic, met their graveyard, especially in the killing fields of the western front. Rather than seeing this process of tectonic cultural change as a cumulative development, instead it has been plotted as a development that occurred at precise 'turning points' on the battlefield. For the British forces, A.J.P. Taylor and Arthur Marwick named a particular battle for the death of ideals, the Somme offensive and its first day, 1 July, 1916, the bloodiest day in British military history. Taylor claimed volunteers 'lost faith in their cause, in their leaders, in everything except loyalty to their fighting comrades. The war ceased to have a purpose.' Arthur Marwick identifies a similar schedule.[29] If men continued to fight, they argue, it was only from alternative motivations, such as a sense of loyalty to their comrades, fear of punishment, or social ostracism. These works assume that religious-

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[27] *The Church Times* 3 March, 1916, p.219. Similar claims were made by the Deputy Chaplain-General Bishop Llewellyn Gwynne, who reported that 'A brilliant young Oxford scholar, known for his outspoken agnostic views, declared: 'I have learned more here in a week than I have all the rest of my life...and this is the first time I have been to the Holy Communion for years.' This is the most powerful and most valuable result of the war, the cleansing and refining of our race in the fire.' *Church Family Newspaper* 12 Nov. 1915 (See Lambeth Palace Archive, Folder 772, pp.28-9).

[28] *Guardian,* 10 June, 1915.

[29] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, (London, 1963), p.140. A. Marwick, *The Deluge* (London, 1965), pp.257-8: 'Those early volunteers who had a simple old-world religious faith were probably most immune to the numbing influence of trench life; but they and their faith were extinguished in the Battle of the Somme...for those who survived it was difficult not to doubt King, Country or God.'

patriotic convictions of the prewar world were too fragile and inflexible to survive contact with warfare of such intensity. Paul Fussell's account of the death of Edwardian values is the most influential thesis of cultural discontinuity. By tracing literary developments, he argues that the war discredited the 'high diction' of chivalric gentlemanly codes, replacing it with a language of irony and iconoclasm, rupturing the present from the past. As civilians remained bellicose and ignorant, the absurdity and extremity of the 'troglodyte' world of the trench system rendered the world desolate and meaningless for its inhabitants. Fussell stresses the overwhelming impact of the immediate and alien environment, with its mud, lice, rats, rain and bombardment, which totally absorbed the participants, and could not sustain belief in such abstractions as God and nation. Above all, war showed the limits of the language that the combatants had inherited, pointing to the contrast between war's horrors and the lexicon of British high culture.[30]

The portrayal of the first day of the Somme as a 'turning point' is an Anglo-centric chronology, reflecting the fact that British volunteers of the 'New Armies' were mostly exposed to combat much later than their German counterparts. While Germany had been engaged continuously from the war's beginning, with its under-prepared volunteers rushed into service, Britain's 'New Armies' of volunteer formations, did not face their first major combat until Loos in September, 1915.[31] In German historiography, the same process of disenchantment is scheduled in an earlier phase, in October and November 1914, when German volunteers were introduced to combat. According to Bernd Ulrich, Bernd Hüppauf and Konrad Jarausch, their ordeal of

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[30] P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York, 1975).
[31] I.F.W. Beckett (ed.) *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester, 1985), p.113. John Terraine described Loos as the 'true beginning of the martyrdom of the British Army', *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (London, 1990), p.154.

alienation began at the battle of Langemarck of November, 1914. It was also known as the *Kindermord bei Ypres*, or the 'massacre of the innocents' at Ypres, *Kindermord* a word with biblical connotations of Herod's infanticide.[32] Newly formed reserve regiments, which included young and unseasoned volunteers, after only two months of inadequate training, had hurled themselves against British regulars, many suffering casualties of 60% or more.[33] The disastrous operation, in which only 18% of the dead were actually student volunteers amongst older conscripts of reservists, was then mythologised. It was repackaged in panegyrics, novels, monuments and poetry as the joyful self-sacrifice of the flower of German youth, supposedly charging to their deaths singing the *Deutschlandlied*.[34] They argue that just as the untrained recruits there and at First Ypres were militarily unprepared to attack British regulars, their religious and patriotic world view left them culturally ill-prepared to withstand such unheroic material conditions within traditional frames of reference. This led to disillusionment that was 'rapid and complete.'[35]

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[32] In the German bible, 'Kindermord' was applied to the children Herod killed after the visit of the Magi: see R. Cowley, 'Massacre of the Innocents' *Quarterly Journal of Military History* 10:3 (1998), pp.38-43, p.39.

[33] B. Ulrich, 'Die Disillusionierung der Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914' in W. Wette, *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten* (München, 1992), p.110-126, p.116; Bernd Hüppauf also nominates the first contact with combat as the 'disillusioning shock': ' "Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg." Todesbilder aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg und Nachkriegzeit' in B. Hüppauf (ed.) *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft* (Hain, 1984), p.70. Huppauf identifies Langemarck as a pivotal moment. In the opinions of the *Frontsoldaten* themselves, he argues, it was a similar transition from enthusiasm to 'disillusionment and despair.' The romantic cult of individual youths who supposedly sacrificed themselves by singing patriotically while attacking under deadly fire at Langemarck, were gradually replaced by the depersonalised, technological 'new man' of steel with his steel helmet spawned in the overwhelming *Materialschlacht* of the battle of Verdun. 'Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a New Man in Germany after the First World War' *War & Society* 6:2 (1988), pp. 70-104. Casualty figures: H. Strachan, *The First World War Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford, 2001), p.278.

[34] For the mythologizing of Langemarck, see K. Unruh, *Langemarck: Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Koblenz, 1986) pp.187-197; G. Mosse, 'Soldatenfriedhöfe und nationale Wiedergeburt: Der Gefallenenkult in Deutschland' in K. Vondung (ed.) *Kriegserlebnis: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980), pp.241-261.

[35] Jarausch, 'German Students in the First World War' p.396. Cf. G. Fiedler, *Jugend im Krieg: Bürgerliche Jugendbewegung, Erster Weltkrieg und sozialer Wandel* (Köln, 1989), pp.52-58.

The disillusionment hypothesis, of cultural values perishing in the bloodletting, has already been challenged from several directions.[36] It privileges the literary output, some of which is post-war, of a small class of atypical soldier-writers above contemporary archival sources. It is also reductive in its bipolarities. It conflates disparate reactions and responses as homogenous, confusing attitudes to the government and generalship with attitudes to the culture being defended, attitudes to military comradeship with attitudes to conditions at the front, and wartime perceptions with postwar opinion. It disregards the mobility and movement that continued on other fronts and which resumed on the western front in 1918 after the trench stalemate. It also overstates the separation of homefront and frontline. Working-class values and popular culture were carried over from peacetime, encoded in cultural forms of leisure, while hostility to civilians was tempered by nostalgia for local communities and enduring affection for family.[37] As Gary Sheffield observes, 'Unless tightly (and rather pedantically) defined, the concept of disillusionment hinders rather than aids understanding of the British soldier in the Great War.'[38] It assumes a unilinear path from the sheer volume of destruction to disenchantment, whether at Verdun or the Somme, a simple relationship between the material conditions of war

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[36] For rebuttals of Fussell's case, see R. Prior, T. Wilson, 'Paul Fussell at War' *War in History* 1:1 (1994), pp.63-80; J. Winter, 'Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the First World War' *Journal of Modern History* 64 (Sept. 1992), pp. 525-32. Some of this debate has been conducted in the context of the morale question, and the extent to which combat willingness was sustained by acceptance of the legitimacy of the organisation's or nation's demands as well as 'primary group' loyalty. See H. Strachan, 'The Soldier's Experience in Two World Wars: Some Historiographical Comparisons' in P. Addison, A. Calder (ed.) *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West 1939-1945* (London, 1997), pp. 369-378, esp. p.371; A. Kellett, 'The Soldier in Battle: Motivational and Behavioural Aspects of the Combat Experience' in B. Glad (ed.), *Psychological Dimensions of War* (Newbury Park, 1990), pp.1-25; S.D. Wesbrook, 'The Potential for Military Disintegration', in S.C. Sarkasian, (ed.) *Combat Effectiveness. Cohesion, Stress and the Volunteer Military* (Beverly Hills and London, 1980), p.248.

[37] For these two arguments, see J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1990); S. Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1992).

[38] G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities*, (London, 2001), p.158.

and consciousness.[39] As an argument about cultural values, it has affinities with arguments relating to combat motivation, such as John Keegan's claim that there exists a numerical threshold or upper limit of casualties that undermines morale.[40] And it assumes that disillusionment was wholesale, puncturing not only belief in the cause of the war but belief in any coherent order in the world.

In the British case, surviving testimonies of pious students often contrast sharply with the traditional picture. For example, in the papers of devout Cambridge Anglican, Captain Barclay Buxton, who had served at the Somme and lost nearly all his 'most intimate undergraduate friends', was an article by Beatrice Brice. It is one of the more intensely elevated tributes to the memory of the Somme, written after the unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice memorial at Forceville, in September 1920. It would be difficult to find a less ironic and more reverential example of 'high diction' praising the ideals of Christian warrior honour:

> Chivalry, knighthood, heroism, self-sacrifice from age to age are knit together here, breathing from the Cross, from the graven heraldry of our history in arms, from the names of these the flower of the manhood of our race. From end to end that battle line of four years' suffering will be set at no great intervals with this sign, this seal, unmistakable and unique of a region consecrated for ever to Britain by the valour of her sons. [41]

That Buxton welcomed the article's commemoration of the war is confirmed by his consistent approving statements of the war's purpose in postwar oral interviews included in his papers. Buxton also endorsed such sentiments during the war, keeping

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[39] A recent article by Yuval Noah Harari argues that 'disillusionment', instead of a material battlefield revelation, was a product of cultural and mental changes in the soldiers' self-perception and expectations of life: 'Martial Illusions: War and Disillusionment in Twentieth-Century and Renaissance Military Memoirs' *Journal of Military History* 69:1 (2005), pp. 43-72.
[40] J. Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London, 1993), p.365: '20 or 30 per cent casualties among the infantry, the passing of the level of 1,000,000 deaths, will suffice to shatter the spirit of a nation.'
[41] IWM 78/60/3 (Captain GB Buxton Papers); newspaper cutting: B. Brice, 'At Forceville. 'If You Seek A Monument' *Times* 2 Sept. 1920, p.13.

a *Punch* cartoon that juxtaposed the German Kaiser slouching menacingly next to Christ on the Cross, entitled 'The Two Ideals.' In a letter to his parents in April 1915, he asserted the ennobling power of suffering, 'we shall come out of this war purged and meet for the master's use and then what a time of service and blessing we will have.'[42] Testimonies of other Britons who had witnessed carnage affirmed the value of war and its sacrifices, a war of 'righteousness' that was a 'mission.'[43]

In the German case, some other neglected sources make it possible to cast the net wider: a report of students' letters, and a trench newspaper which will be examined later. In 1926 archivist Hermann Cron surveyed 50,000 letters that were held in the German Reichsarchiv, many of which he indicated were written by members of the DCSV, materials that were subsequently destroyed by Allied bombing in World War Two.[44] Cron's report makes clear firstly that attempts to periodise disillusionment as a development of the first months of the war in 1914 are insensitive to the different context of other battlefronts. Students serving on the eastern front in 1915 in Russia and Galicia, a front which absorbed a third of the German forces, took part in sweeping German victories and expansion. They continued in that year to express 'pride as victors and high consciousness of a victorious army.' Where the front was immobilised, expressions of grim endurance predominated. The credo was typified by one student at the battle of the Somme, who wrote, 'Selflessly and patiently unto the end, so we stand.' Indeed, in the year 1916, with its large-scale and protracted slaughters, there were many expressions of 'Vaterlandsliebe' (the love of the nation). Far from expressions of religious faith or faith in the cause perishing at Langemarck

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[42] IWM 78/60/3, (Captain GB Buxton). Letter 3 April, 1915. For the newspaper cartoon, see *Punch*, 4 Aug. 1915.
[43] S. Hewitt *Scholar's Letters from the Front* (London, 1918) xiv; E.S. Woods (ed.) *Andrew R. Buxton: The Rifle Brigade, a memoir* (London, 1918), Letter 2 Feb. 1917, pp.245-6.
[44] H. Cron, *Das Archiv des Deutschen Studentendienstes von 1914* (Potsdam, 1926), esp. pp.14-74.

or even Verdun, as Cron summarised, at the end of 1916 'One cannot speak of a sinking of the mood.' Letters expressing despair were the exception, not the rule. Correspondence in 1917 showed war weariness and a lack of enthusiasm for the 'utopian' war aims of annexation of the Hindenburg Programme, but equally showed the 'firm will to hold out until an acceptable peace.' If these letters reflect attitudes, applying Clausewitz' distinction between 'mood', the soldier's day-to-day feeling, and 'spirit', the fundamental commitment and underlying attitude to the war's legitimacy, German students' declining mood had not yet mutated into a broken spirit.[45] Even in 1917, soldiers' complaints and discontent were often not against the cause of defending the Fatherland, but with the perceived misbehaviour or poor performance of people of other groups when they thought they were being let down, such as strikers, journalists, or government. So on 25 February 1917 one wrote, 'If only the homeland holds out; here outside one has done so for a long time. Still never were our people so enraged, as at the last strike.'[46] While they might openly criticise the performance of civilians, they rarely questioned the underlying premise of the war. Moreover, at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, morale resurged after the collapse of Czarist Russia and the prospect of finishing the war decisively. Cron's overall judgment was that the war devastated the faith of those with only a surface religiosity. But for those academic youth who professed faith, as well as other 'field-grey' combatants, he contended the war strengthened their religiosity, while their religiosity enhanced their capacity to hold out.[47] As a source, Cron appears to have tried to be fair. As well as his general conclusion that faith endured, he cited counter-examples and cases which cut against the grain, including letters criticising the churches and military chaplains. He included samples of those angrily questioning the

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[45] K. von Clausewitz *On War* (M. Howard, P. Paret, eds. New Jersey, 1976), pp.187-9.
[46] Cron, *Das Archiv*, pp.30, 32, 34.
[47] Cron, *Das Archiv*, especially pp. 15, 41.

rhetoric, some of which will be examined below. Against the possible accusation that he was using letters to strengthen the 'stab in the back' myth, the myth that the German home-front had betrayed its undefeated and honourable military, Cron quoted from a letter which apportioned blame for defeat to both the army and civilians, claiming that both homeland *and* army had become corrupted 'in the same way' by 'lies, avarice, shameless exploitation and self-interest.'[48] It is unlikely he would have included this, were he trying to portray the army as the incorruptible embodiment of the German spirit. In general, his willingness to consider and take account of countervailing evidence suggests that he was attempting to provide a balanced coverage rather than distort the letters for ideological purposes.

How did students adapt? A comparative 'snapshot' of two pious students, one a junior officer exposed to combat for the first time, one a private who had survived for thirteen months at the front, shows how religious rhetoric was not necessarily discarded as an inflexible archaism after the first contact with the fury of combat, or after prolonged experience of it. The first is devout Protestant 2nd Lieutenant Percy Simmonds. At the end of May 1916, about a month before the Somme offensive, he joined the Queen Victoria Rifles of the 9th London Regiment after recovering from measles. They were positioned near the French village of Gommecourt, which was under German occupation and positioned on a salient protected by woodland. The looming assault on the heavily fortified German stronghold was supposed to be a sideshow to divert German forces away from the concentrated Anglo-French thrust elsewhere. Accordingly, it was allocated minimal resources, and the Corps commander was instructed to make the preparations as obvious as possible, forfeiting

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[48] Cron, *Das Archiv*, p.60.

any surprise. In response, an additional German division was redeployed to the area. An acute shortage of manpower forced exhausted men to overwork at a furious pace in soaking weather. Periodic German bombardment made their labour dangerous and proper sleep rare. Before the hastily formed line of trenches stretched half a mile of ground, on which were trained the eyes of seasoned German gunners. These stringent circumstances, preparing to attack a watchful and deadly enemy, meant that co-operation, camaraderie and an iron acceptance of danger were at a premium. That danger and those lethal odds did not make Percy think it was a futile waste. On the contrary, Simmonds claimed that such conditions stimulated a 'spirit of fellowship' [49] and indifference to personal comfort. Recalling on 20 June 'crouching together in the bottom of the trench' from shells and screaming bullets, 'you feel a sense of unity which is really inspiring. Then, when the bombardment lifts for a minute and you crawl round to see if everyone is all right.' Unit cohesion under fire could be the foundation of a better civilisation, making the war a prelude to 'bloody assaults on the stronghold of Satan', if only people would imitate at home the fellowship he witnessed at the front.[50] After a full dress rehearsal for the attack Simmonds reported the mood of 'dogged pursuance,' and his own psychological preparedness, 'Not rum but our Easter Hope will, I believe, take me over the parapet as it has done before.'[51] In that state of studied calm, After Simmonds clambered over the top at 7:30am, under the cover of a smoke screen, vanished into the mist and was instantly cut down

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[49] P. Simmonds *For His Friends Letters of 2nd Lt. P.G. Simmonds of Mansfield College, Oxford Who was killed in action on the Somme, July 1st, 1916* (Oxford, 1918), Letter, 7 June, 1916.
[50] Simmonds, *For His Friends* Letters, 19 April, 1916, 20 June, 1916.
[51] Simmonds, *For His Friends* Letter, 15 June, 1916.

by a bullet in the head. He quickly entered the pantheon of the 'lost generation' and his university's roll of honour.[52]

Simmonds had already volunteered to combat vice amongst the British divisions in Egypt throughout 1915, brooding about the influences among the troops of gambling, whoring and spirits. His language of militant evangelism was readily transferred to the crusade against Germany. He claimed that blood was necessary for the 'remission of sins'[53], that sacrifice would enhance the honour of his newly-formed regiment, that fighting for Christian civilisation represented an extension of his missionary work, that it strengthened the imperial partnership between Indian and British troops,[54] and that the military ethos of co-operation and readiness for death was a model for national salvation. Anticipating the problems of the postwar world, he predicted another chapter of the same battle for the nation's soul after the war, between the materialism of peace and the collective values of experiencing common danger in the trenches, a battle that would be 'worse than anything out here.'[55] Just as Simmonds was able to reconcile the strain of bombardment and overwork with his world-view, other British students who survived the first day were also able to adapt, as examples will later demonstrate.

A week before Simmonds arrived at the Somme, Johannes Haas, a theology student from Leipzig who was contemplating the priesthood, wrote to his parents from Verdun. By May 1916, the landscape there had been disfigured by vicious fighting,

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[52] The description of preparation and assault is derived from N. Cave, *Gommecourt* (London, 1998), and A. Smith, *Four Years on the Western Front* (London, 1922). For Simmonds' place on the honour roll: E.S. Craig, W.M. Gibson (eds.) *Oxford University Roll of Service* (Oxford, 1920), p.173.
[53] Simmonds, *For His Friends* Letter, 19 April, 1916.
[54] Simmonds, *For His Friends* Letter, 21 Nov. 1915.
[55] Simmonds, *For His Friends* Letter, 20 June, 1916.

churned up by heavy bombardment, emptied of living things, its men dispersed into craters and shell holes after its trenches were broken up. Haas had participated in these conditions, and the structure of his military service had been different to Simmonds. He was a private rather than a subaltern. He had survived to serve for longer, for at least fourteen months, appearing at the Battle of Champagne which began on 20th December 1914.[56] Like other German religious combatants who entered the war with the language of sacrifice on their lips, he had begun a process of adaptation earlier. His fresh encounter with the war did not provoke simple despair. Despite his anxiety over the tension between his Christian duty and his duty to the Fatherland, he affirmed that war had encouraged and strengthened a sense of duty. Like Simmonds he saw the war as a prelude to a postwar struggle against materialism, but over time he grew fearful of the war's consequences, a future of strife that 'will be worse than the war.' Reflecting the influence of Lutheran social concern and its conflict against what it saw as a godless social democracy, he particularly feared working-class hostility, defining the war in October 1915 as a quest for both personal purity and national unity, 'to fight on behalf of my nation; to be free from proletarian class-hatred', and 'to combat all that is not as it should be in our people', a lifelong struggle 'against myself' and against all injustice, wickedness and meanness in our people.' A distinctive aspect of life in the German army in particular gave him doubts about whether the war would positively transform Germany. As a common infantryman he experienced the hierarchical feeding arrangements of the German army, as officers were fed sumptuously out of the line and men in field kitchens. In January 1916 he reported that Lieutenants 'are enjoying themselves while *we* are dying in filth', celebrating Christmas with plum-and-apple and sugar. The army's

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[56] His letters, which appear in the Witkop collection, begin in March 1915: P. Witkop, *German Students' War Letters* (Essen, 1929, English edn., 2002, edited by J. Winter), pp.197-207.

inegalitarian ethos was reflected in its mealtime divisions and caused friction particularly when food shortages began, and paralleled the separation of officers from men in churches, theatres, and beaches.[57] Segregation undermined the ideal of egalitarian army comradeship. He was so distraught at these developments that he even praised Karl Liebknecht, the dissenting socialist parliamentarian. The failure of the promise of war solidarity made him fear that mass sacrifice would not consecrate the Fatherland. Counterbalancing this, he speculated increasingly about his own death, especially after the death of his 'little brother' Konrad, who while dying had hoped that his parents were proud to donate him to the Fatherland. Consequently, Johannes wanted to be seen by his family to believe in the cause of the nation. Over time his patriotic piety narrowed, internalising the war as a more personal test of his own willingness to make the sacrifice. His final letters to his parents in May 1916, written as last testaments in the event of his death, claim that amidst war in its 'most appalling' form, he realised the 'nearness of God', and pledged 'to do my duty to the Fatherland and to my dear German people.'[58] He was then killed on 1 June.

Instead of a frozen body of ideas and language, the rhetoric of sacrifice evolved on a spectrum. Not only did the responses of religious participants change and adapt, but they were adapted by combatants at different stages of the war depending on when they had enlisted and how long they had served, and in what capacity. Over time, military rank, the longevity of their military service, or bereavement from the deaths

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[57] See the postwar collection of complaints about the officer corps in G. Volkmann, *Soziale Heeresmißstände als Mitursache d. dt. Zusammenbruchs von 1918* xi. 2 Halbband des 11. *Bandes des Werkes des Reichstagsuntersuchungsausschusses über die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs im Jahre 1918*, (Berlin, 1929), pp.13-79. On the impact of feeding hierarchies on morale in the German army, and how it threatened the credibility of the rhetoric of wartime community and comradeship, see H. Strachan, 'The Morale of the German Army,' in H. Cecil, P. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon* (London, 1996), pp. 387-398, p.391.

[58] The statements above are made in the following letters: 24 March, 1915, April (n.d.) 1915; 7 Oct. 1915; 29 Jan. 1916; 3 March, 1916; 13 May, 1916. Cited in Witkop, *German Students War Letters* (Essen, 1929), pp.197-207.

of comrades or family, or particular inflections of their brand of Christian social thought, were variables that shaped responses. Their different personal circumstances explain why Simmonds and Haas at almost exactly the same period of the war found themselves on different points of that spectrum. Simmonds was a junior officer who had not undergone Haas' resentment at officer-man inequality. Simmonds had experienced warfare directly for the first time in May 1916, whereas Haas had been at the front for thirteen months longer. Haas had lost his brother, a familial bereavement making stronger the pressure not to renounce sacrificial rhetoric in his letters home. This belies attempts to identify neat moments where naïve war-enthused youth discovered that the rhetoric was outmoded. Instead of viewing the development of the rhetoric of sacrifice only as a one-dimensional process of collective experience, it was something complicated by its intersection with individual experience. These two cases also illustrate that for religious student volunteers of differing experiences and circumstances, there was no automatic, unilinear process of disillusionment, that the intensifying experience war could be made intelligible in religious frames of reference.[59]

Simmonds' and Haas' social origins, education and patriotic-religious ethos were typical of the profile of religious university elites at war. A defect of the disillusionment hypothesis is that its generalisations are based on a narrow range of sources, such as misleadingly selective quotations from the edited Witkop collection of students' letters.[60] As the case of Johannes Haas above demonstrates, a close

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[59] In a later chapter I will explore in greater depth the impact of bereavement on religious participants and the way combatants internalised the war as a personal test.

[60] For the Witkop collection, see M. Hettling, M. Jeissmann, 'Der Weltkrieg als Epos. Philip Witkops "Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten'', in G. Hirschfeld, G. Krumreich and I. Renz (eds.) *Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch...Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen, 1993), pp.186-190.

reading even of the Witkop letters does not yield a uniform pattern of loss of faith. And another neglected body of evidence demonstrates that the cases of Simmonds and Haas are representative of a wider body of student writing from the field.

It could be objected that letters do not necessarily reflect the inner convictions of their authors. Instead, it could be argued, they were officially censored and self-censored, written to ease the anxiety of their audiences of families, friends and loved ones. A proportion of letters may indeed have been insincere 'soft-soap' written to comfort the family. But as Chapter 1 discussed, recent historiography has already shown that correspondence also contained real communication that could not be perfectly shut down by censorship, that the content of letters home was not merely palliative, to such an extent that it became a problem for military morale. On the balance of probabilities, if alienation was actually widespread and dominant in student ranks, it would be unlikely that expressions of disillusionment would be so marginal in such a wide sample of letters.

But even if Cron's findings depend on letters that are unreliable on their own, the pattern of response he identified is corroborated by another source, a neglected trench newspaper, the *Kleine Akademische Feldpost* (KAF). The KAF was edited in Germany and distributed at the front, seeking to sustain a community of the faithful amongst widely dispersed students, publishing letters, and enabling members to commemorate comrades who had often fallen in other regiments or theatres. Secretary Niedermeyer entreated serving students to respond to his question, 'Which fruit has

the war earned you?'[61] It solicited and published student opinions about the war, about their personal faiths, about the official literature they regularly received from the DCSV, and attracted widespread responses. Even though it was a source intended to encourage fighting students to keep the faith, it was also a forum for open religious discussion, giving much more latitude to expressions of doubt and dissent than did the official anthologies of soldiers' letters (*Feldpostbrief*) published by the government and publishing houses.[62] To be sure, it omitted some surviving letters that dissented vehemently from the mythology of redemptive war. For example, the scathing verdict of one on 20 April, 1915 went unpublished, who asserted that the war had been 'a deplorable fiasco', resulting not in heroism or spiritual uplift but 'abysmal materialism', a surrendering to animal appetites, smoking, sexual desire, obsession with food, the lurking danger of death leading men to live for the moment.[63] However, Wahn's letter is unlikely to be representative. Most of the private letters to the editor that the editor had transcribed, dating mostly from 1914-1915, do not categorically reject the language or ideology of redemptive sacrifice. Though replete with anxiety, they include affirmations that they are fighting a 'sacrifice-rich existence-struggle of our people',[64] war as a 'great educator', 'for a higher purpose',[65] of 'soldiers of Christ' in a 'trial of fire.'[66] The KAF newspaper also printed doubts of many students who despaired that the war might not be having the miraculous effects hoped of it. As argued below, these letters of doubt were often full of tensions and ambiguities.

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[61] *Kleine Akademische Feldpost*, Nummer 167, (1914-15), p.45

[62] On the official campaign to encode in literature the patriotic cultural memory during and after the war, see W. G. Natter, *Literature at War, 1914-1940: Representing the "Time of Greatness" in Germany* (New Haven, 1999).

[63] Evangelische Zentral Archiv [henceforth EZA] (DCSV, Students' Letters) Bestand: 34 Nr: 23, Letter, W. Wahn, 20 April 1915.

[64] EZA, Bst. 34, No.23, Hans Berg, 9 Jan. 1915.

[65] EZA, Bst. 34, No.23, Alfred Thieme, 26 Jan. 1916.

[66] EZA, Bst. 34, No.23, 3 Jan. 1915.

As a source, the KAF also has advantages. Soldiers' letters in this newspaper were directed primarily to an audience of fellow combatants. While all letters are a representation of self, and subject to self-censorship, the temptation to soften or sanitise their experience by reaffirming their piety for a distressed relative, friend or lover did not apply. Soldiers sent in their opinions and reflections on their faith knowing full well that it would be read by people in the same predicament. It was also a space in which they were encouraged to meditate on the religious meaning of the war, and the complexities and doubts entailed. It is therefore a valuable, though imperfect, source for identifying the different interpretations of the war and mapping their development as the war continued. Not only is the trench newspaper a more reliable indicator of opinion, but it also shows the terms in which religious faith and doubt in the cause were formulated. If this trench newspaper supports Cron's findings that religious students strove to cope with the traumas of the war, it also indicates *how* they did so, by demonstrating the internal logic of their religious discourse.

What aspects of their backgrounds helped to provide a meaningful framework in which they could cope mentally with grief and loss? One force that made the idea of the finality of war intelligible or justifiable to many Christian students of both movements was that they were aspiring missionaries. Their organisations were missionary, founded partly to rediscover the missionary vocation to Asia and Africa.[67] They saw Britain's empire in the Gladstonian sense as a sacred trust, or Imperial Germany with its appetite for colonies, as a vehicle for evangelism.[68] Some students

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[67] See D. McCaughey, *Christian Obedience in the University: Studies in the Life of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland 1930-1950*, (London, 1958), pp.22-3.
[68] See further B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Leicester, 1990).

were from missionary families or with missionary experience or aspirations. The connection between imperial and military service had been officially encouraged by both the SCM and the DCSV during the war.[69] The slogan of the student movement was 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation', the pledge made by the Student Volunteer Movement at the 1910 International Missionary Conference, a slogan first adopted from the American YMCA.[70] This drive to convert the world predisposed them to accept possibility of rapid, permanent and world-changing transformation, to place the war in the millenarian context of a final world struggle, or equipped them to justify it in this way to others. According to the Annual Report of 1915-16, students intended 'nothing less than to turn the world upside down' for 'the redemption of society.'[71] In explaining their military service, they transferred the eschatology of the student missionary enterprise to the war itself.

The interplay between languages of missionary and military service went both ways. For Oxford student Arthur Ripley, who had seen active service since at least November 1915, the war stimulated his evangelist ambition. By January 1916 he was arguing that the war and missionary service were a natural continuum, 'Consecration to the cause of Xt's Kingdom [sic] provides the moral equivalent to war and…the spirit of sacrifice for country is only the same spirit as that which makes men obey the missionary call,'[72] in September again he showed interest in 'the nigger-converting

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[69] The official newspaper of the British SCM invited students to see parallels in the missionary and military callings. 'For Student Volunteers' *Student Movement* 17:2 (Nov. 1914), pp.33-5); *Deutsche Weihnacht* was studded with references to Germany's 'world mission' and prophecies that the war would extend the reach of its gospel to the non-Christian world, so that 'the flame fire of the world war' would be 'only morning embers' for their sacred calling. Missionsdirektor Lic. Arenfeld, Berlin, *Deutsche Weihnacht* (n.d.), p.175.

[70] Cited in N. D. Showalter, *The End of a Crusade: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and the Great War* (Lanham, 1998), p.2.

[71] *SCM Annual Report 1915-16*, p.5.

[72] IWM 76/1/1 (R.D. Rees, Papers) Letter from A. G. Ripley, Jan. 22, 1916.

stunt.'[73] For Captain Barclay Buxton, who had initially opposed participation in the war, the missionary world-view enabled him to justify taking a commission, to his uneasy family and to himself. His father was a Church of England Missionary in Japan, and his great grandfather was Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, one of the leaders of the British anti-slavery movement. He had initially abjured force, but grew increasingly convinced of the German threat. He justified enlisting on evangelical grounds and on the basis that the war would save Christian civilisation, claiming that the army needed 'good moralled educated men' to combat drunkenness in the forces, and that 'I don't join to kill a German, I join because I believe that if we don't win, Christianity all over the world may be effected [sic]– we are fighting in a right cause and the only means now to get the right for ever is to kill.'[74] *To get the right for ever*: Christian students were receptive to the war's utopian vocabulary of absolutes and finality of the 'last war', seeing in war the potential to secure for the world a permanent righteous order. Similarly, inspired by the Turkish alliance, from north Poland a German junior officer wrote that if God spared him, it was for missionary work among the heathen 'at home and abroad in his empire.'[75] The two goals - the Christianisation of the globe and an end to militarism and war – were commensurate, for the war waged to overthrow the pagan war cult of the *Kaiserreich* would also preserve the British empire, that was seen as the hub of missionaries and the vehicle for the Kingdom of God on earth.

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[73] IWM 76/1/1 (R.D. Rees, Papers) Letter, 6 Sept. 1916.
[74] IWM 78/60/3, (Captain GB Buxton, Papers) Letter 4 Jan. 1915. See also E.S. Woods (ed.) *Andrew R. Buxton: The Rifle Brigade, a memoir* (London, 1918), p.40, 27 Sept. 1914, 'Do you think the front, or national military service, which we are both in for, may lead to the front in missionary service for God? This might be a way and time opened by God.'
[75] KAF 173 (1914/15) 'Gegen Versandung' (D. Lüdeman, Nordpolnische Schutzengrabengedanken), p.175.

The imperialist accent on wartime piety, particularly intense amongst the Oxbridge devout, can be contrasted with Protestant nonconformists, for whom Empire patriotism was less emphasised than army evangelism. Some individuals were less naturally inclined to the ethos of military sacrifice, such as Baptist J.B. Middlebrook, a reluctant soldier who joined under the pressure of his parents and his conscience, who was sensitive to the coarser side of military life, the 'swearing and filth.' He urged his fellow soldiers to temperance, and the refinement of the soul against temptations. But he was also committed to using the war experience to bring himself closer to God, 'the more suffering, the greater the happiness', and to transmit his experience of war as a lesson to help create permanent peace.[76] Allowing for these different inflections, most fellow pious students who wrote about the war entered with at least a minimal commitment to the proposition that the war was not only compatible with faith, but a sacred undertaking for a godly cause.

Another important influence in the ranks of German students was Pietism, the evangelical awakening that stressed emotional and communal devotion, and grew to encourage patriotic fervour.[77] As Cron observed, the DCSV letters were replete with Old Testament references.[78] With its application of Old Testament prophetic attitude to the unfolding of history to wartime, it anticipated some of the existential and religious problems posed by the war, providing believers in the field with parallels

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[76] IWM Con Shelf (J.B. Middlebrook, Papers) Vol. 2, 27 May, 1916; Vol.3, 21 Nov. 1915, 4 Jan. 1916.
[77] There is an extensive literature on Pietism and its interpretation of German history and its national wars, the most relevant to this context are the studies by Hartmut Lehmann: '"God our old Ally" The Chosen People Theme in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century German Nationalism' in W.R. Hutchinson, H. Lehmann (eds.), *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. 85-107; 'The Germans as a Chosen People: Old Testament Themes in German Nationalism' *German Studies Review* 14:2 (May, 1991), pp.261-275;'Pietism and Nationalism: The Relationship between Protestant Revivalism and National Renewal in Nineteenth-Century Germany' *Church History* 51 (1982), pp.39-52; 'Friedrich von Bodelschwingh und das Sedanfest' *Historische Zeitschrift* 202 (1966), pp.542-73.
[78] H. Cron, *Das Archiv* (Potsdam, 1926), p.15.

and signifying practices with which to make sense of an alien environment. It attuned students to the concept of accepting sufferings of war as a necessary prelude to national and world salvation. Many framed the war's longevity within the themes of the Old Testament, where the wars are severe and grievous but carry the guarantee of divine justice to the penitent nation. The German or British forces, like the Israelite armies, prevail if they have observed divine ordinance, but are routed if the covenant has been violated. Old Testament themes appealed to many because underlying its catalogue of wars was the assurance of ultimate purpose. Prussian military chaplains had an especially rich national memory of defeat to draw upon to rationalise operational failures. The memory of the battle of Jena (1806), where Napoleon routed the Prussian and Saxon armies, was frequently invoked. Pastors often warned of defeat as the consequence of moral decay in the form of impiety, the erosion of ancestral virtues of seriousness, the pernicious doctrines of secular philosophers, in materialist corruption.[79]

Consider the statements of two young German volunteers exposed to combat for the first time. According to Rudolf Heufer, 'His love stands behind the war… and it isn't different to a mother beating her little knaves, the same love, the same seriousness…The kind God will also give us the peace at the right time.'[80] Apart from the Pietist heritage, the theme of war meted out as an ultimately benign punishment made sense because it followed as an extension of household family discipline, a theme reflected in metaphorical language that identified God with a loving punishing parent. Johannes Schmidt, writing from East Prussia to his sister and friend in the homeland, claimed that when he was under heavy bombardment as a sentry, 'This war

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[79] See A. J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp.23-5.
[80] KAF 168 (1915) Rudolf Heufer 28 Feb. 1915, p.59.

comes direct from above, to improve man' said a farmer from our company to me… 'Yes', I retorted, 'a father, that loves his naughty child, gives him the rod.' 'You have that right', said he….'[81] Regardless of the factuality of this conversation, the anecdote illustrates how the memory and values of the religious family with its code of parental discipline made sense of the experience at the front. It mediated the message of church pulpits, that war was a divine punishment, with the experience of the war of young recruits entering into a new and alien environment.

Students' horizons were oriented partly to the postwar world, even amidst privations that might seem overwhelming. The very structure of student idealism rested on the thought of an imagined future, and whether through suffering, it would transcend the distress of the war. This way of placing the immediate environment in a wider frame meant that the language of sacrifice could survive the first contact with harsh realities of conditions at the front. In a letter on 19 September, 1914 one private oriented his prayers not to his own survival but to the hope that sacrifices would one day bear fruit:

> We have now first really learnt, what war is, ever since the bad weather has begun. I don't want to grumble and convey more further, what still comes, also snow and cold...It must go well, if we also remain on the field, if only you after the wars have a strong, secure Fatherland, in which you can build and create, that there will be a strong, faithfully loyal god-fearing people. It is splendid to die for such a purchase! That is why one prays! Not that the war will fast come to an end or that I will return healthy, but that the plentiful blood does not flow uselessly, that a spiritual awakening over our beloved German people comes and that for which God has willed to his people. And pray for me, that I till to the last do my duty and be found as a pious and faithful servant.[82]

Reinhold's hopes are pinned on the national destiny, its moral, political and religious condition. Karl Seynsche prayed to God 'that our dear, German people holds on to

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[81] EZA Bnd. 34 No.23, Johannes Schmidt, from East Prussia, 'Rundbrief aus dem Felde' 13 Dec. 1914.
[82] EZA, Bnd: 34 Nr: 23, Letter, 'from Reinhold' 19 Sept. 1914.

God furthermore, that the bloody people's achievements won't be useless.'[83] Similar equivocation is evident in the writing of Neville Talbot, SCM military chaplain who had crawled under shellfire to commend his dead brother Gilbert to God. In a letter from Ypres in January 1915, he declared that the war was a tragedy that would be redeemed if 'in the glare of war's conflagrations' it promoted the need for values of fellowship that manifest at the front, that 'sacrifice and suffering will heighten in value and consecrate.' He feared the revelation would be ignored, that 'whether through littleness and perplexity of faith, or through tiredness or preoccupation in the immediate fortunes of war, or through blindness and hardness of heart, Armageddon may come and go and teach us little.'[84] The allegiance to this ideal, the promise of national renewal, was unsettled by a growing unease that it would not be realised. One anonymous poem, 'Christ on the Battlefield', hoped that blood would not go to waste, and that Germany would 'spiritually rise from the dead.'[85]

In what terms was doubt defined and expressed, and what were the limitations that prevented doubt from becoming a nihilistic rejection of the war as an event with a coherent meaning? Soldiers' letters defy the artificial straitjackets of categories, of 'patriotic' and 'disenchanted.' Many students who doubted the redemptive power of war also expressed allegiance to the ideal. Because the coming of the Kingdom was preached as a matter of faith and patriotic obligation, a salvation that only faith could

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[83] KAF 165 (1914/15) Karl Seynsche, 30 Dec. 1914, pp.19-20.
[84] N. Talbot, Letter, 13 Jan. 1916, *Student Movement* 18:5 (Feb. 1916). Talbot later listed the failures that led to these fears: 'How has our country stood the test? If there has been eager patriotism and public spirit, there has also been the other thing. Witness the profit-making, the strikes, the wastefulness, the unabated pleasuring, and handicapping of war work done by drink and lust, the time it has taken to arouse the country thoroughly.' F.H. Brabant, *Neville Stuart Talbot* (London, 1949), p.68.
[85] KAF 168 (1914/1915) 'Christus auf dem Schlachtfeld', p.192: 'Nicht umsonst seid ihr gebettet / In der Erde kühler Scholle,/ Deutschlands Ruhm nicht untergehet/ Dem so edles Blut gezollet/ O so stiller Wundermann/ Schlachten lenker, Herr, wir flehen,/ Laß aus Blut und Tränensaat/ Deustchland geistig auferstehen.'

secure, it was questioned but not easily discarded. The letter of Rudolf Kobe, stationed near Lens in April 15, attests to the inner turmoil that could result:

> You have solicited, that one might report to you, what the war has meant for our lives. You know, that I in the first time was very baffled, from the most contradictory feelings, hopes and fears there and here. Now, that I myself am a soldier, it all has made a great fissure deepen, I want the 'yes' and will however repress the 'no.' The entire patriotically German nature in me rears against it, it wants to be a bright and sure and proud soldier, but the crucified assigns me the wrecked land, the unfortunate families and the godless hearts, shows me above all, how I till now did nothing for him, did not struggle to lead the comrades to him, and deposits ardently the question in the heart - where is in all these doings is God? His Kingdom appears to me farther away than ever. Still, only this, that I know that the Cross is the last Salvation and that this faith in the low-point will always be strengthened again.[86]

In the same letter, the iconoclastic and the faithful intersect. The consequences of rejecting the message of redemption are unsettling to him – to be a good 'bright and sure and proud soldier', he must not disown it. In the schema of Protestant war idealism, the brutalising effects of war on the nation threatened to undermine the ideal of reaching salvation. Yet only faith in the promise of redemption could make redemption possible, the war's central test. Paul Rohweder, theology student from Kiel, combined the elements of both disillusioned and patriotic archetypes. Irritated at misleading newspaper reports about the events of the war, yearning to return to his family, he also prays that 'If only our warfare achieves the right kind of success; if it brings blessing upon the Fatherland and eventually on the whole of mankind; if we were sure of that, we should bear our sufferings and privations gladly. How I thank God that I am naturally endowed with such powers of endurance! I never felt so strong as I do now.'[87] Not knowing the future, the willingness to sacrifice was defined as an act of faith. In the same letter he is dejected, nostalgic and utopian. The religious imagination of the *Frontsoldat* could maintain belief in the ultimate meaning of the

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[86] EZA Bstnd. 34 Nr: 13, Letter, Rudolf Kobe, 30 April, 1915.
[87] Witkop *German Students War Letters* (Essen, 1929), pp.67-8.

war in the face of conditions by framing the war in a longer span of time. With all his distaste for the business of killing and 'mutual schematic murder', Walter Haas affirmed war brought Germans 'into a belonging together now in the uniform of King and Emperor.' His eyes were turned to the postwar world, and his faith that 'students, if we have fulfilled our duty with the weapons… still await the more noble peaceful duty, to be the leader of the construction of what the war has destroyed.'[88]

This points to a weakness of the 'disillusionment thesis.' The universe soldiers inhabited was not confined to the fighting front, but was interspersed with labour, leave, reading, writing, sport and leisure. Many recovered from wounds or sickness in hospitals over long periods, and in Germany many were later repatriated to provide labour in the understaffed war industries, while military units themselves were constantly replenished and repopulated with fresh troops or dismantled and reorganised. Therefore, just as the pattern of conflict was not fixed in a world of continuous trench warfare a world apart from the civilian sphere, attitudes to the war also were not entrenched. Confidence in the power of sacrifice to create a better world fluctuated with the rhythms of preparation, combat, and release. Arthur Innes Adam wrote home on 7 May, 1916 that 'Methinks England is awaking out of sleep; but somehow to get into the trenches destroys my confidence in the future, of which I am full when we are out.'[89]

Another difficulty with the disillusionment hypothesis is its implicit portrayal of attitudes to the pre-war world, and its presumption that there existed an 'illusion' to

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[88] EZA Bstnd: 34 Nr: 23, Letter, Walter Haas, n.d.

[89] A. M. Adam, *Arthur Innes Adam 1894-1916 A Record Founded on His Letters* (Cambridge, 1920), p.214.

be alienated from. For students and the churches they came from, their starting point was different. Their brand of faith did not view the pre-war world with reactionary nostalgia, as a golden summer of harmony, prosperity and progress cruelly cut short by Armageddon.[90] The war for the British SCM revealed 'on a world-wide scale whereto the common ambitions, the selfish interests, the godless materialism of our modern life tend. The mortar which joins brick to brick in the house of European civilisation has proved to be mixed with the high explosive which is bringing the fabric about our ears.'[91] Devout British students viewed Edwardian Britain as a society wracked with internal dissensions, including labour militancy, an anarchic womens' crusade for emancipation, predatory capitalist exploitation, political partisanship. Anglican divines such as Charles Gore and Neville Figgis, who had embraced a monastic ideal in the Community of the Resurrection, had protested vigorously against the materialist society that they warned was spiralling towards destruction.[92] And during the war chaplains preached about the contrast with prewar predatory materialism. Free Church minister John Adams in 1915 claimed that before the war, Scottish youth were becoming a race bent on 'amusement' and 'sport', while Anglican socialist, intellectual and combatant RH Tawney claimed that alongside 'horrors of war', there were also the 'horrors of peace.'[93] Their German counterparts came from an even more powerful background of cultural despair at modern industrial society. Germany's youth movements in particular were spawned and stimulated by

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[90] This theme is explored by Mark Connelly, '"Never Such Innocence Again" Großbritannien und das Jahr 1914.' *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B29-30/2004, pp.13-20.
[91] Student Christian Movement, *The Ordeal of the Church: A Witness for the Time* (London, n.d.), pp.5-7. See also the declaration by the Baslow retreat chaired by William Temple, 4-8 January 1915 that 'The war is the issue of conflicting selfishness, and all our selfishness has gone to make it. It is the working out of our type of character. It is the measure of our sin.' *The Student Movement*, 17 (Feb. 1915), pp.95-97.
[92] D. Newsome, 'The Assault on Mammon: Charles Gore and John Neville Figgis' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 17:2 (Oct. 1966), pp. 227-241.
[93] J. Adams, *The Great sacrifice or the altar-fire of war* (Edinburgh, 1915), p.36; Tawney cited in J. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War* (London, 1974), pp.154-55.

this reaction. The *Bund*, the special form of close and masculine bonding, was pursued to overcome the collapse of traditional communal relations and reverse the slide towards secular corruption.[94] After Germany's triumph over Napoleon III in 1870-1, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, veteran military chaplain, pioneer of the Lutheran Inner Mission and part of the Pietist movement that was influential in student circles, campaigned for *Sedantag*, the day of commemoration, to be a day of repentance and thanksgiving, lest hubris invite divine punishment.[95] Students arrived at the front from a background which held that the world was already in crisis, a discourse of cultural despair.

What did this mean on the battlefield? As the magnitude of the trial by warfare seemed to grow alarmingly, the ultimate meaning of the war would rest upon the nation's piety and willingness to keep the faith. The war's lengthening duration confirmed not the absence of God but the bankruptcy of a civilisation that had abandoned God, and would not stop until the debauched people repented of their manifold sins. Private Andrew Buxton wrote home on Boxing Day 1914 about the condition of the nation and its relationship with God, that 'If nations aimed at attaining a Kingdom of Christ instead of temporal national interests only, I cannot think that this war would have occurred. I am frightened whether we are a nation honouring God, and hence whether victory will be ours. I wish there was more sign of men turning Godwards.'[96] It was a view he sustained, writing again on 2 August 1915 that 'I had a very nice little service with my Platoon this afternoon, squished up in the

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[94] See P. Nolte 'Broken Utopias: Visions of the Social Order in Modern Germany' in N. Finzsch, H. Wellenreuther (eds.) *Visions of the Future in Germany and America* (Oxford, 2001), pp.275-294.
[95] H. Lehman, 'Friedrich von Bodelschwingh und das Sedanfest' *Historische Zeitschrift* 202 (1966), pp. 542-73.
[96] E.S. Woods (ed.) *Andrew R. Buxton: The Rifle Brigade, a memoir* (London, 1918). Letter 26 Dec. 1914.

bottom of a trench…the nation must get on its knees or we may go under.'[97] Moral-religious renewal was both the purpose of the war and the precondition for victory.

Students' spiritual and intellectual heritage provided them with alternatives to atheism which still made the world intelligible to them. Some were predisposed to interpret wartime suffering itself as a sign that their faith was being deliberately put on trial, an affliction visited on the special or the elect peoples of God. Approximately eight months after the battle of Verdun finished, Richard Walter wrote from the field simply that ultimate blessings were assured:

> Got sends tests -
> We must bear them,
> Without complaints,
> Without apprehension.
> only firmly believe,
> that nobody can steal,
> What he once gave to us rightly.
> Only loyally strive
> Against the light
> Then all blessings,
> Should he bring us blessings again,
> And all our deeds and work turn out well,
> We must win under a thousand pains
> As with the hand, so with the heart.[98]

Millenarian visions were not always extinguished even as the costs of war escalated.

Suffering could manifest the special status of the individual or the nation.

That the war was a benign punishment visited on the nation by God was a grand narrative but it also operated at a more local and everyday level. Personal wounds

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[97] Ibid, p.79.

[98] KAF no. 200, p.126. Poem, 'Gott schickt Prüfungen', Richard Walter, 15.9.1917:
'Gott shickt Prüfungen - / Wir müssen sie tragen,/ Ohne Klagen,/ Ohne Zagen./ Fest nur glauben,/ Daß niemand kann rauben,/ Was Er uns einmal zu Recht gageben./ Nur treulich streben,/ Dem Licht entgegen;/ Denn aller Segen,/ Soll er wieder uns Segen bringen,/ Und all unser Tun und Werk gelingen, / Muß warden erkämpft unter tausend Schmerzen, / Wie mit der Hand, so mit dem Herzen.'

could be rationalised as afflictions willed by a higher power with a benevolent design. The piety of Walter Börner is an example. He wrote after seventeen weeks in bed with a heavy knee wound, inflicted on his birthday, near the village of La Bille aur Bois, north east of Reims, on 16 September, also a slight wound on shin and arm, twice operated on. His body, he believed, had been scourged by God. 'But I then have realized that no hair of our head falls without the will of the highest… God also has allowed the new pus formation… If we think of all the pain, the sorrow, the heart sorrow, the need and the misery, this war has brought, then can it clench up the heart in a wild woe. And if the storm gives the order, it happens not without the will of the highest. Here God's Will affirms heavily...Heavy this struggle but the more marvellous the victory. Also Jesus must have gained this victory there first in Gethsemane.'[99] The passion of Christ resonated as a powerful symbol of the ordeal of the soldier whose suffering would be transfigured into resurrection. And the characteristic virtue of Gethsemane, that Borner tries to cultivate, is the state of faithful waiting. The benefits of the rigours of bodily sacrifice appealed to Kenneth Gordon Garnett, a Scottish Presbyterian soldier who would be awarded the Military Cross and the Croix de Guerre, who was drawn to a poem by a soldier from the Anglo-Boer war that portrayed the path to Christ's approval as an ordeal of acute physical pain:

I would not to Thy bosom fly
To slink off till the storms go by.
If you are like the man you were
You'd turn with scorn from such a prayer,
Unless from some poor workhouse crone,
Too toil-worn to do aught but moan.
Flog me and spur me, set me straight
At some vile job I hear and hate
Some sickening round of long endeavour,
No light, no rest, no outlet ever:

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[99] KAF 165 pp.22-3. Letter, Walter Börner, 14 Jan. 1915.

All at a pace that must not slack,
Tho' heart would burst and sinews crack…
…then You'll come by,
The Captain of our Company:
Call me out, look me up and down,
And pass me through without a frown,
With half a smile, but never a word –
And so I shall have met my Lord.[100]

Garnett imagined Christ as an officer he had to impress by his dedication, the rigours of the soldier's life becoming a kind of pilgrimage. Especially powerful in evangelical traditions was the belief that God afflicts terrestrially those whom he loves. 'What has the war brought me?' asked Martin Marquardt in March 1915. 'Blessing, nothing but blessing… Hard lies the burden not only on our people but on all other powers involved. Tremendously many wounds struck deep into the heart, wounds which cannot be bound in any hospital. And there lies for the immortal souls of many people a great blessing in war. They have found again their saviour, their spirit. In the deepest pain the greatest blessing was granted to them.'[101] Rather than being the sign of abandonment by God, suffering is interpreted as a pedagogic instrument.

There were some students, however, who nevertheless expressed alienation from the idea that war could prove redemptive. Their letters began to emerge as early as 1915. Instead of embracing irony, they take on an even darker cosmology. Most accepted that the war was, in differing ways, 'a judgment of God.' This was configured in different ways. Some regarded it as a direct visitation from god, intervening as a sovereign ruler in history to punish and teach. Others resisted this providential view of the war's origins, while still interpreting the eruption of war as a logical extension of a predatory industrial and commercial world that exposed the weakness of Christianity.

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[100] R. Garnett (ed.) *Kenneth Gordon Garnett 1892-1917* (London, 1918), poem cited in the Address by Dr. R. E. Horton, 'At the Memorial Service on Sunday Morning, 30 September 1917', pp.48-50.
[101] KAF 168, p.95. Letter, Martin Marquardt, 16 March, 1915.

Whatever their view of divine agency, they interpreted the war as a judgment against materialism, identifying a purpose in the conflict even more severe. One wrote: 'that a pastor in Berlin should preach a sermon on the blessing brought by war is outrageous: the man should be knocked on the head. This work of war is the most accursed thing on earth. *It is simply the anger of God*, and in the face of it all idealism and all sentiment disappear.'[102] The most dejected surviving testimonies move from the language of salvation to the language of damnation. Walter Geissler saw in the realisation of the nature of a modern, mechanised war, 'a terrible monster,' 'murdering with all possible technical murder weapons', little good in the whole story, and admitted to heavy doubts and 'towers of mysteries.' But the war remained 'valuable' as a divine affliction or rebuke, as a 'scorn on the culture of the peoples and their high position.'[103] Through a conflict of murderous and demonic weapons, God was moving to judgment. In one of the most vehement attacks on the Protestant war theology of redemption through war, the war was interpreted as a chastisement of the hubris of the churches. It was a letter of a German soldier to a Swiss Professor. 'I cannot tell you the suffering we endure', he reported, as warlike passion had been replaced by a longing for peace:

> The newspapers say that it is not possible to stem the warlike passion of the soldiers. They lie, knowingly or unknowingly. Our pastors deny that this passion is abating. You cannot think how indignant we are at such nonsense. Let them hold their tongues and not speak of things they do not understand. Or rather, let them come here, not as chaplains in the rear, but in the line of fire, with arms in their hands… They [our pastors] speak of a Holy War. I know of no Holy War. I only know one war, and that is the sum of everything that is inhuman, impious, and beastly in man, a visitation of God and a call to repentance to the people who rushed into it, or allowed themselves to be drawn into it. God has plunged men into this Hell in order to teach them to love Heaven. As for the German people, the war seems to be a chastisement and a call to contrition – addressed first of all to our German Church.[104]

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[102] (My Italics) Cited in R. Rouse, *The World Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years* (London, 1948), p.184.
[103] KAF: 168, pp.63-4. Walter Geissler 5 March, 1915.
[104] Letter of German soldier to a Swiss Professor, cited in *The Nation* 31 July 1915, p.556.

This is different from the 'ironic' reading of the war attributed to the armies by Fussell, for whom the war renders the world absurd and meaningless. It is a new vision of order in the world, which still sees in calamity the power of revelation. War becomes a punishment for the very act of going to war with inflated expectations, a chastisement of the hubris of the German church. It is apocalyptic in the sense that it reveals the reckoning of God and man at a critical moment in time - apocalypse originally meant 'revelation.' Yet the motif of the apocalypse was also originally a message of hope, the hope that through destruction renewal would come. These soldiers' letters half deny that promise. While the carnage exposes the failures of a fallen world, it provides no solution. It is the nightmare elucidated by Klaus Vondung, of destruction without renewal, punishment without rebirth, a breakdown in the scheme of salvation promised in 1914.[105] The utopian apocalypse of a world reborn is supplanted by the dystopian apocalypse of unredeemed calamity.

These students continued to see the uncreative destruction as a divine dispensation. Their anger was directed not against God but against what they saw as the delusional expectation that war would engender a spiritual renaissance. However bleak the mythology of apocalypse without renewal, or war as retribution without redemption, it was still a coherent world view, in which the war retained an intelligible place in history and their lives. They embraced a cosmology that was richly mythological, in which death and destruction did not rob the world of meaning, but gave it a bleaker set of meanings.

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[105] As Klaus Vondung states, 'the old, imperfect, and corrupt world must be destroyed in order that a new and perfect one might be established. Apocalypse was a vision of salvation… Salvation has disappeared from the picture – only the first half of the traditional apocalyptic vision. The second half, establishment of new and perfect world, which earlier gave meaning and purpose to the end of the world, has disappeared.' *The German Apocalypse* (London, 1988), p.5.

While some despaired as they witnessed destruction, others had their faith in cultural regeneration strained by the banality of military service. Fritz Pieck was struck by how unheroic and ordinary was life in the frontline. These were bourgeois Protestant students who had moved from the cloistered and secure world of academic life into the life of the field-soldier. They were often shocked at the proletarianisation of their daily living conditions. As well as the strain of actual fighting, the dominance of physical needs that awakened doubts in the war's capacity to regenerate. The man of the trenches, it was feared, was reduced to his primordial instincts. Millenarian hopes were deflated by the daily rhythm of basic self-preservation. 'The life is plainly unfruitful, sleep, eat, drink, trench, wake.' However, Pieck did not disown a higher meaning in this new and alien wilderness. He concludes bluntly, 'One certainly finds out now, that the war belongs to the punishment of God, but because it is from God, is the blessing with it.'[106]

Students embraced the logic of the Book of Job, representing wounds, death, loss and even boredom as part of a programme of redemption, in which the massive investment would be eventually repaid. The grievous afflictions visited on the faithful believer would be compensated by God. Their paradigm framed war as a purgatory which promised rewards on the other side. Hence the appeal of the parent analogy, of punishment designed to educate and develop the character. But those who could see no future renewal had to content themselves with playing a small role in an apocalypse of punishment and affliction that had no seeds of rebirth. Beyond the

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[106] EZA, Bstnd: 34 Nr: 23, Fritz Pieck, Letter 8 April, 1915.

battered myth of renewal through war, there were still grimmer ideals of sacrifice and endurance to be found.

Conclusion

Using religious students as a case study, this chapter has shown that disillusionment was neither automatic in coming nor absolute if it came. Students feared the futility of the war's losses and costs, questioned the inflated rhetoric of their organisations and some even feared that the war was degrading them individually. Yet they did not usually retreat into a nihilistic despair at a meaningless war. Layers of piety often endured beneath the exposure and repulsion from the nature of conditions at the front. Instead of negating a spiritual interpretation of the war, the daily experience of the realities and privations of the frontline was redefined in ways that were grounded in their religious instincts. Christian students on both sides continued to identify God moving through the war, whether as punisher or redeemer. Why?

Several interlocking influences prevented the slaughters of Langemarck and the Somme becoming disillusioning turning-points. Instead of judging the preliminary encounter with combat and war's losses and conditions in isolation, students entered the war with a more complex framework for evaluating the worth and meaning of sacrifices. Prewar cultural despair and especially pietism had predisposed students to accept the terrors of war as a manifestation of divine judgment and prelude to national salvation, rather than meaninglessness to be met with irony. As raw recruits became seasoned veterans and as they entertained doubts, these frameworks were flexible enough to interpret the material experience of war with its mass casualties, desolate environment of combat and daily privations. Whether or not sacrifice was accepted as a redemptive and meaningful process depended not upon the levels of loss but on its perceived impact on national life, on the piety, morality and cohesion of the social

order. It was mostly a qualitative, not a quantitative question, the question asked not 'how many' but 'for what'. This in turn depended upon projections about the future. The complexity of their responses paralleled the complexity of the structure of the war experience. Those who went to war were not entrenched in the fighting line continuously for four years, and likewise their minds were not always narrowly mired in the universe of the battlefront in the present, but oriented towards the much more elusive horizons of a postwar world. The very condition of holding out in faith was an established model of wartime piety, especially in the German Lutheran tradition, and it helped to frame the war experience as the mark of the elect people of God. This enabled them to comprehend the process of doubt itself as a sacred mental state and part of a grand national narrative, as it understood salvation as something that must be preceded by dislocation and suffering.

Their missionary orientation also made acceptance of the war possible, because it framed the war eschatologically as an extension of the missionary pursuit of a final global salvation, and influenced evangelists to see the armed forces as a mission field. In interpreting the war in letters home, students were also interpreting the war and representing themselves to their families, and this communication made them sensitive to their own stature as people who must be seen to be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. Two other forces which strengthened over time and which constrained disillusionment have also been hinted at in this chapter, and will be explored more fully in Chapters 5 and 6: the pervasive attitude to war as a personal test, and allegiance to the fallen.

The minority of students who embraced iconoclastic rejection of the war's redemptive promise turned not to irony but to other forms of cosmological interpretation, chiefly the theme of damnation. Dissidents drew upon a similar set of assumptions as their more idealistic counterparts. Exposure to the terror of battlefield was terrifying and dispiriting but was comprehended as part of an apocalyptic mythology, where the armies were acted upon by a supreme power with reasons, however inscrutable, destroying to teach them a lesson. This was a powerful and recurring motif that made sense of military life in an industrial war, because it explained the otherwise baffling nightmare of destruction and stalemate that seemed to come without renewal. For most students, neither Langemarck nor the Somme can stand as chronological shorthand for the death of a language.

Chapter 3

'A Day of Testing'

Personalising the War Experience

Between 1915 and 1917, there was a succession of failed offensives along immobilised frontiers. Entente attempts to find alternative frontiers to penetrate foundered, as the Dardanelles campaign was repulsed (April-December 1915), and the Salonika campaign was too late to bolster Serbia against a combined German-Austrian-Bulgarian invasion (October 1915). Heavy losses on the western front did not end the stalemate, but turned the war into a prolonged siege. These presented soldiers and chaplains with the problem of horrific costs outstripping limited gains. To be sure, each attempt to break the strategic deadlock with all its casualties can be defended on alternative grounds. Apologists for the Somme offensive, for example, argue that it relieved the pressure being applied against the French army at Verdun, or that it inflicted significant attritional damage on the German forces which they could not ultimately sustain. But such military attempts were nevertheless indecisive. Especially where success was measured in terms of territory taken, in the stationary warfare of the western front it was hard to justify, as sacrifices on a high scale were repeatedly made for attainments that were negligible or quickly erased by counteroffensives. The perceived disproportion between losses and gains raised the spectre of 'military meaninglessness.'[1] Worse, much of combat was experienced passively. As soldiers were intensively bombarded often without the opportunity to defend themselves or retaliate directly, they were often denied the psychological

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[1] J. Horne, *State, Society and Mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), p.11.

compensation that active response could bring, increasing their mental strain.[2] Making sacrifices often without significant advances in territory, combatants in these circumstances were denied much of their agency. From their subjective perspective, if these sacrifices were to remain meaningful, that meaning would have to be constructed differently.

As this chapter argues, religious discourse made it possible to invest meaning in the process of warring as well as the ultimate outcome, to value struggle and sacrifice that otherwise seemed futile, or lacking in operational value. This mindset rejected the detached calculation of losses and gains. Chapter 6 will demonstrate how some aspects of the war experience reinforced sacrificial ideology over time, such as personal bereavement and even the desire for vengeance. This chapter explores a facet of the rhetoric that existed from the war's beginning, the representation of war as a moral test of character. By defining war as a trial of individual faith, it personalised the war as a pivotal moment and rite of passage in the combatant's life. Willingness to endure and risk death, or to take part in an offensive, became valuable regardless of its practical utility. It was also represented as a test of the ideological capacity of nations and the values they were held to embody. This meant that the grinding attrition of the frontline could hold a meaning that did not depend on immediate military breakthrough or success. Passivity was remade into heroic passivity, an ideal 'defensive personality.'[3] In its religious inflection, the soldier's capacity to endure was linked to the pursuit of ultimate victory in a particular way. The pious often did not appraise the likelihood of victory in terms of inspired generalship, or the balance

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[2] Psychiatric studies diagnosed that nervous tension was particularly high amongst men who had remained inactive while being shelled,; W.N. Maxwell, *A Psychological Retrospect of the Great War* (London, 1923), p.66. On the role of passivity in contributing to psychiatric casualties, see also B. Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists 1914-1994* (London, 2002), pp. 33, 113.
[3] This is the phrase of Leed, *No Man's Land* (Cambridge, 1979), p.106.

of their industrial power or material resources, but as a verdict of God that would come only after the willpower and faith of competing nations in arms had been weighed in the scales. Ultimate victory was in God's hands, and all the fighting men could do was prove their worthiness. Whereas some commentators conclude that high casualties suffered for limited gains indicates callous incompetence on the part of the high command, religious rhetoric framed it differently. For both individuals and whole military units, withstanding high casualties was a badge of valour, manliness and faith.

As I also argue, exposure to the destructive combat environment also personalised the conflict by prompting combatants abroad to imagine similar destruction of their own revered homeland, a sacred memory embodied in the local community, parish church and family. The remembered homeland remained sacred both as a place to be defended and as a community which would judge the commitment and faith of the men defending it. These concepts did not have to be expressed through inflated 'high diction' and flag-waving cadences, as they found a laconic and everyday expression in localised patriotism, the local village or parish church representing the 'Christian nation.'

If domestic war aims were central to religious readings of the war, so too were personal war aims. For the ideal Christian warrior, the obedient acceptance of duty and self-sacrifice was the core virtue, which the other virtues were organised around. Just as a man should not flinch in the eye of overwhelming firepower, or 'stand without trembling' as Marc Bloch claimed, the poet Gustav Roethe lauded the concept of German masculinity in 1915, 'unconditional commitment of the whole

person without haggling, considering, or wavering, that holds out to the last.'[4] As well as chivalric roots, this had biblical authority, and a popular refrain of sermons dwelling on the parallel between Christ and the soldier doing it tough was the teaching of Hebrews 2:10, in which Christ is 'Made perfect through suffering.' Martial codes of honour interpreted war as an individual rite of passage and the ultimate theatre of the struggle for the soul. 'Tubby' Clayton, the British military chaplain and founder of Talbot House, a rest home for soldiers, spoke to many men privately about the nervous strain of holding out, characterizing the war as an 'inner besiegement, in which they were beset by every doubt and devil in hell,' and endurance as the achievement of 'true virtue', something that had 'teaching power.'[5]

War was regarded by a range of Christian combatants, chaplains and missionary organisations as an exercise in self-mastery. 'This war is an inner war', insisted the pietist Chancellor Michaelis in April, 1917.[6] As well as pre-existing missionary activity within the armies in Britain and Germany, this conception of the military life as a process of moral discipline had roots in a wider chivalric culture which revived and reworked medieval codes of honour and elaborated a code of gentlemanly conduct. The pietist *Christenboten* edition for soldiers, *Durch Kampf zum Sieg*, evoked a two-pronged battle against sin and the enemy.[7] 'A soldiers' first and last battle is with himself' claimed Edward Woods' pamphlet *Knights in Armour*, sketching the virtues of Christian Knighthood for combatants in 1916, he recast the

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[4] Cited in P. Kruger, 'Etzels Halle und Stalingrad: Die Rede Görings vom 30.1.1943' in J. Heinzle, A. Waldschmidt (eds.) *Die Nibelungen: Ein deutscher Wann, ein deutscher Alptraum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991) p.165.
[5] Cited in P. Chapman, *A Haven in Hell: Talbot House, Poperinghe* (London, 2000) p.60.
[6] EZA Bnd: 34, no.1, 40 'Ansprache von Exz. Michaelis auf der Altfreunde-Zusammenkunft 15. April 1917.'
[7] Cited in J.E. Groh *Nineteenth Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model* (Washington, 1982), p. 584.

experience of combat in medieval idiom. In exhorting soldiers to emulate England's saintly warriors of yore, he claimed 'The enemy outside owes much of his strength and success to his traitorous ally within the gates', just as 'in any town or village, in any school or regiment, on any day, the Enemy is visibly, incessantly striving to work grievous hurt on our manhood and womanhood.'[8]

Reading habits in both armies suggest that the view of war as a moment of self-transformation remained an attractive theme. British troops, even those who had witnessed the war's brutality, were highly receptive to it, showing a sustained appetite for the Continental Library series, which published Ian Hay's novel *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915) and its sequel. The work of a 'Scottophile' Englishman, a territorial army officer living in Edinburgh who enlisted in the 10th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, it was written as a letter home to the families of the New Armies. His novels presented, in a ribald tone, the military discipline of war as an opportunity for individual self-improvement as well as a panacea for a society fractured by political militancy and division. The 'hell' of war was a 'great maturing agent.' These themes generated wide sales and approving comment from combatants. Those novels attracted heavy demand even five months after the battle of Passchendale.[9]

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[8] E.S. Woods, *Knights in Armour* (London, 1916), pp. 8-10.

[9] As I. Gassert demonstrates, 'Collaborators and Dissidents: Aspects of British Literary Publishing in the First World War, 1914-1919' (Unpublished DPhil Thesis, Oxford University, 2001), esp. p.280; I. Gassert, 'In a foreign field What soldiers in the trenches liked to read' *Times Literary Supplement* 10 (May, 2002), pp.17-19; D. Finkelstein, 'Blackwood's Magazine in World War One' in J. Treglown, B. Bennett (eds.) *Grub Street and the Ivory Tower: Essays on the Relations between Literary Journalism and Literary Scholarship* (London, 1998), pp.91-111.

In the German Army, Lieutenant Walter Flex's more solemn and overtly religious novel, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten* ('The Wanderer Between Two Worlds'), first published in 1917, was a bestseller, one of the most successful German publications of the twentieth century.[10] Flex wrote that the soldier's primary duty was to undertake 'incessant work on himself' in order to help elevate the aggregate worth of the nation, to give it a greater right to exist than its enemies. Flex gave flesh and blood to this concept through his hero, his close friend Ernst Wurche who had been killed in August 1915 on the eastern front, whom he fictionalised. In the novel, which contains little tactical detail, Furche yearns to storm an enemy position to prove himself capable of indifference to death, to take himself closer to God. Flex, who claimed to be inspired by 'not national, but from moral fanaticism', presented Wurche's selfless capacity to risk his life as a worthy end in itself.[11] Wurche crosses the threshold into adulthood, where his patriotism is transfigured into a pseudo-religious experience of initiation and self-surrender, glorifying the toleration of suffering.[12]

A pervasive religious discourse about character framed the war as an opportunity to prove the individual's self-worth. The core qualities of character that were elaborated in the nineteenth century were 'self-restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort, courage

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[10] W. Flex, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten* (Munich, 1917). Within two years of its publication in 1917, it had sold approximately 250,000 copies. See T. Medicus, 'Jugend im Uniform: Walter Flex und die deutsche Generation von 1914' in U. Breymayer, B. Ulrich, K. Wieland (eds.) *Willensmenschen: Über deutsche Offiziere* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999) pp.94-111, esp. p.98. See also D.R. Richards, who estimates a slightly lower figure, *The German Bestseller in the Twentieth Century: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis 1915-1940* (Berne, 1968), p.128.

[11] W. Flex, *Gesammelte Werke* I (Munich, undated) pp.29-30, 241. See also the commentary by R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (London, 1979) pp.50-51, 252 n14.

[12] From M. Travers, 'Between Anxiety and Aggression: Thomas Mann, German Intellectuals and the Nationalist Mythology of War' J. Moses, C. Pugsley (eds.) *The German Empire and Britain's Pacific Dominions, 1871-1919: Essays on the role of Australia and New Zealand in world politics in the age of imperialism* (Claremont, 1999), pp.355-369, esp. p.364.

in the face of adversity.'[13] The code of manliness was increasingly associated with the capacity to endure pain and fear stoically, a shift from the leisured refinery of the eighteenth century Georgian middle class, which had sought distinction and virtue in mannered society and polished sociability. It was now work and labour in which character was developed and made manifest. Significantly for the nature of combat in the First World War, with its continual periods of waiting, boredom, routine, heavy labour and the experience of being bombarded without retaliation, the prewar ideal of manhood asserted the more passive virtues of forbearance and self-denial, restraining the passions, leading a chaste life, and developing will power.[14]

This intellectual and cultural prehistory provided a symbolic system within which the war experience could be framed as a personal trial. According to one German student, war was 'a special God-given opportunity to become purified and strengthened…for soldiers in the field it means that to be true in strife and suffering is also to serve God…we must also earnestly strike down the sin in ourselves in order that our flame may become purified.'[15] True manhood was something widely regarded as a state to be attained rather than a biologically-determined condition. Yet the relative stability of the international relations amongst European great powers since the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1 had rendered the opportunities for momentous rites of passage to manhood rarer. Before the war, younger German reservists in veterans associations were continually reminded that their forbears had faced the dangers of war and they

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[13] S. Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991), p.100.
[14] G. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York, 1996) p.109; See also N. Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge, 1985); J.A. Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (Manchester, 1987).
[15] Cited in H.C. Rutgers, 'The Christian Student Union and the War' *Student World* 10 (Oct 1917), p.285.

were as yet untested.[16] And Britain may have ruled a large colonial empire in which adventurers could carve out renown as missionaries or warriors, but the empire projected power primarily by a navy and a small professional army in capital intensive wars, rather than providing opportunities through a mass continental force. Now, war was the theatre in which character traits could be publicly assigned, as an opportunity to vindicate oneself in the crucible of the battlefield. Lieutenant Denis Oliver Barnett was keen to project his self-worth, 'And thank God,' he wrote, 'I believe I can do what is up to me.'[17]

Sacrificial rhetoric survived at the front, therefore, partly because people wanted to be seen to affirm it. Pious combatants persistently claimed that they *wanted* to believe in the war's underlying legitimacy and purpose, to validate sacrifice even in the face of contrary evidence. Though their inner thoughts are not always recoverable, their written convictions suggest that they often wanted to appear as faithful Christian soldiers. To believe in the 'blessing of war' regardless of all conflicting evidence was the credo of Willi Schüßler, pastor turned soldier. 'My task is then, despite all such experiences, to say: nevertheless, nevertheless I hold on to my idealism, nevertheless I struggle for it, joyfully to do my service, nevertheless I will be brave and grateful, to be permitted to play a part, nevertheless I believe in the blessing of war.'[18] Belief in sacrifice, averred soldier turned padre W.P. Young, was a triple duty to the dead, to mourners and survivors. 'We want to believe it' for 'those who suffered and died', for

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[16] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the generational pressures on German students.
[17] Lieutenant Denis Barnett, 19th May, 1915, cited in L. Housman, *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen* (London 1930, 2002 edn.) p.40.
[18] Letter, March 1915, no precise date, in W. Schüßler *Feldzugsbriefe eines Pastors im Waffenrock Willi Schüßler, Pastor von Kunzendorf, Kr. Glogau, gefallen am 12 Juli 1915 als Leutnant d.R. bei S. in Nordfrankreich* (Breslau, 1916).

those who mourn, and for survivors.'[19] Young had undergone lengthy tests of pre-existing assumptions about the uplifting nature of sacrifice. As a private in the 9th Royal Scots, which in the course of the war suffered some of the heaviest casualties among Scottish regiments, he was wounded at Ypres in June 1915.[20] He then became military chaplain to the Seaforth Highlanders from February 1916, serving before being captured in March 1918 and seeing out the war as a prisoner in Germany. Having seen combat and wounds as a private, ministry as a chaplain, and imprisonment, he still declared his desire to believe the rhetoric. These statements suggest a strong confirmation bias, a tendency to search for information to confirm one's preconceptions. The information being processed by the individual was not interpreted through the lens of empirical observation. It was related instead to a rhetoric of hard faith and religious duty that had its own built-in pressures. By making the attainment of character a matter of public display, a rhetoric that helped to make sense of the war to a homefront audience also bound the soldier to live (or die) with its demands. For the soldier who wished to be seen as steadfast, faithful and manly, there was little choice but to carry on. This was how Scot Captain W.W. Ferrie wanted to be regarded by his mother. In a letter to her on the 18th July, 1917, he remarked: 'I am a soldier now. I love the soldier's virtues and I despise the vices that the soldier despises. I ask for nothing more than to be a good soldier, with courage, and thoroughness, and discipline both in my relations to others and in my own soul.'[21]

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[19] W.P. Young, *A Soldier to the Church: An Attempt at Interpretation* (London, 1919) pp.34-35.

[20] The 35 battalions of the Royal Scots lost 583 officers and 10, 630 men: E.W. McFarland, 'A Coronach in Stone', in C.M.M. Macdonald, E.W. McFarland (eds.) *Scotland and the Great War* (East Linton, 1999) pp.1-10, 1.

[21] IWM 03/19/1 (Captain W.W. Ferrie Papers) Letter, 18th July, 1917.

Combatants also deployed the language to persuade their audiences at home to keep the faith. Letters home which testified to the combatant's fighting faith were often written on the eve of battle or in its immediate aftermath. In the shadow of possible death, they were written as the final statements of self-justification, and the last attempt to persuade the audience to hold out. A German student wrote from Arras on 20 April 1917 to fortify his parents' resolve, 'if the supreme sacrifice should be demanded of us, then do not give way, do not indulge in vain lamentations, for it is just at such moments that war is the test of our faith.'[22] A Scout leader tried to exert his final influence on the men coming after him on the eve of the Somme offensive, writing home to his 'Wellingtons' that 'Out here tomorrow thousands & thousands of Englishmen will go out to suffer + die in the fight for England & her allies.' He advised them to 'be prepared to buck up & do your best to become brave Englishmen in the days ahead', to 'take the place of these who fall today.' Winning the war was an extension of the scouting code of service, a matter of virtuous perseverance, as he wrote a fortnight before, 'We tried at Neuve Chapelle and again at Loos to break the German line, but failed. But "try, try again" will succeed at last.'[23]

The link between martial performance and character predated the war. In Germany, it was strengthened by the Kaiser's edict in March 1890, that it was vital to rouse character and develop it for the sake of the nation's defence.[24] The theme of the penitent soldier fighting to conquer his soul was anticipated in the prayer distributed

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[22] P. Witkop, *German Students' War Letters* (1929, English edn.2002, edited by J. Winter), Letter, Karl Schenkel, 20 April, 1917, p.329.
[23] IWM 87/33/1 (A.W. Wyatt, Papers) Captain M. Gamon, letters to A.W. Wyatt, 30 June, 1916, 14 June, 1916.
[24] See M. Funck, S. Malinowski, 'Charakter ist alles! Erziehungsideale und Erziehungspraktiken in deutschen Adelsfamilien des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts' *Jahrbuch fuer historische Bildungsforschung* 6 (2000), pp. 71-81.

to the army by Lord Roberts during the Anglo-Boer war, enjoining soldiers to pray for 'victory over temptation and sin.'[25] It resonated particularly with church youth movements, precisely because they sought to develop souls at their most malleable. The Church Lads Brigade, an Anglican youth organisation formed to combat the perceived delinquency of urban youth culture, formed its own battalion in 1914, incorporated into the King's Royal Rifle Corps. The movement aped forms of military organisation to save 'lads from physical, mental and moral deterioration.'[26] After inspecting their ranks, the Archbishop of Canterbury proclaimed they were learning 'discipline and brotherhood with one another', and were 'getting ready to serve King and country, as lads no longer, but as men…They were to undergo one of the severest tests in a man's life.'[27]

Just as going to war was conceived as a rite of passage into manhood, the first blooding of the military unit was its baptism into worthiness. The first exposure to combat, often after months of tedious routine and preparation, established the group's willingness to undertake risk and sacrifice itself, the primary quality of honour because it signified how much they valued their reputation.[28] Noel Chavasse expected that his regiment would be 'severely tested', praying that 'we will all play the man and live up to the traditions of our comrades who have fallen.'[29] Donald Hankey, celebrated student, mystic and urban missionary, revered his depleted battalion, the 7th Battalion Rifle Brigade, after it purchased its esteem by suffering an attack while

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[25] IWM 90/21/1 (L.H. Stringer, Papers), whose papers have a copy of *With the Colours: For God, King and Country Psalms and Hymns for Soldiers in the Field* (1916).
[26] *The Church Lads' Brigade and The Church Scout Patrols or 'The Coming Man'* (London, 1914), p.4.
[27] *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 23, 1915.
[28] For a discussion about the role of cultural codes of honour propelled statesmen into decisions for war and volunteers to enlist, see A. Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honour?' *Politics and Society* 23:2, (June 1995), pp.213-241.
[29] Bodlean Library, Chavasse Papers [Henceforth abbreviated BLCP] BL 6/234 12 Dec. 1916.

stranded in a wood: 'Yet it was well. The brigade was saved. Its honour was vindicated. Though its men might be fresh from home and untried in war, they would not fail. The brigade had had its baptism in blood, and its self-confidence was established for all time.'[30] The main feature identified by writers, poets and historians to illustrate the futility of the war, high casualties inflicted intensely over years, was precisely the aspect of combat that was treated as the measure of a regiment's resolve.

As well as framing war as a personal rite of passage, religious participants were able to make sense of a seemingly intractable military situation in the way they imagined the ultimate resolution of the war. Wasteful military operations were bearable, because God would end the war eventually after they showed sufficient faith. This may explain why in much of the testimony from religious soldiers, discussion about generalship and the calibre of military command is notably absent. That military success was granted by God as a reward for piety was an idea publicly promoted by martial elites. Conqueror of Lodz General Karl Litzmann claimed that victory depended on the will to victory, the solidarity of army and *Volk*, trust in God and moral seriousness. After the battles of Tannenburg (in August 1914) and Lodz (November 1914), Hindenburg as Commander of East Prussia, hailed for his religiosity, declared that credit for victory belonged to God, quoting Isaiah that God would renew the faithful, and in his daily order on new year's eve of 1914 he thanked God 'who gives us the power to do these deeds.'[31] The Kaiser as *summus episcopus* of the Prussian church delivered a field sermon in Poland in early 1915, preaching that the faith of the Prussian army was essential for success: 'We know from our

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[30] From R. Davies, 'Donald Hankey, A Student in Arms', *Stand To! The Journal of the Western Front Association* 47 (September, 1996), 11-14

[31] Litzmann and Hindenburg are both cited in F. Schwenker, (ed.) *Kriegsfrömmigkeit* (Gütersloh, 1915) i. pp.16, 12-14.

childhood, and as adults we have learnt from the study of history that God is only with the faithful armies.'[32] During the battle of Loos, General Douglas Haig assured a dispirited Hubert Gough that 'we shall win, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by *my spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts.'[33] Haig was able to integrate the unfathomable immobility of the war into his religious world-view

This might be called a religious teleology, or a way of predicting the ultimate resolution of the war. In this view, armies or their commanders did not possess in themselves alone the ultimate agency to break the deadlock, but must await God's final verdict faithfully. Until victory, the army must endure. The sentiment is evident from the first months of the conflict. In early November 1914, one soldier wrote home expressing horror at the devastation of Messines and the war's intensity. 'But we want to hold out – if only God will at last give the victory.'[34] By making endurance and patience necessary preconditions to the resolution of the war and the final judgment, such sentiments gave 'holding out' a positive value. Young officer Hermann Uhl's weary and demoralised battalion saw the British 6th Division recapture on 9 August 1915 all of the ground the Germans had conquered at Ypres. Despite growing scepticism of the efficiency of the army's operations, Uhl's code of personal wartime piety proved tenacious. After observing that 'We feel daily, that "nothing is done" with our power', he averred that the waste of men in failed operations was a crisis that could only be broken through heavenly dispensation. 'God will end this murder, he often has rough ways where we don't find any exit.' [35] Uhl could accept the

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[32] 'Feldgottesdienst in Nivbowo, Poland, 7 February 1915', cited in Evangelischen Kirchenamt für die Bundeswehr, *Bilder und Texte aus der Soldatenseelsorge 1550-1945* (Bonn, 1983), p.44.
[33] Cited in D. Cooper, *Haig* (London, 1935), p.282.
[34] DTA Reg no. 9/II (Georg Kirschmann Zeitdokument 1905-15) Letter, 2nd Nov. 1914.
[35] Bibliothek Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart, (Hermann Uhl, Kriegstagebuch) [Henceforth abbreviated BZ HUK]10 Oct. 1915.

ineffective deployment of his regiment because he had adopted the Lutheran duty of quiescent humility, believing there was a limit to how much an infantry soldier could know and comment about the war's destination, and that what mattered was his continual faith and commitment. Holding-out, *durchhalten*, was preached as an article of faith by military chaplains, just as trench newspapers after 1916 increasingly vaunted stoic endurance as the German heroic ideal.[36] These doctrines that linked war, faith, victory and peace had been shaped by the historical memory of God's intervention in history in the wars of liberation and unification. Just as piety and national awakening had brought the *Volk* into resurgence after the Prussian army was smashed at Jena (1806), so too would faithful forbearance earn God's miraculous intervention in history. Even soldiers who had grown tired of inflated rhetoric often shared similar assumptions, 'the war is not to be dismissed with the meaning of the purifying thunderstorm. It is and remains something horrible. The war is the… consequence of thousands of all our sins, that God allows to take effect…We must be faithful. The counterbalance, the finite solution of the problem is the mercy of God alone.'[37]

The responses of Uhl and medical officer Noel Chavasse, who served on opposite sides in Flanders between June and August 1915, illustrate how personalising the war as part of their own life narrative enabled the religious to make sense of a baffling tactical situation. At the tail-end of the second battle of Ypres, a contest in Belgium for control of network of rail, road and canal communication channels, both men were involved in battles near the village of Hooge, lying on the Menin Road. The battle and

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[36] A. Lipp, 'Friedensehnsucht und Durchhaltebereitschaft: Wahrnemungen und Erfahrungen deutscher Soldaten im Ersten Weltkrieg' *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 36 (1996), pp. 279-92.
[37] Cited in H. W. Böhmer, *Deutsche Soldaten vor Gott: Das religiöse Erlebnis der Front dargestellt u. gewertet an Zeugnissen aus Kriegsbriefen* (Heidelberg, 1939), p.7.

the combat in the wider theatre represented a pattern that was to shape perceptions of the western front, including high losses of life for limited territorial gains that often became negligible, terrain quickly lost that had been obtained at enormous cost. At Ypres, combat had escalated to new levels of terror, as poison gas and the 'liquid fire' of flamethrowers had been introduced, yet even this did not prevent failures and reverses. Such warfare presented a daunting arithmetic. At Second Ypres from 22 April, 1915, the British advanced a maximum of 910 metres at a cost of circa 16,500 men. As General Rawlinson commented about failed attacks nearby, 'A feeling exists that life is being thrown away on objectives which are not worth it.'[38] An English private who was killed at the battle of Hooge in August kept a 'Morning Prayer Card' that reflected an almost child-like piety, which provides a clue into the way faith shifted attention towards faithful obedience and away from the utility of military operations: 'May Thy Holy Spirit guide me and keep me safe from all sin and danger. Make me afraid of doing wrong. Help me to be obedient to my parents and teachers and all whom Thou has set over me; help me to be truthful, pure and honest. If I do wrong to-day help me to be very sorry at once, and to ask Thee to forgive me. O hear my prayer, for Jesus' sake.'[39] In a more hardened form than the younger Private Mathews, both Chavasse and Uhl developed a similar coping strategy through their religion, a strategy that consecrated the process of military service as an internalised moral test.

On 16 June 1915, the Liverpool Scottish, a battalion that included medical officer Noel Chavasse, were to attack in a holding operation to pin down German reserves. Chavasse's record of this period is dominated not by assessments of the progress of

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[38] Cited in R. Holmes, *The Western Front* (London, 1999), p.66.
[39] IWM 78/15/1, (Private J.E. Matthews, Papers), Prayer Card.

the battle or wider operations, but instead concentrates on his regiment's and his own psychological state. The final Sunday communion parade attracted roughly 150 men of the approximately 542 men in the battalion. Particularly in this phase of the war, the regiment's ranks were predominantly white collar with a strong Presbyterian presence.[40] At the hands of Chavasse, the language of sacrifice and redemption took on an aggressively low-church evangelical accent. His frequent praise of "simplicity" as a desired outcome of the war reflected his distaste for the high-church vestments and liturgy of Anglo-Catholic chaplains. On departing for the war, Chavasse had approved of a sermon by the Bishop of Chester about God's discipline, which like military discipline was 'always for our good.' Chavasse also reported on 5 September, 1914 that many of the officers he associated with are 'most of them are very rich, but they all think that the war will do England a lot of good, and that it wanted pulling up.'[41] Now, Chavasse observed the men taking the sacrament at a common table covered with linen cloth, 'the quiet yet reverent yet set faces of the men it seemed to me a perfect picture of prayer before battle. I knew every man was commending his soul to God.'[42] This became a recurrent theme of his commentary, the way nearness to death visibly evoked Christian manliness, engraved in the faces of men before battle and the social harmony evoked by the threat of death.[43]

This, despite the fact that his battalion was all but destroyed, 193 men killed and 212 wounded, including many of his own friends 'strewn on the ground as cannon

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[40] H. B. McCartney, 'The 1/6th and 1/10th Battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment in the period of the First World War', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Cambridge, 2000), pp.73-74.
[41] BLCP, Letter, 18 Aug. 1914, 5 Sept. 1914.
[42] BLCP Letter, 20 June 1915.
[43] BLCP Letter, Oct. 15, 1916, where he would make similar claims about the faces and deportment of his men at communion.

fodder', whose names were later etched on the Menin Gate memorial nearby.[44] Only months after the battle of Hooge he asserted that in the eye of 'sudden death, as an everyday occurrence of life, all talk & argument goes to the wall & we all go back to the simplest beliefs which now impress themselves as facts, & prove their truth by their power to comfort & sustain.'[45] It reflects his code of war as a manly and disciplining exercise, a localised expression of the ideas being articulated in the pulpits as a cosmic conflict.[46] In making these claims, Chavasse was probably not trying to disguise the severities of the war with inflated images, as elsewhere in letters home he made little attempt to conceal the brutal realities of the front that he saw as a medical officer.[47]

Chavasse became increasingly introspective in his attitude to the war. He had seen his predictions about the end of the war, and his forecasts about the collapse of German morale, repeatedly confounded. But offered the chance to leave in April, 1917, he did not take it. Explaining why he would refuse an appointment as surgeon to the Royal Southern Hospital at Etaples, which would ensure safety and a future with his paramour Gladys whom he wished to marry, he wrote that he could not abandon the 'fighting men' for comfort. His obligation to a regiment whose job was unfinished, meaning that he did not want the future guilt of leaving 'the young lads here to fight it out while I luxuriated on a coast town.' He also claimed that his war service was refining his own soul. His patients, 'the wounded – the sick – and weary, slogging,

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[44]Letter, 20 June, 1915. Cited in A. Clayton, *Chavasse Double VC* (London, 1992) p.123.
[45] BLCP Letter, 30 Aug. 1915.
[46] Chavasse also reported on 5 September, 1914 that many of the officers he associated with are 'most of them are very rich, but they all think that the war will do England a lot of good, and that it wanted pulling up.' BLCP Letter, 5 Sept. 1914.
[47] In one letter he described the marching battalion having an 'almost beast like look', 'They are muddied in the eyes. Their coats are plastered with mud and weigh an awful weight with all the water which has soaked in…Their faces are white and haggard & their eyes glare out from mud.' Letter to Father, Dec. 11, 1914.

anxious, infantry soldier do make a tremendous appeal to all the best in a man.'[48] When he first embarked with the Liverpool Scottish, Chavasse had pledged to his father 'to be a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ and King George.'[1] That desired identity was contingent on remaining committed to the war effort, irrespective of its success.

It is difficult to see what alternative motivations Chavasse might have had for turning down a chance to depart the war, accepting a promotion and ensuring that he could marry his sweetheart, if these explanations had been insincere. He had already gained the professional and social benefits his war service could offer. Medical service gave him invaluable experience and he could have obtained more in safety at the Base Hospital. As a medal winner it is unlikely he felt the need for further laurels. The answer also lies in his own evolving identity: Chavasse had given up trying to forecast the end of the war and prognosticate on the imminent collapse of German morale. His response to the astonishing duration of the war was to make his commitment to the war increasingly internalised as a chapter in his growth as a person. The war had become all-important as the climax and test of his own virtue. 'I forget what the old life before it was like, it seemed only to have been a preparation for it, I can never now look forward & beyond the war. I can only manage to take every day as it comes & try and do my best in it.'[49]

Nearby on 30 July, 1915, Hermann Uhl had been in fierce battles against the British 8th Rifle Brigade. British mines had exploded the terrain into a giant crater. Over the

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[48] BLCP 6/283-4. Letter, June 15, 1917.

[49] BLCP 6/283-4. Letter, June 3 1917. Noel's brother Christopher, a military chaplain, also expressed an intensely biographic account of the significance of the war, projected backward the need for order and meaning in a wayward prewar life. On 25th March, 1916, he wrote about his 'awful fits of Depression…I do see God's hand in all my life – I curse the failure at Oxford – and all my slackness since – I was born & raised for this war- If only I had seen it coming.' Bodleian Library, Christopher Chavasse Papers, Fol. 161-217, Letter 25 March, 1916.

crater and in sight of the nearby chateau, German infantrymen used flamethrowers to sweep the hard-pressed Riflemen out of their trenches, driving them into Sanctuary Wood. After this initial victory the regiment gathered under a giant oak tree to hear the Divisional chaplain preach in front of a field altar decorated with guns and drums. The chaplain's text was Romans, 13, 'Happy in hope, patient in afflictions, holding in prayer,' and he exhorted them to remember their achievements and to 'hold out.'[50]

The post-battle sermon, in a theatre where more battles were coming, sought to harness the recent fight for the next one. The emphasis in the field sermon lay in the need for individual virtue and inner strength. After then losing the crater and recovering behind the lines, Hermann recorded another service in which the chaplain preached a similar message from the Psalms, 'how exquisite is patience, to hold on and give thanks.'[51] For him, the pursuit of personal virtue was strengthened by the effect of reading psalms and singing hymns, evoking the union with the homeland and making him grateful for 'such a native country.'[52] Uhl's positive reception of this particular brand of personal wartime piety is evident in his recorded enthusiasm for the *Kriegsfurche* magazine sent to the front by the churches, which preached the need for inner renewal, or in the fragment of a poem he cut out and attached to his diary, about a heart in a storm seeking peace in Christ.[53]

In both these testimonies, by men from religious backgrounds with brothers as military chaplains, there is relatively little commentary on the legitimacy of their nations' cause or the nature of the enemy. Uhl's evident pleasure at celebrating the rapid successes of the German forces in eastern Europe, and passing praise of

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[50] BZHUK, 1 Aug. 1915.
[51] BZHUK, 15 Aug. 1915.
[52] BZHUK, 25 Aug. 1915.
[53] BZHUK, 4 Sept. 1915.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain's case for Germanic racial supremacy, and Chavasse's expressed loyalty to both Christ and King, indicates that the legitimacy of the national cause and attendant universal ideas was, in the phrase of James Joll, one of their largely 'unspoken assumptions.'[54] They do not seem to have been driven by a hatred of the enemy. If anything, their attitude to their adversaries was a grudging admiration. Uhl pitied a dead French soldier whose eternal rest was disturbed by a bullet that struck his grave, while even though Chavasse disapproved of its illegality, he praised the initiative of the Germans in their pioneering use of poison gas.[55] It was at the regimental and personal level, however, where they most often engaged with the religious meaning of the war. An encounter with an irreligious comrade triggered Uhl's concern whether the Almighty would bless the *Volk*, adding in terms similar to Chavasse that 'one notices that one has still to work most with oneself.'[56]

For some young German volunteers from the educated middle-classes, the war's meaning was expressed in an almost mythological realm. Concrete war aims were overshadowed by apocalyptic themes of struggle, death and rebirth, excited visions that were easier to entertain if they remained fantastical and vague. The imagination of a twenty six year-old German schoolteacher and artillery observer while advancing towards Russia was nourished by a Gothic bourgeois repertoire of artistic images, of heroes battling treacherous coalitions of conspirators, twilights, and the promised springtime that would arrive if the warriors stood firm. The war was taking place at an epochal moment in world history. 'How much greater and more beautiful will be the great spring after the great war,' he wrote home to his mother, and 'Our life belongs

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[54] J. Joll, *1914: The Unspoken Assumptions; An Inaugural Lecture Delivered 25 April, 1968* (London, 1968).
[55] BZHUK, 4 Oct. 1915; Letter 5 May, 1915, cited in A. Clayton, *Chavasse Double VC* (London, 1992), p.112.
[56] BZHUK 25 Aug. 1915.

to a great, sacred purpose. This purpose we cannot know.'[57] His responses were complicated by the realisation that within his own brigade, 97% of the men did not share his elevated ideals. 'We must each be ready alone with the world and the present and the world likes to behave itself sadly and miserably around us even in this great time, so it depends on whether we hold out.'[58] This sense of isolation led him to retreat into his own 'inner world' a deliberate distancing from reality which may led him to judge a dangerous situation wrongly, leading to his death. Warned by an anxious comrade to pack his rucksack in a house about to be targeted by artillery fire, he complacently answered that not all the houses would be struck, and was killed by a direct hit shortly afterwards.[59] He became a victim of his own ideology.

Those evangelists who saw the army as a mission field understood the conflict primarily in terms of conversion and ministry, with the legitimacy of the nation's cause a background assumption. The minutes of the Christian Union of the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, a gathering to discuss wartime piety, uncensored by the army because it was a private meeting whose minutes were unpublished, was devoid of commentary on the efficiency of the war's conduct. Convened by their military chaplain, this group would meet weekly and discuss the implications of the war for religious faith. As one private argued, by patterning their lives on Christ's self-sacrifice, they could help redeem their fellow soldiers, and 'to wield the influence we should.' Another claimed that God was using the war 'to bring men back to

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[57] Letter, 26 May, 1915, cited in G. Fritsche, 'Bedingungen des individuellen Kriegserlebnisses' in P. Knoch (ed.) *Kriegsalltag. Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung und der Friedenserziehung* (Stuttgart, 1989), pp.114-152, p.123.
[58] Letter, 20 Jan. 1915, cited in Fritsche 'Bedingungen', p.125.
[59] The circumstances of his death were described in his friend's letter, 9 June, 1915, in Fritsche 'Bedingungen', p.126.

himself.'[60] As they saw the war primarily as a theatre for evangelism, they regarded their own conduct as vital in terms of winning souls, and the war's meaning as separate and independent of the fluctuating fortunes of the military campaign happening at the same time. Over the preceding weeks, their battalion had experienced the terrors of Passchendale, in which their battalion suffered some of the 300,000 casualties of the BEF in attacking the most heavily fortified part of the German line. The battle was exceptional not for its high casualties but for its harrowing conditions. At times, soldiers were forced to crawl, sleep and stand in abnormally deep mud and in waterlogged craters, while horses and men drowned in a lethal swamp that was the creation of lashing rain and a heavily bombarded drainage system. By 31st August, the date of their Union meeting, what had been envisaged as a short attack had been largely aborted by Haig only five days earlier. It is a striking measure of how the rhetoric of a sacred war could survive the extreme conditions of the battle then the apparent failure of the attack, that they could still attest that the war was God's way of 'bringing men back to himself.'

At that stage of the battle, the vindication of sacrifice as the necessary price of winning that particular engagement was not yet available, as the Canadian and British infantry would not capture the town of Passchendale until the 6th November. Yet this was not the kind of consolation they were after. None of them mention in their reflections the fallibility of command or the (im)balance of costs and gains. Their mission in the war, in the words of their pledge card which they signed, was 'To extend the Kingdom of Christ in the Battalion.' Such an apostolic purpose, their personal conversion of souls, placed no reliance on the conduct of operations, and

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[60] IWM 78/7/1 (Evers, Papers) Minutes of Ninth Battalion, Christian Union Meeting, 31 August 1917. IWM, 78/7/1.

precluded the possibility of rejecting the war on the basis that its conduct was ineffective. It is also highly plausible that the muddy landscape of slaughter reminded them of the 'slough of despond' in John Bunyan's highly popular evangelical allegory *Pilgrim's Progess*, and its presentation of life as a pilgrimage through a series of trials. The educated also knew that the word 'martyr' meant 'witness', in this context bearing witness to the mental and physical suffering of war and standing up for faith.

There was another, more radical version of the view of war as a mission for self-purification, the mentality of 'heroic nihilism', that war should be fought for its own sake, an 'ideology of self-destruction' that was the legacy of nineteenth century nationalist romanticism. Carl von Clausewitz in 1812 had endorsed the honourable defeat that would inspire the future 'rebirth of the people.' Ernst Jünger would interpret the war as intrinsically valuable, regardless of the externalities of its outcome.[61] By contrast, most religious accounts implicitly or outwardly see military victory as an important final objective, and their personal salvation complementary to the nation's mission. Strength of character was identified and linked with the commitment to uncompromising national war aims, as one Scottish chaplain preached at church parades, individuals during this 'day of testing in which the character of men and nations is declared' should cultivate endurance and 'fixed determination to go on to the bitter end,' to keep 'steady-nerved amidst trials' in order to contribute to the 'national *morale*' and ensure their nation 'will decide the terms of peace.'[62]

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[61] For studies of this theme, see B. Wegener, 'Hitler, der Zweite Weltkrieg und die Choreographie des Untergangs' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000), pp.493-518; also B. Wegener, 'The Ideology of Self-Destruction: Hitler and the Choreography of Defeat' *Bulletin of The German Historical Institute* 26:2 (Nov. 2004), pp. 18-34; B. Weisbrod, 'Violence and Sacrifice: Imagining the Nation in Weimar Germany' in H. Mommsen (ed.), *The Third Reich Between Vision and Reality New Perspectives on German History 1918-1945* (Oxford, 2001), pp.5-16.

[62] J.R.P Sclater, *Eve of Battle: Addresses at Church Parade* (1915), p.65, pp.9-10.

Christian meditations on the war dwelt on the interplay between the personal and the body politic at war, as the fibre of the individual was entwined with the fate of the national character. The personal conflict within the soul of the soldier was framed as a reflection of a national conflict, so that the debate over war aims, for example, was embodied in the soldier's own inner conflict. According to Donald Hankey, in each soldier there was a 'dual personality', not of pacific rationality versus belligerent impulse, but weakness and egoism versus strength of character. It was a zero-sum game, the decision whether to remain at war not a dispassionate calculation of the nation's interests weighing costs and benefits, but a measure of the nation's calibre and the Christian soldier's resolve. 'In each of these men there is this dual personality: the ordinary human ego that hates danger and shrinks from hurt and death, that longs for home, and would welcome the end of the war on any terms; and also the *stronger* personality of the soldier who can tolerate but one end of this war, cost what that may…'[63]

This meant that otherwise indecisive engagements with heavy loss of life, a tragic misadventure for some, could be represented as the crucible for victory of a different kind. Having survived the first day of the Somme, Donald Hankey claimed that though his regiment's part in the offensive 'was not a successful part, it was none the less a triumph – a spiritual triumph.'[64] One second-lieutenant who survived Neuve Chapelle, where a promising British advance had been bogged down with heavy losses, wrote that war had 'opened up for me new treasures in life whose existence I

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[63] D. Hankey, *A Student in Arms II* (London, 1917), p.72.
[64] Ibid. p.69.

knew not.'[65] As they confront and subordinate their weaker selves, the battlefront becomes the outward theatre for the test of character and self-scrutiny.[66] This stress upon self-development helped to divorce the validity of the will to sacrifice from its operational utility – the sacrificial attitude remained a hallowed duty and purpose of the war whether or not it resulted in offensive breakthroughs.[67]

Like novelist Thomas Mann, Germany's patriotic pastors avowed that the quality of 'inwardness' (*Innerlichkeit*) was a crowning achievement of Germanic culture, a unique spiritual community that should be reborn at the front.[68] They contrasted the primeval Germanic inner spirit of devotion and spirit to the "commercial morality of calculation." Commitment to duty and the inner life stood in sharp contrast, they believed, to the spiritual emptiness of mercantile Britain.[69] In the sermons of Germany's chaplains especially, the devotion to self-cultivation entailed unquestioning obedience to authority and to its conduct of the war. Given the strict obedience to the authority of German princes that was their Lutheran heritage, German chaplains had a greater propensity than their Anglican counterparts to preach a quietist ethos, exhorting their audience to an unquestioning faith in the providential design driving the war. In 1914 Wilhelm Stählin drew on the ethic of deference in

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[65] Cited in E.A. Burroughs *A Faith for the Firing Line: Two Addresses to Officers of the British Expeditionary Force at Rouen, Together with a Sermon Preached in the Chapel of the British Headquarters there, in April 1915* (London, 1915), p.19.

[66] As J. Kissane suggests, *Without Parade: The Life and Work of Donald Hankey: 'A Student in Arms'* (Lewes, 2003), p.235.

[67] As one young scholar Stephen Hewett, a Lieutenant in the Warwickshire Regiment, spelt out to his sister Mary, July 18 1916: 'common desire of all of us, even the least spiritual, not the mere happiness of peace and England; but that beatitude (already realised in your life) which we can only pray that we may reach through the ordeal and the fire before us – 'which has power to make our noisy years seem moments in the being of the eternal silence.' From S. Hewett, *Scholar's Letters from the Front* (London, 1918), p.113.

[68] Eg. H. Beck, *Siegfried! Gottes Kraft für die Front im deutschen Weltkrieg* (Braunschweig, 1917), p.15: 'Let us finally through the world war become inward'; see also Arthur Titius, whose volume of sermons in 1915, *Unser Krieg: Ethische Betrachtungen* opposed Germany's Kantian sense of duty and conscience against the English drive to calculation.

[69] See A. J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism: German Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp.122-125.

Romans, with its inscrutable deity, to instruct departing combatants, the "warrior…needs not to think over the puzzle of this war, he can absolutely not allow it: he has a greater task, he has God's will to do."[70] As a former chaplain recalled the message, it was "hold on, hold out, and hold your tongue."[71] The orders of the Prussian chaplaincy commanded chaplains to 'stress the soldiers' duty, his oath, loyalty, and love of country, as well as emphasise the significance of authority, and obedience to it.'[72] To weigh victories and defeats, casualties and costs in the balance, especially if done in a spirit of questioning authority, was to succumb to the very pernicious doctrine of calculation (and even revolution) that the war was visited upon Germany to destroy. Sweeping early victories over 1914-15 showed that faith could overcome mathematics and the scale of the forces arrayed against the Central Powers, the daunting numerical imbalance in manpower facing the Fatherland, outnumbered four to one, inferior in finance, raw materials and blockaded from oceanic trade. 'God is not bound by the laws of mathematics', preached one chaplain.[73] The survival of Germany's war economy persuaded pastor Otto Dibelius that the war affirmed faith over the soulless logic of numbers and 'sober calculation.'[74] It was the same spirit of German romanticism that the preacher Schleiermacher had developed to preach to soldiers in the war of liberation that intuition and feeling trumped thought.

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[70] W. Stählin, *Der Krieg – Gottes Wille? Predigt von Dr Wilhelm Stählin 15 November 1914* (Nürnberg, 1914) pp.4, 7.

[71] Cited in D.L. Bergen, 'German Military Chaplains in World War II and the Dilemmas of Legitimacy' *Church History*, 70:2 (June 2001) p232, p.235.

[72] C. Werckshagen (ed) *Der Protestantismus am Ende des XIX Jahrhunderts in Wort and Bild*, 1901-1902 cited in J.E. Groh, *Nineteenth Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model* (Washington, 1982) p. 595.

[73] Z. Reetz, Garnisonpfarrer in Bromberg, *An meine Soldaten: Ansprachen und Predigten während d. ersten Kriegsjahres* (Leipzig, 1916) p.168.

[74] 'According to mathematical necessity Germany should have been crushed in 1914 by superior power - and she is still alive! By mathematical necessity our munitions should have been exhausted by the beginning of 1915 for the lack of raw materials – and we are still shooting! By mathematical necessity we all should have starved in the summer of 1915- and we are still eating and drinking! There is a reality that evades sober calculation. And the strongest part of this reality is the power of faith.' Trans. A. J. Hoover, *God, Germany and Britain in the Great War* (New York, 1989), p.13.

This conception of Christian morale arose from the convergence of two developments in the decade before the war: a value-system of masculinity and religiosity already noted, and a growing body of military doctrine that presumed and valourised high casualties. In terms of military doctrine, an offensive spirit that promoted acceptance of a high level of casualties was being reinstated as a necessity of effective fighting power in modern warfare. In the words of German colonel Wilhelm Balck: 'Great victories are, as a rule, accompanied by great losses.'[75] An orthodoxy had developed in response to the revolution of firepower since 1871, that morale was the critical factor to military performance given the technological and logistical advantages that defences would now enjoy. This represented a break with an earlier tradition, where theorists like Henry Evans Lloyd and Dietrich von Bülow counselled artful strategies, valuing the prudent avoidance of expensive battles in favour of other more bloodless and indirect stratagems, prizing evasion or non-combat tactics such as 'wearing down' above the sword, a doctrine embodied in the writing of Flavius Vegetius Renatus, the most influential military work in the west before Clausewitz.[76] In contrast, by the late nineteenth century, costly frontal assaults were deemed militarily inevitable for the pursuit of victory, and it was widely accepted that nations must cultivate the psychological readiness to accept vast losses. Military discussion stressed Clausewitz' insistence on the unavoidable costs of combat, as 'we are not interested in generals who win victories without bloodshed.'[77] Willpower, strengthened and honed through training, drill and military education, would propel soldiers into the firefight, spirit that would decide the clash of material forces. The Russo-Japanese war (1904-5),

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[75] W. Balck, *Tactics* (4th edn. Kansus, 1911), p.109.
[76] See J. A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture From Ancient Greece to Modern America* (Boulder, 2003, 2004 edn.), pp.24-5; D.A. Neill, 'Ancestral Voices: The Influence of the Ancients on the Military Thought of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' *Journal of Military History* 62 (July 1998), pp. 487-520.
[77] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (trans. M. Howard, P. Paret, Princeton, 1984), p.160.

especially the Japanese assaults in Manchuria, were seen as a model of how the modern offensive could break through if applied with 'careful preparation and fanatical courage.'

It followed that troops could be most effective if they confined their minds to their own commitment, obedience and discipline, rather than making their morale conditional on the efficiency of military command. As British colonel Maude argued, 'The chances of victory turn entirely on the spirit of self-sacrifice of those who have to be offered up to gain opportunity for the remainder…in other words the true strength of an Army lies essentially in the power of each, or any of its constituent fractions to stand up to punishment, even to the verge of annihilation if necessary…With troops trained to judge their leaders merely by the skill they show in economising their men's lives, what hope of adequate endurance can ever exist?'[78] If it was imperative for a sound military commander to accept the likelihood of high losses, or 'face the arithmetic' as Abraham Lincoln had frankly put it, it was imperative for the soldier to 'stand up to punishment' without judging the skill of his leaders according to bodycount, in order to graduate as a man. Heavy losses, therefore, at an individual, regimental and national level, were represented as reflecting not ineptitude but the resolve of the combatant or regiment, as the 'determination or grit of the unit had come to be measured by the number of casualties,' so that officers often pressed attacks with appropriate vigour.[79] This mentality was incorporated into the field literature of the German chaplaincy, as one

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[78] F.N. Maude, *The Evolution of Infantry Tactics* (London, 1905) x.

[79] These quotations and the prewar evolution of the doctrine offensive are derived from M. Howard, 'Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', in P. Paret (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Oxford, 1986), pp.510-527, esp. 522. See also D. Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale' in H. Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998) pp. 191-203, pp.191-192; M. Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto, 1989), p.189.

Baden- Württemberg pamphlet taught, the soldier must honour himself by standing 'unthinking before the enemy, holding out coldblooded in the rain of bullets and shellfire, gathering up every last power…bearing tribulation and wounds, that is the way of the soldier.' Above ambition, there must be the 'moral will', because 'everything is at stake.'[80] This religious-military doctrine also emerged from below. Pastor's son and gunner Heinrich Woebken warned his parents not to be disheartened by high casualties or to question the performance of generals, claiming 'Without blood no victory can well be gained, it must be risked. And where it is risked, there can it also go wrong. The leaders must possess responsibility joy and courage, even sometimes to sacrifice the blood of their people uselessly.' He urged his parents to observe the unquestioning acceptance of bereaved parents, 'the parents of Delius [lost both their sons] "They were our joy in life and in death remain still our pride." They asked not, whether a leader had also made an error. So it is proper also that the soldier does what is ordered of him, and asks not what for and why.'[81] The acceptance of costly losses and enormous sacrifices had become both a military doctrine and a religious duty. In the rhetoric of the Christian gentleman at war, both discourses – the discourse of character and the discourse of direct military engagement – were entangled.

How this paradigm had penetrated both military doctrine and religious discourse is evident in the responses of one devout professional soldier who fought in the early phase that saw the near-annihilation of the original BEF. Major C.A.L. Yate lauded the spirit of the offensive as part of a soldier's faith. Yate was the son of a clergyman,

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[80] BZ, *Kriegsblatter* Pamphlets, [Henceforth abbreviated BZKP] 5, 'Soldatenehre' pp.1-2.Bibliothek Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart, Documents, "Religion und Kirchen."
[81] A. Woebcken (ed.) *Im Westen: Briefe eines deutschen Frontsoldaten* (Oldenburg, 1929), Letter 28 Feb. 1915, p.34.

veteran of the Anglo-Boer war and fought in the Yorkshire Light Infantry. Fluent in Japanese and German, he invoked the model of German and Japanese sacrificial values, undergirded by biblical metaphors of the Christian warrior. He also quoted St. Paul, citing his instruction to 'endure hardness as a good soldier', and to wean his thoughts from the 'mere pursuit of comfort and gain,' because 'no-one that warreth entangleth himself with the things of this life.' The soldier as man of sacrifice was contrasted with the man of calculation, with those who 'measure everything in cash values." He must aim for the immortality that would be conferred by being remembered for an honourable death, and must go forth to fight 'Not dreaming of the homecoming, the medal, the batta. These are distant and problematical. Nearer, and more probable are the enemy and the tomb.'[82] The aims of the soldier could only be the rewards that came with death. Amongst the qualities needed for ultimate victory, there must be an absence of materialism, the spirit of the offensive and the appreciation of the soldier's sacrifice. Yate's death would demonstrate the power of his own doctrine. Commanding a company at Le Cateau and with all other officers killed and ammunition exhausted, he led 19 survivors in a hopeless charge and was mortally wounded. A militarily pointless last fling, it enabled him to live up to his own credo.[83]

Because the faithful did not necessarily embrace the rhetoric of sacrifice on the basis of false conceptions of combat, the kind of faith that Yate espoused, and applied, also

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[82] 'Moral Qualities in War' *Blackwood's Magazine* 196: 1187 (Sept. 1914) pp.287-302; his identity was revealed in *The Times* Sept. 17, 1914, p.5, 'The Pen and the Sword. A Soldier's Message from the Grave.'

[83] As another illustration of the convergence of the doctrine of morale and the religious discourse of character, one English chaplain in 1914 united the appeal for soldiers to overcome sin with the appeal for men to take the offensive until the end, invoking the mottos of the 18th Hussars ('We shall deserve') and the 17th Lancers ('Death or Glory'). 'Please God may they all become ready to die rather than disgrace themselves by grievous sins, to die rather than expose themselves to the loss of heaven.' A. Bitot, *A Little Pocket-Book offered to British Soldiers* (London, 1914) pp. 110-111.

often survived the first months of fighting. The devout Harold Macmillan, young subaltern in the Grenadier Guards injured at Loos in September 1915, regularly took communion and trained men in bomb-throwing. The battle of Loos had been the primal scene of Hay's *The First Hundred Thousand*, as the heroic Scottish infantrymen anticipate the attack as its sections' blooding, before their morale and discipline continues, celebrated in the title of its 1917 sequel, *Carrying On*.[84] The Loos offensive was open to the charge of 'useless slaughter' in the words of the official history, and in the scathing judgment of military historian Liddell Hart.[85] For these critics, the battle was marred by a lack of adequate support troops and shells, and the poisoning of British soldiers with their own gas, resulting in British losses three times greater than the German forces, which were not dislodged. But in the logic of the military-religious ethos embraced by Macmillan and Hay, these criteria were irrelevant. After recovering from the injury he had suffered at the heavy fighting at Loos and returning to active service, Macmillan linked military victory not primarily with the economical deployment of manpower, or the skilful envelopment of the enemy, but with the army's faith in the righteousness of the national cause. Inspired by a memorandum from French General Headquarters on morale, Macmillan insisted that it was this 'unexpressed and almost unconscious faith' of the BEF in that cause that reflected the decisive 'superiority of mind over matter, the spiritual over the physical', and that a well-trained and officered body of men with a high state of moral 'can do anything, can withstand any attack or bombardment, however terrible; can in short, accomplish almost miracles.' The elevated purpose of the war, which Macmillan depicted in the same letter with the language of martyrdom and crusading,

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[84] See the discussion of G. Urquhart, 'Confrontation and Withdrawal: Loos, Readership and 'The First Hundred Thousand', in C.M.M. Macdonald and E.W. McFarland, *Scotland and the Great War* (1999), pp.125-142.
[85] B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (London, 1970), p.201, 203.

would endow Britain's grand strategy with its most prized asset, a militant body of believers. As a consequence of this mentality, the necessity of high losses for great victories was assumed. From the memorandum he copied into his Field Pocket Book the mantra, 'the sacrifice of each being the condition of the victory.'[86]

Just as the act of sacrifice was itself given meaning, the cause for which men were called to sacrifice remained sacred in a highly personal way. The national or imperial cause for which they were sacrificing remained compelling because it was mediated through a local patriotism which made the cause intimate to the individual soldier. It would be tempting to adopt the false distinction between 'abstractions', such as nation or God, and tangible causes, such as loyalty to the primary group. That neat divide, however, neglects how the remembered local community united big abstract ideas with the concrete world of the soldier. For many combatants, the town *was* the nation, the local church *was* civilisation, the family *was* the innocent population being defended. The cause of the nation was embodied particularly in the memory of the family and the local homeland. While the war was being given universal meaning in sermons, tracts and pamphlets, for the combatant, that meaning was rooted in localised patriotism.

Fighting in foreign fields, British and German faithful regarded the frontiers as their outer defences. Waging war abroad was represented as a defensive act, as they were preventing it coming home. For German Lutherans like French Roman Catholics, the enemy had literally destroyed or pillaged some of their native churches. Even as occupiers deep inside enemy territory, Lutheran soldiers presented invasion as a

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[86] BL (Macmillan Papers), War diary, 13 May 1916.

defensive act. Witnessing the burning of towns and the first terrifying mobile battles, Georg Kirschmann wrote home 'Thank God that you don't have the war in [our] country.'[87] A German Lieutenant stated in a trench newspaper during his first Christmas in France, 'The field-grey youth bleeds and dies for the homeland. The old *Landsturm* freezes and keeps watch, protects and patrols, to sacrifice health and the quiet life. The graceful God wants to protect the German homeland, so that war never comes to our country.'[88] Lieutenant Franz Koeppe wrote home that 'we stand on French soil…for the honour of our beloved Fatherland, for Kaiser and Reich, for all our beloved at home. Because it is terrible where the war rages. No newspaper writer, no person's mouth can announce, who has not seen it, as it is.'[89] If they failed to resist the enemy, it was feared, the battlefront might literally transport itself into the homeland and the family hearth. So far from destroying faith in the cause, in the mental topography of British and German faithful at war, the need to keep fighting was demonstrated when they looked out over the parapet. Heinrich Woebcken described the war as the defence of all that had been won by their forefathers in the wars of 1813 and 1870, describing the frontier as the 'iron embankment' of the homeland. In his private diary, he tried to nerve himself for danger by thinking of the existential threat posed by the racially polyglot enemy: 'Now look lively and don't let the head hang! The situation is that each must give his blood so that the white and black power, that lies before us, does not break through and all that is achieved til now, is wrecked. We have enough cartridges, now let them come. The old God won't let our people perish.'[90]

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[87] DTA Georg Kirschmann, Reg. Nr. 9/II, (Zeitdokument 1905-1915), Letter 20 Sept. 1914.
[88] Leutnant Ohr, 'An die Heimat' *Frankfurter Landsturm* Kriegsnummer *Weihnachten*, (1914), p.2.
[89] F. Koeppe, *Mit Gott für Kaiser und Reich: Feldpostbriefe von Franze Koeppe* (Stuttgart, 1917) Letter, 25 Oct. 1914.
[90] A. Woebcken (ed.) *Im Westen* (Oldenburg, 1929) diary entry, 29 May, 1915.

In this war, civilian casualties formed a relatively low proportion of overall losses compared to other wars. Paradoxically, the defence of the civilian population and homeland from enemy predations had become a central justification for continued fighting. Compared to the American Civil War or the Second World War, this war was relatively sparing of civilians. Of the casualties it inflicted, over 80% were against combatants, and the war was not followed by a prolonged military occupation of the defeated powers.[91] But subjectively for the soldier, who did not know the future, they had good reason to contemplate the frightful prospect of their homes being vandalised. Territorially, it had already been a war of multiple invasions: the Austro-Hungarian attacks on Serbia (August-September and November 1914) Germany's invasion of Belgium and France (August-October 1914), the Russian invasions of East Prussia (August-September 1914), Galicia and Bukovina (September 1914-April 1915). And Belgium and Northern France had already witnessed despoliation of infrastructure and civilian sites. Military frontiers were also a belt of destruction of churches, houses, and villages, ruined landscapes and long lines of fleeing refugees. In the realm of propaganda and representation, atrocities against civilians were at the core of justifications for war as a defence of civilisation. And combatants saw a continuum between the form warfare had taken at the front and what would happen if it they lost ground. The intensity of mechanised combat in itself suggested that a trail of devastation that would continue into their homeland following military defeat.

In September 1917, Private P. Smith, an infantryman from Bedfordshire, wrote an uncensored letter for his family, that he smuggled home via a friend going on leave. It

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[91] On the theme of the conflict between soldiers and civilians, see J. Horne, A. Kramer, 'War Between Soldiers and Enemy Civilians, 1914-1915' in R. Chickering, S. Foerster (eds.) *Great War, Total War Combat and Mobilisation on the Western Front* (Cambridge, 2000) pp.153-168.

reveals much about the way men at the front integrated their own intimate contact with the conditions of the battlefield into a religious reading of the war as an existential and ideological struggle. 'Well Dear', he wrote, 'it is not a nice story to tell you', and prayed that God would give him the strength to endure the 'terrible life.' What made the enemy so terrible? Smith saw the shelling of a 'fine old church' and a 'beautiful town' into a 'ruined and deserted place,' while poison gas had contaminated the fruit of the trees. As for many observers on the side of the Entente, his conviction that a Christian civilisation was being attacked by the enemy was made plausible by the fact that the enemy was bombarding churches. But the threat was also manifested in the fury of the machine war itself, the *Materialschlacht*. 'It is not a war of fighting for rifles are not used like they used to be in other wars, it is a war of machinery, terrible machinery, for what with the tremendous shells which rush through the air & make a noise like a train you can hear them coming but cannot see them, & bursting shrapnel, liquid fire, which is the most awfulest thing invented, and poisonous gases, men have very little chance.' Witnessing these attacks on nature and on the buildings of civil society, the town and the church, Smith imagined the battlefront literally moving into his own native land and turning it into a similar wasteland. 'Thank God England is surrounded by that little bit of water + has the boys in blue to protect her shores. For God only knows what would have happened if she hadn't, for we are up against the most wickedest and powerfulest enemy that ever was.'[92] He imagined the sphere of combat with its demonic technology not as compartmentalised but continuous. Material conditions and events at the front, in this case the destruction and pollution of the landscape and its sacred sites, and the terrifying nature of machine warfare, served to reinforce his case for fighting on. It is

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[92] IWM 01/21/1 (P. Smith, Papers) Letter, Sept. 18, 1917.

likely that these sentiments were authentic, as Smith's argument for why the war had to be fought was based on an unflinchingly realistic report about the battlefield, and he went to some lengths to evade censorship, giving the letter to a friend going on leave. He clearly wanted his family to realise the extremity of the battlefield, as a motivation to accept the continued British war effort. They had to resist the force of German expansion to prevent their own homeland being churned into a wasteland. In another way, the experience of the intensity of combat reinforced rather than undermined acceptance of the cause.

If war was configured as an endeavour for self-development and self-transformation, it could also be perceived as a test of loyalty to the values of the local community, the willingness to die an expression of a civilian identity transferred to the front. For the pious soldier, the language of wartime sacrifice remained compelling because it was often not just a free-floating ideology. It was a set of values and instincts grounded in their upbringing and tied to individual memories, and was particularly encoded in nostalgic or idealised memories of the local community. To be willing to risk death or maiming in battle, and to maintain commitment to the cause, was to be faithful not just to an abstract religious concept of valour imposed 'from above.' It was to affirm loyalty to the family and locality that had inculcated that very code of values. The local community and local church being defended were both sacred objects that must be defended, and the place where the combatant's performance and civic duty would be judged. Former saltworker Private Enoch Bratt wrote to his local vicar on February 1915,

> I am glad to hear that my name is being read out at Church and that I am the grandson of the man that rang the bells of the Church for forty years…and in my younger days he used to take me to the Church with him while he rang the bells, and as I sit by the

> fireside, with my head in my arms, I fancy I hear the sweet sound of the bells. Dear Vicar, it is the first Christmas I have had away from home, but I am none the worse off. We enjoyed it well. We went to Church on Christmas morning and then when night came we had [xmas dinner]…We are each one of us working with our utmost power for the sake of our country, and we will do so till the last. We have responded to the call haven't we…I had a good situation before I joined Lord Kitchener's Army, but what matters that – Kitchener wanted me and I went when duty called me.[93]

This illustrates how the desire to defend the local church community and the need to be seen as virtuous within it, were intertwined. As this letter demonstrates, these ideas did not necessarily take on a bombastic tone; it was more widespread than the socially privileged officer corps. Even if the more florid version of the rhetoric was not always embraced, combatants expressed more subtly a commitment to the 'Christian nation' as embodied in their local community with its parish church.

Apart from being a theory of why going to war was a sacred undertaking, the rhetoric of sacrifice was equally a mnemonic device that summoned affective images and emotive traces of upbringing and family. The will to sacrifice was rooted in a sacrificial culture, the very word having an evocative effect. Lieutenant H.F. Bowser reaffirmed his commitment to the war by invoking the nostalgic memory of home, in which willingness to sacrifice was associated with 'strains of music from a village church', 'the mother's voice', 'the father's morning prayer', 'a Saviour's words of comfort and cheer.' The will to sacrifice for him rested upon memories of a code of living embodied in his family and local community.[94]

As the images and emblems of social harmony, localised patriotism and chivalric service suggest, these sentiments also often entailed a class consciousness. Noel Chavasse, the medical officer of the Liverpool Scottish regiment twice awarded the

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[93] Cited in A. Clayton, *A Cheshire Parish at War* (Liverpool, 1998), pp.34-5.
[94] IWM 88/56/1 ('Extracts from the Memoirs of H.F. Bowser') Letters, 11 Dec. 1916, 13 May, 1917; final quotation in Letter, 9 April, 1918.

Victoria Cross, represented the war itself as a vindication of the 'religious middle class' that formed the will to hold out: 'The so-called stuffy, respectable, homely religion, of family prayers and Sunday observance, with a conscious effort to do one's duty during the week, which has been the butt of all cheap and fatuous swell-headed sceptics' had been 'vindicated.'[95] Many officers of the Liverpool Scottish worked and traded throughout the British Empire. Chavasse's friend Captain Bryden McKinnell, a twenty-five year old machine-gun officer who was killed during the offensive at Hooge, was a corn broker and proud member of the commercial and trading classes. On the eve of the charge he scribbled in his diary his apprehension that they were facing a slaughter. He suspected their battalion would be deliberately deployed to tremendous loss as part of a holding attack to divert attention from another brigade's assault elsewhere, and he feared they would face a highly prepared enemy, as "the Huns must know everything, as it has been so widely discussed." Men ragged each other about how they would look maimed in wooden legs. But the attack, he believed, would be worthwhile to prove the worth of their ethos as merchant men. 'We are going to justify our existence as Terriers and men – we middle-class business men. GOD SAVE THE KING!'[96] If the war was a testing ground for the integrity of character and manhood, the dauntless acceptance of slaughter was also the vindication of the values of an entire social class.

It was the same notion of a highly class-specific 'sentimental equipment' that F. Scott Fitzgerald characterised as the force that powered the capacity to endure trench warfare. Fitzgerald describes it as a capacity for sacrifice common to the bourgeois cultures of Germany, France and Britain. To undertake protracted positional warfare

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[95] BLCP 6/276 Letter, 30 May, 1917.
[96] Diary of Captain Bryden McKinnell, 16 June 1915, cited in Hal Giblin, *Bravest of Hearts The Biography of a Battalion The Liverpool Scottish in the Great War* (2000), pp.21-2.

over an unmoving frontier, you 'had to remember Christmas, and postcards of the Crown Prince and his fiancée, and little cafes in Valence and beer gardens in Unter den Linden and weddings at the Mairie, and going to the Derby, and your grandfather's whiskers.'[97] Idealised memories of the German landscape, locality and family were tied intimately to the ideology of sacrifice. Unteroffizier Georg Guertier noted on the day of repentance (*Busstag*) that 'I think of the House, and my loved ones. I hear the bells, that call to evensong, see the mild, friendly face of our pastor. I hear his repentance day sermon, how he speaks so insistently to us.'[98] A similar sentiment was echoed in an anonymous German letter, 'I always think that the land which gave me so much beauty and promises to be more beautiful can well demand that I and my wife (who has enjoyed and will enjoy it) can well make this sacrifice.'[99] These statements may not be representative of the army as a whole, but the affective memory of the homeland as the embodiment of the will to sacrifice was often drawn from religious officers. The remembered birthplace and place of adolescence gave the sacrificial ideology a sensory power of memory. In these ways, the multiple allegiances they felt shackled to – regimental, familial, religious and social class – restrained outright retreat into irony and alienation.

To say that religious people did not think about tactics and tactical realities would be to overstretch the argument. The imperfections of military command, fostered by the sheer length of the front and underdeveloped battlefield communication, meant that junior officers of the profile of men in this chapter were delegated with burdensome tactical authority and the implementation of operational orders. They faced the possibility of death and injury directly, and privately calculated the likely losses that

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[97] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night: A romance* (New York, 1934), pp.117-118.
[98] 'Der Sieg des Glaubens im Felde', *Liller Kriegszeitung Eine Auslese aus Nummer 1-40* p.133.
[99] 'Aus Feldpostbriefen' *Evangelischen Freiheit* 16 (1916) pp. 323-4, 16 Jhrg. September 1916.

would afflict their regiment before making assaults and attacks. They could acknowledge the possibility of the regiment's decimation in a forthcoming attack without its efforts resulting in material gains, or could realise that their particular regiment was being deliberately placed in extreme danger to serve the objectives of a wider operation. But the sacred meaning of the war often survived these hard-headed realisations. The mentality they had internalised throughout their upbringing left them with a highly anti-utilitarian attitude to the experience of hardship and death. Facing it or enduring its risks, as a sincere drive or as to maintain face for the homefront audience, became an end in itself. It was therefore inimical to a 'balance sheet' mentality in which the legitimacy of the enterprise would rise or fall on the calculus of gains versus losses. It was alien to their formation, education, and piety.

This chapter has illustrated the survival and adaptation of a rhetoric that rendered war as an 'inner experience', which valorised the will to war as a godly virtue worth pursuing regardless of war's immediate progress. Religion divorced the sacred meaning of the war's purpose and the soldier's daily struggle to remain virtuous, from the logistical and tactical efficiency of its military conduct. War's realities were received not as raw data but mediated through a powerful code of character, honour and masculinity that religion had helped to implant. By framing warfare as a vital biographic stage of manhood, as a personal morality play, it enabled individuals to represent the daily trials of war as a meaningful struggle amidst a protracted and often indecisive military situation. If war on both sides was presented as a trial of character and faith rather than a struggle whose legitimacy was to be judged through a rational calculation of interests, to be a Christian soldier entailed the cultivation of character

and Christian manliness, which meant rising above the ebb and flow of disheartening news with the armour of faith.

Where that rhetoric was expressed, was it sincerely meant or was it primarily a way of presenting oneself to an audience? Probable authenticity can be established in some instances, as with Uhl's personal diary in which he had clearly internalised the piety of war as a personal test and discipline that only God would terminate. Or in the case of Noel Chavasse, where he so desired to be seen as loyal to his regiment and to continue the development of his own character through war, that he acted against his own interests when given the chance for a transfer and assured physical survival. Or the minutes of the 9th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, a voluntary and private forum for believers that was not subject to the scrutiny of military censors. In other cases, (though impossible to verify) the rhetoric may have been an insincere posture. But even this was driven by the desire to be seen as a virtuous and faithful soldier by loved ones. Prewar religiosity furnished a system of representations and language that enabled them to do so. But representations themselves also generated and shaped behaviour. The desire to be assigned virtue may animate soldiers to write home about themselves in certain ways, but to maintain the image they must then vindicate it by living up to it. Military service made war the ultimate public display of virtue.

CHAPTER 4

MOBILISING THE SPIRIT:

SOLDIERS' HOMES AND THE WAR ROLL

This chapter examines two church initiatives conducted at the front to minister to the moral welfare of combatants, German Soldiers' Homes, and the British War Roll movement. Soldiers' Homes were centres of leisure and accommodation for German troops in foreign territories. The War Roll movement was an evangelistic movement within the British Army that numbered hundreds of thousands. Both were attempts by the churches to reform combatants through frontline projects. It is argued that these projects reflect some distinctive features of the religious war experience of the British and German faithful, but also some fundamental commonalities. In contrast with the dominant role of the BEF as a partner invited into theatres of war by its coalition allies, Germany's army was an invading force. The eastern frontiers in particular lent a distinctive accent to German religious responses, representing the armies of the *Kaiserreich* as conquerors commissioned by God but also as pilgrims threatened by the alien cultures and hostile territories they had encountered. This paradox, that the warriors who were bringing *Kultur* to godless lands could become corrupted by their separation from the Fatherland, created an uneasy relationship between the army and its conquered cultures and peoples. Invasion and settlement shaped German war theology around the fear of cultural dislocation. That theme is less pronounced in the self-perception of British participants.

But these projects also illustrate a parallel process. As Chapter 1 demonstrated, military service was once cherished by the churches as an endeavour that would uplift and purify the combatant. As the war continued, it threatened to do the opposite. Both projects in different ways reflect how the hope for national redemption was being threatened, not so much by high casualties and losses alone, but by the danger that war was not transforming national life as embodied in the army. In particular, both projects reflect increasing anxiety about the effects of war on combatants and about an anticipated moment of the war, the return of the veteran. Though the churches canonised the dead as saints and martyrs, those who survived were regarded with more apprehension. The dead were more easily woven into myth than the living, who could potentially emerge from the war maimed, damaged and brutalised. Consequently, several movements arose to rehabilitate the armies and remobilise them as the veteran citizen-soldiers of the future.

In early 1915, and again in 1917, the German army thrust deep into enemy territory on the eastern front. Spectacular victories led to the expulsion of Russian forces from Polish territory, and the creation of German satellite states from the Arctic circle to the Caucuses. While the German armies occupied Belgium and northern France, historically familiar terrain, Germany's military campaigns in the eastern theatres of war confronted it with territories that many found unfamiliar. These regions with their weaving of foreign peoples were represented by their occupiers as both bewilderingly chaotic and primitive, at first as a mess, then increasingly as a malleable terrain to be reordered by 'German mastery and organisation.'[1] Behind the victorious forces of overlords Hindenburg and Ludendorff, followed a determined group of Lutheran

[1] As argued by V.G. Liulevicius in his account of the imperial and racial ideologies underpinning German visions of an eastern European empire, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I.* (Cambridge, 2000) p.8.

social engineers, led by Pastor Paul Humburg, chairman of the Young Men's Evangelical Federation. As Germany's conquering armies entered *terra incognita*, it fell to the German branch of the Student Christian Movement to manage the homes, shelter soldiers and orchestrating their leisure time.[2] In the cities of newly seized territories, including Libau, Kovno, and Warsaw, they built Soldiers' Homes. By the end of the war, hundreds of soldiers' homes were established from Libau to Constantinople, in the theatres of eastern Europe and in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Palestine, with several in Warsaw, Constantinople and Kowno. Homes were also built in occupied France and Belgium.

Surviving testimonies show that religious participants greeted these conquests with unease as well as pride, as armies of occupation in culturally threatening lands. The new lands were populated by complex web of ethnic communities, unknown places and new languages. As the Director of the German Christian Student Union remarked of the eastern theatre, the architects of the Soldiers' Homes had to learn a 'new geography', as it ministered to armies occupying unfamiliar and foreign cities.[3] It was that very insecurity of entering foreign soil that shaped the attitudes and fears of the pastors and Protestant soldiers who congregated in the soldiers' homes. The new eastern territories were seen all at once as a dangerous wilderness to be tamed, a place of spiritual exile for Germany's faithful and a new empire granted by God. Deprived of a large colonial empire, the expanding frontier represented a providential chapter in German history, just as America's Puritan settlers had interpreted the wilderness of

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[2] Gerhard Niedermeyer recorded those on the governing committee, which combined senior pastors, future German Chancellor Georg Michaelis, military chaplains and laity. Archives of the World Student Christian Federation, Yale Divinity School (Henceforth abbreviated AWSCF) Box No. 127, Folder 975 D(c) 555.3, 'Materials Re: The Armed Forces', 'Deutsche Soldatenheime' p.4.

[3] AWSCF 127/975 D(c) 555.3, Gerhard Niedermeyer, 'Deutsche Soldatenheime', p.1.

the New World as a land to be converted to the New Jerusalem, making their national history the history of salvation.[4] Germany's bounty of new resources and populations presented the rewards of faith but also new possibilities for wandering from ancestral customs. The armies took with them an inherited fear of separation from home in foreign territory. It had been inscribed into their official liturgy. The field hymn book of the Swabian army, first published in 1888, included the prayer 'O shelter us now also in the foreign country, offer protection to us before all the dangers, from which we cannot protect ourselves, before insidious hosts, treacherous signposts and all shady attacks which creep in the darkness.' Despite an extensive programme to domesticate and Germanise these lands and peoples, they would continue to be seen by Protestant patriots as hostile landscapes throughout the war. Looking back on the war in 1920, one officer blamed the alleged mischief of Ukrainian Jewish merchants and the subversive atmosphere of eastern cities engulfed by revolution for corrupting the fighting spirit of *Frontkämpferen* in the last days of the war.[5]

Because they served an important practical purpose, the homes had the imprimatur of the military authorities. Field Marshal Hindenburg had secured subsidies from the military for the project. The armies' interest was in soldiers' morale and supplies. Homes on the eastern front, as one report noted, 'must have many things for sale, otherwise the soldiers cannot get them.'[6] For the soldier in far flung terrain, the homes were an oasis of rest and a vital artery of communication with the homefront. Usually

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[4] For a parallel analysis of the influence of the progressive social gospel on American Christian idealism in World War I, see R. M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War and the Rise of the Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, 2003).

[5] R. Wallau, 'Die Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs in der Ukraine' in *Deutsch-Evangelisch* 11 (1920) pp.38-55.

[6] Report, 'The Student Movements and the War – Germany,' *The Student World* 9: 1 (Jan. 1916) p.33.

in a house co-opted by the army, it furnished reading and writing material, and large rooms for congregating and singing.

If the homes were valuable to the army in terms of logistics and morale, the Lutheran churches saw a civilising mission in the business of sheltering the armed forces and orchestrating the soldiers' leisure time. The daily life of the soldiers home was designed to reinforce a wholesome cultural identity. As Humburg summarised when commenting on the Soldiers Home in Kovno, it was a 'place in a hostile land where German soldiers may find a home, may be newly related to their home and where we hope many a one accepts the call from the Heavenly home to his eternal salvation.' Contact with the family through letter-writing preserved the nostalgic memory which the churches were keen to sustain. Patriotic songs, edifying literature and religious services were ways of cultivating the ideals of the citizen-soldier, anchored in memories of hearth and homeland. Humburg and his brethren encouraged the pleasure of writing and receiving letters from the homeland 'knowing, however, what a great influence on the attitude of the warrior's families at home and also on the morals of the soldiers out here is exercised by a continuous correspondence with the home.' That leisure was a danger, and that letter-writing was a means to sustain soldiers' morals was a sentiment shared by British Y.M.C.A. authorities, 'It is well to emphasise the recreation side of things, for a man's spare hours can be charged with wickedness; it is well to emphasise the facilities for writing letters, for a man's contact with home will keep his heart true.'[7] Tables were laid out with 'patriotic entertaining' and 'Christian reading matter.' Singing gatherings were especially encouraged. Songs ignited the sentimental attachment to the homeland, invoking

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[7] J. K. Maclean, T. W. Riddle, *The Y.M.C.A. With the Colours* (London, 1916) pp.103-4.

families and wives left behind, picturesque landscapes ('In fairest meadows lies my home'), and the honoured Fatherland – 'Oh Germany High in Honour'. Homes were staffed by 'sisters,' who outside the homeland embodied 'domesticity'[8] and functioned as substitute sisters.[9] The celebration of Christmas was seen as an especially evocative reminder of the culture being defended. Pastor Wendelin rejoiced that on the third Christmas of the war they were showered with cigars and cigarettes, harmonicas, apples, writing paper, nuts, gingerbread and sewing kits.[10] Through the homes, the expanding frontiers of Imperial Germany and the home front could be bound together in a cultural continuum, shielding Germans serving abroad from the potentially corrupting influences of military service in foreign territory.

Humburg's account of his visit to the home in Libau typifies the way he regarded the homes, as an alternative to 'unclean elements' in the port city.[11] In a packed room, Humburg who had once been a military chaplain joined in the folk songs, enabling them to inhabit their family homes mentally, 'no longer in Libau on the Nieman, but each at home in the circle of the dear ones.' Later that night, the soldiers' home was given a housewarming. A chorus sprang up, as the assembled soldiers, young volunteers alongside severely wounded and disabled veterans, 'all with bright eyes and joyful faces', sang every verse of a song in tribute to their "land full of love and life, my German Fatherland.' The room fell quiet as Humburg then pledged their fealty to the Kaiser, an oath that 'has a special sound when people are gathered in a hostile country.' He then rededicated the physically depleted congregation to the

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[8] Sächs. Ausschuß f. Soldatenheime, Dresden (ed.): *Aus der Heimat kommt der Schein Bilder aus deutsch Soldatenheimen im Felde* (Leipzig, 1917) p.1.
[9] One sister described her role as attending to soldiers who longed for a sister away from home: Schian, *Die Deutsche Evangelische Kirche* (Mittler, 1921-5) p.457.
[10] Sächs. Ausschuß f. Soldatenheime (ed.) *Aus der Heimat* (Leipzig, 1917), pp.49-50.
[11] EZA Bstnd 34, Nr. 23 P. Humburg, 'Ein Brief', Libau, 11 August 1915.

'Father in Heaven', to the sorrow of the home and family there, and to the 'Saviour on the Cross', who had come amongst them like Parsival, mythic keeper of the Holy Grail and saviour, during the 'great trouble,' a reference to Germany's pantheon of medieval heroes typical of Protestant wartime preaching. Throughout the war pastors in the field would invoke that patriotic Protestant trinity: God the Father as Germany's "old ally", the Son whose suffering was the pattern of the ordeal of the ordinary soldier, and the Holy Spirit of the Fatherland. Finally, as Humburg claims, he was surrounded by some twenty or thirty men from all sections of Germany - a visible image of the newfound unity of the *Burgfriede* - thanking him and remarking, 'A thing like this in the land of the enemy!'[12]

Humburg's report acclaimed the success of the soldiers' homes as places of piety and social harmony, but as a source should be treated with caution. As the overseer and fundraiser for the homes, he had an interest in boasting about their success. In contrast, one official military report from an observer of other homes complained that the homes were not places of construction and composure, but rather 'hotbeds of worsening moods and the spread of dirty jokes.'[13] Enforcing an austere code of abstention from alcohol, the homes were designed to replicate not the authentic home environment of the soldier but the Lutheran ideal of the family home, antagonising soldiers with alternative expectations of what the interior of the German house should contain. Sister Johanna Haas, for example, recalled a dispute with soldiers enjoying their home recreation of beer drinking.[14] The churches claimed to be exporting the

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[12] AWSCF D(c) 555.3, 127/974 Group 46/4, 'Materials re: the Armed Forces', P. Humburg, 'General Survey of the Soldiers' Home on the East Front' (already translated, translator unknown) pp.8-11.
[13] FMA RM 5/3820, 'Bericht des Vetreters der 7. Armee Report, 7.11.1917': 'Aufsichtung über die Besprechung über den Vaterländischen Unterricht', am 4 November 1917 in Charleville und am 5 November 1917 im Großen Hauptquartier.'
[14] J. Haas, *Sonnentage und Gefangenschaf: Ein Jahr an der Front* (Barmen, 1919) p.10.

household, but they were actually trying to reform it on their terms. The picture is further inflected by the fact that the Soldiers Homes were not exclusive to the devout but open to all, including some who welcomed the chance for recreation but were hostile to their patriotic piety. Social Democrat and soldier Hans Berger reviled the homes as institutions founded to exploit the slaves of Prussian militarism, run for the benefit of Germany's jingoistic patriot women who staffed the homes as sisters.[15] The extracts from a guest book in one home, reprinted in an official Saxon appraisal of Soldiers Homes scheme, contains entries that are clearly selected to advertise an idealised image of the soldier after his time in a home. Exhausted, battle-weary and bored, he arrives to feel himself in the 'German home' moved almost onto 'German ground,' with German literature and even 'the last culinary pleasures of home,' a relief from the monotony of field-life.[16]

Students letters in the German *Kleine Akademische Feldpost*, indicate that amongst the pious there could be authentic fear amongst dislocated soldiers stationed in strange and alien territory. From Warsaw, Helmuth Arnold wrote: 'The soldier home seems infinitely beneficial for the part of the comrades here... On the other hand the temptations are great. Then all detachments stand almost not under control at all…When will the Lord bring us together into fields of light? God protect the friends and comrades and send us soon glorious peace.'[17]

Both Humburg's report and the visitors' complaints reveal much about what the homes were intended to achieve, about the aspirations that the architects of the

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[15] Cited in H. Cron, *Das Archiv des Deutschen Studentendienstes von 1914* (Potsdam, 1926), p.81.
[16] 'Feldpostbriefe, 10 March 1917,' *Aus der Heimat* (Leipzig, 1917) p.55.
[17] KAF Num.180, 1915/16, Helmuth Arnold, Letter, 7 November 1915, p.92.

mission invested in soldiers homes as one component of the 'spiritual guidance' (*geistigen Anregungen*) of 'patriotic education'. The soldier's allegiance to the anointed monarch, God and the family home, was typically invoked through the civic duty towards the monarch, through cultural symbols (such as the pantheon of Germanic medieval heroes), and the affective memory of the localities and music of the homeland. Humburg presents the religious service and folk singing as an exemplar of social harmony and national unity, stylising the gathering as the incarnation of an ideal folk community reborn at the front.

These frontline initiatives amounted to a deliberately cultivated nostalgia for the homeland. Soldiers' Homes from the beginning were presented to their occupants and the homeland as centres of transplanted Germanic culture and outposts of a sacred imperial and divine mission. One account reported that at the opening of a home created out of an old Russian barn, it was consecrated by military chaplains and celebrated by a lusty singing of "God for Kaiser and Reich", as well as a choral number from Wagner, while at another opening a soldiers choir performed in a room decorated with German colours before guests from the civilian and military administration sat down to breakfast.[18] The activities of the pious in soldiers homes were also intended to fortify the identification of God and Fatherland. After a bible study one evening, one soldier was presented with the Iron Cross, greeting the honour with three cheers for His Saviour and then three cheers for His Majesty.[19]

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[18] Divisionspfarrer Krohn, 'Ein Soldatenheim an der vorderstern Front' *Zeitung der 10 Armee* 43 (March 14 1916); *Zeitung der 10 Armee* Unteroffz. Kastemacher, 'Einweihung eines Soldatenheims' 110 (July 26, 1916).
[19] *Weißes Kreuz Zeitschrift* 1915, p.71.

Soldiers Homes formed one pillar of the OberOst scheme to control, settle and cultivate occupied eastern territories and implant Germanic civilization. Germany's new eastern empire was to be the platform for Christianising the heathen in places inhospitable to true godliness. As one official letter in 1918 claimed, their mission was 'To build the Kingdom of God even in the enemy land.'[20] Simultaneously, they wanted to preserve the national identity and customs of the military. While the 'places and races' of the East were to be re-ordered and acculturated along "German" principles, that cultural transmission was only supposed to flow in one direction. The native cultures of the new territories were not to be imbibed by the conquerors. German warriors, it was hoped, would be prevented from being divorced from their ancestral culture and virtues. This meant they must remain separate and distinct. Thus there was an inner contradiction in this imperialist project. Native populations must be enlightened by exposure to German culture, but without Germans being exposed to natives. Paradoxically, in the eyes of its clerical supervisors the very condition that was supposed to make German military enterprise sacred, exile in alien lands and the attendant longings for native customs and culture, was also the condition that most endangered it. The mission of the homes was therefore twofold: to furnish a 'piece of the homeland' by replicating the interior of the typical German household, and to educate the soldier or sailor, to function as a 'school.'[21] Such projects were also intended to shield the soldiers from the corrupting influences of foreign territories.

The account of Friedrick Fick, pastor in Antwerp and then Garrison pastor in Lüttich, illustrates the contradictory way Germany's imperial project was conceived.

Germany's mission, according to the Garrison Pastor in Lüttich, was to expand the

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[20] Diakonie Archiv, Berlin ADW CA 423 CA 423/1918 III A I c 15, 'Kriegslehrgang fuer Feldgeistliche im Osten 1918.' Letter, undated, 'Die Kirche und Theologie auf dem Vormarsch im Osten.'

[21] *Aus der Heimat* (Leipzig, 1917) p.1.

frontiers of God's Kingdom while shielding soldiers from 'foreign influences' that they encountered, quarantining the homesick and endangered combatants with 'all the good spirits of the native country', its soil, family life and cultural memory.[22] Along with the press section and the political section, Lutheran churches were an important agency in this project. Soldiers Homes were considered to be outposts of everything that was prized in national culture, placed on the very edge of an expanding German frontier.

The eastern theatre of war gave a distinctive topography to Lutheran war piety. The Lutheran pastors of the German forces imagined their flock as the chosen people in exile, because unlike the bulk of the British army, German armies occupied foreign territory as invaders rather than as invited coalition partners. According to the spokesmen of soldiers' homes, the army's condition of exile made it special because it was supposedly unique. One pastor explained the role of soldiers' homes as part of a tradition of Germanic diaspora, in terms of a singular racial experience of dispersal. He described the German armies as the latest wave of the *Wandervolk*, a wandering or migrating people, with a special "yearning" (or *Sehnsucht*) for their homeland. Drawn to all countries and continents, their homesickness ("Heimweh") was characterized not as a universal human condition suffered in separation from home, but as a special and intrinsic part of the Germanic national character. The millions of German sons scattered on fronts from Flanders and France, in Turkey, Russia, Rumania and Macedonia, longed for their families and children, for their mothers and brides, for their German customs, for art, cleanliness, order, and 'loveliness.'[23]

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[22] F. Frick, *Beim Landsturm in Lüttich: Bilder aus der Kriegs und Friedensarbeit hinter der Front* (Barmen, 1917) pp.40-42.
[23] *Aus der Heimat* (Leipzig, 1917) p.1.

Geography and landscape also influenced how British participants represented the sacred purpose of the war. By way of contrast, the religious imagination of English chaplains was stimulated by the sacred soil of allied France. The more ritualist Anglicans were drawn to the mystique of Roman Catholic iconography in the French countryside, which was a territory of horrendous conflict populated with wayside calvaries, consecrated by icons and sites of pilgrimage. Wounded soldiers were sheltered in churches, and crucifixes improbably survived bombardment. It was an intelligible way of communicating the war's transcendent meaning to them and the homeland. A public symbol in France in a way it was not in England, the cross and its kindred crucifix appealed as potent *foci* of worship. One chaplain reported that soldiers 'constantly comment on crucifixes standing among desolation and more than once one has heard to remark 'They can't touch Him.' A picture of our Lord upon the Cross is eagerly welcomed, and thousands wear crucifixes they have bought...nothing drew men more surely to voluntary services in or just behind the trenches than the knowledge that they would hear about the cross.'[24] While Roman Catholic iconography inspired many, embracing icons came easier to Anglo-Catholics, less affected by Protestant iconophobia than some of their evangelical counterparts. When the evangelical Low Church Chaplain-General visited Harry Blackburne, '…I do not think he quite liked our Crucifix. I told him that we had learnt to understand and love the Crucifix out here.'[25]

Directors and pastors attached to German Soldier's Homes feared that the nation's manhood was divorced from the birthplace of their native customs, the sacred landscape where lay their bonds of ancestral community, custom and piety. Exile, 'the

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[24] J.S. Brough, 'Religion in the Army' *Church Quarterly Review* 86:171, (April 1918), p. 21.
[25] H. Blackburn, *This Also Happened on the Western Front: the padre's story* (London, 1932) p. 170.

nursery of nationalism,' is a generic theme in the identity of peoples separated from their native territories.[26] As Svetlana Boym observes, nostalgia for the remote homeland was a term that originated precisely from the condition of fighting abroad, developed by seventeenth century physicians to evoke the melancholy of Swiss mercenaries separated from their mountain homes and pastures.[27] The nation's capacity for calling forth sacral devotion was never stronger than amongst beleaguered exiles. The experience of fighting abroad in hostile territory was likened in German war sermons to the ancient Israelites of the Old Testament, dreaming in captivity of Jerusalem, and as a community of faith physically adrift but reaffirming its special covenant with God. Homesickness itself in one military chaplain's tract was treated as a manifestation of purity and piety. Meditating on homesickness, field hospital chaplain Dr Anton Gulielminetti described the armies as the weeping exiles of Psalm 137, 'Who would blame the needy and neediest that must sit at the 'rivers of Babylon' and must eat the bread of the exile.' Homesickness was an emblem of penitence, evidence of the army's Christian *volk* idealism, a precondition for victory. The soldier's tears of "faith and love for the family and home" would be deposed as evidence before the 'throne of the chief of warlords.' While stationed "on alien soil," and separated from their sacred Fatherland, to miss homeland was to retain its values, while executing the *Kulturkampf* by purging Germany of Gallic immoral infiltration. He repeats the Psalm's injunction not to forget Jerusalem, symbolic citadel of their native ideals.[28] The missionary and welfarist objectives of the Soldiers Homes were to deliberately cultivate a sense of a sacred communion forged in the memory of the

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[26] See A. D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford, 2003) pp.21-24.
[27] S. Boym, *The future of nostalgia* (New York, 2001) xv; see also J. Winter, 'Metropolitan Nostalgia and Metropolitan Iconoclasm: Representations and urban identities in wartime Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919' in J.-L. Robert, J. Winter, (eds)., *Capital Cities at War. Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*, ii. (Cambridge, 2006) (forthcoming) p.8.
[28] A. Gulielminetti, *Heimweh und Heimkehr: Ein Feldbrief an die heimwehkranken Kameraden* (München, 1916) p. 5.

defended homeland, attachments enabled through both religious services, musical evenings and letter-writing. The unfamiliar and the foreign became domesticated and familiar, or in the words of the report on Soldiers Homes in Belgium, the visitor would encounter a 'little piece of native country.'[29]

The temptations, ungodly practices and subversive dangers of French culture were particularly feared, but as familiar and well-known threats. These two intertwined objectives were identified in the report of Director Pastor Meyer on the Homes established in France and Belgium. According to Meyer, the home would recreate the conditions of the family home, the locus of the soldier's ideals and values, whilst sobriety and a pure environment would fortify the soldier against perverse entertainments:

> Our aspiration [was]… from the start to create rather…comfortable, drawing spaces, in which the soldier finds everything he is accustomed to find at home, pleasant conversation, a loyal friend, good reading, music, refreshment for the body, instruction and lessons, and only if he wants, also strengthening and raising of the soul and the mind… In the face of the moral dangers, which will just walk towards the warrior, especially in the romantic countries, however, we hold abstinence to be a very good weapon not to be defeated.[30]

German chaplains characterised the invasion and occupation of enemy territories as pilgrimage in a hostile landscape. Superintendent Leonhard described the fields of France as 'a godless foreign land.'[31] Germany's ancestral demonology of French degeneracy stretched back to the Napoleonic wars, where pastors cast France as an

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[29] AWSCF 129/984 'Ein Besuch in den Soldatenheimen in Belgian', *Gott mit uns! Aus der Kriegsarbeit der Nationalvereinigung der evangelischen Jünglingsbündnisse Deutschlands Ein Gang durch die Soldatenheime in Belgien und Frankreich (1915)*, p.17.
[30] AWSCF 129/984, Direktor Pastor Meyer, 'Gott mit uns! Aus der Kriegsarbeit der Nationalvereinigung der evangelischen Ju(e)nglingsbu(e)ndnisse Deutschlands Ein Gang durch die Soldatenheime in Belgien und Frankreich' (1915) pp.13-14.
[31] Superintendant Dr. Leonhard, 'Das religiöse Leben der Feldsoldaten' *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands* 44 (1917), p. 18.

irreligious and blasphemous nation of hedonists.[32] Paris was Sodom, capital of their corrupt national spirit. In regimental folklore Prussian officers had left the "stinking city" to return to their robust virtuous rural people.[33] The visit to the Home was intended to renew the courage of the men, while strengthening them "to hold out in the difficult struggle" of military conflict and "in the struggle against the evil powers, that still rush out against each warrior especially in the enemy land."[34]

This highlights the different topography in which British and German religious participants regarded the conflict. Geography mattered in defining the 'holy war.' As chaplains canonised the dead of their armies into a Christian martyrology and their living into an heroic pantheon, the landscape helped to define what made the war sacred. The religious imagination of the more ritualist English chaplains was stimulated by the Roman Catholic iconography of the French countryside, a territory of horrendous conflict populated with wayside calvaries, icons and sites of pilgrimage. Wounded soldiers were sheltered in churches, and crucifixes improbably survived bombardment, as the soil of French territory became, in Annette Becker's words, 'the 'bulwark of their patriotic mystique.'[35]

One example of the religious and patriotic literature that filled the reading rooms of the Soldiers Homes is the *Deutsche Weihnacht*. It was a Christmas gift compiled by the German Christian Student Movement regularly distributed to approximately 30,000-40,000 mobilised students. The heroism of youth was located in the codes of

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[32] See further, E. Pelzer 'Die Wiedergeburt Deutschlands 1813 und die Dämonisierung Napoleons' in G. Krumreich, H. Lehmann (eds.), *Gott mit Uns: Nation, Religion und Gewalt im 19 und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2000) pp. 135-156.
[33] Cited in A.J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism German Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart, 1986) pp.129-30.
[34] AWSCF 129/984 Direktor Pastor Meyer 'Gott mit uns!', p.16.
[35] A. Becker, *War and Faith* (Oxford, 1998), p.6.

the nation's cultural memory, beckoning German combatants as far away as Lithuania or the Ottoman Empire or as culturally alien as Liège to anchor their personal story in the framework of Germany's literary, aesthetic and heroic tradition. The love of God celebrated at Christmas, wrote Superintendant Blau, was also a sacrifical love, and Germans would only rescue the world "through death and bleeding."[36] Christmas was particularly cherished in Germany, and its resonances with the nation's cultural and religious heritage were invoked to induce soldiers' to continue their *Opferwilligkeit*, their willingness to sacrifice themselves. Above all, the literature was provided to instruct the soldier in his grave responsibilities, urging him to shoulder solemnly his duties as a future veteran. 'It is possible for a nation to be ruined by success', Dr. Axenfeld proclaimed in the *Deutsche Weihnacht*, and 'Our Future and our effect on the world depend on the spirit in which you return, and on what we have become meanwhile in God's school.'[37]

Military service, a vocation once promoted as the highest state of Christian manhood, was now a pilgrimage in conditions which imperilled the soldier's moral health. One pamphlet, circulated by the *DCSV*, depicted the soldier's condition as akin to the unflinching paladin, beset by devils and beasts on the narrow path to the city of God, in Albrecht Dürer's famous woodcut, 'The Knight,' an allegory on salvation.[38] The Soldier's Homes, in Humburg's words in an appeal for donations of books and magazines from the homeland, were designed to facilitate both the field soldier's

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[36] AWSCF 128/978 Generalsuperintendant D. Blau, 'Opfer', in *Deutsche Weihnacht Eine Liebesgabe Deutscher Hochschüler* (n.d.), p.78.
[37] Dr. Axenfeld, *Deutsche Weihnacht* cited in George Hare Leonard, *They Also Serve*, 1915, p.46.
[38] M. Zimmermann, *Albrecht Dürer als Deutscher Kunstler*, (**find reference in student materials)** 1915.

physical and spiritual recovery, to service the bloody struggle against the enemy and the inner struggle against 'manifold temptations.'[39]

Emphasis on simulating the interior of the household in the Soldiers Home reflected a brand of patriotic Lutheranism that was particularly home-based. The family was seen as part of the bedrock of the soldiers' virtue. The social militarism of the Kaiserreich stressed family ideals, communicated in the journals of veterans associations, which looked to the armies as instruments for immunising manhood from political subversion, and cultivating the virtues of the family hearth. 'The power of the German people lies in the family and in the faithful care, pure sense of the family. The welfare of the whole nation depends on it, that man and wife should keep in mind the higher vocation and rear children in hard-working and pious life.'[40] The German armies had evolved demographically with an increase in the number of middle-class officers to meet its demands, so that 70% of the officer corps as a whole were *bourgeois* by the year 1913, while the proportion of noble generals had fallen by 28% between 1865 and 1913. Probably reflecting a fear particularly of the unchurched urban recruits, the churchgoing middle-class family was explicitly identified as the cradle of sacred domesticity, an ideal state of comfort and cleanliness, (*Gemütlichkeit*), a hallowed Germanic achievement and something to be preserved amongst the occupying army. Publicly acknowledging in 1890 that the nobility of birth would no longer enjoy its monopoly over the officer corps, Kaiser Wilhelm publicly appealed to the sons of

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[39] AWSCF 127/46 P. Humbug, 'Herzliche Bitte an unsere Freunde und Leser in der Heimat Für die Soldatenheime im Osten.' (no date).
[40] *Parole* 1900 cited in T. Rohkrämer *Militarismus der kleinen Leute Die Kriegervereine im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914* (München, 1990), p.217.

'honourable *bourgeois* families in whom the love for King and Fatherland, a warm heart for the soldier's calling, and Christian morality are planted and nurtured.'[41]

[41] Figures and quotation from G. A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army* (New York, 1964 edn.) p.235.

The War Roll Movement

The War Roll project was an interdenominational evangelistic movement created by Britain's Protestant churches. It aimed to form men of the British Army into a vanguard of Christian soldiers who would return to their local communities after the war to devote themselves to maintaining the wartime community spirit. Founded in 1915 as a BEF mission, it later entered Dominion and American forces. Originating amongst theologians at Oxford university, it attracted hundreds of thousands of signatories. It has received little attention in the existing historiography.[42] Yet it became the largest social-religious movement in the British armed forces, and claimed the loyalties both of converts and established Christians from all parts of Britain's Protestant spectrum. Why was it founded, how did it appeal to so many of the pious within military ranks, and what does it say about the changing religious experience of the war? I argue that the War Roll movement demonstrates several patterns of commonality and convergence in German and British Protestant attitudes to the war. The War Roll reflected a shift in perceptions of the effects of the war experience, with its particular concern for the impact of the war on the future military veteran. Sacrifice was not automatically purifying the nation and what was supposed to be its noblest manifestation, the citizen army. Consequently the war would not decisively redeem the nation but would only be the prelude to a greater struggle. Once thought of as the highest vocation of Christian civic duty, military service was coming to be seen with greater ambiguity. It was feared that military service might be potentially a spiritually dangerous pilgrimage that imperilled the servicemen's character and

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[42] It is unmentioned in the most recent and wide-ranging overview of religion in the British and American Armies, R. Schweitzer, *The Cross and the Trenches: Religious Faith and Doubt among British and American Great War Soldiers* (Connecticut, 2003).

values, or that men evangelised and reformed by the discipline of war would be spoilt by the relaxation into peace. The missionary drive to prevent the degradation of combatants therefore intensified. The architects of the War Roll movement were haunted by the duality of the imagined war veteran, as both potentially enlightened and potentially brutalised. In this respect, the fears that motivated the creation of German Soldier's Homes by Lutheran missionaries were the same anxieties that propelled the creation of the British War Roll movement.

The founder of the War Roll movement was Canon Edward Arthur Burroughs, an Oxford theologian, Chaplain to the King and future Anglican Bishop of Ripon. After an impassioned letter to the *Times* in March 1915, Burroughs attained the stature of wartime prophet to Britain's public school families and the religious elements of the officer corps, in the same way that padre Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy, child of a Leeds slum vicarage, was revered as the icon of the infantry and the man in the street. Burroughs grieved after the war claimed a succession of his Oxford friends, and was anxious that the first uplift of wartime society into communal values was being threatened by the 'greyness and stagnation of the long period of trench fighting.' He feared that German propaganda was accurate, that Britain had indeed become 'mercenary, decadent, individualist, material', and implored the nation not to waste the sacrifices of the dead by praying for a premature peace but to 'remain in the fire until we learn to cry, 'We have sinned.'[43] Burroughs' conception of the war was so millenarian that it made the stakes very high. Not only for the 'crushing of German militarism', it was also for a 'New England,' and 'a better world, bought by the sacrifices, built upon the experiences, of these tragic years.' He returned to that fear

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[43] E.A. Burroughs, 'The Eternal Goal. A Plea for Ideals.' *Times*, 4 March 1915.

throughout the war, warning that failure would mean that those who fought 'suffered in vain.'[44]

In August 1915, Burroughs approached Archbishop Randall Davidson seeking his support for the creation of the "League for the Spiritual War" (LSW). The draft manifestos of the League committed it to building 'Jerusalem' in the 'green and pleasant land.' It pledged to recruit men 'if God spares them, to fight on His side in that second campaign…[and] to prepare things at home for the mobilisation of our spiritual forces.' It envisaged the creation of a national Register of troops who joined, with their regimental and home addresses, and proposed to foster preparation for their homecoming amongst the civilian population 'for the spiritual struggle ahead.'[45] In his seminal study of the Church of England during the First World War, Alan Wilkinson portrays Burrough's crusading vision of Christian veterans in spiritual rearmament as the cloistered dream of an upper-class divine, so remote from the realities of the fighting front and the material concerns of ordinary people that it was destined to remain in obscurity.[46]

On the contrary, despite Burroughs' privileged social status, his ambitious ideals proved attractive to the pious within the army. The missionary project of the League was not disbanded because it lacked appeal, but was taken up and popularised by the War Roll campaign. After discussion and planning, the League for the Spiritual War with its 5000 members had its project of creating a register subsumed by the united War Roll project, which was eventually co-ordinated by the vast machinery of the

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[44] E.A. Burroughs, *The End of it All* (London, 1918) p.1.
[45] Lambeth Palace Library [henceforth LPL] Randall Davidson Papers [henceforth RDP], Vol. 356, pp.47-49. Letter, August 19 1915, E.A. Burroughs to Archbishop Davidson.
[46] A. Wilkinson, *The Church of England in the First World War* (London, 1978) p.282.

Y.M.C.A in conjunction with the Church of England Men's Society, the Church Army, and members of the old League. Burroughs also received the approval of the Moderators of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church. Each volunteer swore an oath on joining, 'I hereby pledge my allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as my saviour and King, and by God's help will fight His battles for the victory of His Kingdom.' The Card of Welcome for returning Members of the War Roll, entitled *The Greater War*, was illustrated by a crusader knight with sword drawn ready to combat shadowy Viking ships approaching the coastline, its caption: 'To drive from our coasts the sins that put to shame.'[47]

The Church of England section of the War Roll compiled a card index of its members by diocese, which were then subdivided into cities, towns and villages. Its purpose was to build a national, Protestant inter-denominational organisation of future military veterans. Each individual would pledge himself to a crusade that would continue after the war finished. Those who signed the War Roll pledge engaged with the association through their local incumbent cleric, who was asked to keep in touch with the man during the war, and welcome him back if he came home. A copy of the *Comrade*, published by the Church Army, was sent to him every few months from the central office through his home address. Organised in a national structure through local church parishes, the movement aimed to win the citizen army for God and keep surviving combatants in a continued state of psychological mobilisation. It channelled the desire of various associations (the Church Army, the YMCA, the Church of England Men's Society and the League of the Spiritual War) 'to conserve the spiritual results of the war among men on active service who have expressed their desire to

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[47] LPL RDP, v. 356, p.267, 'Card of Welcome for returning Members of the War Roll.'

ally themselves with the Christian forces at home when they return after the war.'[48] It would transfer their military service into a militant struggle against the sinful regression that the resumption of peace threatened to bring, preparing them for the home-front that would be the theatre of a new struggle.[49]

Like so many churchmen, the League for the Spiritual War, reincarnated in the War Roll campaign, diagnosed the causes of the war in 'not one nation only but *all* the modern world' that had turned its back on God and embraced 'force and fraud and competition.'[50] It emphasised that the wartime lesson of service and faith must be sustained to justify the sacrifices of the dead by building a "more truly Christian civilisation": 'It is monstrous even to think of accepting the blood of so many just persons as the price of our being able to settle down comfortably to our old mad ways. If there is not a reformation, there will be a degeneration.'[51] That the war originated in the competitive lusts of nations was also the belief of the two of Burrough's co-signatories in a later leaflet, Wilson Carlile, founder of the Church Army, and E. Gordon Savile, head of the Church of England Men's Society. Because the contagion of warfare lay not only in the predations of Prussian militarism but also in the destructive inner workings of the social order across all nations, Germany's bid for world power was the culmination of a European-wide pursuit of 'Pleasure, power and the money to buy them' and 'Competition between man and man, business and business, class and class, nation and nation', so that war was only 'competition on a big scale.'[52]

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[48] 'Churches and Soldiers after the War A Single Pledge Card' *The Times* March 26, 1917, p.11.
[49] LPL RDP v. 356, p.75, Draft 'Proof of Statement of Objects.'
[50] LPL RDP v. 365 p.79, 'Draft Copy of Letter to New Members, League of the Spiritual War' (1915).
[51] LPL RDP v.365, p.85, "After the War" A Brief Introduction to 'The League of the Spiritual War.'
[52] LPL RDP v. 365, p.292, Leaflet, 'The War Roll.'

This was no ordinary evangelism. As the authors of a Memorandum on the War Roll project explained, the harvesting of souls at the frontline was not being undertaken purely to save their souls in eternity. 'The challenge of the War Roll makes a peculiar appeal to the soldiers which was not always the case with the old Evangelistic method. It suggests the making of a better England, and urges the importance of commencing at the right place, namely, personal surrender to Christ.'[53] Like the medieval millenarian concepts of salvation that took the form of a messianic earthly kingdom, the national salvation they desired would be terrestrial, collective, total and achieved within historical time.[54] As well as an outgrowth of the social concern of nineteenth century Christianity, ministry to the welfare and values of the army was also an extension of the churches' pre-war efforts to regulate and guide the leisure time of the masses.

The movement to enlist the ranks of surviving veterans into a crusade to redeem Britain also illustrates the way the language of sacrifice and redemption united Protestant church parties, clerics, missionaries and combatants. An appeal for the War Roll by two very different churchmen illustrated that the war cut across the boundaries that once divided them. The appeal was penned by an Officer of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and by Oxford divine Henry Scott Holland, Canon of Christ Church and founder of the Christian Social Union, who had contributed to the influential *Lux Mundi* (1889), which signalled a shift in Anglican orthodoxy from the 'ambulance work' of charity and philanthropy to a wholesale

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[53] University of Birmingham Special Collections [Henceforth UBSC] YMCA Collection, 'First World War Green Folders', Section K, Folder no.24, 'Memorandum of Y.M.C.A. War Roll Work, 1918,' p.2..
[54] For a study of medieval millenarian concepts of salvation, see N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium Revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1957), esp. p.13.

critique of the economic and social order.[55] Holland championed radical reform, advocating the 'Christianization of the social structure whereby all men live in accordance with the principles of divine justice and human brotherhood.' Holland was also the Chairman of the Provisional Committee of the League of the Spiritual War. Holland called 'the Men at the Front' to a campaign to liberate Britain from 'all that now disfigures our national homes,' in a battery of causes that foreshadowed the aspirations of the secular welfare state: 'We must see to it that all who will shall be free to live clean lives…We must purge the land of drink, and lust, of cruelty and greed, of tyranny and wrong. We must lift the poor out of the mire. We must build for ourselves fairer cities, such as Britons know how to fashion, and fill our countrysides with the old happy life.'[56] The Officer's inflection of Protestant redemption was more individual-centred in its stress on personal reform rather than systemic social reform, summoning men to 'control our passions and our thoughts', battling 'temptations' and vigilance in self-examination.[57] Such statements signify the extent of the changes Protestants expected the war to deliver and the protean nature of their visions of national salvation. It embraced reformists who aspired to reorder society and moralists who advocated evangelical individual discipline. It combined causes as various as temperance, urban sanitation, the alleviation of poverty, and the sanctity of marriage. Another tract that was distributed at the front was even more specific in its prescriptions for a new social order. Entitled *YMCA: Victory and After?*, it represents a united Protestant declaration of war aims. "We simply must go on working together after the war is over if we are really to secure the things for which we have been fighting. Our Country needs to be made a better and a happier Country," it insisted. The war was being fought to replace industrial discord with industrial peace, a system

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[55] See K. Barnes, *Nazism, Liberalism and Christianity* (Lexington, 1991), pp.10-20.
[56] LPL RDP, Leaflet, 'For God: and for Greater Britain', v.365, p.195.
[57] Ibid.

of universal education that would equip youth with technical skills, an assault on juvenile delinquency through 'homes where every boy and girl may learn the sanctities of sex, the nobility of work, and the shame of idleness and waste', reforms of popular leisure that would turn public houses into healthy proletarian social centres, and greater devotion to citizenship of the British Empire, all to ensure 'the Kingdom of GOD come upon earth.'[58] Significantly, it was countersigned by senior chaplains of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Wesleyan confessions, as well as the United Board and the Y.M.C.A. In the war aims being elaborated by the War Roll endeavour, the austere values of Victorian and Edwardian religious philanthropy were married to the objectives of systemic, social reform in ways that dissolved divisions between the denominations.

Much of the War Roll crusade was also Anglo-American in inspiration. Its foundation had been laid half a century before by the surge in revivalist trans-Atlantic campaigns to promote conversion and moral reform in the ranks of the British army.[59] The 'second great awakening' of 1859 cross-fertilised evangelical preachers from America and Britain, and saw a rise in militant hymns and vocabulary which presented the military life as a manifestation of the Christian pilgrimage. The antislavery campaigns and the American Civil War helped to galvanise the association of military service and evangelism. These influences penetrated evangelical and military circles particularly through the United States Christian Commission which worked among the troops, some of whose preachers repopularised military imagery in Britain through addresses, hymns and devotions. American preacher Sherwood Eddy (1871-

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[58] UBSC, YMCA Collection, Section K, Folder n.26, War Work Green Book, n.13, 'YMCA: Victory and After?.'

[59] See O. Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in mid-Victorian Britain' *English Historical Review* 84 (1971) 46-72.

1963) was a child of this tradition. During the war he urged soldiers to accept their suffering as a sacrament to bring them back to God.[60] He was invited by the British YMCA to preach in nightly meetings at huts on Salisbury Plain, and then in 1917 took a party of ten evangelists to address the British army. To foster good relations between the fresh American divisions who had newly arrived and the weary Allied troops, particularly to persuade the American divisions of the excellence and traditions of the Allied armies, British Prime Minister Lloyd George even arranged for him to lead a deputation of Americans to tour the Allied front from Ypres to Verdun. Like the War Roll movement itself, Eddy personified in the words of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr the fusion of 'evangelical experience and social passion.'[61] Eddy's account of War Roll enlistment, *With Our Soldiers in France*, is not necessarily a reliable guide to the actual climate in which men joined, given that it was written, in his own words, to promote support for the war work of the YMCA and to strengthen public morale.[62] It does indicate, however, the way the War Roll movement was conceived as a campaign for both personal and national redemption and as a struggle against inner corruption:

> Boys, what was the greatest battle of the war?...Was it the brave stand of little Belgium at Liege? Was it the splendid retreat of the little British army from Mons?...Was it the great stand at Ypres, or the defence of Verdun, or the drive on the Somme? What is your hardest battle? Is it not within, in the fight with passion? Now is the time to challenge every sin that weakens a man or the nation. How about drink? Is it friend or

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[60] S. Eddy, *Suffering and the War* (London, 1916), esp. pp. 90-91.
[61] Both the visit to the front and Niebuhr's praise are recorded in Sherwood Eddy's Autobiography, *Eighty Adventurous Years An Autobiography* (New York, 1955) pp.98-99 and pp.11-12 respectively.
[62] S. Eddy, *With Our Soldiers in France* (New York, 1917). Eddy later recalled that '...I wrote *With Our Soldiers in France,* interpreting my experiences at the front, endeavouring to enlist support for the war work of the YMCA, and trying to strengthen public morale.' Eddy, *Eighty Adventurous Years* (New York, 1955) p.102.

> foe? How about gambling? How about impurity?' Here we mass our guns on the greatest danger of the war.

The offences that signatories had committed, according to Eddy, were often against their families. Adulterers, prodigal sons, or men without families for whom the War Roll became their new family where they found God through the Christian fellowship of the army. Significantly, it was through the family that Eddy appealed to lost souls to convert through the War Roll, as the 'Christian ideals of home, of the Church, and of their own best selves surged up again…nearly the whole company joined in the song 'Tell Mother I'll be There.'[63]

In sum, the War Roll was consistently presented by evangelists and chaplains from all traditions of churchmanship as a movement to extend the war into a campaign to reform Britain by extending wartime ideas about fellowship into postwar reconstruction. Tracts and sermons testify to this remarkable unanimity. By devoting themselves to Christ, the armed forces were summoned to be shock troops of a postwar national rebirth. As Rev. W.E. Soothill remarked on this transfer of allegiances, "We asked them to sign our covenant in order to carry over to Christ and His kingdom what they had sworn to do for king and country…"[64]

In contemplating whether national 'reformation' would occur, the architects of the War Roll movement were nervously ambivalent about the servicemen who would survive. In the returning armies of the future lay the potential for the salvation or the further corruption of society. They presumed that returning British combatants would

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[63] S. Eddy, *With our Soldiers in France* (New York, 1917) pp.36-40.
[64] Rev. W.E. Soothill, 'War Roll Letters' *Triangle* Jan. 26, 1917, p.65.

form a distinct class that would wield dangerous authority, conscious of its own separate interests. These fears proved inaccurate in the light of how far veterans reintegrated into postwar society with a primarily civilian identity.[65] But without this foreknowledge, in August 1915 the League for the Spiritual War 'Statement of Objects' claimed 'Those of them who live to come home will wield enormous influence, but will meet all manner of temptations to use it for evil instead of good. The conditions of life 'on Active Service' are all against solid spiritual progress.'[66] In a leaflet that was distributed to 30,000 men in the British army, Chaplain Frank Barry beheld the dangerous power that lay in the hands of organised returning servicemen, exhorting those who would survive to wield their newfound influence wisely. 'You – the Army – *can get anything you like.* You *are* the Nation. You can control public opinion; not merely because you are so many, but because Britain is grateful to you.'[67] The War Roll, as Barry and the founders claimed, intended to secure the loyalties of future ex-servicemen by preparing their reception into their local communities, implanting a nucleus of godly veterans in every local area, 'a fighting unit of the Church Militant.'[68] The message was taken up by *The Comrade*, the Magazine of the Church Army War Comrades' Union, who summoned the troops with the slogan of Wilson Carlile, Honorary Chief Secretary of the Church Army, 'Comrades of Christ / War against sin, by/Union with Him, and prayer.'[69] The moral panic of the War Roll founders had been anticipated in the Church Army Commissioner's appeals for volunteers, who fretted that without enough workers to

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[65] On British veterans' re-assimilation, see S. Ward, "Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost" in *The War Generation Veterans of the First World War* pp.10-35, 34; A. Gregory, 'Peculiarities of the English? War, Violence and Politics: 1900-1939', *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2003), pp.44-58, 51.

[66] LPL RDP v. 356, p.75, Draft 'Proof of Statement of Objects.'

[67] LPL RDP v.356 p.288, Leaflet, F. Barry, 'When the Boys Come Home', (undated).

[68] LPL RDP v.356, p.271, 'Leaflet to members of the War Roll.'

[69] LPL RDP v.365 p.103, *The Comrade The Magazine of the Church Army War Comrades' Union.*

man new huts and recreation centres, 'there is a danger of our slipping back from the positions we have already gained.'[70] According to missionaries on the ground, such as Montague Goodman, the war was a twofold mobilisation, with men and women enlisting in munitions factories, in the rallying of imperial forces, and in the new army for 'our National Salvation', against the devil's mobilisation even on British soil. The duality of the war experience became manifest in the British army away from the combat zone, where the devil had mobilised his forces in barrack-room profanity, in 'the normal conversation of many a barrack, hut, or tent; the hundred thousand gambling tables in our camps; the awful stream of drink that sweeps away many a mother's boy, and gives her back a drunken waster'.[71] The scheme therefore aimed at the 'formation of Christian recruits into small but aggressive fighting units for the battle of the Lord in the camps.'[72] The model soldier was portrayed as a pious and sober idealist whose horizons were firmly fixed on the postwar struggle.[73]

The War Roll's message of remobilisation in a peacetime army of Christian war veterans attracted a significant response in the forces. After its inception, it co-ordinated a pre-existing similar Y.M.C.A. scheme that had begun in Easter, 1915 ('Christian Fellowship') and quickly received 30,000 by December, 1915.[74] The aggregate figure for the entire endeavour was recorded as 350,000 from the British and Dominion armies, and 500,000 from the combined membership of the British,

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[70] LPL RDP v.254, pp.381-2, 'The Call of the Front to Clergymen and Others.'
[71] UBSC YMCA Collection First World War Green Folders Section K, Folder 24, M. Goodman, 'Mobilising for God,' *YM*, October 6th 1916, p.939.
[72] UBSC YMCA Collection First World War Green Folders Section K, Folder 24, *YM* May 7 1915, p.403.
[73] Eg. the *Comrade* told its readers that 'A Soldier-Scout, just before leaving for the Front, recently said, "The whole of life is one great fight between good and evil. The fight with Germany is hard enough, but *we* have a fight which will go on long after the present war is over." LPL RDP v.365, p.103 *The Comrade* July 1916.
[74] UBSC YMCA Collection First World War Green Folders Section K, Folder 24, *YM* December 1915.

dominion and American armies.[75] Without a comprehensive record of War Roll statistics, the precise distribution of recruits along national and denominational lines is unclear. An exact calculation of the size of the British contingent of the War Roll is impossible. It is clear, however, that the first figure excludes American signatories. The disparity in size between the BEF and the Dominion forces suggests that a large portion of the 350,000 volunteers were British.[76] Arthur Yapp, Director-General of the Y.M.C.A., wrote that 200,000 officers and men had already signed the War Roll by May 11, 1917.[77] Few if any would have been American, as the United States had only recently declared war on Germany on the 6th April. The first record of American soldiers becoming signatories to the Roll was not until February, 1918, when in the first three weeks of February 15,000 American soldiers signed the card before sailing to Europe.[78] British participation continued to increase throughout 1918. Within the Church of England, as opposed to the entirety of the British membership, Gordon Savile, Clerical Secretary to the Church of England Men's Society, reported that by January 1918 the Church of England War Roll numbered 70,000 names of sailors and soldiers, which by April 1918 had increased to 80,000, in a time when the 'ordinary man in his ordinary life must be the hero and builder of our future New Jerusalem.'[79]

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[75] According to submission of the Y.M.C.A. to the interdenominational postwar inquest chaired by Bishop E.S. Talbot and Professor D.S. Cairns, the *Army and Religion: An Inquiry and its Bearing upon the religious life of the nation* (London, 1919), p.404: 'As the result of special services of this kind in the camps during the four years of war, for instance, the "War Roll" pledge of dedication to the service of Christ and His Kingdom has been signed by nearly 350,000 men.' The figure of 500,000 signatories, which includes American signatories, to the War Roll pledge is claimed by Sir Arthur Yapp, the Director- General of the YMCA, in *The Romance of the Red Triangle* (London, 1919) pp.211-212.

[76] 13% of the British infantry were from the Dominions: *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* p.28, J. Fuller *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1990), p.9.

[77] UBSC YMCA Collection First World War Green Folders Section K, Folder 24, A.K. Yapp, 'Our Outlook', *Red Triangle*, May 11 1917.

[78] UBSC YMCA Collection First World War Green Folders Section K, Folder 24, 'Memorandum of Y.M.C.A. War Roll Work, 1918.'

[79] First figure reported in letter of January 1918 by Gordon Savile, cited by Archbishop Davidson in letter, 14th Jan. 1918, LPL RDP v.356, p.257; Church of England Men's Society, *Men's Magazine (Quarterly) (Church of England Men's Society)* April 1918, p.10.

British pledges to the War Roll continued even during the demobilisation period, as the Minutes of the YMCA Standing Committee for Reconstruction and Demobilisation in mid-1919 record.[80] Allowing for the proportion of Dominion troops in the British forces, the numerical size of the British membership of the War Roll should be estimated at between 250,000 and 300,000. The demographic and religious profile of the thousands of voluntary crusaders was diverse. It attracted luminaries from the church and military establishments and from the Protestant masses, from both the Catholic and evangelical wings of the Church of England and from the Biblicist and less Eucharistic YMCA and nonconformists. Lay evangelist Captain W.R. Davey, after twenty years preaching in churches, Mission Halls, tents, prisons, Reformatories and Workhouses enthused that he was 'glad to be alive to witness the making of a New Britain and a purer world' in the 'greater War.' General Sir William Robertson also signed the pledge.[81]

The quantitative appeal of the War Roll movement cannot reveal much about the religiosity of the bulk of the British army. But as an indicator of opinion amongst the devout the figure is statistically significant. Of the force of approximately 5,704,416 mobilised men, the proportion who were perceived by military chaplains to be overtly religious (or 'in vital connection' with the churches in the words of the *Army and Religion* report) were estimated at 11.5%, or approximately 655,680 men.[82] As a

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[80] UBSC YMCA Collection, Section J, Folder 118 'War Emergency Committee Minutes', Minutes of Meeting of Standing Committee for Reconstruction and Demobilisation, July 1st 1919, p.196 (alternative archival page number p.1623).

[81] LPL RDP v.365 p.282, *The Comrade* (undated) pp.2-3, 8.

[82] Size of the British army cited in War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* (London, 1922), p.364. The figure of 11.5% was the net average percentage based on chaplains' reports sent to the Protestant interdenominational post-war inquiry into faith in the armies, the *Army and Religion* (pp.188-191). 4/5ths of the numerical estimates gave a figure of 20% or lower of men who were 'in vital relationships with any of the churches.' There were reported variations between different units, especially between Kitchener's New Armies and the Territorials, which were apparently 'considerably more churchgoing' than the New Armies. Scottish returns yielded a higher rate of piety,

proportion of this group, therefore, the estimated number of British War Roll signatories would represent the equivalent of between 38.17% and 45.66% of the observably 'churched' in the army. While this represented only a small fraction of the whole British army (roughly 5.26% at most), around four in ten of the 'churched' in the army signed a pledge voluntarily. Attempts at measuring the extent of religiosity in the army are problematic, as churches quantified it impressionistically. But if used as a rough guide, and allowing for the unknown number who signed the declaration as converts from a completely irreligious background, the War Roll figure still represents a substantial proportion of the faithful. In military units that contained particularly active evangelists, the rate of War Roll enlistment was higher. For example, on 22 April, 1915, Captain B.G. Buxton recorded that almost 80 men from his entire battalion (at most 1000), almost 8% or roughly double the average proportion of signatures from the whole BEF, had signed the Decision Roll while at the base before departing for the front.[83]

To put these enlistment figures in context, it is instructive to compare them with the appeal of other voluntary military movements formed among the British army. The War Roll movement's membership could not compete with the combined membership of approximately two million ex-servicemen of the two major veterans organisations that were formed during the war, the liberal National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers, and its rival, the politically conservative Comrades.

Unlike the Federation or the Comrades, the War Roll was not a lobby group formed

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the net average being 'about 20%,' while the Church of Scotland's Report based on 200 reports reached a higher figure, at 30%. Cf. the estimates by John Baynes of a Scottish regiment. In *Morale A Study of Men and Courage The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle 1915* (London, 1967), p.204, Baynes estimated that 10 % of soldiers regarded religion as an 'important influence' (compared to 50% of the officers by his calculation!)

[83] IWM 78/60/3, Captain BG Buxton, letter, 22 April, 1915.

with the support of Parliamentarians and public subscription to agitate on behalf of veterans for their material demands upon the state. It is more instructive to compare its yield amongst ex-servicemen with the British Legion. The comparison is distorted because the British Legion was founded in the early postwar period, in 1921, as an amalgamation of two other organisations, the Comrades and the Federation. However, the War Roll's ethos was closer to the British Legion's in terms of providing and perpetuating the comradeship of ex-servicemen as a social institution, though unlike the Legion's more modest purposes of inculcating loyalty to the 'Crown, Community and Nation' it saw the perpetuation of veteran's comradeship as a foundation for a spiritual struggle to combat sin and re-Christianise Britain. The British Legion was effectively a primarily social institution carrying on the social function of the veterans' organisations that were founded during the war. Formed in 1921, the Legion began after many of the material and monetary interests of ex-servicemen as a whole had already been satisfied by government concessions and by the initial post-war boom. In Britain, most serving combatants or veterans were not drawn to institutional comradeship and remembrance, something which both the War Roll movement and the British Legion were created to establish.[84] The voluntary societies and rival groups of ex-servicemen that began to appear in the middle years of the Great War were later united into the British Legion and would recruit by 1922 approximately 116,426 members.[85] These figures are statistically significant. That the War Roll campaign recruited numbers that were in absolute terms even comparable with *the*

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[84] For a discussion of the ethos of the British legion and the argument that only a minority of veterans were attracted to the social forms of institutional comradeship, see A. Latcham, 'Journey's End: Ex-Servicemen and the State during and after the Great War' (Unpublished DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1996), p.161. The War Roll's potential constituency was restricted by its sectarian limitations, admitting only nominally or prospective Protestant combatants, compared to the British Legion with its wider, non-sectarian claim to the loyalties of combatants, as it was a non-denominational group open to any British ex-servicemen. Roman Catholics, Jews, professedly agnostic or atheist combatants who were excluded from the War Roll were eligible to join the British Legion.

[85] Membership figures cited in G. Wootton *The Official History of The British Legion* (London, 1956), Appendix 5, p.305.

major national ex-serviceman's organisation of the postwar period indicates the magnitude of the War Roll as a movement amongst Protestants in the British army.

The impression of the War Roll's relative magnitude should be tempered by several caveats. Firstly, as the administrators of the War Roll themselves freely admitted, not every signatory was necessarily motivated to take the pledge out of a sincere commitment, 'some are for the encouragement of others, while a small proportion have little meaning at all.'[86] Nevertheless, the YMCA War Emergency Committee reported in July 1919 that it continued to receive a large number of letters from men voluntarily 'telling us of their desire and effort to remain true to the Pledge.'[87] Unlike the context of letters home, which might sometimes be a hollow posture, in this context they were writing to Committee staff they did not know. In declaring their commitment to this audience, there would be little ulterior motive to professing these sentiments, suggesting that these signatories were sincere. Peer pressure possibly drove some to sign the pledge, though the existence of peer pressure in itself is evidence for the force of the movement.

The timing of many enlistments is revealing, as it suggests that the format of the War Roll was attuned to the structure and rhythms of the war experience. The pledge was often taken 'just before leaving the country for the Front, or even just before going into battle.'[88] Many signed up en masse in Y.M.C.A. huts and tents after an evening's entertainment. One account reported:

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[86] "Memorandum of Y.M.C.A. War Roll Work, 1918", First World War Green Folders, Section K, YMCA Collection, folder no. 24, Special Collections, University of Birmingham.
[87] UBSC YMCA Collection, Section J, Folder 118 'War Emergency Committee Minutes', Minutes of Meeting of Standing Committee for Reconstruction and Demobilisation, July 1st 1919, p.196 (alternative archival page number p.1623).
[88] *Men's Magazine (Quarterly) (Church of England Men's Society)* October 1919, pp.21-2.

> On the Tuesday evening I was present in the Queen Alexandra Hut, where a crowd of men were enjoying their evening sing-song. One soldier after another made a contribution to the programme…At a certain moment the chairman of the singsong, himself a well-known evangelist and a preacher of no mean order, commenced what appeared to be a frank and homely talk to the men. He announced no text; he did not appear to be preaching; but before we were aware of it he was pleading with the men to take sides with the Master, and follow Him wherever He might lead, fighting His battles till the victory should be won. He spoke to the men about the greater enlistment, and introduced the now familiar War Roll – which is, I venture to think, one of the sanest declarations of faith I have ever seen. He concluded with a deeply moving prayer, and with the National Anthem the sing-song was over. And then a strange thing happened. I fully expected to see the men, released from what proved to be a meeting, making straight for the coffee bar; but no; there was a raid on the platform, and calmly and earnestly, in the face of their comrades, no fewer than sixty-nine men signed that War Roll of allegiance to Jesus Christ.[89]

Sometimes signing up to the War Roll was their final act of self-definition before leaving for France or for the front, their last gesture, before entering the frontline, towards their reasons for being prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice.[90] This cannot be the whole answer, as decision cards were also being signed after hostilities had ceased on November 11, 1918.[91] Nevertheless, taking the pledge in the context of approaching the danger of the battlefront suggests that a compelling motive to enlist was probably the desire to reassure the family or spouse of one's piety in the event of death, when under the scheme they would be contacted by the local minister or priest with a copy of his pledge. After burying a dead soldier, Anglican chaplain Christopher Chavasse found in the Testament he had given him an inscription, 'The book was given me on the Battlefield…on June 19th by our Chaplain. If found please

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[89] UBSC YMCA Collection, First World War Green Folders, Section K, Folder 25, T. Wilkinson Riddle, 'A Challenge to the Soldier Spirit Some Impressions of an Extended Tour Through the Southern Command' *YMCA* magazine, March 31, 1916 p.283.

[90] UBSC YMCA Collection, First World War Green Folders, Section K, Folder 25, For example, Y.M.C.A. missionary Mr. J.W. Moodie reported that in his camp at Larkhill, in Salisbury Plain, that on three successive nights 600 out of 1000 men rose to take the solemn appeal, 'They are just on the eve of going to the front, and I am duly thankful of having, perhaps, the last message to deliver to them.' Newspaper Cutting, *Christian Workers Magazine*, undated.

[91] Lambeth Palace Library, Church of England Men's Society, Minutes of Council 1912-1933, 2nd Dec. 1918; YMCA Collection, First World War Green Folders" Section K Folder 118, War Emergency Committee Minutes Section J, Minutes of Meeting of Standing Committee for Reconstruction and Demobilisation, dated Tuesday July 1st 1919, p.196 (p.1623).

send to my wife' and on the back page was his name on the Decision Form.'[92] The importance of making the pledge to signify faith to family as well as self, is evident in the comments of signatories to Rev. W.E. Soothill during a 'Farewell' at Belton Park: 'One man said, "I am doing this for her sake." After a few months of happy married life he had nobly responded to the call of king and country. He knew what his decision would mean to "her." Another said, "It will do mother good to know that I have determined to keep straight."…Yet another said, "Thank God, I am back again." He had been a Sunday School teacher, but the monotony of camp life had weakened his convictions, and he had slipped.'[93]

The prospect of death impelled many combatants to put themselves right with God and family. Combatants whose minds had been focused by the danger of sudden and unexpected death were anxious to establish their Christian commitment. One Scottish soldier privately inserted a declaration of faith into his will, recorded in his diary. 'I, Bertie Victor Sporton serving with His Majesty's Forces in the Royal Scots Fusiliers 7th Batt on active service in Flanders, do declare that I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour, and will endeavour to serve him in the way in which he wills. Signed by me on this day, 1/1/16.'[94] The War Roll signature facilitated this process of dedication, enabling combatants to publicise it to their families. By September 1917, the Anglican Committee reported that it was receiving a 'large number' of letters of gratitude from bereaved relatives.[95] It was through the family that the redemption of

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[92] Christopher Chavasse Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Fol.161-217, 7 Nov.1915.
[93] W.E. Soothill, 'War Roll Letters', *Red Triangle* Jan. 26, 1917, p.65.
[94] IWM 01/52/1, (BV Sporton, 15th Scottish Division, 7th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers 1914-1919 Papers) Diary, 1st Jan. 1916. Sportan attended the Anglican, Salvation Army and Scottish Churches Huts.
[95] Lambeth Palace Library, Church of England Men's Society Minutes of Council, 1912-1933, 5 Sept. 1917.

the Christian serviceman would be established and remembered.[96] 'Mother will treasure the signed Card. Man since killed', claimed one report. Sometimes the effect of signing the pledge when the local priest visited the family home was to gratify the individual's parents that he had aligned himself with Christ. If the individual was subsequently killed, this served to console his bereft parents. As one congregational Minister in Sussex reported in a private letter to the YMCA, 'I took it [ie. 'Decision Card'] down to his mother. Unfortunately, U. had since been killed in the trenches. His mother, who is a Baptist, was literally speechless, and wept with joy at receiving it. She had been anxious – more anxious than most mothers would have been, because she had been praying earnestly that she might receive some evidence to comfort her with the highest and deepest assurance that he had committed his life to Christ. Her Husband had said that she could never have that now – and then your letter, with the Y.M.C.A. file card arrived.'[97] According to the *Red Triangle* of the YMCA, all of the homes of signatories were visited by clergy or ministers.[98]

By stressing the importance of the moment of conversion, and through its recurrent use of military metaphors, the War Roll rhetoric defined the war as a pursuit of personal purity and a battle against temptation, deliberately blurring the distinction between the moment of embarking to the front for the nation and the moment of

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[96] UBSC YMCA Collection, First World War Green Folders, Section K, Folder 24, 'The Visitors Reports to the Free Churches in their National Council Report 1917-1918' G. S. Hirst, *Free Churches, National Council Report*.

[97] Letter, Rev. R.J. Wells of the Congregational Union, from Minister in Sussex, First World War Green Folders, Section K, YMCA Collection, folder no. 24. Similarly, the War Roll secretary reported that in Radnorshire, Wales, a Presbyterian family had received the pledge card of the son Fred Evans only hours before that soldier's memorial service. 'You cannot imagine,' wrote the Secretary of the Welsh Presbyterian General Assembly, 'the comfort it was to me to be able to make the statement that Fred Evans had pledged his allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, and had promised by God's help to fight His battles for the Victory of His Kingdom…to his sorrowing parents ministered untold consolation.' Letter, Rev. E.P. Jones, Secretary, General Assembly, Presbyterian Church, Wales, to War Roll Secretary, First World War Green Folders, Section K, YMCA Collection, folder no. 24.

[98] *Red Triangle Bulletin* June 21, 1918, p.2.

dedication to God. For Christians guilty after falling into the bacchanalian release of drink and whoring, the War Roll enabled a public display of rededication. One soldier wrote 'I find it very hard at times…especially when things seem to go all wrong, to keep my solemn promise which I have given; but I still fight hard against all temptations' while another claimed that the pledge represented the struggle against sin and a talisman for divine protection: 'I am trying to get my comrades to realise what a battle life is – which must be fought and won; and to do this, men must forget self, as you remark in your letter.'[99] It built on a similar rhetoric of prewar youth movements, such as the Church Lad's and Boys Brigades, which sought to militarise adolescence as a strategy of combating delinquency. 'Muscular Christianity' narrated the world as a clash of competing masculinities, of the manly religion and gentlemanly values of the respectable classes, against the heathen, brutish behaviour of the 'unchurched.' Thus according to one soldier, the War Roll was lifting him out of a rough adolescence: 'I was a bad lad in civilian life, running along with a gang called 'The Redskins', and have done time in gaol. But I hope you will forgive me, as I now see the right side, and will show no fear, but fight against the enemies, for I know God will be with me.'[100] It also gave those who wanted to be publicly religious a chance to meet co-religionists in the army. 'I am sorry to say that instead of facing the sneers of the fellows in camp and barracks, I was saying my prayers under the blankets. But signing the card has been the one thing to help me. I have now won a chum, who kneels down beside me.'[101] Offering institutional comradeship and defining their identities as religious citizen-soldiers, it was far from an abstract cause, unifying in one organisation the Protestant combatants' twin instincts for comradeship and salvation.

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[99] *Red Triangle Bulletin* Nov. 9th, 1917, p.5.
[100] *Red Triangle Bulletin* Oct. 26, 1917, p.7.
[101] *Red Triangle Bulletin* Oct. 26, 1917, p.7.

A comparison with wartime Catholicism helps to show why the War Roll pledge held a particular appeal to the families of signatories. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant parents of combatants were anxious about the salvational state of their sons as they risked their lives, whether their sons were prepared for death and whether their souls would be saved if they fell. For distraught Roman Catholic parents, however, these fears could be assuaged by the knowledge that their son had been spiritually cleansed by the sacraments. Roman Catholic chaplains dispensed absolution, Extreme Unction and last rites, expiating their sins before death.[102] Strictly Protestant families found themselves in a more painful situation, as they were denied the cycle of sacraments that assure atonement and salvation. The War Roll pledge, as a tangible declaration of a commitment to Christ often made before entering an advance position, might perform a similar function to a sacrament, providing the assurance that the soldier had committed himself to God as a solemn pledge. Hence the particular relief noted in reports of Free Churches about families who received copy of son's pledge card after his death. Because Protestants abjured the automatic effects of the sacrament, they scoured the life history of the dying or dead person for evidence of their salvation. The 'last moments' before death had become a prominent theme. This continued in wartime through interest in the spiritual state of the combatant before battle. One picture-postcard that appealed at home was printed in the *Daily Mail*, entitled 'Church Service Before Battle', depicting a gathering of kneeling soldiers at a field service.[103]

As well as its content, one reason for its appeal was possibly its form. The War Roll as a pledge was a renewal of a baptismal vow, or for some recruits, it represented their

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[102] See T. Johnstone, J. Hagerty, *The Cross on the Sword: Catholic Chaplains in the Forces* (London, 1996) pp.107-108.
[103] Postcard reproduced in J. Laffin, *World War I in Postcards* (Gloucester, 1988) p.39.

first vow as a convert. Pledge cards or Reconsecration cards were popular devices of Anglo-American Evangelical revivalism in that era.[104] They appealed to a generation at the front because it was formed in the late Victorian period where the emblems of piety were shifting away from churchgoing, which was in decline, and becoming more associational and located in the family and its rites of passage, its family rituals of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and Sunday School.[105] How appropriate, for Protestants at the front to renew a baptismal vow, when their military comrades were effectively their surrogate family, their primary group.[106] The War Roll attracted believers because it was a continuation of the tendency of that generation to encounter faith through the familial rites. This also makes sense circumstantially, as the same huts in which War Roll preachers summoned troops also facilitated letter-writing home. When men signed the Roll, they encountered it immediately after correspondence with the family.

Within the ranks of the pious, combatants were drawn in large numbers to the War Roll's conception of the war, as a struggle for personal and national regeneration. The relative success of the War Roll movement during the war can be attributed to its appeal to two powerful forces. Firstly, faith for believers at the front was often not a constant impulse, but fluctuated. Expressions of piety intensified during threshold moments, such as leaving homeland, leaving the rear for the front, immediately before an assault, or during immediate postbattle reflection. It was preached and taken up often immediately before a regiment left Britain for the theatre of war, or before it departed from the base camp to the frontline. Secondly, it was sensitive to the

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[104] See W. G. McLoughlin Jr. *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago, 1955) pp.200-1.
[105] See further C. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, (London, 2001) pp.187-8.
[106] See further A. Kellett, 'The Soldier in Battle: Motivational and Behavioural Aspects of the Combat Experience' in B. Glad (ed.), *Psychological Dimensions of War* (Newbury Park, 1990) pp.224-6.

dialogue between combatant and home front. Because it enabled them to take a pledge before risking death, it appealed to the desire of soldiers to communicate their religious commitment to the family as a last testament. The Soldiers Home and War Roll projects were united in their emphasis upon the family, the architects of the Soldiers Home striving to export the family home environment to foreign enemy territory.

As for chaplains and those overseeing the troops' moral welfare, it was not primarily the brutalising potential of the combatants' experience at advanced positions that concerned them. The zone of corruption was identified as lying at the rear. Combat was only one component of military service. Most time was spent preparing for battle and recovering from it. Many of the same soldiers that were heroically submitting themselves to death and maiming were also exposed to a less uplifting war experience, or so pious observers feared. Leave, labour, rest, convalescence and rotation in and out of the front lines in a protracted war introduced the temptation to 'live for the moment' after surviving the psychological strain of the frontlines. It was behind the lines where the devil's sinews reached. Of the five main weaknesses of soldiers identified in Britain's postwar inquiry, at least three could mostly manifest themselves when out of the line: 'Impurity', 'Obscene & Profane Language' 'Drunkenness' 'Gambling', and 'Lack of moral courage.' The relaxation from combat and danger, from nervous strain and tension in the next phase of the rhythm of military service, represented a graver long-term threat. Reports from German Lutheran, Anglican and Calvinist padres agree. One Bavarian Protestant chaplain asserted that 'The further removed from the front, the greater the war weariness and immorality,' while a tract warning soldiers against the dangers of sexually transmitted

disease also listed the soldier's whereabouts as one variable in determining whether the war would corrupt them, claiming men stationed at the rear were especially at risk.[107] Reports of misbehaviour at garrisons for another chaplain were more plentiful than misbehaviour closer to the front, because garrisons lacked the frontline's 'seriousness.'[108] One English padre stressed that war at the front was 'a hell' inhabited 'by heroes', elevating virtue through the awful strain of fighting, while at the rear was 'the seamy side of war.'[109] The theatre of combat might foster co-operation and community, and men might feel an elemental need for God immediately before combat, but the beneficial impact of these conditions was by definition temporary. As one officer from a Scottish regiment reflected, the archetypal soldier became increasingly aware of the 'need for God' while approaching the line, prayed in the 'hour of battle', but on returning to the rest camp forgot and yielded to temptation.[110]

Both projects reflected a fear of the returning veteran. The war was being waged by citizen armies. Most combatants were not professional career soldiers, but people who had enlisted as civilians and who, if they survived, would demobilise and return as civilians. As the survivors repopulated their homelands after the war, their return would bring the effects of the frontline experience onto the wider community. As Prebendary Carlile claimed, 'In the Army to-day we have the manhood of the Empire – wonderful material. The soldier of today was the civilian of yesterday; the soldier of to-day is the civilian of tomorrow…The British Army converted, consecrated, would

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[107] LKAN 3209, p.11 'Bericht des Div. Geistl. Wolffhardt über seine Tätigkeit während des Feldzugs 1914-1918.' Pamphlet: Kriegs Blaetter 14: 'Soldaten, seid auf der Hut') Bibliothek Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart, 'Religion und die Kirchen.'

[108] Landeskirchliches Archiv, Stuttgart A 26 Nr. 1176. Bericht, 25 Juli 7 Uhr Vm. Alfdorf O.A. Welzheim, Erntebetst (report on the 'Heimataufklärung' visit, examined in greater depth in chapter 6).

[109] G. Birmingham, *A Padre in France* (London, n.d) 17-19.

[110] Cairns, *Army and Religion*, pp.13-14.

be the greatest missionary society.'[111] The corollary of this potential in the power and authority of the veteran army was that it also could be a threat, returning tainted and spiritually deformed. This fear originated at least from late 1914, with alarm over the 'khaki fever' in which the allure of military uniforms led young men and women into sexual misbehaviour, and the subversion of moral order.[112] War could brutalise by unleashing animal instincts or lawless attitudes. If the army represented 'the nation in arms', the war was becoming a struggle to prevent the degradation of combatants as the most influential future citizens of the nation. British chaplain G.A. Studdert-Kennedy summarised the impulses behind missionary work in the field. The church battled against 'dull despair' and 'brutalisation,' combating the temptations to 'drown the horror in drink' or 'lust', 'War does not automatically and of necessity purify and elevate a man; it may easily dull, degrade, and brutalise his soul…we may win a crushing victory, but we shall lose the war, because we shall not gain the end for which we really fight, a lasting civilisation which lives by the Spirit of Christ.'[113] These fears were focused on the eventual transition from soldiering to civilian life, the future reintegration of the ex-serviceman, as the moment when the war's impacts would be fully realised. One chaplain who had served in the ranks as a soldier defined the threat: 'There are many indications that when the Army returns there will be a great social upheaval. Men feel that they are out to fight Prussianism, but they are becoming growingly conscious of Prussianism in our own national life.'[114] Educated in violence, antagonistic to the uncomprehending civilian world, alienated from the

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[111] *Church Family Newspaper* May 10, 1918 p.8.
[112] See A. Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever' and its Control; Gender, Class, Age and Sexual morality on the British Homefront in the First World War, *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 (1994), pp. 325-347.
[113] G.A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Rough Talks of a Padre* (London, 1918) pp. 31-3.
[114] Report of an English army chaplain and former combatant cited by Sherwood Eddy, *With our Soldiers in France* (New York, 1917) http://www.lib.byu.edu/-rdh/wwi/memoir/Eddy/Eddy3.htm, in Chapter 6, 'The Camp of the Prodigals.'

rule of law and civil society, the warriors praised for their crusading idealism were also imagined as future menaces.

The prospect of a returning mass of militarised soldier-citizens was more novel and alarming for British clergy. Germany, unlike Britain, had traditionally fielded conscript armies and had boasted highly visible and large veterans' organisations populated by a vocal Protestant membership. The future veterans of the army represented a problem to German chaplains not primarily because they were militarised in isolation, but because they could be potentially radicalised politically and divorced from their Germanic heritage. And as the final chapter demonstrates, they would also later fear the German army would be affected by the revolutionary subversion that followed the failure of the Spring Offensive of 1918 and during the chaos that attended successive defeats and demobilisation.

Conclusion

The Soldiers' Homes and War Roll enterprises highlight some of the commonalities and peculiarities between German frontline 'missions' and their British counterparts. In the discourses of the German and British devout, there was a geography of corruption. Both show a concern with the detachment of the combatant from home, and homesickness as a means of conversion or rededication. For the British, it lay in the movement from the discipline of the fighting front to the indiscipline of the rear. For German Lutherans, there was also a cultural dimension, in the movement from the household and nation as places of ancestral virtues to foreign lands and alien cultures.

Soldiers Homes were planted in enemy territory to minister to the welfare of an occupying army of conquest. It accentuated their belief in the sacredness of their military enterprise, as their religious gatherings were held while surrounded by 'a world of enemies.' And unlike the Lutherans, the Anglicans (and some Calvinists) were also inspired by both liberal and socialist forms of social Christianity. Despite these differences, a common process was also underway for both groups. National citizen armies, previously revered as the vanguard of national regeneration, were now the object of anxiety, as the prophecies of national rebirth in 1914 were yielding to apprehension that sacrifice was not automatically elevating the nation's manhood.

This chapter also reveals the tendency of much religiosity to fluctuate. Instead of classifying combatants into two separate camps, as the 'rough unchurched' and the 'respectable' worshippers, the letters they wrote to the co-ordinators of the War Roll project suggest a more complex picture. Under the pressures of the combat environment and the anticipation of the possibility of death, they might want to identify publicly with faith. At the same time, the strain of combat contained its own built-in opposite reactions, from exhaustion and numbness in the postbattle phase to the movement away from the front, bring the urge to relax from it with booze, gambling, sex, and 'rough' sociability, in a rear zone that fully catered to these temptations. Though before battle they presented themselves one-dimensionally as faithful soldiers, in the rhythms of war many might have been distancing themselves from faith and then returning to it. In this sense, their faith was more prodigal than pure.

CHAPTER 5

Martyrs for the Faith:

Martyrology and the heroic death

On Armistice Day 1920, King George V interred an unknown foot-soldier in a tomb in Westminster Abbey, to lie in the company of kings. The unknown warrior's anonymity symbolised all of Britain's dead combatants *en masse*.[1] Only a century before, British soldiers had been described by their own commander, the Duke of Wellington, as the 'scum of the earth.' The military profession was decried as the refuge of drunkards and mediocrities.[2] Similar changes had occurred in Germany. In 1914, the 'respectable' classes volunteered for war in high proportions. German soldiers were blessed in garrison churches, German churches were filled with honorary plaques for each fallen soldier of the parish, while men of any estate could win the Iron Cross.[3] But before Germany's Wars of Liberation, its 'respectable' classes had reviled the armies of German states, populated as they were with the labouring classes and mercenaries. Changes in warfare and politics, with the inception of revolutionary citizen armies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had swept aside the feudal warrior elite's monopoly on military glory. In both Britain and Germany, military glory had become democratised, meaning that the common soldier could now rise to heroic stature. It had also become spiritualised, its iconography filling the sacred spaces of churches and cathedrals. Heroism, and who or what is

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[1] See K. Inglis, 'Entombing Unknown Soldiers: from London to Paris to Baghdad', *History and Memory*, 5 (1993), pp. 7-31.
[2] 5th Early Stanhope, *Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington* (London, 1888), p.14; A.W. Wellington, *Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda*, v. (London, 1880), p.594.
[3] W. Schwipps, *Die Garnisonkirchen von Berlin und Potsdam* (Berlin, 1964), p.92.

deemed to be heroic, is a mirror on the societies that celebrate it. While they may perform inspiring acts, heroes in turn depend on their wider culture to project heroism onto them, to invest their lives and deaths with meaning. In turn, heroes reflect societal *mores* or anxieties. The translation of individual deeds into heroism is a process of 'social creation.'[4]

In both Germany and Britain, the dead were commemorated in terms that borrowed from the language of Christian martyrology. As the dead were remembered they were remade, from a disaggregated mass of individuals with different motives to armies of believers dying for one Christian, patriotic faith. One German field hospital chaplain declared that 'The heroism of the field soldier was manifest and transfigured into martyrdom. One would like to kiss each single hero's forehead and fasten the iron cross to his heroic breast.'[5] Martyrdom conferred upon them an elevated status within their nations, making them the most virtuous people in their country. An obituary commemorating the late Brigadier-General Roland Bradford in the journal of the Church Lads Brigade proclaimed 'It is one of the mysteries of the war that the best should die for the rest of us, but it is a mystery in God's Providence which links that heroic sacrifice of our youth with the atoning sacrifice of the Perfect Man of Calvary.'[6] Suffering on the battlefield was portrayed as analogous to Christ's passion, and by perishing on the battlefield, they were performing a Christ-like act.

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[4] P. Cochrane, *Simpson and the Donkey: The Making of a Legend* (Melbourne, 1992), p.4. For a study of the differing ways heroism was defined, see O. Bartov, 'Man and the Mass: Reality and the Heroic Image in War', *History and Memory* 1 (1989), pp. 99-122.

[5] 'Aus Berichten der Brüder im Felde' *Mitteilungen für die evangelischen Christlichen der Armee und der Marine* 40: 5/6 (May, June 1915), p.102. Ludwig Hoppe likewise described the 'martyr death for the Fatherland', L. Hoppe, *Feldpredigerfahrten an der Westfront: Kriegserlebnisse aus großer Zeit* (Berlin, 1916) p.12, 42.

[6] *The Brigade* (Jan. 1918), p.5.

But what was their heroism for? What did it mean to be assigned heroic virtue within the Christian churches during the First World War? How were the deaths of fallen soldiers represented? How did hagiographies use the memory of the dead to promote the ideal warrior personality to men in the ranks? How were their heroic deaths and their martyrdoms supposed to save the nation or the world? How was heroism on the battlefield supposed to save the soldier personally? Were there competing concepts of heroism by the end of the war? And how did pious combatants themselves collaborate in this process of mythmaking?

This chapter reconstructs the context in which participants together with onlookers represented the lives and deaths of the fallen. Tales of heroes and heroism could be rapidly disseminated in belligerent nations because the First World War in Britain and Germany was a literary war. That was made possible by the inception of cheap publishing and the technology of mass communication, with markets for war-related literature in two highly literate populations. The heroic language of the German churches dovetailed with the orders of the High Command, who in a directive in January 1915 encouraged the creation of tablets of honour (*Ehrentafel)* in which 'individual depictions of remarkable heroic deeds by individual soldiers would be published in order to honour the heroes, to instill pride in their relatives, and to spur on the younger troops.'[7] Accounts of military heroics, and panegyrics to the dead, were widely distributed. From these surviving texts it is possible to reconstruct the evolving notion of the Christian martyr-soldier, to explore the anatomy of heroism as it was developed during the war. This chapter explores the creation of what might be called a military hagiography in the purest sense. The word 'hagiography' derives

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[7] Cited in W. G. Natter, *Literature at War 1914-1940: Representing the "Time of Greatness" in Germany* (New Haven, 1999), p.46.

from the Greek *Hagios*, referring to the genre of literature that chronicled and praised the early lives of the saints to reveal the qualities and achievements that made them holy, in particular their purity and reverence for God. The saints were believed to become intercessors, and were studied as exemplars. Although Protestantism eliminated saints from its devotional practice, the resurgent Catholic wing of the Church of England had rediscovered saints, and Protestantism in other ways had expanded the reach of sainthood by placing the 'burden of saintly individualism on every believer.' [8]

Similarly, many wartime evangelists sought to distill the essence of the sainthood of ordinary combatants. As this chapter argues, the rhetoric of heroism resonated for Christians because it went beyond the search for solace, the glorification of military excellence or the desire to commemorate individuals affectionately. Heroes reconciled two things that increasingly threatened to be splitting apart, Christian virtue and military service. Soldiers who were also devout gave corporeal form to the quest for social harmony and salvation through war, against the materialist corruption war might instill. Heroes enbodied a cosmic conflict in flesh and blood.

Heroism was inflected in the different national and confessional contexts of both sides. In Germany pietism shaped the heroic ideal, the fallen embodying a deferential obedience to Kaiser and Reich, and unity between the recently-united German states. In Britain, dead martyrs were credited with a sense of duty but were also invoked as justifications for liberal postwar reconstruction. Heroism appealed to different denominational tastes within British Protestantism. Anglo-Catholic patriots were

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[8] D. Weinstein, R. M. Bell, *Saints and Society* (Chicago, 1982), p.4f.

drawn to the revival of interest in sainthood. Evangelicals or nonconformists recalled Oliver Cromwell as the model Protestant soldier, and his Ironsides whose memory affirmed that 'faith and fighting qualities can go together.'[9] Overall, however, I argue that both martyrologies reflected a widespread anxiety about the corrupting effects of military service on individuals, and a widespread desire on both sides of the front to reconcile Christianity and soldiering. It also reflected the need in Christian war theology to justify war on the basis of *how* it was being waged (*jus in bello*), as well why it was being waged (*jus ad bellum*). It was important in Protestant discourse that the fallen had lived pure lives and fought honourably before their deaths. Some soldiers and chaplains went even further, becoming so committed to the cult of the fallen soldiers that they bordered on heresy, embracing a concept of martyrdom that promised paradise to all the dead of the regiment.

Much of this conversation between clergy and combatants about the meanings of heroism took place in the context of a complex 'love-hate' relationship between the British and German Protestant churches. On one hand, they represented one another's role in the war as a perceived betrayal of their religious and cultural heritage, and insisted upon absolute victory as a duty to God. Under the pressures of war, some voiced sentiments of violent animosity. But on the other hand, the churches and concerned combatants also often resisted the temptation simply to demonise the enemy as an inhuman menace to be exterminated, cautioning believers to fight out of principle rather than hatred, to be wary of the degrading effects of killing. For

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[9] F.A. McKenzie, *Serving the King's Men: How the Salvation Army is helping the Nation* (London, 1918); see also the speech of Lloyd George to Welsh soldiers in which he invoked the memory of the Ironsides to prove 'that the best disciplined army [and]…the best army that this country ever saw, was a religious army…I have never met a soldier yet who did not envy the discipline and cohesion, the iron strength of that great army, and that undoubtedly was an army that was animated by a strong religious belief.' *Times* Monday, August 21, 1916, p.3.

combatants under fire, their mixed responses to their relationship with the enemy took place in a dialogue between homefront and frontline, and between the competing claims of both nations. To confer virtue on their dead, they sometimes claimed that the enemy had been impressed by their gallantry. To bolster their own 'just' cause, they represented their own behaviour as chivalrous and merciful in order to refute the enemies' allegations of barbarity. The wartime creation of martyrs was an interrelated and reciprocal process. Germany's heroic cult cannot be fully understood divorced from British accusations of militarist cruelty, while British martyrs were glorified partly to counter Germany's allegation that it was pursuing merely materialistic goals.

As previous chapters have shown, the risk of death rather than killing lay at the centre of the rhetoric of sacrifice. In its military context, it focused on the Christian's duty to accept *being* maimed or killed. It was largely passive. A frequent quotation on both sides of the front was 'Greater Love hath no man than he who lays down his life for his friends.' This was inspired by the grammar of Christian suffering and salvation, but also reflected some realities of the conflict. The majority of casualties, approximately 60%, were inflicted by artillery at a distance and out of sight, remote from human targets, while less than 1% were inflicted by edged weapons in close-quarter combat.[10] Christian artillerymen were confronted with the dilemmas of taking life far more than other religious combatants. Some combatants deliberately adopted a coping strategy of denial, separating their religion from their role in the war. Free Churchman Alexander Caseby divided his writing into two separate diaries, one about

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[10] The medical report of the German army estimated that 54.7% of deaths in battle were caused by artillery, while on 0.28% were the result of edged weapons: Heeres-Sanitätsinspektion des Reichskriegsministeriums (ed.) *Sanitätsbericht über das Deutsche Heer (Deutsches Feld und Besatzungsheer) im Weltkriege 1914/1918.* iii. p.73. The British figures are comparable: shells & mortar bombs caused 58.51% of British casualties, while bayonets only inflicted 0.32%. R. Holmes, *Acts of War* (London, 1975), p.210.

soldiering and the other about religion, 'to psychologically become two people living within one mind.'[11] But most infantry combatants did not get the opportunity to be regular death-dealers, especially in close-quarter combat. Being shelled for hours was a passive experience. It left the individual crouched in a confined space hoping not to be struck by an explosion that fell arbitrarily. Within the time spent at the front, the dangers of death being inflicted on the individual from artillery attack, sniper or mine outweighed fleeting opportunities to inflict death.

Despite these caveats, soldiers were employed to kill as well as risk being killed, as potential executioners as well as victims. Organised religion supported their cause, helped to define their mission ideologically, and justified the use of violence. But to conclude that religious discourse functioned primarily to create a war culture that glorified race hatred, demonised the 'evil other,' or deliberately sublimated murderous instincts, would be an oversimplification. To be sure, both churches denounced the misbehaviour of the other as a betrayal of their shared Protestant and Anglo-Saxon heritage. In Germany, *Gott Strafe England* was a central catch-cry of the churches, and the 'Hymn of Hate', composed by a Jewish poet, was circulated approvingly by the government. In 1916, pastors of Germany's Evangelical Churches were directed to preach sermons not against France or Russia but only against England.[12] But as Barbara Ehrenreich observes, 'War…is not simply a clash of Others, made possible by an ignorant horror of difference. The warrior looks out at the enemy and sees men who are, in crucial respects, recognisably like himself' who 'share the basic tenets of warriordom: a respect for courage, a willingness to stand by one's comrades no matter

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[11] 'Jottings from the Spiritual Side of the Army' printed in appendix, R. Caseby (ed.) *Going with God The Biography of Reverend Alexander Caseby From 1898 until 1991* (Lewes, 1993), p.396.
[12] A. G. Marquis, "Words as Weapons: Propaganda in Britain and Germany During the First World War" *Journal of Contemporary History* 13 (1978), pp. 467-98, p.490.

what, a bold indifference to death.'[13] This sense of partial 'sameness' applied particularly for churchgoing combatants, as the Anglo-German conflict took on the tensions and contradictions of a war within the family.

Combatants in the field showed many cases of fraternal behaviour and expressed friendly sentiments in both 'quiet' circumstances and even in the context of the combat environment. From the eastern front, a *Felddiakon* wrote 'Who is so foolish to believe that one does not weep for the dead in Russia?'[14] As late as 29 March 1918, stumbling on a wounded British soldier, one soldier wrote from a shell-hole to the man's family declaring 'Love and a sense of duty.' 'I knelt down at his side and prayed with him…I was moved to tears to see how grateful your son looked at my little services…and shall continue to remember him in my prayers. May the Lord soon grant us Peace according to His everlasting mercy and grace.'[15] Scottish Presbyterians, some of whom spoke German and had studied in Germany, represented the ideas and behaviour of the enemy as a threat to civilisation but also sympathised with them as individuals or small groups. The diary of Rev. J.M. Connor, Presbyterian chaplain to the Glasgow Highlanders, shows that in September 1914 he fraternised with 20 German prisoners, 'one said war was 'unglück' [misfortune] I said all nations should be friends & brothers…shook hands all.' In the same month he led prayers 'for foes that 'their hearts may be softened.' He preached that the conflict was a 'War for liberty + righteousness.' In December he continued to justify killing, 'a lad Henderson, one Gordon, wounded asked me 'What about 'Thou shalt not kill' & I

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[13] B. Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passion of War* (London, 1997), p.141.
[14] L. Weichert, *An der Ostfront: Tagebuchblätter eines Felddiakonen* (Hamburg, 1915), pp.102-3.
[15] IWM Misc 230, Item 3281. Letter, 29 March 1918, H. Weingartner to 'Family Mole.'

explained how a righteous war does not break the Commandment.'[16] The difficulty for many chaplains was precisely that they were sanctioning killing while at the same time trying to resist its socially degrading effects, looking for a form of violence that would not taint its practitioners.

At an ecclesiastical level, the dismissal of wartime religion as a vector for murderous hatred fails to explain the fact that some avowed supporters of the war continued to resist the brutalisation of the war effort, attempting to limit its extension towards civilian populations. All of the Anglican Bishops in the House of Lords voted against the retaliatory bombing of German civilians in 1917-18, even the Bishop of London, who in 1915 had called for a 'holy war.'[17] Berlin theologian Adolf Deissman had consecrated Germany's rallying in 1914 as 'a nation united down to the last man, assembled because its holiest possessions are threatened. A world-historical transformation: emperor and people exchange vows and clasp hands.'[18] Yet the same Deissman who celebrated German wartime unity also read the King James Bible to remind himself of his ultimate Protestant kinship with the English.[19] Representations of the relationship at the front sometimes celebrated mutual respect between enemies. On some parts of the line, the legendary 1914 'Christmas Truce' featured displays of both laconic and highly stylised expressions of chivalrous friendliness. The *Daily Mail* reported that the German chaplain had passed on the address of a dead British officer whom he had comforted in his final moments, before a combined field funeral service for the dead, 'officers and men who had been fighting…as fiercely as ever,

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[16] IWM 87/10/1 (Diaries, Lieutenant-Colonel Rev. J.M. Connor, Presbyterian chaplain to Glasgow Highlanders) Entries 11 Sept. 27 Sept. 8 Nov. 15 Dec. 1914.
[17] *Guardian,* 10 June, 1915.
[18] Cited in A.J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism: Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart, 1986), p.51.
[19] A. Wilkinson, *Church of England and the First World War* (London, 1978), p.229.

bareheaded, reverent, and keeping sacred truce.'[20] At an ideological level, heroic figures were celebrated for their tenderness as well as willingness to fight. The only Scottish 'son of the manse' awarded a Victoria Cross, Captain Harry Sherwood Ranken, was decorated for tending the wounded under fire, like the British 'double VC' winner, Noel Chavasse.[21] One of Britain's most prominent martyrs was a non-combatant, the nurse Edith Cavell who was executed in Belgium in October 1915 for conducting Entente troops across the border. To be sure, her death was represented in one bestselling postcard as an outrage to be avenged. Paradoxically, she was commemorated not for her ardent nationalism but for her magnanimity and final words, 'I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone,' words that were considered important enough to be conveyed by the English chaplain to Brussels, Gahan.[22] *The Times* represented her commemoration at the St. Paul's Memorial Service as inspiring unforgiving mourners to put aside 'loathing' and 'low and base' thoughts.[23] Tributes emphasised another factor that complicated the relationship with the enemy, the desire for the enemy's admiration as evidence of the valour of one's own heroes, citing German chaplain at Brussels, Paul Le Seur, who claimed that 'She Died Like a Heroine.'[24] These heroes embodied the paradox that participants needed determination to win, but compassion to be worthy of victory.

The rhetoric of chivalry took on added importance for German Christians at war. They were resisting the accusations of inhumanity made in Entente propaganda.

Germany was accused of barbarity firstly as an invader, denounced particularly for

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[20] *Daily Mail* 1 Jan. 1915.
[21] A.W. Ferguson, *Sons of the Manse* (Dundee, 1923), p.285.
[22] R. Ryder, *Edith Cavell* (London, 1975). For the trial, pp.198-9, for her statement, p.214.
[23] 'In Memory of Miss Cavell. Simple Service at St. Paul's. Queen Alexandra Present.' *The Times* 30 Oct. 1915, p.10.
[24] 'Miss Cavell's Last Hours. British Chaplain's Report, Tribute from The Enemy.' *The Times* 23 Oct. 1915, p.7.

atrocities in Belgium and Northern France. German Protestant churches denounced these allegations as 'war lies.'[25] This context explains the remarks of a Frankfurt regiment in Christmas, 1914, which reported on the funeral for two Uhlanen killed on patrol in August. 'The French population witnessed with astonished eyes as the German barbarians honoured their fallen heroes, may in this hour the consciousness have dawned, that a *Volk* of such strong moral power is invincible and will remain so.'[26] Later, though Britain at war also targeted civilian populations and also innovated in the realm of destructive technology, Germany was perceived to be the pioneer of barbaric methods after it introduced poison gas to the battlefield at Ypres in April 1915. Representations of German chivalry took on a particularly defensive tone. Pastor Schwenker's two-volume tome on war piety included a section on *Feindesliebe*, or love towards the enemy. To counter the 'insults' by the foreign press against both the army and the Kaiser, it collected reports of magnanimity by German combatants, 'good Samaritans' who affirmed 'blood-brotherhood between enemies.' In his account, wounded and dying combatants, English, Russian, Belgian or French, are treated with equal chivalry by Germans from each state. Dead enemies are given funerals. Prisoners of war are treated humanely. German occupiers treat friendly civilians gently, giving children chocolates and men cigarettes. A Prussian officer cadet rescues a pleading Belgian woman's sick husband from a burning house.[27] To counteract charges of barbarism, German hagiography celebrated its soldiers' acts of mercy. Both sides were claiming to embody a more enlightened civilisation, making chivalrous self-representation an important part of their legitimacy.

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[25] D. Borg *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic* (London, 1984), p.38.
[26] Leutnant Ohr, 'Das Ulanengrab in Lesdins' *Frankfurter Landsturm Kriegsnummer Weihnachten, 1914*, p.12.
[27] F. Schwenker, (ed.) *Kriegsfrömmigkeit Zeugnisse aus dem großen Kriege für Kirche, Schule und Haus* (Gütersloh, 1916), ii. pp.277-291.

While the one-sided picture of religion as a discourse of hatred is misleading, it would be equally simplistic to succumb to the comforting image of pious combatants always being mutually sympathetic.[28] Acts or expressions of hatred, or determination to do violence, made their way into the responses of religious participants. Germany's invasion of Belgium was seen by some German Protestant soldiers and their institutions, the Army League and the *Evangelischer Bund zur Wahrung der deutsch-protestantischen Interessen*, as re-enacting the *Kulturkampf*, Bismarck's anti-Catholic campaign of the 1870's.[29] Edith Cavell's execution was ordered by the son of a Lutheran pastor, Generalleutnant Traugott Martin von Sauberzweig, who justified the death penalty on the grounds that his own son had been blinded by a bullet that could have been fired by someone Cavell had covertly sheltered.[30] Captain Bryden McKinnell, who noted the irony of wishing Yuletide peace to all men in 1914, nevertheless disapproved of attempts to fraternise on Christmas Eve, thankful that the troops holding his immediate line had fired on friendly Germans, 'it stopped any of this "scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" sort of nonsense.'[31] The abhorrence of the enemy's immoral tactics, alongside empathy with the victims of war, generated tensions in some accounts. For young chaplain Georg Leinhos in Belgium, who reported the rumour that 'black devils with machine guns' were sniping at German troops from rooftops, burning houses showed that war was a 'terrible thing' which he could imagine happening to his homeland.[32] Even many religious combatants who

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[28] For a warning against this 'cosy' interpretation, see P. Liddle, 'British Loyalties: The Evidence of an Archive', in H. Cecil, P.H. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London, 1996), p. 525.

[29] J. Horne, A. Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001), pp.157-8.

[30] This was Generalleutnant Traugott Martin von Sauberzweig. See R. Ryder, *Edith Cavell* (London, 1975), p.232.

[31] Diary of Captain Bryden McKinnell, 14th Jan. 1915, cited in 'The 1914 Christmas Truce', http://www.newsfinder.org/comments.php?id=1159_0_1_0_C.

[32] *Kriegsdiest und Heldentod eines evangelischen Pfarrers aus Oesterreich (Georg Leinhos, Vikar zu Amstetten, geffallen bei Dirmuiden am 10 Nov. 1914)* Letters 31 Oct. 1914, 3 Nov. 1914, pp.23-5.

expressed hostility or bitterness towards their adversaries often showed an awareness of what they were supposed to think, that they were not supposed to overindulge those instincts. Wilhelm Weber, a student writing in March 1915, agonised that because of England's 'low breeding and hypocrisy', it was difficult to fulfill the Christian duty to show magnanimity to one's oppressor, or to emulate the forgiving grace of St. Stephan, who had prayed for his enemies while being stoned.[33] Franz Keoppe, a junior officer at Verdun, corresponded in September 1916 with his concerned mother about the treatment of wounded enemy soldiers:

> Dear mother, you are quite right with your reminder, to be careful with the wounded enemy, that we Germans are no barbarians. Some cases are known to me, where merciful love lured out the hate of the enemy and was butchered by him. In this the blacks in particular distinguish themselves who execute the counterattacks against us. A Christian who is a soldier may forget no enemy, what the duty to God, to Kaiser and Reich demands from him, but always must he discharge each duty with circumspection...[34]

Regardless of the factuality of his claims about Senegalese soldiers' treacherous behaviour, for a man who believed that enemies pretended to be wounded in order to kill unsuspecting Germans, such murderous circumstances placed limits on the Christian soldier's capacity to be merciful. Against that, it was important to observe the duty to be civilised in order to refute the accusation that Germans were 'barbarians.' Religious discourse about the enemy took place in a dialogue between sympathy and the disaffection of the soldier towards the enemy, and the code of honour he was supposed to live up to.

While it is difficult to gauge the precise degree of participants' affection or hostility towards the enemy, what can be uncovered from both published and private writing is

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[33] *KAF* 168 (1914-15) p.66, Letter, Wilhelm Weber, 7 March, 1915.
[34] F. Koeppe, *Mit Gott für Kaiser und Reich: Feldpostbriefe von Franze Koeppe* (Stuttgart, 1917), letter 7.9.1916, pp.149-51.

the way they constructed the meaning of wartime Christian valour. Christian warriors were supposed to kill reluctantly and out of solemn duty, and to prevent killing from degrading their soul. Enmity was not an inevitable condition arising out of war to be indulged, but a dangerous mentality to be overcome. As well as defining war aims, the churches at the front dwelt upon the spirit in which the war must be fought. Scottish chaplain J.R.P. Sclater called for a 'spirit of knightliness,' preaching at military parade that Christians must 'cleanse the heart of the nation from the domination of that which would undermine the possibility of international peace.'[35] German pamphlets instructed combatants that a 'holy war' was a war waged in 'mildness' without 'hatred', for self-defence rather than 'envy or injured vanity', 'arrogance', 'profit' or 'conquest addiction' that should earn the enemy's respect, and contrasted the brutalised soldiers of the Thirty Years War and Russian barbarism with the honourable field-grey troops of today.[36] The YMCA used the death of 'gallant Captain Garvin' to remind readers about the correct attitude to killing and the enemy, quoting a tribute to the Captain, 'I always felt that he was a great soldier, not from any lust of battle or hatred of the enemy, but from sheer devotion to duty.'..the only right attitude of mind of a true Christian man on the battlefield, and we advise you to cultivate it.'[37] In the Augustinian and Thomistic traditions, wars must be waged for a legitimate purpose (*jus ad bellum*) but also waged legitimately (*jus in bello*). The morality of war was determined by both its purpose and its conduct.[38] This meant that in the essential act of taking life, the mental state of the killer mattered. Echoing Augustine, the Anglican socialist and intellectual R.H. Tawney, himself a soldier who

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[35] J.R.P. Sclater, *The Eve of Battle: Addresses at Church Parade* (London, 1915), pp.70, 85-6.
[36] Bibliothek Zeitgeschichte [Henceforth BZ], Folder: 'Religion und Kirchen', *Evangelischer Presseverband* Pamphlet No.1: 'Der Heilige Krieg.'
[37] BSC YMCA Collection, Folder 26, War Work Green Book, No.13, Letter #2, 'The Christian Soldiers' Fellowship, Salisbury Plain' (undated).
[38] On the Augustinian just war doctrine, see F. H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1975), pp.16-40.

regretted his feelings of violent anger on misfiring at a German soldier, insisted that 'to kill in hatred is murder; and soldiers, whatever their nationality, are not murderers, but executioners…And it is right that there should be a solemn detestation of the sins of Germany, provided that we are not thereby caused to forget our own.'[39]

One example of the way Christian heroism was used to promote the correct attitude to the enemy is the panegyric for John Keith Forbes, a skilled Hebrew scholar from the university of Aberdeen and sniper sergeant in the 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders, who was killed in September 1915. As an heroic figure, Forbes reconciled in his person the qualities of faith and scholarly intellect with combative skill. Holding the particularly cold-blooded role of sniper, he was also celebrated for his alleged lack of hatred for the enemy. One of Forbes' friends recalled his final hours, a scene which represents Forbes as a man of scholarship, fortitude and piety, 'Last scene of all – somewhere in France. J.K. in the role of Fighting Parson, strenuously digging himself and his men into their trenches, anon, in the darkness of night, creeping up to the enemy's trenches to pick up information, like some Red Indian of his boyhood's stories, and then in his off-duty hours, grinding…at Hebrew!' Forbes allegedly drew sustenance from the clean and manly fight with a 'worthy antagonist' that drew upon an ethos of public school sport. One of his diary entries is selected to show his sensitivity to his adversaries and his sense of gamesmanship, before the authors claim 'his magnanimous heart clearly saw that all Germans were not monsters of iniquity.'[40]

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[39] R.H. Tawney, 'Some Reflections of a Soldier', (article originally written in *Nation* in October 1916), in *The Attack and Other Papers* (London, 1953, 1981 edition), p.27.
[40] See the memoir about Forbes, W. Taylor, P. Diack *JK Forbes Student and Sniper Sergeant: A Memoir of J.K. Forbes, 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders Who Died for His Country, 25 September 1915* (London, 1916), pp.180-1, 158.

The enemies' respect was also desirable as a form of self-flattery. Such was the piety of the nation's armies that it aroused the admiration even of its foes. One German pamphlet claimed that a wounded Briton said to American missionary John Mott, 'You cannot imagine how awful it is to direct the machine gun fire upon a regiment' which sang 'a mighty fortress is our God' as it advanced across the battlefield.[41] The Battalion funeral of two British officers as recorded in a trench newspaper in October 1915 celebrated the constituent parts of the code of Christian soldiers. They were eulogised as brave men who made a daring reconnaissance. One had perished trying to rescue a Lance-Corporal. They inspired their surviving comrades to behave like them, their honourable deaths consummating virtuous 'stainless' lives. The most striking compliment came from the other side of the front: 'It is pleasant to report a kindness from the enemy. We hear that the wife of one of the German officers in the trenches opposite wrote to Tewkesbury to say that Lieut. Moore had been given an officers' funeral.'[42]

There are likely to be gaps between representations of heroic tenderness and the more complicated reality, in which feelings were probably more diverse and conflicting, and which fluctuated in the rhythms of military service, through rest, preparation, combat, and leave. But even if combatants were not able to live up to them consistently, they clearly believed it important to persuade others that they stood for the virtues of chivalry. Had this not been the case, it is unlikely they would recur throughout religious representations of the war. People would not have continually stressed these themes in obituaries, tributes, hagiographies and sermons – the need to

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[41] W.Siebel *Die Herzen empor! Ein Wort zum Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1915), p.18.
[42] 'RIP Lieut. T.H. Moore', *Fifth Gloucester Gazette* (Oct. 1915), p.43.

resist hatred, the respect of the enemy - if they did not command strong moral authority.

A comparison of religious responses to the deaths of two soldier-evangelists, and the meanings attached to their lives, illustrates other commonalities and differences between German and British martyrologies. Both Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Storr of the 1st Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, who died on 15th August, 1918, and Prussian General Paul von Viebahn, who died on 15 December 1915, were professional soldiers whose deaths were followed by published collections of memoirs and tributes.[43]

They were both renowned for their conscientious piety and pastoral care amongst their regiments. Both memoirs were published with the explicit intention to inspire imitation in others. The record of Storr's good work and personality should serve 'as an incentive to others', while one Colonel would 'cherish the memory of him and the fine lessons he taught.' The German Christian Students Union would hold von Viebahn 'in our memory', his word and testimonial would effect his admirers 'in a lasting memory before our spiritual eye.'[44] Both embodied the marriage of the martial and the spiritual. Storr, it was claimed, 'was not a Christian first and a soldier next, but both at once. And there lay the secret of his strength and influence. He was, in short, a man,'[45] while the Archbishop of York lauded his example of 'straightforward, soldierly devotion. A clean, straight, simple man – the sort of soldier whom our Lord

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[43] The memoirs were B.G. O'Rorke, *A Soldier and a Man: A Sketch of the Life and Work of Lieut.-Colonel H. Storr, D.S.O.* (London, 1919), and Deutschen Christlichen Studenten Vereinigung [DCSV], *Soldat und Christ: zum Gedächtnis des Königlich Preußischen Generals Paul von Viebahn* (Cassel, 1916).
[44] O'Rorke, *A Soldier and a Man* (London, 1919), p.4, Ionides tribute pp.36-7; DCSV, *Soldat und Christ* (Cassel, 1916), p.17.
[45] O'Rorke, *A Soldier and a Man*, (London, 1919), p.51.

on earth seems to have specially loved.'[46] Von Viebahn's life of Christian grace and civic duty, carried out 'not in monastic seclusion' but in service to the nation in 'manly determination', proved that there was 'no intrinsic contradiction but a harmonious accord, to be a true Christian and a genuine soldier.'[47] Von Viebahn's military evangelism aimed to synthesise the career of the soldier with Christian piety in the service of two kings, Christ and Kaiser.[48] Storr preached a similar message, that his men should become 'soldiers of the King of Kings.'[49]

Both had also dedicated their careers to reforming and evangelising the army. Von Viebahn's brand of conversionist preaching grew from an intense brand of pietism, in which he preached 'life renewal' (*Lebenserneuerung*) and the need for grace as part of their godly military service. As a regimental commander in Trier, von Viebahn had established a soldiers' home at his own expense, and regularly wrote and distributed sermons and gospel sheets to troops. Storr also reformed his own regiment, replacing Christmas Day drinking evenings with an improving programme of 'tea, games and competition',[50] while he also was credited with sustaining a high standard of discipline and 'sanctified professional efficiency', overseeing the digging of roads and lines of trenches near Ypres, recruiting men to the War Roll movement and showing exemplary paternalism towards individuals. Storr had stressed in one of the early National Mission meetings in Beaconsfield the need to rediscover the Old Testament

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[46] Letter, Archbishop of York, 18 Aug. 1918, printed in O'Rorke, *A Soldier and a Man* (London, 1919), p.63.
[47] DCSV, *Soldat und Christ* (Cassel, 1916), p.13.
[48] As von Viebahn himself wrote, the whole calling of the soldier was to live 'In faithful devotion and imitation to our heavenly King Jesus Christ and our earthly King' in 'Ein Regimentsbefehl,' *Korrespondenzblatt für die evangelischen Geistlichen der deutschen Armee*, 11, (Feb. 1891), p.92.
[49] O'Rorke, *Soldier and a Man*, p.17.
[50] Ibid. pp.23-4.

and its theme of war bringing the nation to repentance as a divine judgment.[51] Von Viebahn, who had already retired, was acclaimed for donating his two sons to the struggle, praying that they might 'move forth on the field of honour itself to their Christ.'[52] The lessons encoded in both their biographies teach the living that the war is about the cultivation of a Christian character of manliness, piety, cleanliness and evangelistic witness, the pursuit of social harmony through the war effort, that the loyalties of the Christian complement and strengthen the loyalties of the soldier. Not only could Christians also be soldiers, but Christian virtues made the best soldiers.

Several differences between Storr and von Viebahn also emerge, that are symptomatic of the different emphases in Anglican and German Pietistic war theology. Storr was inclined towards social reform as the path to salvation. 'He really cared for the Kingdom of God, and as such he considered problems far beyond the vision of your ordinary politician. He got to know about race questions, national movements, wage questions, the relations between employer and labourer.' A 'Sir Galahad' who stood on platforms wearing his Distinguished Service Order and pleaded for a 'Christian England', Storr's hagiography presented a model of paternalism, a visionary espousing social reconstruction. Wounded in both hands and lying in hospital, Storr's conversation was reported as a combination of his paternalistic sense of duty and his reformist ideals, 'a delightful mixture of visions for the future of the Society, of schemes for a better Britain, and expressions of a soldierly longing to be back with his regiment.'[53]

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[51] See D. M. Thompson, 'War, the Nation and the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope, 1915-1916' in W.J. Sheils (ed.) *Studies in Church History* (Blackwell, 1983) pp.337-350, p. 344.
[52] DCSV, *Soldat und Christ* (Cassel, 1916), p.16.
[53] O'Rorke, *Soldier and a Man*, (London, 1919), p.30.

Von Viebahn, by contrast, was reared in the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* or community movement, which upheld national political unification as the ultimate expression of the Kingdom of God.[54] Von Viebahn was praised in his memorial pamphlet for searching for a Christian community beyond the immediate Protestant circles of western Germany, as an icon of the unity of the people of God.[55] The *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* was influenced profoundly by Johann Wichern, the founder of the Inner Mission, who preached that religious renewal, social regeneration and national unification were part of an indivisible triad, and one necessary step was the creation of a true *Volkskirche* or national church. The sacredness of Germany's national wars, according to these pietist circles and according to von Viebahn who had served in the campaigns of national unification, was that each war was a decisive moment in 'salvation history' that would create the holy German nation as a vehicle for the Kingdom of God.[56] Despite these differences, both of them were dead men promoted and idealised as spiritual warriors by people and institutions that warned of the debasing effects of life in the military. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the Church of England Men's Society, in which Storr had been Lay Secretary, was concerned about the condition of veterans returning from the front, while the DCSV was fearful of the potential corruption of culturally dislocated German soldiers. The latter months of 1918 saw an upsurge in alarm about the effects of the violence and strain of war on combatants once they would be demobilised.

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[54] See J. Ohlemacher, *Das Reich Gottes in Deutschland bauen: Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte und Theologie der Deutschen Gemeinschaftsbewegung* (Göttingen, 1986) p.59, n.184.
[55] DCSV, *Soldat und Christ* (Cassel, 1916), p.15.
[56] For the literature on Pietism and its interpretation of German history and its national wars, see Chapter 2 of this Thesis.

Heroism denoted a struggle on several levels. It represented the effort to resist brutalisation. It was a war of long periods of tedium and inactivity, of frustrating delays and long, menial labour behind the lines. Churchmen at the front articulated a form of heroism that was reconfigured around the ideal of endurance. A British military chaplain who was invalided out of the war preached

> the image of the soldier hero waiting "with eager heart and starry eyes" to go over the top is as sickening as it is silly. No, the splendour and wonder of our men in France and Belgium, and no praise can possibly be too high, lies not so much in the dash and glory of it all, but in their grimly doing their duty: sticking to a hateful task amid conditions that every right-minded man must hate and loathe with fierce intensity… Insensibly we are all of us getting brutalised – and we at home not the least.[57]

Because the brand of heroism being advocated entailed service and subordination to the community, modesty was another core value of the ideal hero-soldier. An army infected by hubris, hostile to authority and bearing an inflated sense of entitlement could be dangerous. German field hospital chaplain, Martin Ulbrich, perceived two competing heroisms on Germany's eastern frontiers. Ulbrich prophesied that the returning generation of Germans had a mission to complete the rebirth of the nation, but warned that this mission could be undermined by a fatal arrogance that some war survivors were showing. Identifying conflicting forms of heroism, he condemned the way veterans were abusing their status and might abuse the gratitude of their nations and menace society, thereby rupturing the pursuit of social harmony that lay at the heart of the war. The *dangers* that accompanied the cult of heroism threatened the sense of duty and humility that marked a good Christian soldier.[58]

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[57] UBSC GB 0150 CMS/ACC18 F1 50-54 (Lewellyn-Gwynne, Papers and Diaries) Sermon, C.B. Motlock.
[58] M. Ulbrich, 'Falsches und wahres Heldentum' *Zeitung der 10 Armee*, 50 (28 March, 1916).

Heroism also represented the struggle against materialism and the class divisions it engendered. German propagandists in particular stressed that its national culture embodied heroic ideals, as a land of heroes warring against antiheroic civilisations. Werner Sombart's *Händler und Helden* (Merchants and Heroes), depicted the war as a contest between the powers that had been shaped by the legacy of 1789 with their merchants' creed of commercial values and liberal, bourgeois mediocrity.[59] It found parallels in the claims of one British correspondent from the front, who claimed that heroism was more than courage, it sprang from belief, an entire nation so inspired by faith that a 'nation of heroes is possible.'[60] Military success would depend on heroic spirit and faith, because the industrial and mechanised war was ultimately a spiritual contest, so that a godly inner state was the precondition for victory. As one postcard depicted, the heroic death must be aligned to the four crosses of the German cause, the iron cross of individual bravery, the red cross of compassion, the cross of the comrades' grave enshrining loyalty to their memory, and the cross of Christ, declaring 'Germany, in this sign you will conquer.'[61] As well as sanctifying sacrifice, the reference to Emperor Constantine's moment of conversion aligned Christian duty with loyalty to the Second Reich, the Kaiser as the successor to the Caesars of the Roman and Holy Roman Empires. Reinhold Seeberg, prominent divine at Berlin University, claimed death derived its heroic quality not from hereditary blood but from devotion to an ideal, the 'nameless heroism' that sacrificed life for the Fatherland that expressed the 'greatest love' of sacrifice preached by Christ. The

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[59] W. Sombart, *Händler und Helden* (Leipzig, 1915).
[60] 'Heroes Response to the Ideal' *Times*, 18 Aug. 1917, p. 9.
[61] O. May, *Deutsch Sein Heisst Treu Sein: Ansichtskarten als Spiegel von Mentalität und Untertanenerziehung in der Wilhelminischen Aera (1888-1918) (Hildesheim, 1998), p.395.*

world-historical crisis was awakening 'sacred seriousness' in ordinary people.[62] Like Sombart, Seeberg portrayed heroism as the property of the German nation, a status that the common soldier could aspire to.

What Seeberg preached in Berlin, however, was in danger of being unravelled on the eastern frontier, where his own son, military chaplain Erich Seeberg, diagnosed a crisis. Seeberg portrayed trench existence as a brutalising process. Its dismantling of conventional societal restraints outweighed any restraint and discipline inculcated by military service. The absence of wives, manners, the loosening of limitations through a violent power struggle, preoccupation with mere personal survival obliterated consciousness of sin and ethical boundaries. The war did not generally promote morality, he insisted. It obliterated limits, increased egoism, the absence of wives dismantling restraints, and encouraged the 'dirty joke.'[63]

In the writing emerging from the field, the war was laying siege to the heroic and sacrificial purity of the German nation that Sombart celebrated. Earlier, in 1916, a poem by Leutnant Richard Dehmel in a trench newspaper exhorted Germany, the 'heroic nation', to resist materialist corruption. God had created it for the struggle 'not to gather spoils', and Germany must prove worthy of its stature in the world by remaining faithful in the face of 'lecherous hordes.'[64] The same ambivalence, seeing in war the dual potential to purify or corrupt, marks the writing of Donald Hankey, who argued that heroism was needed at the front as an antidote to materialist and

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[62] R. Seeberg, 'Heldentum' (speech given on 5 Dec. 1914 at University of Berlin) in B. Doehring (ed.), *Ein feste Burg: Predigten und Reden aus eherner Zeit Zum Besten der Nationalstiftung für die Hinterbliebenen der im Kriege Gefallenen* (Berlin, 1914) ii. pp.339-353.
[63] E. Seeberg, *Religion im Feld* (Berlin, 1918), p. 70.
[64] Leutnant d. L. Richard Dehmel, 'Gebet ans Volk' L167, *Zeitung der 10. Armee* 167, (no date) 1916.

moral corruption, heroism and religion being two of the powers that are 'stronger than the flesh.[65]

While the rhetoric of heroism rested strongly on the sanctity of blood and death, paradoxically the redemptive value of the war would depend upon its effects on its survivors. It was the survivors of war, and the way the war experience affected them, that became central to the churches prophecies about the meaning of the war. Jakob Schoell in 1916 hoped that 'our weapon-capable force returns from a hard school into civilian life, travelled and deepened.'[66] In December 1915, Anglican chaplain Jeeves prophesied that through the 'carnage', 'sickening sights' and 'monotonous discomfort' of the battle, 'our men shall learn such a lesson as shall never be forgotten whilst their children can remember to tell the tale of the part that father played in the great War.'[67]

A major site of this discussion about the relationship between religion, heroism and the conduct of war was the social and sexual life of the army. As well as considering religion a talisman of probity, hagiographers also promoted religion as a way of making combatants more militarily effective, and attuning them to the new demands of a protracted war of attrition. When brothels were introduced to the frontline, missionaries and chaplains deplored them on two grounds, that they would undermine the central purpose of the war by contaminating soldiers who would return as future civilians,[68] and that it undermined the military effectiveness of the combatant. Not

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[65] D. Hankey, *A Student in Arms* (2nd ed. London, 1916), p.72.
[66] J. Schoell, *Was ein Feldsoldat im Krieg gelernt haben muß* (circa. 1916), p.2.
[67] IWM 80/22/1 (L.L. Jeeves, Letters to Whitechapel parish), December 1915 .
[68] The fear was of 'infected men discharged from the Army bringing that infection back into civil life.' LPL DP, v.355, p.180 'Minutes of Proceedings at a conference regarding venereal disease and its treatment in the armed forces', War Office, 10 May, 1918.

only were military excellence and Christian principles consistent, they were mutually dependent. Their criticisms drew upon both a moral language and a language of national efficiency. It clashed with the opinion of some military authorities, that a regulated sexual outlet was essential for morale and fighting effectiveness. As the report of an interdenominational conference convened by chaplain Harry Blackburne claimed, 'sexual intercourse is quite unnecessary, and that on the contrary continence is a most valuable asset to the fighting efficiency of the troops, and therefore a direct means towards achieving victory.'[69] This had roots also in the Edwardian past, as the campaigns of purity movements for higher standards of public morality and chaste private sexual behaviour were inspired partly by concerns about the degeneration of the race in an age of escalating international rivalry and anxiety about falling birth rates, the bodily health of the population and the need for family *mores*. Puritanical divines as well as eugenicists and imperialists 'came to see purity as a precondition for national preparedness', reaching an equation between the moral health of the body politic and national power.[70]

One of the most extensive collections of heroic tales was made by a Scottish Protestant chaplain, W.E. Sellers. He claimed military life and spirituality were not a contradiction but a desirable marriage, that 'a Christian man can make a fine soldier, and a man who is at once a Christian *and* a soldier, is a man whose influence must be all for good in the Army.' In anecdotes of soldiers being converted, praying or dying, lives are consecrated in the army, while the army benefits from the ethos of men strengthened by the bracing discipline of faith. Far from being out of place on the

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[69]LPL DP, v.355, pp.125-6 Letter, Deputy Chaplain General Llewellyn Gwynne, 27th March 1918, enclosing 'Resolution of Interdenominational Conference and report of a conference on venereal disease under Douglas Carey at Etaples.'

[70] See E. J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (Dublin, 1977), p.6.

European battlefields, religion was especially responsive to the exceptional demands modern total war made on the combatant's psychology and character. Sellers developed the argument of Japanese General Nogi Maresuke, the hero of the Russo-Japanese war, that self-mastery was a precondition of military excellence.[71] The Christian graces, he argued, produce 'bravery, endurance, heroism and patience.'[72]

Concern over the enervating effects of release from the strain of the front was voiced in particular by men's Christian Morality movements, such as the German White Cross League and the British Alliance of Honour, and evangelist bodies such as the Church Army. The journal of the German White Cross League, with thousands of members at the front, portrayed proper manliness as the quelling of internal demons, warning that civic virtue was endangered by the temptations of whoring. In a possibly fictitious letter from a mother to her son in the field, she counsels him that the highest victory is 'to restrain one's self', warning that he is fighting in a strange foreign land. The German man is spoilt by war because he is visits towns with disposable income to waste in brothels. Even if the returning army is victorious, its victory will be meaningless if it returns corrupted.[73] The White Cross League, one of the Men's Christian Morality Movement in Germany, who associated the perceived threat to sexual morality and marriage and the established political order, the revolt against Christian *mores* the precursor to class warfare and revolution.[74] Spokesmen for the Alliance of Honour were equally perturbed by the prospect of soldiers on leave. In a

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[71] W.E. Sellers, *With our Heroes in Khaki: The Story of Christian Work with our Soldiers and Sailors – and Some of its Results* (London, 1917), pp.47, 117.
[72] W.E. Sellers, *With our Fighting Men* (London, 1915), p.119.
[73] Published letter, 'Brief einer Mutter an ihren Sohn im Felde' *Weißes Kreuz,* 22:2 (15 April, 1915), p.21.
[74] See E. R. Dickinson, 'The Men's Christian Morality Movement in Germany, 1880-1914: Some Reflections on Politics, Sex, and Sexual Politics' *The Journal of Modern History* 75 (March 2003), pp.59-110.

letter to wounded soldiers, Lieut. Col. Seton Churchill warned that there were more dangers in 'Old England' than before the enemy.[75]

Three differences in the heroic imagery should be noted. Firstly, those who eulogised their national heroes, German and British, adapted the rhetoric of modern knighthood to their different systems of recruitment. Because the British Expeditionary Force was a volunteer force until February 1916, there arose a hierarchy of virtue within the British wartime pantheon. Those who had volunteered for the New Army before conscription was introduced were accorded particular praise. Just as the nation had voluntarily decided to uphold its treaty obligations, so too was the heroic endeavour of its men elective, something they chose to do. 'Honest John', an officer in one of the early brigades, signed up 'without hesitation or counting the cost', and was described by a correspondent at the front in January 1918 as 'the embodiment of the spirit of the New Army,' a 'noble band of brothers, eager, resolute and clean, the forerunners of the nation's strength.'[76] German volunteers were also lauded for their choice to enlist, but they fought in a predominantly conscript army from the beginning, involving combatants who could not lay claim to a voluntarist ethic. The characteristic virtue of German military heroism was duty, both through patriotic obedience to the Kaiser, and the quiescent Lutheran submission to the authority of crowned monarch. One German postcard depicts a wounded and bandaged soldier, braced with his bayonet ready next to his dead comrade, staring ahead resolutely, and the caption above him reads 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in heaven as it is on earth.'[77] The picture depicts the Christian state of manliness and acceptance that a pious soldier should

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[75] 'A Letter to Wounded Soldiers', *Honour Quarterly Record of the Alliance of Honour* 6:22 (April-June 1916), p.49.
[76] 'John. A True Record. The Spirit of the New Army' *Times* 25, Jan. 1918, p.5.
[77] Postcard reproduced in J. Laffin, *World War I in Postcards* (Gloucester, 1988), p.201.

aspire to when facing danger, while it also conflates unquestioning and staunch acceptance of military duty with obedience to God. Where British heroes were celebrated for their creed of elective heroism, German heroes obeyed their sacred duty.

Secondly, unlike Britain with its much older and established political unity, Germany's churches hoped the war would complete her internal unification, the peoples newly amalgamated by Bismarck in 1870-1 now receiving its baptism of fire into true nationhood. Germany's Christian heroes, therefore, were also identified with this cause. Georg Leinhos, a German Protestant military chaplain who had moved to minister in a church in a biconfessional area in Austria, became a potent icon of one element of the *Burgfriede* in particular, the suspension of sectarian and political divisions. The commemorative pamphlet, issued as part of the *Volkschriften zum Grossen Krieg*, reproduces a letter written by Leinhos to the children of his parish in St. Pölten in lower Austria, in September 1914. Leinhos urges them to live in harmony with the Roman Catholic children in wartime, to build the foundations of a reconciled Germanic Christianity: 'be kind to your Roman Catholic class mates and comrades. Where the Protestant and Roman Catholic soldiers fight and fall shoulder to shoulder on the battlefields we want more as think that we belong together at home even if we have another faith.'[78] Like so much of the martyrology of the war, Leinhos idealises the armies, in this case as soldiers whose solidarity at the front submerges confessional hostilities, as a lesson to the civilian world in how to live. The eradication of sectarian hatred at home, in faithful imitation of the example set in the

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[78] F. Ulrich (ed.) *Kriegsdienst und Heldentod eines evangelischen Pfarrers aus Österreich (Georg Leinhos, Vikar zu Amstetten, geffallen bei Dixmuiden am 10 Nov. 1914)* (Berlin, 1914), pp.14-15.

armed forces, would then justify the 'dear sacrifices' that had to be made to defend the nation against numerous enemies.

Thirdly, the heroic idiom was sometimes inflected in a different aesthetic style and emotional temperature. Germanic heroism reached a more histrionic pitch on two separate occasions during the war. In a more vainglorious gesture, towards the end of the war, in November 1918, several high level military and civilian leaders proposed a deliberately staged performance in which the Kaiser would lead a suicidal charge by a special assault unit against a dangerous enemy position, salvaging the reputation of the monarchy and the prestige of the army in the twilight of the German campaign.[79] The proposal to mount a dramatic King's death (*Kaisertod*) was presumably aborted by the Kaiser's own reluctance to emulate the sacrificial deaths of his compatriots. It is not clear that under similar circumstances such a plan would have even been suggested or seriously entertained either by Field Marshal Haig or by King George V. While the British army was also susceptible to mystical experiences, as evident in the rapid rumour of the Angel of Mons, the (probably fictitious or exaggerated) image of men singing jubilantly as they stride towards their deaths has no exact parallel in the British army, though there was plenty of singing and praying before combat. Conversely, it would be difficult to find a German equivalent of the cheeky Captain Phillip Neville, whose company on July 11 1916 climbed over the parapet and dribbled soccer balls as they advanced across No Man's Land, the ball of one platoon marked 'The Great European Cup / The Final / East Surreys v Bavarians / Kick Off at Zero.'[80]

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[79] Albrecht von Thaer, quoted in S. A. Kaehler, 'Vier quellenkritische Untersuchungen zum Kriegsende 1918,' *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaft in Göttingen. I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse* 8 (1960), p.462.
[80] M. Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme*, (London, 1971), p.67.

Allowing for all these differences, which relate more to style than substance, one term and concept recurs again and again in the hagiographies of wartime Christian martyrs on both sides: purity. The heroic ideal mattered particularly in the First World War because it was portrayed as an existential war, a struggle between belief systems and faiths. When combatants fell, it was not enough for the churches that they had fought bravely or fiercely. Their heroic stature also demanded that they embody inner purity. The Langemarck martyrs were said to be the vanguard of a purified Germanic race, while Captain Neville's sporting antics were credited by one military chaplain, with playing 'a game which was to be played to the end in a clean and straight manner.'[81] The good Christian soldier fought bravely and nobly because he was 'clean' and because his death would release a life force of purification.[82] As well as winning acclaim for their physical deeds, Christian heroes possessed interior qualities that made possible their outward valour. 'True heroism', wrote one pastor in a trench newspaper, 'has its roots in God', its qualities were 'inwardness' and 'humility.'[83]

Germany's ideal of the *Heldentod* embraced many qualities, ranging from the manner of the combatant's death, his relationships with his fellow soldiers (or subordinate soldiers if he was an officer), his motives, his idiosyncratic features, his demeanour and personality, and his piety. The dying hero possessed an ideal warrior personality. It was prescribed in the first months of the war by German military chaplains in a 'Soldier's Catechism':

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[81] See J.W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington, 1990), p. xii. IWM 80/22/1 (Rev. L.L. Jeeves) (no date).
[82] See eg. the diary entry on 28 June, 1916 of the British Deputy Chaplain-General, that 'Potter is a splendid specimen of a Xtian British Officer – clean – earnest – an indefatigable worker and a great lover of his fellow men.' UBSC GB 0150 CMS/ACC18 F1 50-54 (Papers of Lewellyn-Gwynne).
[83] *Kriegszeitschrift für Unsere Soldaten im Felde* 39 (Jan. 1917), p.16.

> A valiant soldier and warrior should struggle for his laudable and just King and Lord and for the Empire and glory and hold out until death. The valiant soldier should love his Fatherland and his people above all and gladly spill his last drop of blood, if that beloved Fatherland stands in danger. A valiant soldier should always have God before his eyes and carry God's commandments deep in his heart, that also no force can compel him from doing God's commandments. A brave soldier shall not flaunt the outer honour, still swell on vanity; but loyalty to the native country shall be his honour, and quiet courage his highest ornament. German warriors, this shall this be your honour, to you the love of Fatherland is more beloved than all gold, and German freedom more worthy than life, and God-obliged virtue dearer than all earthly goods. This shall be your honour, that no doubt, God will free the brave and honest, that none becomes disheartened to die in such a holy war.[84]

These exhortations were drawn from Felix Arndt, patriot of the War of Liberation, who had published in 1813 a code of conduct for the soldier as a citizen in arms. It bound the soldier to a bourgeois and religious system of ethics, who defended his personal honour, his family, his property and his Fatherland, thereby proving his manhood. Outer courage and patriotism must be matched by the purity of the spirit, overcoming corruption. Thus the soldier was rendered heroic by his inner state, his godly character, as well as individual acts of patriotic endeavour. The popular military anthem, 'Die Wacht am Rhein' also exalted the dutiful defence of the nation by 'true and pure' patriots of high moral stature gazed upon by heavenly heroes of antiquity, 'leading Germany through eternity's door.'

As several examples demonstrate, the construction of the *Heldentod* ideal or the chivalrous soldier, was partly the result of correspondence with bereaved families, a sentiment that could come from below. For the benefit of their co-religionists at war, the churches canonised pious soldiers who had perished as exemplars to the living, promoting an ideal warrior personality. Hagiographies of soldier-saints were not

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[84] *Mitteilungen für die evangelischen Christlichen der Armee und der Marine* 39: 9/10 (Sept/Oct. 1914), p.168.

exclusively 'top-down' impositions of the high command as a device of elite propaganda, though publishing houses and governments were active agents in disseminating the rhetoric of patriotic sacrifice. Instead, literatures produced to commemorate dead individuals during the war were usually collaborative projects. They gathered reminiscences and tributes to the dead from comrades, family and superiors. The set of ideas that underpinned what made someone heroic and what made sacrifice sacred was a heroic idiom was generated collectively, uniting the bereavements of people from the home front and the frontline, officers and men, family and comrades. As one bereaved wife wrote to her late husband's field chaplain, her 'dear husband' who passed away 'far too early', 'died the heroic death for the nation in faithful self-giving and fulfillment of his duty for the Fatherland.'[85] It derived force from the communal grief of fellow soldiers, officers, family, and sometimes even voices from opposing armies.

Hans Kaiser was the son of a Lutheran pastor and an officer in the 6th Baden Infantry, who had left school in Heidelberg to enlist as a volunteer, was awarded the Iron Cross (2nd Class) and was later killed by a shell in Champagne on 16th April, 1916. After his death, his father organised a commemorative tribute in his honour. [86] From the pages of the pamphlet dedicated to him emerges a character who embodies the qualities that Lutheran sermons exalted in the fighting men of their churches and in German *Kultur*. Hans was a devoted violin player and 'thinking man.' From his infancy he was 'bodily and spiritually healthy,' a state which Protestant youth organisations cherished in the young generations of Germans. Though he was aware that Germany's enemies

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[85] DTA, Sig. 424, 1,2 (Siegfried Eggebrecht, Diaries) Letter, 13 Sept. 1915, transcribed letter from Frau Anna Wiegandt.

[86] The following quotations are all from '*Wie Gott will!' Zur Erinnerung an d. Heldentod von Hans Kaiser, Lt. im akt. 6. Bad. Inf.-Rgt. Gefallen am 15. Apr. 1916 an d. Westfront* (Dinglingen, 1916), pp. 7-8 ,19-20, (Obituary, cited in pamphlet) pp.16, 6, 23.

wanted to annihilate the Fatherland, his motives were pure, 'He hardly knew personal hate for the enemies.' In Hans' person comes together all of the contrasting elements of perceived Germanic virtues. He is culturally sensitive yet courageous, pious to God and dutiful to the Kaiser, inspiring as a leader yet humble, fiercely patriotic yet above hate. According to his father, Hans had resigned himself after a Christmas visit on leave to the inevitability of his own death, repeating 'God Wills It' as his mantra, which he repeated as he died. His last hours were related by his divisional chaplain. As he lay dying, he opened his 'beautiful blue eyes' and asked to say prayers, before saying 'Goodbye.' The depiction of his death, with his perfect preparedness in the final hours, asserts that his life reached completion, consummating his full dedication to the Fatherland and God, his conscious sacrifice of his life for the cause, his piety and devotion unspoilt by the wearying strain of warfare.

His father testified to his patriotism and holiness, his chaplain to the beauty of his final moments, but his comrades attested to his impact upon the regiment. Company leader Stern claimed in a letter to Hans' father that Hans' 'meek death', which crowned his 'beautiful life', inspired him. Stern faced his own 'great struggle, without and within.' Hans represented to Stern the pattern of heroism in warfare – striving against inner darkness. 'I will struggle and will, God willing, prevail like Hans.' Oberstleutnant Sydow, the Regiment's Commander, posted an obituary in the newspaper, also crediting Hans with exemplary virtues: 'faithful to his comrades, bold and brave before the enemy, of simple, deep piety toward the Lord of all armies.' The *Heldentod* was special because it consecrated life and set the model for others to follow.

Any search for the 'real' Hans Kaiser would view this hagiographical source with suspicion, as it was written by admirers and family to celebrate him and his attitudes and project his wartime heroism deep into his childhood, thereby conferring some of the credit onto his family and local community. It was not written as a dispassionate dissection of his character or his weaknesses, nor to explicate paradoxes or ambiguities. Quite the opposite, it strives to show a seamless chain of character originating in birth and rearing and culminating in sacrificial death. But the pamphlet reveals much about the meanings invested in the archetypal heroic death. It goes well beyond affection, and aims to do more than comfort the bereaved. It is written to shape the attitudes of fighting men. In his own father's words, Hans became one of hundreds of thousands of sacrifices 'for all that is and shall remain German', his memory serving as 'a monument of the powerful, ideal, Christian attitude to life within the German people in this great time.' The power of the language of sacrificial heroism can partly be explained by the fact that it lay outside the person of the individual being commemorated. This is demonstrated by the claim of one chaplain, who never once met Hans, that Hans' salvation was assured. Heroic ideals submerged individual personality. It is a political document written to interpret the ultimate political act, dying for the nation, as well as an expression of personal mourning, deliberately legitimising the language of martyrdom.

The rhetoric inspired by the death of Hans Kaiser and his generation stands at the intersection of politics and consolation: mourning the dead entailed teaching the audience how they should live. One Scottish Minister who also fought in the Black Watch, taught his readers that the heroes of the army consecrated their local communities by plunging them into a state of mourning. 'The mere reading of a list of

casualties has sobered and purified us.'[87] In commemorative books dedicated to two brothers in 1916 by their father, Dr. Gotthold von Rohden, it was also intended to inspire those who would fight and those who would rebuild Germany after the war. The two dead brothers were exemplars that would have something to say to the new generation, who would be 'charged with the reconstruction of our people.'[88] Dr. Gotthold von Rohden commemorated his son as a paragon of inner strength guide the survivors of the war on wartime citizenship. Later he would write a tract on the iniquity of prostitution, and was clearly troubled by its threat to the moral fabric of the nation.[89] Hence the appeal of his dead sons' example. The heroic inspiration of his son's sacrifice represented the ennobling impact of war on the men who fought it, because it 'turned them into knights.' The collection of letters which follows depicts a young student subordinating himself to a sacrificial culture, 'I am no longer "I", but a part of the people's power, that must use itself up for the Fatherland and sacrifice itself.'[90] When enlisting, he expresses a quiet determination to do God's will, aware of the dangers that he will face. Like Hans Kaiser, Gotthold defines the struggle as a quest to preserve his 'Christian German' spirit.[91] The freshness and vitality of the early period yields not to despair but to 'staying power, proving oneself.' The trenches symbolise the struggle to develop the individual character, as heroism is reconfigured around endurance.[92] His brother, also an officer, claimed that Gotthold inspired him during his own 'physical and spiritual depression.'[93]

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[87] D.M. Ross, *A Scottish Minister and Soldier: The Rev. Peter Ross Husband, 2nd Lieutenant Black Watch* (London, 1917), pp.118-119.
[88] G. von Rohden, *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden Leutnant im 184 Inf-Regiment.* (Halle, 1916), p.6.
[89] G. von Rohden *Die Prostitutionsfrage gehalten auf der Kirchlich-sozialen Kriegstagung in Berlin 16. bis 18. Oktober 1916,* (Leipzig, 1917), pp.8, 39.
[90] G. von Rohden, *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden*, (Halle, 1916) 11 Dec. 1914, p.4.
[91] G. von Rohden, *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden*, (Halle, 1916), (no date), p.14.
[92] G. von Rohden, *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden*, (Halle, 1916) Letter, n.d, probably after the new year of 1915, p.21.
[93] G. von Rohden, *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden*, (Halle, 1916), p.92.

The father of Walter and Fritz Jungst circulated the story of his sons in order to expand the reach of their inspirational example. 'Our warriors still talk to us even if their body also rests in the foreign country…It is the father's duty to hold tight and to present the blessing decided on in their death. Therefore he has depicted his sons, has shown their life, their dying and their ethos. May the ideal sense of the brothers and their willingness to sacrifice themselves here or there inspire imitation.'[94] His concept of paternal duty is revealing, enhancing his sons' sacrifices by retelling them.

To understand the needs and anxieties that gave life to the cult of heroism, it is necessary to investigate not only the heroes but their eulogists. The desire to venerate heroes' memory as exemplars of a war for purity, and to control the way they were remembered, often transcended sectarian divisions. At the same time, the denomination of each eulogist could give the idea different inflections. This is demonstrated by Barry Doyle's study of responses to the death of Major W.H. 'Harry' Jewson. Jewson was a Nonconformist whose memory was utilised both by the local Norwich nonconformists with their emphasis on Jewson's Liberal orientation as a volunteer, and by the local Anglican vicar who hoped that 'their example and sacrifice will be remembered.'[95] Compare this to the White Knights movement, founded by John Oxenham, the Congregationalist poet, and Beatrice Chase, a Roman Catholic novelist. Chase's devotion to the dead went well beyond the military piety of Anglican and Presbyterian believers. She prayed in her chapel to a dead member of

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[94] J. Juengst *Zwei Für das Vaterland Gefallenen Bruder von ihrem Vater Joh. Juengst* (no place of publication listed, 1916) 'Vorwart.'

[95] Cited in B. M. Doyle, 'Religion, Politics and Remembrance: A Free Church Commuity and its Great War Dead' in M. Evans, K. Lunn (eds.) *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 223-238, 228.

the White Knights, as a saint who could intercede in the world to do 'glorious work for the souls of men.'[96]

The most cherished attitude was willingness to be killed for a greater cause, named *Opferwilligkeit* in German notation. Archetypal soldiers were encouraged to hope for an honourable death. One British postcard enjoined the Tommy to pray for a decent passing that linked him with a feudal past. Alongside a picture of mourning soldiers praying at a comrades' grave at the front, a poem is printed: 'Let me like a Soldier Fall / I only ask of that proud race, which ends its blaze in me,/ To die, the last, and not disgrace its ancient chivalry.'[97] That combatants in both armies were risking their lives was clear, but more ambitious claims were made about their mental state. Christian heroes virtually *decide* to lose their lives. Sacrificial death represented the ultimate negation of individualism, where the individual transcended himself and became part of a greater whole. Leutnant Heinz, brother of Leutnant Gottgold von Rohden killed at Champagne, in commemorative book claimed that death was the 'necessary crown', which merged his brother into 'the completion of the task.'[98] A similar meaning was attached to the death of an English junior officer, Charles Lister by 'brother officer': his 'eager sense of duty' and 'willingness to sacrifice himself seemed part of some high secret religion of his own.'[99] Paradoxically, military death itself represented the consummation of a process of self-development.

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[96] O. C. Parr, *The Soul of Two Knights* (London, 1918), pp.69-70.
[97] Laffin, *World War I in Postcards* (Gloucester, 1988), p.87.
[98] G. von Rohden, *Leutnant Gotthold von Rohden* (Halle, 1916), p.85.
[99] *Times* 29 Dec. 1916, p. 9. One friend's poem stressed that his life's accomplishment was complete: 'To have thought great thoughts and lived till you knew them true/To have loved men more than yourself and have died to prove it/Yes, Charles, this is to have lived; was there more to do?' 'To C.A.L.' in E.B. Osborn, *The Muse in Arms* (London, 1917), p.140.

As well as being an emblem for the hero's ultimate self-sacrifice, death was also fundamental to heroism because it silenced the hero, thereby enabling others to control the public memory of the hero's biography. Hagiographies of each departed warrior usually played down the distinctive features of their personalities, showing striking uniformity when it came to identifying what the hero embodied. Each hero, whether German or British, was pure, pious, clean-living, cheerful, selfless, patient and patriotic. The most potent hero is the dead hero, especially the martyred hero, their death enabling their image to be inflated, interpreted and manipulated.'[100] This was particularly important in the context of the religious rhetoric surrounding martyrs in the war, because their memory was appropriated to serve as a didactic tool to educate the living.

What did the heroic death do for the individual soldier? Was death in the service of a holy cause enough to save his soul? What should be the relationship between the living and the dead? The monument to German and Austrian soldiers killed at Wloclawek in Poland in 1915, recorded in the trench newspaper *Deutsche Kriegszeitung in Polen*, affords an insight into popular piety within the army towards the dead and the ways heroism and martyrdom was conceived. The monument was a giant obelisk with a cross marked with the simple inscription 'Unseren Helden!' (Our Heroes!). The monument is not exclusively a Protestant one but an ecumenical Christian commemoration for both Austrian and German divisions (Germany). The monument and the article and poems it inspired in the trench newspaper enshrined a

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[100] J. M. MacKenzie 'Heroic myths of empire' in J. M. MacKenzie (ed.) *Popular imperialism and the military 1850-1950* (Manchester, 1992), pp.109-139.

prayer to the dead, working 'as one prayer that has become stone' in 'grateful love' for 'our heroes.' The names of the dead were inscribed beneath the cross. [101]

At first glance prayers for the dead represent a departure from strict Protestant tradition. Praying for the dead might appear to have resonances of interceding for the welfare of their comrades' souls. In Germany, however, this is unlikely to have appeared alien to Protestant soldiers. Popular demand in 1814 had resulted in the creation of *Totensonntag* (Sunday of the Dead), observed on the last Sunday before Advent in November. It was the day when Protestant Christians remember their dead, especially those who had died in the past few years. It was roughly the equivalent to the Roman Catholic All Souls Day (*Allerseelen*), but held a more commemorative than intercessionary function. Worshippers would gather to remember the dead even if their prayers were not necessary to ease the passage of the soul from purgatory into paradise. The mourning Sunday instituted in 1814 means that Roman Catholics at the front held no monopoly in wartime over piety to the dead. A poem appeared in the same newspaper by a combatant (whose rank is unmentioned) entitled 'Totensonntag':

> You mustn't cry because they aren't dead,
> At the sound of the drums and reed pipes
> They have marched through the sunrise
> In tight step in long rows
> Well over the golden threshold
> The heavenly citadel[102]

The poem celebrates both the regiments' immortality and its indivisibility. They would all go to heaven as one. This demonstrates the way that the Sunday of the Dead

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[101] 'Unseren Helden!' (Zur Weihefeer des 2. Kriegserdenkmals in Wloclawek) *Feld- Zeitung Deutsche Kriegszeitung in Polen* 6 (1915), pp.2-3.
[102] O. Doderer, 'Totensonntag', *Feld- Zeitung Deutsche Kriegszeitung in Polen* 6 (1915), p.3.

could commemorate the dead whose salvation was already assured. Here, it guarantees that their salvation was purchased by the act of dying for the nation, a tradition more Islamic than Christian, in which military martyrdom entails automatic entry into paradise. Furthermore, it sees salvation less as an individual state and more of a collective achievement of the regiment. Just as they had lived and fought together, after death they would rise and enter paradise together in the afterlife. In popular military piety on both sides, military martyrdom rendered salvation less about an individual's faith and more about army's collective act of blood sacrifice and its commitment to eternal comradeship.

Both of these manifestations of heterodox popular piety were reported within the British army. The post-war interdenominational inquiry reported the growth of a 'Moslem view of salvation by death in battle.'[103] An ambulance captain claimed that it 'is apparently taken for granted by many that all "good fellows" who die for their country will go to heaven.'[104] According to one Presbyterian chaplain, who approved of this popular doctrine of martyrdom, a 'Gordon Highlander was right who whispered as he lay dying, "The Lord'll no' be hard on a puir sodger." Dying in battle expiated sins, he argued, and the believer therefore died in a state of grace knowing of his absolution. Similarly, a bereft British junior officer anticipated reunion with his dead comrades Denis and Henry, who 'are waiting for me to join them, and when I do will give me a real welcome. Then I will understand everything, and be happy and content.'[105] Even evangelicals and Calvinists averred like their German counterparts that their military regiment would be saved together as one, that 'No real Christian is

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[103] *The Army and Religion: An Enquiry and its Bearing upon the Religious Life of the Nation* (London, 1919), p.2.
[104] Ibid, p.19.
[105] IWM P239 (W.B. St Leger, Papers), Letter 21 Oct. 1917.

content to go alone…The archangel never has to open the gate for *one* soldier, there is generally a crowd to be passed through – a corporal's squad at least, if not a platoon.'[106] A Church Army postcard about the soldier's death showed the shadowy faces of his fallen comrades, still in uniform, gazing down on him peacefully from heaven.[107]

Uneasy at the view of death as automatically redemptive, many clergy were content to allow the dead combatant an intermediate state after death to resolve the difficulty of military martyrs being denied salvation. Anglican Churches revived intercessory prayers for the dead and a form of 'purgatory.' Some clergy from the Scottish churches also innovated. Two Edinburgh chaplains, Norman Maclean and J.R.P. Sclater, offended by the teaching 'that banishes erring lads, struck down by a German bullet' called for a Protestant doctrine of an 'intermediate state' and prayers for the dead. They had been reared in the nineteenth century Scottish theological revision of some of the more severe aspects of Calvinism. An Island presbytery contemplated prosecuting Maclean for 'Popish practices', but refrained in order to 'let sleeping dogmas lie.' If the war had not made these ideas universal in the main Scottish churches, it had made them more tolerable.[108]

Some hard-line Protestants disapproved of this doctrine. They branded as a heresy the notion that war death could be a passport to heaven, or that a bullet or shell could atone for a life of sin. Scotland's Free Presbyterian Church, which had broken with

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[106] W. Sellers, *With our Heroes in Khaki: The Story of Christian Work with our Soldiers and Sailors - and Some of its Results* (London, 1917), pp.15, 32.
[107] J. Laffin, *World War I in Postcards* (Gloucester, 1988), p.112.
[108] N. MacLean, J.R.P. Sclater, *God and the Soldier* (London, 1917), pp.188, 205-8. See also J. L. MacLeod, 'Greater Love Hath No Man Than This: Scotland's Conflicting Religious Responses to Death in the Great War' *The Scottish Historical Review* 81: 211 (April 2002), pp.70-96, esp. pp.87-96.

the Free Church in 1893 for its liberalising tendencies, staunchly disavowed prayers for the dead and purgatory. It refused to adjust its theological position. While acknowledging the 'honour' of its congregation's losses, its clergy strictly applied the Calvinist and predestinarian doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Such heresies, it claimed, echoed the heathen belief in salvation through human sacrifice.[109] This divided them from the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, whose chaplains and clergy proved more flexible in adapting their conception of salvation to the pressures of war. Dissidents within the Anglican and Lutheran churches, like the evangelical Anglican chaplain Guy Rogers or the Lutheran Friedrich Gaedke, also disapproved of the doctrine of posthumous rewards for wartime death, arguing that it duped wayward souls into complacency. They urged soldiers to find salvation through faith alone.[110]

But many chaplains found the doctrine attractive because it was such a powerful means of consolation. Chaplains sometimes preached while on leave, interpreting the war to a civilian congregation, who were especially aggrieved that many of the bodies of the dead were missing. One offered solace to a parish community during the *Totenfest* of 1915, 'God has missed no soul, that in its last need cried out to him…Let them rest, even if you don't know if their grave has no cross or flower adorning its earth hill.'[111] The combined impact of missionary zeal, which extolled the archetype of the pure soldier, popular piety which anticipated heavenly reunion with the fallen, and the intimacy of personal attachment, meant that the dead were frequently promised a double immortality. Their example would live on to shape the behaviour

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[109] 'Greater Love hath no Man than this' *Free Presbyterian Magazine* 21 (Oct. 1916), p.203.
[110] F. Gaedke, *Soldatentod – seliger Tod?* (Berlin, 1916).
[111] 'Predigt gehalten am Totenfest 1915 in der Schlosskirche zu Mergentheim von Lazarettpfarrer Dr. Beiswaenger' *Evangelische Freiheit* 16 (April 1916), pp.124-130.

of others, and they would reach heaven. Shortly after the Somme offensive was launched, one bereaved Anglican chaplain wrote to the Deputy Chaplain-General about his dead brother, claiming that his brother had fearlessly rushed to help his battalion during a gas attack, was gloriously entering paradise, that his life would inspire others to emulate him.[112]

The promise of martyr's salvation may even have had a particular appeal to the less ritualist Protestants. Like Roman Catholic soldiers, they would often go through anxiety over their salvational state. Unlike the Roman Catholics, they contemplated the possibility of sudden death without the assurance of the cycle of absolution from sin through sacraments - confession, repentance and penance – which wiped the slate clean. While this did not mean that they craved death, it did provide security about their ultimate salvation. This became doubly important when soldiers wrote what they believed might be their last letter home before an offensive. 'If this day should be my last, know then that I go to the Father', wrote one anonymous German student at Verdun, just as Captain Derrick Hamer reassured his parents that if he was killed the family would reunite in 'a better place.'[113] On the eve of an attack, they wanted their parents to know that their souls were destined for heaven if they fell. Death had become their sacrament. For Protestants who were denied the guarantee of Roman Catholic sacraments of last rites and unction, they needed reassurance that their dead beloved comrades or family members had obtained salvation. This was particularly intense outside the Catholic wing of the Anglican Church and the more flexible Calvinist and Lutheran believers, who were more receptive to other devices and doctrines that helped to reassure anxious mourners of the salvation of their loved

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[112] UBSC GB 0150 CMS/ACC18 (Llewellyn Gwyyen, Papers). Letter, 3 July, 1916.
[113] German Student: *The Student World* (Oct. 1917), p.282; IWM 88/27/1 (Derrick Hamer) Letter, 5 Nov. 1918.

ones. To stricter Protestants, it was especially important to establish that their dead heroes had not only fought bravely but lived pure lives before they fell. Others took this to greater extremes, arguing that a patriotic self-sacrifice in itself was enough to guarantee salvation. That idea was strengthened by the group identity of military units. Soldiers, and sometimes their chaplains, affirmed that the brotherhood of their regiment was indivisible, and that they would all march into heaven as one.

Chapter 6

The Economy of Sacrifice, 1916-1917

In the first phase of the war, the churches used an apocalyptic language that cast the war as the last great struggle. Scotland's United Free Church declared in December 1914 that forces blocking 'God's law of evolution' would be 'swept away by blood and fire.'[1] The cleansing storm was another image of destruction and renewal. A German field hospital chaplain preached in 1915 that 'If the spring shall come, first must the storms bless the land.'[2] In the new year of 1915, the Bishop of London compared the effects of war on Britain to Christ's crucifixion.[3] Such imagery, mingling the sacral with the natural (blood, fire, storm, the crucifixion) suggested suffering but promised finality. In Germany, those themes were heightened by emphatic early victories in 1914-15. Lutheran sermons cast the first victories as revelations of Germany's divine mission.[4] This rhetoric restricted the process of salvation in time and space, focusing on the redemptive death of the soldier as agent of world redemption in a decisive historical moment.

This chapter examines how and why this religious language of sacrifice was challenged and reformulated in 1916-17 from its earlier incarnation. By this phase, religious faith in the transformative power of war had been shaken. In the rhetoric of

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[1] United Free Church of Scotland, *The Record of the Home and Foreign Mission Work of the United Free Church* (Edinburgh, Dec. 1914), p.521.
[2] 'Predigt gehalten am Totenfest 1915 in der Schlosskirche zu Mergentheim von Lazarettpfarrer Dr. Beiswaenger' *Evangelische Freiheit* (April 1916), pp.124-130, p.127.
[3] *The Times*, 31 Dec. 1914, p. 11.
[4] Eg. E. Ott, who depicted the rapid advances as a divine epiphany, *Religion, Krieg und Vaterland* (München, 1915), p.3, cited in Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism: German Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart, 1986), p.48.

1914, blood sacrifice had been ascribed a value that was fixed and final. Now, Christian participants were faced with the potential failure of millions of casualties to purify and uplift the nation, and with the fear that mass death might be wasted. Even the most committed Christians feared that blood sacrifice had not sufficiently uplifted the moral fabric of society. It had not realised the vision of the Anglican *Church Times*, that the conflict would forge 'a better and more devout people.'[5] German chaplain Thomas Breit preached that the war as a struggle against mammon was being undermined by war profiteers, placing their interests 'over the fatherland' for profit.[6] Different indices suggested that morals had not improved and piety had not strengthened. While the general crime rate fell, subjectively, the clergy feared like middle class observers and government inquiries that war had stimulated commercialist indulgence, youth delinquency and sexual misbehaviour. Absent fathers, family separation and the increased income of employed youth had aggravated the social problems the war was supposed to cure, increasing youth criminality.[7] In Scotland, 1916 and 1917 saw agitation from churches, religious charities and the temperance movement against the growth of gambling, culminating in legislation against gaming machines, which was followed in 1918 by agitation against alcohol, resulting in municipal plebiscites in the west of Scotland firmly in favour of limiting the licensed trade.[8] There were also fears that the separation of married couples made extramarital sexuality and illegitimacy a problem of new

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[5] Cited in P. Street, 'God and Country' *Church Times* 20 Aug. 2004, p.16.
[6] Landeskirchliches Archiv Nürnberg [Henceforth abbreviated LKAN] 3210a, Thomas Breit, Field sermon, 1917, undated.
[7] According to the survey of Moritz Liepmann, convictions among male youths doubled, from approximately 40 per 1000 in 1914 to above 80 in 1918, *Krieg und Kriminalität in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1930), p.98. Juvenile offences were reported to be on the rise in Britain, according to a government report in 1917, see G. De Groot, *Blighty British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London, 1996), p.221.
[8] C. Brown, 'Piety, Gender and War', in C.M.M. Macdonald, E.W. McFarland (eds.), *Scotland and the Great War* (East Linton, 1999), p.188; *Reports to the General Assembly of the United Free Church*, Temperance Committee, (Edinburgh 1918), p.21.

proportions.[9] In its tracts sent to the front, the Protestant Baden Württemberg press advised wounded soldiers and soldiers on leave to resist the corruption that came at the intersection of the two fronts. It then appealed to the domestic population to show more 'life-seriousness',[10] lashing out at people who attended 'ragged theatrical plays', who attended masquerades, who did not observe the Sabbath, who spent money on their vanity, before condemning pleasure-seekers in general. The worth of the 'enormous sacrifices of property and blood' would be half in vain if there was no moral and spiritual rebirth. To ensure the value of the armies' efforts, it would be 'necessary to take care, that the days of elevation are not followed again by times of sleep.'[11]

Church numbers that surged in the first year of the war were slowly dwindling, albeit not spectacularly. Of Protestant communicants in Berlin, after the 32% increase for the year 1914, there was a drop in 1915, although figures were nevertheless still 16% above prewar level.[12] Church attendances had not plummeted disastrously below prewar levels. Instead there had been a gradual decline in the overall number of communicants, though some cases modest successes were recorded.[13] These numbers fell short of the millenarian prophecies of 1914, that the war would bring their nations back to God. Britain's National Mission for Repentance and Hope met with

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[9] See L. Sauerteig, 'Militär, Medizin und Moral: Sexualität im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Wolfgang U. Eckart, Christoph Gradmann (eds.) *Die Medizin und Der Erste Weltkrieg* (Pfaffenweiler, 1996), pp.197-222, illegitimacy p.199.

[10] BZ *Kriegsblätter* n.17, 'Mehr Lebensernst.'

[11] BZ *Kriegsblätter* n.3, 'Was wir vom Krieg erhoffen.'

[12] H. McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York 1870-1914*, (London, 1996), p.198.

[13] R. Currie, A. Gilbert, L. Horsley, *Churches and Church-Goers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), pp.128, 143, 150; S. P. Mews, 'Religion and English society in the First World War' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1973), pp.50-1. For examples of London parishes undergoing small increases in communicants, see A. Gregory, P. Purseigle, P. Porter, V. Wilcox, J. Moses, 'Churches and Sacred Sites' in J. Winter (ed.) *Capital Cities at War* (forthcoming, 2006).

disappointment.[14] That the war was raging on was treated as further evidence of the nation's impiety. A Scottish chaplain would opine that the very fact of the war's continuation showed that the demon of materialism had not been quelled and that people had not rededicated themselves to God.[15]

Wanting to affirm that these sacrifices held a value, they tried to salvage meaning and purpose by appealing to those still living and to future generations, to fulfil the mission of the dead and ensure that sacrifices were completed, fulfilled and vindicated, to ensure their 'blood debt' was repaid. Defeat, or a retreat into materialism, or a collapse of the cohesive wartime community, would be a betrayal of the dead. Paradoxically, at a time when Christian millenarian visions of redemption seemed less and less likely to be realised, it had become more and more vital to succeed. The implication of these fears was that the soldier's death was alone insufficient to achieve victory and redeem the nation. This reality of a modern industrial war meant that other kinds of sacrifices, the material sacrifices of civilians, now had become acts of devotion on which military sacrifices depended. Therefore, two problematic wartime relationships were reshaping the rhetoric of sacrifice: the relationship between combatants and civilians, and the relationship between the living and the dead. I argue that these developments altered the rhetoric in two ways. Firstly, the cast was enlarged. The building of a better nation as a domestic war aim became a duty of civilians as well as soldiers. Secondly, it changed in terms of time. The rebirth of the nation would involve survivors and generations after the war as well as

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[14] See D. M. Thompson, 'War, the Nation and the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope, 1915-1916' in W.J. Sheils (ed.) *Studies in Church History* (Blackwell, 1983) xx. pp.337-350.
[15] 'The Fifth Year' *Life & Work*, August, 1918, p.123.

participants during the war. Death in battle was no longer redemptive on its own, it had become part of an economy of sacrifice.

War theology was growing to mirror the changing relationship between soldier and civilian, and the reliance of the military on civilian sacrifices. The material needs and demands of 'total war' were brought home to parish communities. As well as being the sites of public mourning, churches were also centres of voluntary patriotic activity. The material war struck hard at the everyday life of churchgoers. Parishes in Scotland, England and Germany knitted garments and sent gifts or *Liebesgabe* to the front, of food and clothes. Germany's Protestant women's association appealed to its members to economise thriftily, write encouraging letters to their men, maintain dignity in clothes and appearance, and pray faithfully.[16] Civilian material sacrifices became an especially pronounced theme in German churches. Because it could not break Britain's naval supremacy and was commercially a landlocked power from the west European and American economies, Germany was denied access to oceanic trade after the British blockade which was launched from the beginning of hostilities, and was also excluded from global capital markets after a failed attempt to float a major loan on Wall Street in 1914. As a result, Germany ruthlessly exploited its own internal resources, and the wealth of the churches was to be placed on the altar of the Fatherland, often by order of the state. As objects made of copper, brass and nickel were ordered to be taken by the summer of 1915, the war devoured church fabric, taking organ pipes, church plate, as well as cash from church funds, and donations. From March 1917, Germany's parishioners looked on as medieval church bells, 18,668 in total, were melted down for metal, a heavy sacrifice of parish heritage and

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[16] *Frauenhuelfe* 16 (1916), p.47.

property.[17] It had become literally an anti-materialist war, taking with it the material of its sacred sites. In ways more painful than in Britain, the war was consuming the very fabric of churches themselves, taking the theme of civilian sacrifice into the heart of the parish community.

To be sure, these developments had already been anticipated at a state and ecclesiastical level. By 1915, the war effort extended deeply into the civilian sphere, as warring nations called upon civilians in the homeland to make sacrifices. As warring governments allocated lucrative war contracts to industrial and commercial magnates, the word 'profiteer' had already entered the vocabularies of both belligerent societies.[18] One German military chaplains' report in mid-1915 lamented that civilians' complaints about the introduction of war bread and the withdrawal of wheat pastries, showed that the homeland had not yet grasped their duties and the seriousness of the time, that the war had not yet lasted long enough to awaken 'the conscience of the people's soul.'[19] In Berlin, such themes took monumental form in the 'Iron Hindenburg,' that was unveiled in 1915. A twelve metre wooden statue of the General studded with nails hammered in by paying civilians, symbolising the collaboration of citizen and soldier.[20]

These live themes were accentuated in 1916-17. In this period, which has been called the 'remobilisation' phase, both state and the bulk of the clergy called for rededication to the national cause. They did so to combat pacifism and to counter calls for a

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[17] Figures from M. Schian, *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918*, (Mittler, 1925), p.295.
[18] G. J. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London, 1996), p.73; R. Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1998), p.103.
[19] 'Eine Pfarrerconferenz im Felde', *Mitteilungen für die evangelischen Christlichen der Armee und der Marine* 40: 5/6(May/June 1915), pp.86-7.
[20] S. Goebel, 'Exhitibitions' in J. Winter (ed.) *Capital Cities at War* (forthcoming, 2006), p.8.

negotiated compromise settlement, in response to persistent and costly failures to find a decisive military resolution.[21] The demands on the civilian population of Britain were escalated by the introduction of conscription in January 1916. Concerned that the war be seen as a call to penitence, in the autumn of 1916, the archbishops of Canterbury and York launched the Church of England's National Mission of Repentance and Hope. It was founded to evangelise the nation, which the founders of the movement believed was being chastised 'by discipline to fulfil some great task.'[22] The Church of Scotland in 1917 redefined the war as 'a call to national and social reformation of national and social evils' so that those burdened with the war's trials would 'find recompense in a worthier social environment.'[23] British public rhetoric became increasingly attentive to the postwar period, and how wartime sacrifices should translate into postwar policy as part of the meaning of the conflict. As an (approximate) measure of the degree of emphasis placed on post-war reconstruction, a search of all the uses of the phrase 'after the war' in *The Times* for the years 1914-1918, produces the following results: from 572 references in the fourteen-month period August 1914-December 1915, it surged to 1030 in the twelve months of 1916 alone, remaining steady at 1071 in 1917 then climbing again to 1279 in 1918.[24]

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[21] J. Horne, *State, Society and Mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), introduction, and his chapter 'Remobilising for Total War: France and Britain, 1917-18.'

[22] See D. M. Thompson, 'War, the Nation and the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope, 1915-1916', in W.J. Sheils (ed) *Studies in Church History* vol.xx, (Oxford, 1983) pp.337-350, p.345.

[23] Church of Scotland General Assembly, *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland* 1917 (Edinburgh, 1917), pp.726, 753.

[24] This count was conducted through the 'Times Digital Archive' at the 'Oxford Libraries Information Platform' at the Oxford Bodleian Library, by counting the number of times the phrase occurs in the content of all published articles for each year between 1914 and 1918. As a 'control' on this number, the equivalent phrase 'post-war', used less often, climbed from 31 in the fourteen month period between August 1914 and the end of December 1915, to 63 in 1916, to 89 in 1917, before surging to 188 in 1918. In 1918, 139 of the 188 citations occurred before the armistice on 11 November. Like the phrase 'after the war', the number of references increases dramatically between 1914/15 and 1916, more than doubling, before rising again in 1917.

In Germany, the year 1917 that marked the four hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, saw the unravelling of the hallowed domestic truce of 1914, which had been used to justify Germany's claim to be the chosen people of God. Church efforts to mobilise the nation anticipated the state's. Czarist Russia's military collapse was welcome, but the revolution in March and then November 1917, precipitated by civilian protests in St. Petersburg, was taken as a lesson in the consequences of internal discord. One church declaration warned 'if the inner front does not do its duty, then the work of the outer front is for nothing. Events in Russia show this in dazzling clarity.'[25] The adoption by the Reichstag of a nonannexationist peace resolution on July 19, 1917 was denounced as symptomatic of irresolution amongst the population. It prohibited German chaplains from any open discussion on economic and social-political themes.[26] Chaplains denounced any premature peace, condemning the irresolution of those who supported the nonannexationist peace of the Reichstag resolution of 19 July 1917. At the behest of the state, the churches became sites of civilian mobilisation, and chaplains came under tighter rein as propagandists. Chaplains promoted war loans, which in their eyes were sacrificial devotions, depositions before God of the people's faith above materialism. Campaigning for the sixth war loan in 1917, German chaplain Paul Piechowski claimed Germany would win if it proved a purer, anti-materialist people than the mercenary English. God would deny victory if the *Volk* ignored the summons for self-renewal. People who subscribed would be *Heimatkämpfer*, 'homeland fighters.'[27] In line with the pattern of

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[25] E. Seeberg, 'Innere Front 1917', from G. Brakelmann, *Der Deutsche Protestantismus im Epochenjahr 1917* (Witten, 1974), pp.243-246.
[26] A. Vogt, 'Militärseelsorge im Wilhelminischen Reich (1888-1918) Grundlagen und Struckturen aus Militärgeschichtlicher Sicht' (unpublished dissertation, Wesfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster, 1982), p.548.
[27] P. Piechowski, *Die sechste deutsche Kriegsanleihe in Religiössittlicher* (Berlin, 1917), pp.1-5.

intensification of civilian sacrifice in 1916-17, the sixth and seventh war loans in 1917 increased sharply the funds raised by the Prussian churches. [28]

A concrete example of the interactions between combatants, chaplains and civilians that led to this reshaping of rhetoric can be found in the many surviving reports of the Baden-Württemberg church, which had conducted a 'homeland enlightenment' campaign in July 1917, following a campaign supported by the Württemberg Ministry of the Interior from May 1916 to raise morale in a demoralised countryside.[29] To investigate the climate of opinion on the home-front, and to fortify the will of civilians, its Protestant chaplains visited 30 places and held 270 meetings. It was mostly an agrarian population which also featured labouring classes in Heidenheim and Oberndorf. It took place at a time when the German war machine was coming under material and psychological strain. Food shortages from the spring of 1916 had led to tensions between officers and men, [30] and recently there had been mutinies in Württemberg units.

The campaign followed the logic of Hindenburg's programme of patriotic enlightenment, *Vaterländischer Unterricht*, which had grasped that the soldier's will to self-sacrifice, instead of being autonomous and individual, was entangled with his relationship with the civilian world. The reports reflect the problems of logistics, morale and social conflict that were feared to be undermining the rhetoric of uplifting

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[28] Whereas the 5th war loan had raised 18, 588, 978 marks, the 6th raised 33, 102, 164 marks and the 7th 29, 286, 224 marks, the 8th war loan falling back to 18, 627, 558 marks. Figures from M. Schian, *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918* (Mittel, 1925), pp.299-300.
[29] D. Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War 1914-1918* (London, 2000), p.164.
[30] A. Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1989), p.60.

sacrifice.[31] They report poor relationships between officers and men, and the 'bad blood' caused by the officer corps' privileged salaries, accommodation, food and neglect of their men, shaking trust in the cause.[32] Maladministration and the inequitable distribution of materials and wealth, which ruptured solidarity within the army, also aggrieved the home front. Complaints were reported about the melting down of church bells, which locals loved with 'almost superstitious devotion.'[33] Ironically, while soldiers at the front talked of the need to protect their churches from destructive invasion, the state was confiscating the most loved ancestral feature of the churches in the name of the war effort. Not only did these strains threaten the region's capacity to sustain the war effort, but they undermined the war's domestic purpose, especially the notion of a brotherly wartime community, in turn threatening instability in the post-war world. Letters, both to and from the front, circulated rumours and grievances. The populations were reportedly willing to make sacrifices for a settlement that protected the nation, though they questioned the need to make sacrifices for the 'Hindenburg Peace' of lavish annexations and indemnities, war aims that had the support of the bulk of Lutheran clergy. They were also reluctant to take out more war loans, especially as they had been promised that each war loan was the last.[34] One farmer could not understand 'why the merchant appointed by the state makes off with such large profits.'[35] Such complaints showed the gulf between the official rhetorical ideal of shared sacrifice and the perception of unfair privilege, as

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[31] The reports are summarised in Landeskirchliche Archiv, Stuttgart (Henceforth abbreviated LKAS) A 26 No. 1176, 'Bericht der aus dem Felde zur Heimataufklärung angeforderten Geistlichen über die vom 5. bis 25 Juli durchgeführten Vertragsreisen.'

[32] LKAS A 26 No. 1176, 'Bericht des evg. Divisionspfarrers Dr. Lempp, 26. Res. Division über Vertragsreise in den Oberämtern Crailsheim, Aalen, Heidenheim, Reutlingen-Stadt; 25 Juli 7 Uhr Vm. Alfdorf O.A. Welzheim, Erntbetst.'

[33] LKAS A 26 No. 1176, 'Bericht des evg. Divisionspfarrers Erhardt 26. Landw. Division Vortragsreise in den Oberaemtern Tuttlingen und Balingen.'

[34] LKAS A 26 No. 1176, 'Bericht von Leutnant d.L. Weitbrecht über Vortragsreise im den Oberämtern Geislingen, Nuertingen, Kirchheim, Muensinge: Stuttgart.'

[35] LKAS A 26 No. 1177, 'Bericht des Feldgeistlichen Lau (7.K. Wuertt. Landw. Div) Über Vortragsreiseim Oberamt (Saulgau, Waldsee).'

merchants were profiting from a war that was supposed to be waged against mercantile values, in which Germany was supposed to embody anti-materialist principles. These frictions also reflect the intensifying political dynamic of wartime 'social morality', whereby different parties and constituencies were making reciprocal judgments about their respective contributions and entitlements in the context of the war, an 'economy of sacrifice.'

These chaplains then preached to the gatherings, and their central theme was the mutual capacity of combatants and home front to affect each other's morale. They repeatedly warned civilians not to dispirit fighting men with 'misery letters.' The reports reflect how the idea of sacrifice had become something non-combatants must perform as well as armies, as a duty to the men who had fallen as well as the bereft, warning that it would harm 'the great German cause, if she went down, and what would all the fallen brothers and the children of the fathers who died as heroes say', therefore each must do their part.[36] In a test of interdependence, civilian sacrifice had become a core part of the test of warfare, as a trial of the nation's ideological capacity to sustain hardship, belief in the cause and a cohesive community. Citizen's sacrifices took the form of positive sacrifices, as active contributions to the war effort, and sacrifices of omission, forsaking the material comforts of their consumer societies for the greater good. Just as prayer, war loans, donations, voluntary work and industrious labour were sacred undertakings. Conversely, hoarding, profiteering, shirking and extravagant consumption were acts of treachery.

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[36] LKAS A 26 No. 1176, 'Bericht des Divisionspfarrers Mauch 243 Inf. Div. in den Oberaemtern Goeppingen, Orach, und Schorndorf.'

Church efforts to rededicate the nation to war took place in urban as well as rural settings. The communities that the Baden-Württemberg chaplains visited were predominantly rural and agrarian. They chafed at state regulation and contained many smaller farmers who were more vulnerable, with lower profit margins.[37] But other problems reached new orders of magnitude in German cities, where food shortages and undernourishment (exceptionally bad in the first half of 1917 after the failure of the winter potato crop) struck harder where people could not produce food or access the black market, and industrial disputes meant that material circumstances and social strife were more severe.[38] A Berlin pastor's report of the daily life of his parish complained of being shoved aside on trams by disgruntled civilians, of overworked mothers neglecting to register their children for confirmation, of profiteering by coffin dealers.[39] These related problems assaulted the spirit of the *Augustgemeinschaft* that churches had cherished. In a sermon in January 1918, Berlin preacher Bruno Doehring castigated striking munitions workers as 'cheap, cowardly creatures who with their brothers' blood have desecrated the altar of the fatherland …have poisoned the virtuous spirit of our people, who have deceived and herded the unfortunate masses into the streets from their peaceful workplaces, pressed deadly weapons into their hands, and bid them attack from behind their brothers, who are still confronted by the enemy.'[40] Because they defined war as a test of faith, they identified the weakening of the *Burgfried* not primarily with the cumulative grind of material conditions but with political subversion, mischief and greed in the civilian sphere.

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[37] See further R. G. Moeller, 'Dimensions of Social Conflict in the Great War: The View from the German Countryside,' *Central European History* 14 (1981), pp.142-168.
[38] See further J. Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg: Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1973).
[39] Quoted in D. Bartelt, *Kreuz und Pickelhaube: Großstädische Gesellschaft und Kirche zwischen 1850 und 1945 am Beispiel der Heilig-Kreuz-Gemeinde in Berlin* (Berlin, 1995), p.100.
[40] Quoted in W. Pressel, *Die Kriegspredigt 1914-1918 in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* (Göttingen 1967), pp.305-6.

German pastors were also more heavily active in party politics than the British clergy. Seeing liberal reform as a dangerous subversion of wartime sacrifices, particularly the reform of Prussian franchise proposed by the Reichstag, they were drawn to the Fatherland Party, a mass movement founded in September 1917 of 1.25 million members organized to oppose the peace resolution in favour of an annexationist peace without internal political reforms. Alarmed at the dissension over war aims, many churchmen as well as schoolteachers and the professional middle class joined the party.[41] The creation of a more godly community meant renewing allegiance to the old order. Social reform and the equalising of the franchise were linked to anticlerical socialism. The rising scrutiny towards non-combatants and their loyalties had reached its logical conclusion in antagonism towards pacifists, socialists, criminals and shirkers, alleged internal enemies who threatened the *Volk* in its struggle. Appeals for unity in the war-forged *Gemeinschaft* now yielded to finger pointing. The German churches had fallen into the same dilemma as the authoritarian state. By trying to regenerate consensus and unity on their own terms, they had helped to stimulate a political conflict which further eroded unity as reformists and centrists realigned around liberal war aims that competed with the objectives of the Wilhelmine elite.

In Britain, the relationship of national church with the state was looser and more critical, even though it was fundamentally supportive of the war. German Lutheran churches had virtually become propagandist and logistical arms of the state, as the OHL formally enlisted pastors into the patriotic enlightenment campaign. The elite-

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[41] In Prussia east of the Elbe, for example, parish priests formed almost 21% of the membership, west of the Elbe at around 16%, while priests formed overall approximately 16% of the party's officialdom. Figures derived from H. Hagenlücke, *Deutsche Vaterlandspartei: Die nationale Rechte am Ende des Kaiserreiches* (Düsseldorf, 1997), pp.186-7.

orchestrated propagandist function that was given to Germany's pastors was not formally given to British military chaplains by the state. In Britain, party machines were appointed to propagate the message of the war aims committee and its agenda of remobilisation, while churches were supportive in a more voluntary capacity.[42]

As a result of clerical involvement in the 'patriotic enlightenment' campaign, Germany's churches were less and less sites of solace and comfort and increasingly places of agitation. Directives ordered appeals to be read from the pulpits for voluntary contributions of goods from civilians, for parishioners to economise on corn, bread and flour, for donations of jewellery and gold coins, and for help in gathering in the summer harvests.[43] Mercenary demands for materials in weekly sermons upset the solace of church services. Writing to his wife in mid-1918, junior officer Christian Albert complained that one local pastor asked his parishioners to hand in all butter and eggs, 'little wonder that the people sink always deeper,' if such dispiriting demands were made in church that obscured the 'true gospel.'[44] Military chaplains' pastoral duties were eclipsed by their propagandist function. One German prisoner of war was relieved that the French preacher was unlike the military chaplain he remembered for endless 'propaganda-speeches' for the war loan campaign.[45]

German Lutherans with their aversion to Christian socialism confined this rhetoric to moral demand. The Presbyterian social gospel also suffered from a polarized political climate, as the Glasgow rent strikes and the emergence of 'Red Clydeside' as well as

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[42] See J. Horne 'Remobilising for Total War: France and Britain, 1917-18' in J. Horne (ed.) *State, Society and Mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997).
[43] See N. Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism 1700-1918* (Oxford, 1995), p.600.
[44] BZ Bd.34 u.26, (Unteroffizier Christian Albert, Papers) Letter Katharina to Christian, 5 May, 1918, p. 42; Letter Christian to Katharina, (n.d) p.48. I am grateful to Professor Aribert Reimann for bringing this material to my attention.
[45] Cited in H. Cron, *Das Archiv* (Potsdam, 1926), pp.18-19.

the Russian Bolshevik revolution created hostility to Christian socialist ideas.[46] But those English Protestants who came from more programmatic and policy-oriented traditions of social Christianity found their churches more receptive to the idea that specific schemes and policies were also aims of the war. Anglican intellectual, socialist and soldier R.H. Tawney, for example, appealed for educational reform in February 1917 as a memorial to the dead, 'corresponding to the sacrifices which it commemorates. A reconstruction of education in a generous, humane and liberal spirit would be the noblest memorial to those who have fallen.'[47] In Talbot House, a soldier's retreat founded by chaplain 'Tubby' Clayton, gatherings debated social reform and causes such as 'the Economic Position of Women, Nationalisation of Railways, The Drink Problem, Ireland, Federation', and officers with professional knowledge lectured on 'Town Planning, the Housing Problem, Back to the Land, etc.'[48] Tom Pym delivered lectures on 'social conditions and misery produced by introduction of steam…factory life because we were unprepared shall be so after the war if we are not careful.'[49] E.C. Crosse contributed to 'After the War Papers' stressing the gravity of the postwar condition. The churches would need to emulate the courage of the British soldiers 'to face, and ultimately to win, a heathen and a Godless world.' England would need men prepared to renounce nationalist hatreds and create a just social order, 'who will work for better housing, better education, better industrial conditions, without falling into the abyss of materialism.'[50] The impact of their service was to reinforce demands for social action. As the chaplain to the 56th London Division wrote in 1917, 'the pale thin faces of the children haunt me

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[46] C.G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), p.140.
[47] R.H. Tawney, 'A National College of All Souls,' *The Attack and Other Papers* (1953, 1981 edn.) pp.21-34.
[48] P.B. Clayton, *Tales of Talbot House: Everyman's Club in Poperinghe & Ypres* (London, 1919) pp.43-44.
[49] IWM 81/17/1 (J.K. Best, Papers) Diary 31 Dec. 1917.
[50] IWM 80/22/1 (E.C. Crosse, Papers) 'After the War Papers', pp.8-9.

as the terrible sights on the Somme will never haunt me, for a ragged starving child is more terrible than a youth blown to fragments.'[51]

This kind of authorised discussion, premised on an acceptance of the state's obligation to ameliorate social conditions and encouraging soldiers to think about liberal social reform, would have been intolerable to most Lutheran chaplains, who viewed the military as a strictly counter-revolutionary organisation that pitted religious patriotism against social democracy. But if the OHL had banished progressive social gospels from the realm of public religious devotion within the army, it could not entirely banish social thought. There remained a moderate group of patriotic Protestant intellectuals such as von Harnack, Baumgarten, Troeltsch, Max Weber and Friedrich Naumann who advocated moderate war aims and the greater enfranchisement of the working class.[52] One soldier from a leisured middle class background wrote privately to ecumenicist theologian Friederich Siegmund-Schultze that his exposure to proletarianised conditions alerted him to overcrowded conditions in Germany's cities and persuaded him that 'much else must be changed in our new-won Germany.'[53] Some soldiers claimed they would deploy the authority the war experience gave them by becoming postwar peace activists. 'War against war!' one wrote, vowing if he survived to 'Fight with all remedies against it!'[54]

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[51] T. Tiplady, *The Cross at the Front* (New York, 1917), p.97.
[52] Five dissenting pastors who called for a moderate settlement in October 1917 only attracted 16 pastors (*Chronik der christlichen Welt* 1917, p.349), and were rebutted by 160 pastors from Berlin who claimed that Germany must choose between complete victory and ignominious defeat: *ChrW* 1918, p.15, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 1918, p.487.
[53] Cited in F. Siegmund-Schultze, *VER SACRUM. Was die im Kriege gefallenen Mitarbeiter der Sozialen Arbeitsgemeinschaft dem deutschen Volk zu sagen haben. Mitteilungen und Aufzeichnungen*, (Berlin, 1919/20), p.33.
[54] H.W. Boehmer, *Deutsche Soldaten vor Gott: Das religiöse Erlebnis der Front dargestellt u. gewertet an Zeugnissen aus Kriegsbriefen* (Schnabel, 1939), p.5.

Though liberal visionaries were given more latitude in the BEF to raise the issue of social reform as a necessary extension of the war effort, it still generated some frictions with those military commanders who preferred narrower military war aims. Chaplain J.K. Best's diary reflected this tension, 'The General comes in at the beginning of address. I am treading dangerous ground – peace talk is criminal + I had decided to talk about the spirit which makes permanent peace a possibility. Have to continuously modify my talk.'[55] Deputy Chaplain-General Llewellyn Gwynne saw the war as a struggle for domestic social change. He saw it both as a purpose of the war and as a cause that would motivate the army to perform more effectively, linking social reconstruction and the promise of postwar collective provision and more equitable social conditions with fighting efficiency. On the 31st January, 1918 he noted in his diary the hostility of General Holman, who 'now talks about the question of Reconstruction being out of place in war and not any factor in the great struggle. My answer is that spirit and moral [sic] are the great reinforcements for loss of nerve or failing physical strength and that the man who ignores that fact ignores one of the great factors in the make of a fighting force.'[56] The emphasis in Field Marshal Haig's piety was counter-revolutionary. He wanted religion to help prevent social revolution and bind together and preserve empire through an Imperial Church.[57] He insisted that 'a good chaplain is as valuable as a good general', instructing visiting chaplains that they were simply to 'Preach the objects of Great Britain' and 'cease quarrelling amongst themselves.'[58] The differences between Haig and Gwynne were defused by their good working relationship, and Gwynne proposed to Haig in March, 1918 during

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[55] IWM 81/17/1 (J.K. Best, Diaries) Diary Entry 20 Oct. 1917.
[56] UBSC GB 0150 CMS/ACC18 F1 50-54 (Llewellyn Gwynne, Papers), Diary, 31 Jan. 1918.
[57] See N. Cave, 'Haig and Religion' in B. Bond, N. Cave (eds.) *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 Years On* (London, 1999), pp.240-257.
[58] R. Blake (ed.) *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig 1914-1919 Being selections from the private diary and correspondence of Field-Marshal the Earl Haig of Bemersyde* (London, 1952), p. 143.

the German Spring Offensive that expansive egalitarian war aims be proclaimed on a card to soldiers: 'Better homes where the children could grow up healthy and strong; better education which gave a child full opportunity for developing the faculties implanted in him by God; a fair deal for labour, giving to the worker a full life; justice for women and a resolute stand against prostitution; a discipline which keeps a man at his best and maintains holy matrimony as the ideal of family life.'[59]

Despite these sharp political differences, a similar pattern is evident in the way rhetoric was reformulated around civilian material sacrifices in Britain. As in Germany, war theology was adapting to the changing nature of warfare, which was no longer to a limited clash between professional forces but a contest between the stamina and material resources of entire nations. The meaning of sacrifice now encompassed civilian forms of participation, the demands of total war a test of the nation's worthiness before God. If religious rhetoric had to adapt to the mobilisation of civilian society by according citizens the role of heroic sacrifice, the corollary was that it also spread responsibility (and blame) to the home front. If the clash of arms at the front had not resolved the conflict, it was also because of the failures of the citizenry at home. In his sermon at Westminster Abbey on 30 July 1916 at Westminster Abbey, Chaplain-General Llewellyn Gwynne called for a national referendum of repentance, so that 'our race will come out of this trial purified and stronger by suffering.'[60] He was preaching after the first month of the Somme offensive, which had already taken a devastating toll. Now the nation's penitence had to be expressed in the ballot box, as well as in battle. The duration of the war was not attributed primarily to a problematic military situation, or strategic miscalculation, but

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[59] Cited in H.C. Jackson, *Pastor on the Nile* (London, 1960), p. 160.
[60] The Sermon is reported in *Challenge*, 11 Aug. 1916, pp.242-3.

to the impiety of the domestic population. Admiral Beatty claimed 'Surely the Almighty does not intend this War to be just a hideous fracas – a bloody drunken orgy? There must be purpose in it all.' Until there was religious revival at home, 'just so long will the War continue.'[61]

Religious readings of the war could rationalise and help the faithful accept why the war was prolonged, bypassing criticism of generalship. This was especially helpful to religious generals who would otherwise be blamed for inconclusive slaughters. It helped to sustain Field Marshal Haig, a devout Presbyterian and architect of the Somme offensive. For him, the deadlock could only be broken by the prayers of a 'great united people.'[62] His own chaplain, George Duncan, framed the war's longevity as a sign of its cosmic importance, preaching on 24 September 1916, from 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord', claiming 'this Great War was accomplishing the preparation of the world for better living. It was ruthlessly sweeping away all shams, and in a larger sphere, was preparing what was done by John the Baptist centuries ago for the Jews and the coming of the Lord.'[63] The war's longevity itself could be taken as evidence for its cosmic purpose, as the necessary destruction that would be the prelude of a new world. Haig's capacity to find meaning in the immobility of the war was complemented by his own predestinarian Calvinist sense that he was personally directed by God and 'meant to win.' Haig's references to divine guidance increased in his correspondence with his wife, just as the Somme offensive was losing its potential for a decisive outcome. His sectarian suspicion of Catholicism, another Scottish

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[61] Admiral Beatty, quoted in *Church Army Gazette*, 11 Aug. 1917, p.1.
[62] Prayers theme, diary entry on sermon of George Duncan, 2 January 1916, 'The Rev. George S. Duncan at GHQ, 1916-1918,' A. J. Guy, R.N.W. Thomas, G.J. DeGroot (eds.) *Military Miscellany I Manuscripts from the Seven Years War, the First and Second Sikh Wars and the First World War* (Stroud, 1996), p.277.
[63] Cited in A.J. Guy, *Military Miscellany I* (Stroud, 1996), p.303.

Calvinist inheritance, and his occasional preference for faith over facts, meant that he disregarded the assessment of the state of the German Army, noting in his diary in October 1917 that the Director of Military Intelligence was a Roman Catholic subconsciously influenced by tainted sources. Haig and Duncan's conviction that any development was divinely willed made their world-view unfalsifiable. Victories signalled divine favour, while stalemate indicated that the war had even greater purpose.[64]

On the home front, war loans were represented as an expression of civilian commitment to Christian sacrificial ideals. What better measure of the crusade against materialism than civilians offering up their wealth for the common good?[65] The Church of England recorded no final figures for its war loan subscriptions, but the diocese of London was especially committed to promoting a 'symbolic…substitute for the blood-sacrifice of the soldier,'[66] climaxing in its rally at Trafalgar Squire in February, 1917. Appeals for war loans entailed a shift in the rhetoric. As Bishop Winnington-Ingram had earlier stated in an appeal sent to half a million Londoners as part of the 1915 Second War Loan drive, 'The sacrifice that is *for* all should be offered *by* all.'[67] The voracious material demands of the war, aggravated by submarine attacks on merchant cargo, were putting on trial the commitment of

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[64] See T. Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918* (London, 1987) p.119. He continued to refer to his divine guidance throughout the war, writing to his chaplain on April 16, 1918 that 'I *know* I am sustained in my efforts by that Great Unseen Power, otherwise I could not be standing the strain as I am doing.' Cited in G.S. Duncan, *Douglas Haig as I Knew Him* (London, 1966), p.122. See also G.J. De Groot, 'We are Safe Whatever Happens' – Douglas Haig, The Reverend George Duncan, and the Conduct of War, 1916-1918', N. Macdougall, *Scotland and War: AD 79-1918* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 193-209. For his hostile reaction to intelligence, see De Groot, p.208.

[65] Almost 190 million marks were subscribed by Prussian individuals and parishes. The exact figure was 189, 942, 089: M. Schian, *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918*, (Mittler, 1925), pp.229-300.

[66] A. Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War* (Duke, 1974), p.200.

[67] From A.F. Winnington-Ingram, 'A Message from the Bishop of London to the People of London' *The Church in Time of War* (London, 1915), pp.314-317.

citizens and demanded the reshaping of their character, either as combatants in the field or as agents in the war economy. As Anglican chaplain Crosse explained, the deployment of resources was a test of the fibre of the body politic:

> …the number of men a nation will put in the field is mainly a moral question at bottom. The size of an army depends upon two things – the size of the nation, and the amount of sacrifice it is prepared to make…The same argument applies to the question of munitions…in war-time munitions are only the expression in terms of explosives of the moral determination and industry of the nation at home…Exactly the same argument applies to the submarine menace. All the authorities agree that the most effective way to deal with submarines is for the nation to eat less and to grow more wheat. For the first time in history the glutton and the loafer have been given their real names, "Traitors." Success in the submarine campaign is therefore dependant on the development of the habits of restraint and industry, and these are moral questions. [68]

Likewise, a Scot chaplain claimed that man-power and armaments were the 'sacramental embodiment of the nation's faith and spirit.'[69] By aligning the material demands made by the state on civilians with Christian civic values of restraint of self-interest for the common good, they presented the new form of 'total' warfare as a salvation drama. Communitarian devotion became the precondition for victory.

As well as reformulating 'sacrifice' around the material contributions of civilians, those who articulated the rhetoric also appealed to the memory of the dead. To fortify commitment to the cause, they pointed to the sacrifices that had already been made, the spiralling fatalities. In this period, religion helped to link mourning, commitment and remobilisation. The death toll, it was argued, made endurance and victory more necessary. Bereavement and loss, above all the fear that sacrifices would be wasted, lent greater momentum to appeals for rededication to the war effort. In the evolving religious discourse, fighting the war until its absolute aims had been achieved was

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[68] E.C. Crosse, *The God of Battles: A Soldier's Faith Being an attempt to reveal the power of God in war* (London, 1917), p.28.
[69] 'A New Campaign By A Chaplain at the Front', *Life & Work*, 5 (Jan. 1918), p.3.

presented as a duty to the fallen to achieve an outcome commensurate with the scale of losses suffered. Chaplains began to speak for the fallen, claiming the dead wanted the war to be continued in their name. As a rhetorical technique, they ventriloquised for the dead in the same spirit as Canadian John McRae's poem:

> Take up our quarrel with the foe:
> To you from falling hands we throw
> The torch; be yours to hold it high
> If ye break faith with us who die
> We shall not sleep[70]

This demand was made firstly in the context of remobilisation, as an appeal to continue the war. Giving up, or seeking a compromise peace, would betray the dead and cheapen their sacrifice. A Bavarian chaplain invoked this tradition in a field sermon on the Lutheran *Totensonntag* of 26th November, 1916, the Sunday of the Dead. Exactly a century after the day was inaugurated, he demonstrated how the perceived relationship between the living and the dead was an active one that went beyond ceremonial remembrance, 'Our people feels on such days what it owes to greater armies of its dead.' As well as keeping faith with the fallen of this war, the soldier must keep fighting out of obligation to the 'blood of young volunteers' a century before.[71] The cult of death was also a cult of ancestors that demanded further deaths. To justify sacrifices already suffered, more sacrifices would have to be made. In urging his family to accept the costs of war in July 1916, Captain Yoxall drew on this equation, 'it is only by more sacrifices that we can save the sacrifices of the past two years from having been made in vain.'[72] The dead of the bereaved individual's military unit received pledges of loyalty. For Lieutenant W B St Leger, 'my company

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[70] Cited in B. Gardner (ed.), *Up the Line to Death: The War Poets 1914-1918, an Anthology* (London, 1977), p.49.
[71] Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg [Henceforth BA-MA] Msg 2/5659 (Gustav Adolf Rost, Feldgeistlicher der 8 bad. Landwehrdivision, Papers) Sermon, 26 Nov. 1916.
[72] IWM Con Shelf P 317, (H.W. Yoxall Papers), Letter 23 July, 1916.

is carrying on the work' of his three lost friends, 'Judge, Henry and Denis.'[73] Lieutenant H.B. Bowser, who wore a sword that his father gave him as an emblem of his family's code of honour inscribed with the motto 'Veritas Praevalebit', overcame his fear that the 'struggle naught availeth; the labour and wounds are vain' by swearing an oath, 'We must finish our job, redeem our pledge, vindicate our rights, justify our attitude, avenge our dead.' Given that his two agonised letters of doubt and rededication violated his own rule of only writing non-distressing letters, his sincerity is likely.[74] British censors' reports after the abortive peace negotiations of late 1916 report similar sentiments.[75] A war that had begun in the conviction that suffering would ennoble nations continued as a duty dictated by piety to the dead.

The process of interpreting bereavement to reinforce willingness to continue fighting, taken up and intensified 'from above' in 1916-1917, was following a pattern that had begun earlier for bereft families and combatants. The postbattle reflection was written in a funerary context, a time of services in the field which were reported to be better attended than other voluntary services, in a mood of both thanksgiving and mourning.[76] Letters written in the aftermath of battle affirmed not only the gratitude of the soldier to God for sparing him, but the bond between the living soldiers and the dead, an emotional connection that they used to reaffirm their obligations to keep fighting. The death of his friend Kenneth gave Lieutenant Denis Oliver Barnett a vengeful focus, 'I've got a long account to settle out here, and Kenneth is at the top of

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[73] IWM P 239 (W. B. St Leger, Papers) Diary, 21 Oct. 1917.
[74] IWM 88/56/1, (H.F. Bowser, Papers) letters 11 Dec. 1916, 13 May 1917, 9 April, 1918.
[75] IWM 84/46/1 (M. Hardie, Censors' Reports), 21 Jan. 1917, p.7: 'I read today that 150,000 graves of British soldiers have been registered in France. I have seen many[,] many thousands, and have always thought when passing them, that these lives must be paid for by Germany and not sacrificed in vain.'
[76] For example, Chaplain Harry Blackburne reported that 1000 men from two battalions attended a voluntary service held after the First Battle of the Marne. H. Blackburne *This Also Happened on the Western Front* (London, 1932), p.17.

it. I think they'll find that will cost them a lot.' His war had become a personal blood-feud with the German army.[77] The filial sacrifices of bereaved families, especially mourning wives or mothers who had given up their menfolk, were held up as losses that must be translated into triumph. One obituary for a dead soldier quoted his bereft mother, who insisted that from her son Alfred's death 'beloved German must come to victory.'[78] Those with doubts claimed that they were constrained by their sense of obligation to dead comrades. After more than eight months in the field, Albert Ernst in 'pain and grief' wrote a tribute on the 6 June 1915 from Bapaume for his friend Richard who had recently been killed. He worried about the war's effects on incoming recruits, who were indulging lifestyles 'not in accordance with the seriousness of the time,' and doubted 'all pompous talk of the purifying and rebirth of our people by the war.' But he did not fully dismiss the pursuit of national regeneration, praying that 'a new future may begin for our people' and urging readers to play their part in making it possible. He concluded by remembering his young friend's patriotic death on the battlefield, giving up his 'young, flourishing life as the sacrifice', the Fatherland on his lips. Though losing faith in the capacity of bloodshed to redeem civilisation, he demanded that the total commitment of the dead remain examples to be emulated.[79]

Christians at war confronted a paradox. The lifeblood of warriors could no longer guarantee the ultimate salvation of the country, and deaths were harder to frame in terms of their uplifting effects on the nation. Paradoxically, precisely at the moment when it appeared increasingly unlikely that war would purify and uplift, demands escalated in inverse proportion that since so many had been killed, it was now more

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[77] D. O. Barnett, letter 19 May, 1915, cited in L. Housman, *War Letters of Fallen Englishmen* (London, 1930, 2002 edn.), p.40.
[78] KAF 181, (1916), p.104.
[79] KAF 173, (1915), pp.176-7.

important for their faith to be fulfilled. Sacrifice had become an economy, in which lives lost generated debts and obligations that must be repaid by the civilian population. To Anglican chaplain Neville Talbot, whose own brother had died at Hooge in July 1915, British combatants 'were paying the price for the future', increasing the public debt of the community to 'its defenders and to their folk', increasing the 'urgency that the better future, for which the price has been paid, may come to be. With the humility of indebtedness let good men and women see to it that…the agony shall not have been endured in vain.'[80] Instead of mystically consecrating the nation with blood, the validity of the soldier's death was now to be found in its capacity to inspire the behaviour of the living. Anglican chaplains Tom Pym and Geoffrey Gordon dedicated their book to those killed and 'to the prospect of the new England of which they died.' Sacrifice could only be sacred, they claimed, if it was remembered and emulated in rebuilding the social order. 'It is you at home who must help us to have constantly before our eyes the ideal side of war…by raising your own standard of life and service, so that the England for which men have fought and died may be more worthy of their sacrifice.'[81] As the soldier died, so the civilian must cherish and perfect their sacrifice.

This mortality accounting, which promoted a belligerent state of mourning as a basis for mobilisation and further sacrifices, was also an argument used in debates about what kind of victory and peace settlement should be pursued. Such investments had been made in blood that only the firm guarantee of national security and the purification of national life could justify such losses. In Germany it was a theme shaped in the context of the war aims debate, which climaxed in 1917, as prolific

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[80] N. Talbot, *Religion Behind the Front and After the War* (London, 1918), p.2.
[81] T.W. Pym, G. Gordon *Papers from Picardy* (London, 1917), p.178, pp.15-16.

church pamphlets depicted the dead as martyrs for the annexationist Hindenburg peace, terms that would give Germany a hegemonic position on the continent, and for the moral rebirth of the Fatherland: '…take up with brave courage the old and the new tasks again in attack! You already owe this to the fallen. Or did they die as heroes, so that all of you could walk away from the life struggle cowardly and weak? Their bequest is the memory of their manly brave way and the steady reminder: hold out, struggle through!'[82] In propagating this highly politicised form of reverence for the dead, they appealed to 'survivor guilt' as well as sympathy for those already bereaved. Moderate peace terms were unthinkable because 'Too much blood has flowed, too many tears are spilled; shall no joy be harvested out of these seeds of blood and tears at the end? Should the graves of the fallen charge against the living, that they have fallen whining, before the full victory was gained?'[83] A similar logic underpinned German religious soldiers' responses, though they were less insistent upon annexations, demanding that Germany emerge from war with inviolable security. Soldier Fritz Hertwich wrote that from 'this war with its great sacrifices we want an honourable peace. A peace that guarantees the protection of our borders and the security of our country for decades', just as God's blood sacrifice at Golgotha must result in a godly German nation and in eternal peace.'[84] This echoes the censors' reports of the 5th Army on 12th July, 1917. While the desire for peace was widespread, most writers who were not professed Social Democrats affirmed that they did not want peace 'at any price', insisting that they 'did not want the sacrifices to have been made in vain', that Germany must demand compensation.[85]

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[82] BZ *Kriegsblätter* n.9, 'Gefallenen.'
[83] BZ *Kriegsblätter* n.15, 'Kopf Hoch!'
[84] KAF, 2 (1917), 15 May, 1917, Printing letter Fritz Hertwich written on 18 Feb.1917, pp 27-8.
[85] BA-MA Freiburg, W-10/50794: 'Postüberwachung bei der A.O.K. 6 insonderheit 5. Armee. Erfaßungen letzten Kriegsjahr, 12 July 1917.'

As well as operating in a specifically military context, and in the context of public war aims debates, the 'blood debt' to the dead also entailed a longer-term demand for civilian sacrifice that stretched even into the post-war future. Over time, the millenarian view of the war as the decisive moment of salvation was replaced by a more gradualist view of the war as only the beginning of a deferred future resurrection, an intergenerational struggle for national salvation, a process that bound present and future generations to continue the military struggle in other forms.[86] Consider the church parade sermon of Major Young, a Scottish private who became an officer and then a padre:

> Men are dying and have died at the front not that we who remain might be free to indulge ourselves in pleasures and drink and vice, free to get rich and live at ease, free to quarrel about petty points of doctrine, free to disregard God and Christ…They are dying…that the nation may be lifted up to the great heights of truth and brotherhood, of right dealing between man and man, of purity of life, and faith in God. The world has always made progress through sacrifice, and never since the sacrifice of Christ for men has there been a greater sacrifice than is being made to-day. I don't believe that their sacrifice can be altogether wasted, but I believe it may go largely for nothing unless *we* live up to it…Many of you can see in your mind's eye some of those corners that are for ever England – a corner of a field by a cross-road, a little clearing in a wood, where there are row on row of simple, wooden crosses. What did these men die for?[87]

Significantly, this address was published *after* hostilities finished, suggesting Young believed the message of unfulfilled sacrifice was still relevant even in victorious Britain. Even while the war was being fought and its outcome was uncertain, the devout exhorted both soldiers and homefront congregations about their post-war behaviour, urging them to embrace a higher ethical existence and live up to the high standards set by the fallen, stressing the bond of obligation between living and dead.

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[86] Cf. the sermon of one Anglican clergyman, 'But they will have died in vain…unless we who are left are prepared to pledge ourselves at any cost to achieve the objects which they aimed at. That is the debt which we owe to the heroic dead- to ensure that their bitter sufferings shall not be wasted.' Accordingly, the civilians' duty was now to combat the 'peril within' of luxury, lust, idleness, untruthfulness, greed and the passion for pleasure. F. Homes Dudden, *The Heroic Dead and Other Sermons* (London, 1917), pp.106-112.

[87] W.P. Young, *A Soldier to the Church: An Attempt at Interpretation* (London, 1919), pp.106-7.

One German chaplain gave sermons on the 'German man of the future, as well as the 'spiritual struggle of the present.'[88] 'Should the immense sacrifice have been achieved in vain?' pleaded Hermann Bauke before the graves of Liège. Commemorating the dead would be worthless if it were only 'respectful feeling.' The Brandenburg graves were more than memorials; they were reminders to civilians. Their 'immense sacrifice' imposed duties that reached beyond the war. 'If we, God willing, will someday have peace', the 'new future of our people and fatherland should be built' to fulfill 'the serious admonition these graves shout at us.' Redemption of the community meant executing Germany's civilising mission to the world in both war and peace, galvanised by the martyrs who died 'for the great and good future.'[89] The dead rose in sermons as stern men of judgement, rather than peacefully sleeping spirits, spokesmen for the forgotten purpose of the war. Reunion with the dead, it was warned, might be a reckoning with the angry spirits of lives that were wasted. In their sermons they imagined a dialogue with the dead. Divisional chaplain Ernst Vits preached to his field congregation on the day of *Totenfest*, 1915, 'Yes, your dead will live, and if ever again either materialism, stupid Mammon avarice, disdainful egoism, wretched riotous living in German lands wants to become powerful, then they will rise up as our judges and will say it to us: we did not bleed so that your contentment and your lusting should live.'[90]

Proper respect for the dead entailed a permanent state of psychological mobilisation. In Germany the accent lay with renewed future commitment to the *Volk*, in Britain it was harnessed to the creation of a permanent peace. Bernard Adams of the Royal

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[88] Landeskirchliches Archiv Nürnberg [Henceforth abbreviated LKAN] 3209, 'Bericht über das Kriegsseelsorgejahr 1917' (Feldgeistlicher Niklas 4. Bay.inf.Div), p.8.
[89] H. Bauke *Im Deutschen Lüttich Vier Reden* (Berlin, 1916), pp.4-6.
[90] E. Vits, *Deine Toten werden leben De gefallenen Kameraden zum Gedächtnis, den kämpfenden zum Ansporn Feldpredigt gehalten am Totenfest 1915* (Straßburg, 1915), p.9.

Welsh Fusiliers, writing while on furlough after eight months of military service in mid-1916, was sceptical that such a brutalising war could really be the war to end all wars. He could see 'a new generation fostering and harvesting the seeds of war.' To him, liberal internationalism with its emancipatory agenda of democratising the warlike tyrannies of the Central Powers and giving independence to small nations, could not guarantee perpetual peace. To put an end to warfare in the future, the world must convert to Christ and remember the dead. It was essential to remain mindful of the memory of the fallen, such as his dead friend Lance-Corporal Allan, to ensure the utopian purpose of the war was realised. 'It would be so easy to forget, after the war. And yet to forget might mean a seed of war. I must never forget Lance-Corporal Allan.'[91]

Because even the prospects of victory and peace were troubling, the dead were also enlisted to exhort citizens to higher standards of post-war behaviour, to preach against the relaxation into materialist indulgence. Like Nietzsche's warning in 1871 that great victories pose great dangers, some warned that victory could corrupt.[92] With rumours of the armistice coming, on Nov. 10th 1918 one pious soldier cautioned that 'we must practice patience & thank God that the end is in sight; and, after all our prayers & supplications in our time of distress, we mustn't forget Him in our days of rejoicing.'[93] Peacetime, with its loosening of wartime restraints and legacy of bitterness, was the greatest threat to the social order. Chaplain M.A. Bere from a casualty clearing station at the Somme warned about parallels with Germany's triumphs over the French Third Republic in 1870-1. Military triumph could mark the

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[91] B. Adams, *Nothing of Importance: A Record of Eight Months at the Front with a Welsh Battalion October 1915, to June, 1916* (London, 1917), pp.303-307.
[92] See W. Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery* (London, 2003), p.4.
[93] IWM Con Shelf (AJ Arnold, Papers) Letter, 10 Nov. 1918.

point of decline into hubristic pride, not salvation. His ministry to German prisoners of war increased his suspicion of nationalist propaganda. The churches' call to national repentance, 'our only hope', clashed with 'our self-advertised superiority. We are certainly unfit to advertise a righteous cause.'[94] The coming of the Armistice was an ominous warning, a stage in the dialectical cycle of the corruption of nations: 'We have now to think of the duties which peace will bring us. If one looks back, the defeat of France in 1870 was the making of the French, and the victory of Germany was her undoing. England will have to keep her head and not be too much puffed up with victory; to think more of her own faults and less of the German's iniquities.'[95] This discourse of anxiety resonated in British Imperial History of the late nineteenth century, immortalised in Kipling's *Recessional* which cautioned against hubris. Likewise, chaplains warned that Britain's imperial mission could be unravelled if triumphalist hubris eclipsed humility.[96]

The anticipated end of war presented as many problems as the war itself. Years of self-sacrifice might unleash a reaction into self-gratification. Donald Hankey predicted that after war people would lose the vision of a classless national community and slip into the 'same old grooves' rather than be transfigured by suffering.[97] The new warfare was of such intensity that when it ended it would entail the dismantling of restraints imposed on leisure and consumerism and a release from years of privation and austerity, a recession into materialistic cultural demise that could undermine the purpose of the war itself. In 1917 a hospital ship chaplain feared that society potentially could betray the memory of the army of the saints: 'Do you

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[94] IWM, 66/96/1, (M.A. Bere, Papers) Letter 7 Dec.1917.
[95] Ibid.
[96] See D. Judd, 'Diamonds are forever? Kipling's Imperialism' *History Today* 47:6 (June, 1997), pp. 37-43.
[97] D. Hankey, *A Student in Arms* (London, 1916), pp.35-6.

realise what the Empire's sons are doing for your sake – to preserve your rights and liberties, your honour and life?… Shall you ever either now or in the years to come forget it and be negligent of the needs of these broken wrecks of humanity? Shall you ever be willing to indulge in your luxuries again – your dinner parties and outings, your 'purple and fine linen'? If you do, I for one shall cry 'Shame, shame' upon you. I know the cost of your freedom and the preciousness of the price that has been paid – the price of blood.'[98] Just as the self-sacrifice of the citizen was vital for victory, chaplains claimed it was necessary for people to continue in a mental state of wartime self-sacrifice long after the war finished as an obligation to the dead.

As well as the dead, future returning veterans were also privileged in the rhetoric of the 'economy of sacrifice.' They were represented as soldier-citizens of authority to whom the nation owed its gratitude. The debt they were owed was a literal material one. Some soldiers feared postwar chaos, such as one who asked on 15th July 1916, 'What are the preparations, to regulate the high tides of [returning] men after the peace agreement? They will often find their jobs occupied. Some are then afraid of disturbances; I heard even the word revolution in this connection twice.'[99] An anonymous "amateur officer" in a book entitled *After Victory* (1917) wrote of the indebtedness of civil society to future veterans. Their claims on the state as postwar citizens were greater after military service: "the men who have fought have earned something better than "the mouldy crust and filthy rags," that they have established their right to a reversal of 'the hopeless and chaotic pre-war conditions'; and, above all, they were 'entitled to a preference share in the new Britain, the foundations of

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[98] Anon. *Fifty Thousand Miles on a Hospital Ship: By "The Padre" A Chaplains Experiences in the Great War* (London, 1917), p.34.
[99] Cited in B. Ulrich *Frontalltag im Ersten Weltkrieg: Wahn und Wirklichkeit: Quellen und Dokumente* (1994), p.114.

which can only be well and truly laid upon a full recognition of their rights and their worth, and a complete discharge of our national duty to them.' These demands reflected an assumption that military service enhanced the civic entitlement of veterans on their parent societies, as well as the assumption that the meaning of the war would now have to be fulfilled beyond the battlefield, in the parliament and in public policy. His poem, "TO THE MEN", praised sacrifices that were glorious but incomplete:

It was said that chivalry long was dead
In the lap of luxury,
That the heroes of old had no peers to-day,
And a decadent race were we.
You have proved it false, and surpassed the best
That history's page can tell;
You have risen to heights that never were scaled,
While you fathomed an unknown hell…

And what will you do when the war is done?
Will you beg, or starve, or slave?
Will good folk remember the hallowed thing
You fought and bled to save?
The great Christ sacrifice be aught,
If the world but holds it true,
Then the world must bow to you boys who fought,
Must love and cherish you.

As the second stanza suggests, the noble endeavour is in vain if the armies are not fairly reintregrated and rewarded after the war. It exploits an association with Christ's

Calvary, that the worth of soldiers' sacrifice depends on the recognition and following of the people who benefited from it. The legitimacy of the cause would now be determined by the relationship between soldier and state, and the capacity of society to repay and honour the men who fought for it. It was now in the power of survivors to undo the worth of men's deaths, 'God forbid that we shall mar the fairer ideals that war has brought forth in pain and sacrifice…Else the blood has flowed in vain.'[100]

That some were perceived to be making money from sacrifices was particularly troubling. It perverted the basic principle that sacrifices were made to overcome materialism for the common good. Revulsion against profiteering was also a British theme. In the diary of chaplain Julian Bickersteth, the breakdown in the economy of sacrifice becomes evident in his semantics, as he describes deaths in brutal detail without ennobling sentiments. Parasitic war profiteers and newspaper magnates were robbing deaths of purpose, and he himself as a chaplain felt implicated. 'The country is hoodwinked. Facts are distorted or totally misrepresented by the press. Everyone seems to be on the make. My nostrils are filled with the smell of blood. My eyes are glutted with the sight of bleeding bodies and shattered limbs, my heart wrung with the agony of wounded and dying men.'[101] When will this grim butchery of unfledged boys, German and English, end? For whose glory do we mangle the bodies of our splendid youth – God's or our own? Or that the Northcliffe Press can sing of another triumph?'[102] Though he tempered this with his instinctual belief that his doubts were part of the test of faith, it shows how the soldier's death as an act of devotion was no longer perceived as redemptive on its own. Military chaplains had a particular interest in validating sacrifices, as they were agents in the war machine and had encouraged

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[100] Anon. *After Victory: by an amateur officer* (London, 1917), pp. 307-8, 7-10, 316.
[101] Cited in J. Bickersteth (ed.), *The Bickersteth Diaries 1914-1918* (London, 1995), Dec.1917, p. 220.
[102] Ibid. 30 August 1918, p.268 (my italics).

combatants to make them. 'I'm afraid the next few months are going to be very hard on the boys, the Boche very strong and fierce" wrote Tubby Clayton to his mother, "but we shall weather the storm with God's help. And I feel more and more convinced as the time goes on that we must go on too…I should not relish the task of going to the women in black at home and saying, 'It was all a mistake. There was no need for him to have died at all.'[103] As someone who would have to face the mourners, and justify his role in abetting the soldier's sacrifice, victory had become more important, commemoration of the dead the occasion for rededication to the cause.

Thus the language of sacrifice was being reformulated, around an evolving idea of an unfulfilled covenant with the dead. Its new expression was also nourished upon older ideas and rhetoric. For Britons, it had come partly from across the Atlantic. America's Revolutionary and Civil Wars had been energised by progressive northern Protestants who portrayed the conflicts as righteous wars inaugurating the Kingdom of God on earth.[104] The sacrifices of founding heroes created a bond with the living, a debt Americans must 'requite' by keeping their memory sacred and living up to their patriotic example.[105] It was a foundational principle of republican nationhood, at Gettysburg dedicating the living to the 'unfinished work' of erecting a sovereign republic to ensure that 'these dead shall not have died in vain.'[106] Attention to American martyrology had been stimulated by trans-Atlantic evangelism, the 'second great awakening' of 1859, and Civil War propaganda, battle hymns and literature,

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[103] P.B. Clayton, *Letters from Flanders: Some War-Time Letters of the Rev. P.B. Clayton (Tubby) to his Mother* (London, 1932) Letter 12. Dec. 1917, pp.121-2.

[104] For a study of the role of progressive American Christianity in propagating the American war effort, see R. M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War and the Rise of the Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, 2003), especially pp.149-179.

[105] See S. J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice and Memory in Revolutionary America* (2002) p.53f.

[106] 'The Speeches At The Elysée M. Poincaré's Homage To America, Mr. Wilson's Reply', in *The Times* 16 Dec. 1918, p.10; statement to Congress cited in A. Willert, *The Road to Safety: A Study in Anglo-American Foreign Policy* (London, 1953), p.166.

which reached Britain quickly.[107] Before America's entry into the war, chapel-goer Lloyd George deliberately linked the memory of the Civil War to the present Great War, calling Germany's militarism the 'new slavery.'[108] After Germany's triumph over Napoleon III in 1870-1, German Protestant preachers increasingly tied remembrance of the dead to gratitude towards God. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, veteran military chaplain and pioneer of the Lutheran Inner Mission, campaigned for *Sedantag,* the day of commemoration, to be a day of repentance and thanksgiving, lest hubris invite divine punishment. Local memorials and heroes' groves that arose in German towns and villages reminded the next generation of their ancestors' sacrifices. Their heroic achievement could be emulated – and undone.[109]

Conclusion

As it became harder to vindicate the death of the soldier as a revitalising and unifying force, the language of sacrifice was reformulated. This chapter has identified two dynamics that intensified in 1916-17 and reshaped religious rhetoric. These dynamics were the need for material sacrifices of civilians, and the impact of bereavement on the will to war. These two developments were taken up as themes by both church and state, and had been anticipated by chaplains and combatants in the field who had already demanded civilian sacrifice and whose bereavement reinforced their willingness to hold out. A major difference between German Lutheran and British

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[107] A. Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War' *History Workshop Journal*, 2 (1976), pp. 104-123, 118; O. Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain' *English Historical Review* 86 (1971) pp. 46-72, 70-71.
[108] D. Lloyd George, 'The Case for War for Democracy', *Survey* 37 (17 Feb. 1917), pp.564-5.
[109] H. Lehmann, 'Friedrich von Bodelschwingh und das Sedanfest' *Historische Zeitschrift* 202 (1966), pp. 542-73.

Protestant visions of national salvation in war was in the role of liberal social and political reform. It was embraced by many British chaplains and soldiers as a part of redeeming the nation and pacifying the world. A vocal and influential body of British chaplains avowed that sacrifices had been made to build a more egalitarian community. By contrast, the German chaplaincy since prewar Wilhelmine era had formed part of the authoritarian and illiberal core of the Wilhelmine army, and had aligned against the influence of social democracy. This role was intensified in wartime, as it had now become an agent of the High Command's campaign against liberal, reformist war aims. Paradoxically, this helped to create a divisive climate of mutual blame and recrimination that exacerbated the social unity that the Lutheran churches had desired from the war.

Chapter 7

Judgement Days: 1918-1919 and the meaning of defeat and victory

This chapter examines how the devout interpreted the last year of the conflict, and how they represented victory and defeat. While the debate about the objective causes of Central Powers' victory and Entente's defeat continues, this chapter is concerned with the subjective reading of the events of 1918-19.[1] I argue that the year 1918, despite seeing some of the heaviest fighting in the war, and despite the despair in the German army at widespread impiety and indiscipline, did not represent a downward spiral into alienation from religious readings of the war. A comparison of two chaplains most famous for their alienation from patriotic war theology actually demonstrates the marginality of outward dissent among the faithful during wartime. Paul Tillich and Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy publicly supported the redemptive reading of the war in its final year. Both became disenchanted more by disappointment with the post-war settlement, than exposure to the war's realities. For many participants, the return of mobility to the battlefield strengthened the view that the final judgment was arriving, even as a deserved defeat. German censors' reports illustrate that even after they accepted that Germany could not win the war, the prayers of pious soldiers show that they continued to frame the war in coherent religious ways, sharing their chaplains' conviction that God was arbitrating over the final outcome of the war.

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[1] There is an extensive literature on the objective reasons for German defeat and British victory: J. Mosier, *The Myth of the Great War: a new military history of World War I* (London, 2001); G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory* (London, 2001); N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1999); T. Travers *How the war was won: command and technology on the western front* (London, 1992).

I then argue that after the armistice, those Germans who espoused the sacred meaning of the war faced the problem of explaining failure. How could a war fought in God's name or on God's command end in defeat and collapse (*Zusammenbruch*)? Conversely, what did victory mean to the British victors? I argue that for both, the end of the war did not entail the end of the clash of ideas it embodied, and did not initiate a neat transition to consolation, commiseration or celebration. Vanquished German Lutherans had been conditioned to accept defeat not as disproof of their world-view, but as a judgment on failure. As their world was turned upside down in the German revolution which replaced the consecrated monarchies with a secular state, defeat represented a judgment against the failure of the *Volk* to rededicate itself to God and the spirit of the *Augustgemeinschaft*. While a small group splintered towards Christian socialism and disavowed the old order of Throne and Altar, most surviving chaplains who interpreted the war embraced a militant memory of the war, urging their compatriots to unite around the memory of the dead and reclaim the mantle of chosen people. The victorious British Anglicans and Calvinists were also uneasy, even though the demon of German militarism had been defeated. They too implored their congregations to complete the sacrifices of the dead by renouncing materialism, and to ensure a permanent peace that had been purchased by blood. The peace would become as problematic as the war.

None of this is to deny that throughout the war, there had been a dissenting religious minority in both armies, who resisted any notion of building heaven on earth through war. To them, the war so violently represented the wreckage of human sin and fallibility, and the dangers of seeking salvation as a state within the fallen material world, that they could not see it as redemptive in any way. They objected to the thrust

of patriotic war theology from different standpoints. Some objected on doctrinal grounds to comparisons between Christ's passion and soldiers' deaths, or 'lesser Calvaries' as John Arkwright's 1919 hymn 'O Valiant Hearts' would describe them.[2] They believed it traduced basic articles of faith. To them, the notion that the soldier's death could be redemptive was a heresy, because it traduced the singularity of Christ's death and resurrection, which was the sufficient and exclusive saving act. Four Anglican chaplains signed an interdenominational letter to Archbishop Davidson, claiming 'Sacrifice is not our Saving Grace, as we are no [sic] so carefully told, which belittles our Saviour's great Sacrifice when He gave Himself, not a dead but a living sacrifice for us.'[3] In another camp lay those who embraced 'crisis theology', most powerfully enunciated by Swiss theologian Karl Barth. Offended that Germany's theologians had signed the pro-war manifesto of the intellectuals, Barth wanted to reclaim Christian salvation from militarism and earthly political agendas. He rejected 'hyphenated Christianity', or faith that equated gains in human well-being with 'the progressive redemption of the world by a predictably benevolent deity.'[4] For these dissidents, the war had exposed the bankruptcy of the very idea of the Kingdom of God on earth. Objecting to those who confused nations or empires with the messiah, they reasserted a transcendent Kingdom of God. Other dissenting clergy and soldiers

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[2] J.S. Arkwright, *The Supreme Sacrifice and Other Poems in Time of War* (London, 1919), p.13.
[3] LPL DP Letter, undated. Along similar lines, it was resisted by the German pietist *Hahn* Society: 'A hero's death remains a hero's death" and should be honoured, 'but it is not a deed of self-redemption from all burdens of conscience; redemption from all evil is and remains the merit of Jesus Christ.' Cited in J. E. Groh, *Nineteenth Century German Protestantism* (Washington, 1982), p.584. Many others tried to reconcile the singularity of Christ's passion with the death of the soldier, preaching that the soldier's sacrifice was a reflection of Christ's: eg. H. Bodensieck, *Gotteskraft in schwerer Zeit – Zwölf Predigten aus Feld und Heimat* (Osnabrück, 1918), p.17.
[4] D.J. Hall, 'The Great War and the Theologians, in G. Baum, *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview* (1999) pp.3-14, p.9. In his Tambach lecture in the autumn of 1919 at a conference on religious socialism, Barth condemned 'hyphenated Christianity.' K. Barth, 'The Christian's Place in Society' in *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (trans. Douglas Horton,1928), p.276.

asserted that bloodshed had nothing to do with salvation.[5] They did not want to frame the war as a religious experience, preferring to separate their faith from the war. One wrote 'The field preacher should not still speak of war, battle, courage, faith in God, that guarantees us the victory, and speak of Old Testament parallels, but of salvation and our determination to be right children of God. That is and remains still the main point of Christian religion.'[6] They objected to the way nationalism had appropriated faith, complaining that the war dominated the field sermons of highly politicised clergy to the point where it suffocated true Christianity. Worship and preaching should help them forget about their tribulations and focus on their own salvation. For a beleaguered minority of chaplains, the war was an opportunity to save souls, not a means to grace. The maverick free church pastor from Hesse, Rudolf Schlunck, was reprimanded for his criticism of militarism and his denunciation of Prussia's illegitimate annexation of Hesse-Kassel, but his popularity and pastoral effectiveness meant he was ultimately tolerated and even awarded the Iron Cross.[7]

That 1918 saw a survival of religious rhetoric, and in some cases a resurgence, is demonstrated in the responses of Paul Tillich and Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy. Since they are two of the military chaplains most famous for becoming 'disillusioned,' the fact that they were in many ways still subscribing to the rhetoric in 1918 reflects its durability. The disenchantment they developed, it is argued here, was mostly a post-war development. In the final year of the war, the way they framed their war

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[5] A good example is Anglo-Catholic socialist Peter Green, Residentiary Canon of Manchester, 'The Humiliation of War' in G.K.A. Bell, ed. *The War and the Kingdom of God* (London 1916), p.60: 'I profoundly disbelieve in the possibility of any good coming of war…and I regard all talk about war in itself being a moral purge, and a wholesome discipline, and a school of character, and all the rest of it, as being either profoundly immoral and antichristian, or mere moral platitudes.'

[6] From H. Cron (Bearbeiter) *Das Archiv des Deutschen Studentendienstes von 1914* (Potsdam, 1926), pp.18-19.

[7] *Ein Pfarrer im Kriege Kriegserlebnisse des renitenten Pfarrers Rudolf Schlunck* (Kassel, 1931), p. 18.

experiences in public and private was ambiguous. Paul Tillich, Prussian military chaplain and later theologian, claimed decades after the war that his moment of iconoclastic alienation from the old God of patriotic Protestantism was after the battle of Champagne (from September to November, 1915). Moving 'among the wounded and dying as they were brought in - many of them my close friends, much of my German classical philosophy broke down that night…I well remember sitting in the woods in France reading Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra, as many other German soldiers did, in a continuous state of exaltation…European nihilism carried Nietzsche's prophetic word that "God is dead." Well the traditional concept of God was dead.'[8] The grievances he expressed in his memoirs were both religious and political. War had discredited the confident faith in a benevolent God's will unfolding through progressive history. After weeks, he thought the war 'would last indefinitely and ruin all Europe', attributing his conversion to socialism to the first weeks of the war, when exposure to the class divisions of the nation alienated him from the landed aristocracy, the army and the church, exposed as 'an unquestioning ally of the ruling groups.'[9] He preached an increasingly transcendent view of the realm of salvation. In the spring of 1917 he preached that the Lord's kingdom was not of this world, that social legislation and modern medicine and industry had not eliminated hatred and injustice. Having earlier preached fealty to the Kaiser and identified soldiering with Christian love, he now contrasted God's kingdom the 'eternal and invisible, our Fatherland that is in heaven,' with the wastelands of the front. [10]

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[8] P. Tillich, 'To Be or Not to Be', *Time* 73:11 (March 16, 1959), p. 47.
[9] P. Tillich, *On the boundary: an autobiographical sketch* (London, 1967), p.12.
[10] Cited in E. Sturm, 'Zwischen Apologetik und Seelsorge. Paul Tillichs frühe Predigten (1908-1918)'*Theologische Literaturzeitung* 124 (1999), pp.251-268, p.266.

Yet Tillich's reminiscence should be treated with suspicion. His contemporary rhetoric, both public and private, was contradictory, his disillusionment more cumulative and piecemeal than he liked to remember. In one phase he expressed despair, talking of the war in November 1916 as the 'death of this our time' and of his unease with the old idea of God.[11] Personal distress intensified his doubts, as he had to spend more time gravedigging than ministering to his troops,[12] enduring several nervous breakdowns and losing his wife Grethi to his best friend. Yet his field sermons to soldiers warned against the desire for peace and condemned politics demanding peace (*Friedenspolitik*). In his sermon on the Kaiser's Birthday in January 1917, he condemned 'peace thoughts' or talk of negotiated settlement that came from 'weakness', and called for commitment to the war aims championed by the high command, an uncompromising victorious *Siegfried* of lavish territorial rewards.[13] This was thirteen months *after* the battle of Champagne which he later recalled as his Nietzschean epiphany. After the resumption of the war of movement, as late as 31st May, 1918, as his regiment was approaching the Marne, he wrote to his father 'This is the first time in war that we have experienced something of victory and advance. The result is that we are fresh and joyful again despite all losses!' and on 11 June he wrote of his pride at receiving the Iron Cross First Class.[14] If he was inwardly divided or drawn to rebellion against the establishment, he did not want certain audiences to know about it. He only publicly embraced rejection of the old order and its patriotic monarchist piety later, once he demobilised with the army and confronted the anarchic state of Berlin in 1919, where he embraced socialism and a bohemian

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[11] R. Albrecht (ed.) P. Tillich, 'Der Feldprediger' *Gesammelte Werke*, (Stuttgart, 1959-1975), xiii: pp.71-79, p.70.
[12] Ibid. 'Bericht an den Herrn Feldprobst' pp. 71-79, esp. pp.77-8.
[13] E. Sturm (ed.) P. Tillich, *Frühe Predigten* (1909-1918), 1994, 'Feldpredigten' 355-645, Nr. 128, pp.535-7.
[14] Letters 31 May, 1918, 11 June 1918, cited in W. & M. Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought* (London, 1977), p.55.

intellectual life. Tillich, the most famous Lutheran dissident, did not fully radicalise until the post-war period. His memoirs falsely projected his full-scale disillusionment back into his first wartime doubts.

Anglican padre Studdert-Kennedy also turned against the Christian patriotic reading of the war to embrace socialism and to proclaim the sacrifices a waste. Like Tillich, however, this was a post-war development. As late as 1918, he described the British Army as the 'Army of Redemption.'[15] His own postwar declaration of disillusionment shows how painfully difficult it was to disown publicly any meaning in the war. Speaking to an audience in Westminster Hall on Armistice night in 1921, he claimed there were 'no fruits of victory - moral, spiritual or physical. For two years I have gone on believing that there must have been some good in it…but I cannot see anything in the world.' As a chaplain he felt complicit in a meaningless war, 'there is due from me an act of penitence and an open confession to God.' War against militarism had militarised Britain, making Britain more Prussian than the Prussians. Significantly, it was not the war experience itself that had alienated him. His was a postwar confession, made as a response to his disappointment with British armaments spending. If it was hard enough to tell an audience that included the bereaved that their men had died for nothing, it would have been harder still earlier, when the war had not yet finished and its outcome was uncertain. Also at the meeting was former chaplain Dick Sheppard, who would found the pacifist Peace Pledge Union. Even he wanted to commemorate the dead and justify their deaths as martyrdom for peace,

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[15] G.A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Rough Talks by a Padre* (London, 1918), p.131.

hoping that 'no mother who had lost a son or wife her husband would go home with the impression as he feared they might that those lives had been given in vain.' [16]

How then were the events of 1918 interpreted by the more mainstream faithful? In early 1918, at first glance the strategic balance favoured Germany. With Germany's major adversary on the eastern front eliminated, and a transfer of thirty-three divisions to the western front, the final year of the war saw a resumption of the war of movement. With the elimination of the Czarist front in the Russian Revolution, the defeat of Italy at Caporetto, the French mutinies of 1917, and Ottoman jihadist expansion towards the Indian Subcontinent, the hope of Lutheran patriots was echoed in the Berlin Church year-book. But these concealed material constraints. High casualties throughout 1917, the stationing of a million troops in the east, the desertion of approximately 10 per cent of the soldiers during the transport from the eastern front, and the haemorrhaging of a million males to the industrial demands of the Hindenburg Program meant that their manpower was inferior to allied armies.[17] Regardless, in more hopeful quarters, military events renewed forecasts of a final, apocalyptic attack. One Church yearbook claimed that 'March 1918 saw the rise of a new flowering of unbreakable German power in the west. England had seen a heavy assault, the French divisions bled in hopeless retreat. The field generalship of Hindenburg, who broke the Russian steamroller in the east and now in the west after

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[16] *Guardian* 18 Nov. 1921, p.834.

[17] On the manpower and disciplinary problems besetting the German army in 1918, see R. Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.178-9; W. Kruse, 'Krieg und Klassenheer: Zur Revolutionierung der deutschen Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996), pp. 530-61; W. Deist, 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs: Zur Realität der 'Dolchstosslegende' in Bütter, U. (ed.) *Das Unrechtsregime. Internationale Forschung über den Nationalsozialismus* i. (Hamburg, 1986), pp.101-129.

holding sharply, threateningly raises the hand, lets us see with full confidence into the future. *We are conquerors*. Conquerors of the globe.'[18]

Combatants at the front took a less jubilant tone. In the first months of 1918, Lutheran soldiers in the field were strained to the limit, but were still framing the events of the war in religious terms. Prayers recorded in the censor's report from Germany's 5th Army show that they hoped that the promised last battle would materialise after years of fighting. The German fifth army, which had led the destructive offensive at Verdun, served under Crown Prince Wilhelm II. From September 1916 it became part of the *Heeresgruppe Deutscher Kronprinz* 'Crown Prince's Group of Armies,' which contained the three armies occupying the central section of the German line on the western front. The responses of religious men in this force in 1918 can be divided broadly into two phases, on either side of the Spring Offensive of March. Beforehand, the high command had made itself a hostage to fortune by assuring a war-weary army that a successful campaign would end the conflict and bring victory. It was supposed to be the decisive offensive. 'Please God, give us Germans the victory, don't place before the people still greater tests' pleaded one *Frontsoldat* before it began.[19] 'God, give peace soon! But should it not be, I will still do my duty', wrote another.[20] After the offensive stalled, one soldier wrote 'I want to cry from yearning and homesickness.' 'When will the day of salvation come?'[21]

While these troops clung to an image of God as the final arbiter of the conflict, invoking God in appeals for the final assault, God's vicar on earth, the Kaiser, was

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[18] *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 1918, p.330f.
[19] Staatsbib. Berlin, MS. Germ. Fol. 1651: C.F. Mueller, diary, 18 March, 1918. I am grateful to Alex Watson for alerting me to this statement.
[20] FMA W-10/50794, Censor Report for 5. Armee for 24 Feb. 1918, p.65.
[21] BZ, Bd.19, u.Bd 43, G. Wimmer, 5 May, 1918.

volubly unpopular. Signs of alienation from the Kaiser were apparent as early as January 1918. Hostility to the monarch, for Protestants the figurehead of their church and high priest of their nation, was shown in widespread antagonism to celebrating the Kaiser's birthday (January 27th), and open grumbling against the Kaiser during field services that was previously unthinkable.[22] Though this may reflect a popular transfer of allegiance to the iconic commanders Hindenburg and Ludendorff, so intimate was the relationship between the monarch and the churches that this hostility was intrinsically also hostility to the established churches.

On the other side of the front, the BEF with its Dominion forces faced a threatening situation. With the French mutinies, and the collapse of the Russian front, and the American forces not yet combat-ready, it was holding the ring. But the acceleration of events and the further globalisation of the war also raised speculation that the final judgment was coming. On March 1, Deputy Chaplain-General Llewellyn Gwynne wrote in his diary 'Japan to come to the relief of poor Russia. America may also give assistance and China has offered four divisions so this is indeed a war world & agony out of which please God will come the Kingdom of God.'[23] The German Spring Offensive and its subsequent assaults from March 21st made the chimeric final struggle finally appear real. On April 9th, German forces attacked thinly-stretched British troops in the Lys valley south of the Ypres salient, and the normally unemotive Field Marshal Haig made his 'backs to the wall' appeal for troops to fight until the end to protect 'the safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind.'[24] On the same day, Lieutenant Bowser, who in the previous year had been despondent that the war seemed endless, wrote home that 'it is only a question of time now I feel sure

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[22] As Martin Schian summarises from chaplains reports, M. Schian, *Die Evangelische Kirche im Felde 1914-1918* (Mittler, 1921-5), p.221.
[23] UBSC (Llewellyn Gwynne, Papers) Acc 18/F1 50-54, Diary, 1 March, 1918.
[24] Cited in M. Howard, *The First World War* (Oxford, 2002), p.123.

the end will come of all this strife and it is a case of simply enduring to the end like Good Soldiers of Jesus Christ.'[25]

As the German armies reeled from successive blows of Entente and American counter-offensives between July and October, military chaplains penned a litany of complaints. After the failure of the Spring Offensive and counterattacks, they reported that years of war were brutalising a soldiery infected with war-weariness, insubordination and revolutionary psychosis, making their own work increasingly difficult, as part of a general collapse of discipline and morale. Bavarian chaplain Hermann Kornacher reported in July 1918, coinciding with the army's influenza epidemic, that some units that were brave and hard suddenly collapsed psychologically and refused to obey, that the war exposed the loss by more than a few of all 'sense of honour', although the 'iron sense of duty which bears the greatest sacrifices' lived on in most German men.[26] A similar timetable was reported by theologian Martin Schian, who summarised the reports of the Prussian military chaplaincy which were lost after the archives were destroyed largely by Allied bombing of Berlin in the Second World War. Prussian chaplains alleged that military reverses in July after the ultimate failure of the Spring Offensive caused the final 'moral collapse of the army.'[27] The summer of 1918 saw church services considerably depleted, abandoned even by officers.[28] Facing apathetic or even hostile soldiers unnerved once ardent chaplains in their field services, further undermining their ministry. One censors' report cited a churchgoing soldier, 'Today, was once again at church; the priests don't know any more what they shall preach. The soldiers don't

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[25] IWM 88/56/1 (Lieutenant H.F. Bowser), Letter 9 April, 1918.
[26] LKAN 3209 (Div. Geistlicher der 9 Bay. Res., Hermann Kornacher.) Report, July 1918.
[27] M. Schian, *Die Evangelische Kirche im Felde 1914-1918* (Mittler, 1921-5), p.141.
[28] Reports cited Ibid. p.201.

want to know more at all, only peace and to eat.'[29] In the Württemburg reports, chaplains met resentment because they advocated war aims that were seen as prolonging the war, when popular opinion in the army favoured a war of defence rather than large-scale annexations. Particularly damaging to their reputations amongst the men was their membership of the 'hated Fatherland Party.' One soldier reported that whole units took pledges to refuse to attend services and Holy Communion. Departing from their own dogma of national unity, Swabian chaplains laid some of the blame on Prussia's doorstep, alleging that unlike their own balance of rousing 'patriotic duty feeling' and 'religious conviction', their Prussian colleagues indulged in excessive 'Hurrah-Patriotism', which exacerbated the resentment towards the clergy. [30] Undertaken to reunite and redeem the nation, the war apparently had the opposite effects. It had not ultimately inspired the rebirth of the fatherland as a spiritual, patriotic and united community, the central purpose and justification of the war for the faithful.

These reports contrast with chaplains' postwar recollections in one important respect. After the war, they propagated the accusation of the 'stab in the back', that the undaunted and honourable armies had been betrayed by the treacherous home front. This theme may have represented a continuity with their wartime emphasis on solidarity between fronts, and their warnings that civilian apathy would undermine the military. But as this chapter will show, during the final year of the war, chaplains also represented the army as itself corrupted, lamenting the state of large sections of the army and its moral decline and spiritual emptiness. In the previous chapter, chaplains had already warned that officers' conspicuous privileges were breeding discord and

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[29] FMA W-10/50794, Censor's Report, 5. Armee for 23 June, 1918, p.70.
[30] LKAS Bstnd. A26, Nr. 1777 'Aus den Berichten der Württ. Evang. Feldgeistlichen'

undermining morale. In their postwar recrimination, they would simplify this messy picture into a more polarised judgment.

As for the religious soldiers, the German offensive had left their units depleted and exhausted. Statements recorded in censors' reports after the reversals and defeats following the Spring Offensive show German religious soldiers still praying, still asserting that God was coming to judgment, though they were no longer praying for a last victorious offensive, conjured again by Ludendorff as the *Friedensturm* promised before the July 16 attack at Reims. Soldiers' reactions to a diplomatic event, when the Austrian emperor publicly appealed to President Wilson for separate peace terms in September 1918, show a religiosity different from the unyielding militancy of the chaplains. One soldier wrote home that 'If it is God's will, the peace offer from Austria will go to fulfilment', while another prayed, 'May the loving God give all responsible state leaders the insight to take the new Austrian peace note into consideration, because the misery is enough.' 'We must be very close to deciding this world drama', wrote another, hoping 'for a good end soon! This God gives!'[31] No longer expecting triumph, nevertheless they still shared a fundamental assumption with their chaplains, that God was the judge and arbiter of world history. The censor's report also includes a moving statement:

> I am absolutely no doubter or pessimist, because healthy common sense rebels against the further continuation of this murder. It must still be an end that imposes unfavourable conditions on us. Germany lost the flower of its best men; we hope not further; however, the last ray of hope has sunk completely, then soon a German unity won't exist any more; God will it that it doesn't come to that. We hope now to have a just peace soon.[32]

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[31] FMA W-10/50794 'Postüberwachung bei der A.O.K. 6. insonderheit 5. Armee. Erfaßungen der letzten Kriegsjahr.' 'Urteil der Truppe über das Friedensangebot Össterreich-Ungarns Stimmungsbericht A.O.K.5 vom 28.9.18' pp.97, 104.

[32] FMA W-10/50794 'Friedenssehnsucht und Urteil ueber das Friedensangebot Deutschlands; Stimmungsbericht A.O.K.5 vom 17.10.18 hierzu,' p.115.

These words reflect a soldier's conflicted state, his exhaustion, his belief that prolonging the war is fracturing German society, his hope in God's protection, and his fear of an unjust settlement. Soldiers going on leave saw that the supposed sacred unity and fraternity of the mythical *Augustgemeinschaft* of 1914 was unravelling. One infantryman and theology student on leave in Berlin on 1st August 1918 wrote to his fellow students that 'We are frightened in the face of the great tear which goes through our people, in face of the apathy and even unscrupulousness…in view of the boundless bitterness and furious hate…We see badness at home, muddling along and party-business in politics…We ask the old Father State: Why don't you remember? And those at home: Why don't you help to carry us? and those in the army: why have you not more understanding of the psyche of the common soldier, why this often glaring measure of two classes?'[33] Having withstood the assault at Passchendaele and the all-but-victorious Spring Offensive, they saw the soldiers around them failing the test through desertion, impiety and large scale surrender. The community solidarity which had nourished their rhetoric had dissolved.

Chaplains from all states identified a deeper dysfunction that they argued lay at the heart of the German collapse, namely adversity leading to a flight from faith and sacrifice-willingness. Communal solidarity, they alleged, had been undermined by materialist self-interest, political subversion, and disunity between Germany's states. For Bavarian Protestant chaplains, antagonism between Bavarians and Prussians, and then the Munich Revolution which culminated on 7 November in the creation of the Bavarian 'free state', then in April 1919 the Bavarian Soviet Republic, were

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[33] KAF 43 Nummer 213, Letter, Ewald Ray, 1 Aug. 1918, pp.4-6.

dispiriting symptoms of national failure, visible at the front in the breakdown in discipline and ideals, and the rise of revolutionary licence.[34]

Because it provided a pre-prepared explanation of both victory and defeat, war theology contained its own self-fulfilling logic. As previous chapters have demonstrated, the meaning of defeat had been inscribed into the logic of church war preaching from the beginning, as well as in biblical authority and precedent. It was the judgment of heaven against the unworthy agents of God's will. For German chaplains, reared in a Lutheran-Hegelian tradition that saw divine will in the unfolding of all things, especially in national wars, even defeat rarely dislodged the Lord of History. Bavarian Protestant Emil Wolffhardt had preached on the Kaiser's birthday that the German people, though not elect were the most 'highly gifted' people with a 'special relationship' with God, that like Israel had to prove itself. Faith in the terrible struggle was God's demand.[35] Defeat, therefore, would not reflect God's absence, but national failure. The same understanding of the war as a trial of national penitence predisposed

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[34] LKAN 3209, (Div. Geistl. Wohffhardt, Papers) 'Bericht des Div. Geistl. Wolffhardt über seine Tätigkeit während des Feldzuges 1914-1918': 'And then came the end, an unfavourable end beyond all expectations. The non-appearance of the hoped-for successes of the great offensives of the present year, the failure of the U-Boat war, the enormous superiority of the enemies in men and material (guns, munitions, aircraft, tanks)…the displeasure over the war not ending, discontent about actual or supposed wrong treatment by superiors…this all caused struggle-listlessness, that must have disastrous effects. Companies and battalions of ours fell into captivity [or fled before the tanks]…The resistance strength was broken; and as then since the beginning of October 1918 the peace desire [and] also the homeland desire came to expression in political reports, then the average soldier only had one thought at the front: Peace, Peace at any price! From sacrifice-willingness to consideration of the welfare of the whole was not the least in existence any more, the responsibility-feeling was dulled, religious thoughts, feelings and striving had no place any more in the inner life of the masses, there was frequently no more desire in existence to visit the prepared and agreed service, the "Freedom" preached everywhere and in all tones intoxicated the people, discipline was…undermined, superiors were not rarely derided, taking off the German badge arising at the Munich Revolution was a welcome cause for other expression of inner discontent, much more also the expression of hate against the Prussians, the thoughts of the people almost fully occupied themselves with the…full equality in the food of officers and men…with the election for 'barracks council' and 'soldiers council.' Authority was cleared away, 'Freedom' had come, but not only freedom from human oppression, but also freedom from custom and decency, from all ideals, the freedom also from the dependence and feeling of responsibility before God.'

[35] LKAN 3209 (Emil Wolffhardt, Papers) 'Königsgeburtstags-Feier im Felde Predigt über Pred. Sal. 8,2 gehalten am 7.1.1917', pp.6-7.

him to interpret defeat as a judgment on Germany. Hence his acquiescence to defeat in November 1918: 'The struggle is over. The judgment is spoken. We bow to you, oh Lord of the World! We were great. You have broken us. Lord, you wish it! Lord, as it pleases you! …no devil can steal you, dear God, from us!'[36]

For German chaplains, it was failures in peacetime which had brought forth the war as God's trial of the *Volk*. Like the British, they did not remember the prewar peace with reactionary nostalgia. Their identity as Protestants lay in their intimate relationship with the monarchy and the state. To question the sovereignty of God and the providential meaning of the war was unavoidably to question the mythology at the basis of the *Kaiserreich*. These implications were revolutionary. For most soldiers and military chaplains reared in the conservative and monarchist climate of the Old Prussian Union, that was too big a leap. The ambiguity they saw in the war experience was that the mythic memory of the *Augustgemeinschaft* remained sacred. In their post-war reflections, former chaplains recalled the first days of mobilisation for showing the possibility of forging a new national community.[37]

Everywhere they looked, German chaplains saw implosion. They expressed fear of demobilised veterans, with the escalating number of desertions, defeat and collapse and the prospect of a chaotic demobilisation of millions of demoralised soldiers. Rudolf Schlunck hoped in his diary in October 1918 that the restraints of piety would prevent 'the great misfortune' of defeat returning combatants 'not as an army to the homeland but rather as hordes, bringing misfortune over the homeland.' He prayed

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[36] LKAN 3209 (Emil Wolffhardt, Papers) 'Bericht des Div. Geistl. Wolffhardt über seine Tätigkeit während des Feldzuges 1914-1918', p.47.
[37] See P. Porter 'Beyond Comfort: German and English Military Chaplains and the memory of the Great War 1919-1929', *Journal of Religious History* (forthcoming, 2005).

that the army preserve discipline, preserving God's command over the people and the nation.[38] Strikes meant the disintegration of hallowed domestic unity. The indifference and impiety of the infantry meant that the consecrated weapon of God, the German army, was broken. The rise of revolutionary soldiers' councils, the naval mutinies and the abdication and finally the flight of the Kaiser on November 10, 1918 meant that the state had been overrun by secularists. It seemed to fulfill the logic of church warnings they had heard throughout the war, that the failure to answer God's summons to national renewal and faith had destroyed the *Volksgemeinschaft* and called forth divine judgment against the nation, as pastors had warned all along.

Victory and peace also called forth anxieties, as well as rejoicing. Religious participants anticipated something that had not happened on such a scale in British history, the release of millions of combatants, the relaxation of wartime restrictions, mass celebration and the loosening of the restraints on which the pious had founded their appeals to rediscover self-sacrifice. Their writing warned against both the dangers of triumphalist hubris and the perils of ignoring social reform. With the rumour of an armistice coming, medical officer A.J. Arnold wrote on 10 November that 'we must practice patience & thank God that the end is in sight; and, after all our prayers & supplications in our time of distress, we mustn't forget Him in our days of rejoicing.'[39] Lance Corporal H. Boden of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, also cautioned 'What a blessing it will be for us if we will only stick close to the Almighty when we get peace again.'[40] An ex-chaplains fellowship dedicated itself to 'arouse the conscience of the Church with regard to social reform, and to urge upon Christians the

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[38] R. Schlunk, *Ein Pfarrer im Kriege: Kriegserlebnisse d. renitenten Pfarrers* (Kassel, 1931), p. 342.
[39] IWM Con Shelf, (A.J. Arnold, Papers) Nov. 10, 1918.
[40] Lance Corporal H. Boden, cited in A. Clayton *A Cheshire Parish* (Liverpool, 1998), p.98.

study of the problems of reconstruction.'[41] In his diary on Christmas Eve, 1918, J.K. Best recorded his trepidation over demobilisation from the western front: 'discipline becoming more stringent. We should be humane rather than tyrranous – study human nature. Much losing of names. Men not being demobilised in right spirit for peaceful reconstruction. What will happen, will they think all law order + officialism pernicious.'[42] The protracted process of demobilisation might also strain the nerves of survivors. M.A. Bere worried about the consequences of tense waiting for release onto the home front: 'I do hope that the restoration of the troops to civil life will soon begin. This kind of existence tries men's nerves in quite another way to war.'[43] This extended the fears of chaplains about the automaton effect of discipline on individuals and the dangerous release from it. If the war was an inner struggle against corruption and sin, the brutalisation of soldiers could efface the peace and security that victory was supposed to deliver.

The war was not formally concluded until June 1919 with the Treaty of Versailles. During the armistice period, with the celebration of victory and relief at the end of hostilities, the experience of victory with demobilisation and the return to civilian life provoked warnings and anxieties from returning military chaplains. Speaking in Malborough College chapel in May, 1919, E.C. Crosse delivered stern warnings to the assembled schoolboys. Though the war had been won, it 'remains for us to reap the fruits of victory.' The spoils of war were not primarily redrawn maps, dismembered territories, or 'money which can be squeezed out of a beaten enemy.' Instead, post-war reconstruction was about 'the moral regeneration of those who have survived the

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[41] *Church Times* Oct. 11, 1918, p.259.
[42] IWM 81/17/1 (J.K. Best, Papers) Diary 24 Dec. 1918.
[43] IWM 66/96/1 (M.A. Bere, Papers) Letter 23 Nov. 1918.

war. Is England going to forget, as she is apparently anxious to do, that over 600,000…of her very best have laid down their lives for her future?' He chastised an ungrateful nation that 'is fed up with the war or anything to do with it.' Only attention to the recent war, and the divine judgment against militarism implicit in the overthrow of 'the mighty from their seats,' could make peace and regeneration possible.[44]

Though dealing with very different circumstances, Germany's returning chaplains also represented the war as an unfinished struggle. Returning from the Ukraine, Hamburg ex-chaplain Johannes Wehrmann tried to salvage meaning from defeat. The root cause of defeat was not primarily military. Instead, it was a manifestation of a failure in the national character, a community at war that had imploded into disunity, sectional politics, and mercantile greed. The judgement of the war was not an indictment of Germany's imperial ambition, but God's punishment for Germany's collapse of solidarity. By relinquishing their obligation to find inner renewal and sustain their early wartime cohesion, Germany had forsaken its divine mission to enforce God's will, and been denied victory. He lamented the failure to live up to the promise of 1914. The homeland had disintegrated "yet again into states and interests groups" while 'millions of us abroad' thought 'of money and were not at all concerned about the people and about the people's unity, that this national corruption was so great that we could not make the military cutting edge — that is our guilt, that we must confess before our God.' He also denounced Germany's enemies for their 'envy,' which drove their concerted assault on the Fatherland, assigning them the war guilt. Above all, Wehrmann reaffirmed the unity of piety and nationalism. The Kingdom of God he identified with the Reich, Christian rebirth with the resurrection

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[44] IWM 80/22/1 (E.C. Crosse, Papers) 'A Sermon Preached in Malborough College Chapel on May 25th 1919', p.1.

and renewal of the Volk. In an enduring struggle, repentance meant national reunification, salvation would come by rekindling 1914 solidarities.[45] Defeat and disintegration did not refute God's hand in the war, but proved the failure of Germans to answer the divine call to self-renewal. Only unity could secure God's intervening grace.

In their diagnosis of defeat and failure, German chaplains frequently identified a contagion that originated at home and spread abroad. It was a chain of causation that blamed civilian corruption first, which then undermined armies in the field. One chaplain apportioned 'moral guilt' squarely on those who undermined 'the undefeated army', those 'who question our dead and their work, who destroy Germany', 'after its best in hundreds of thousands for their salvation fell.'[46] Pastor Reetz argued that Germany's inner decay spawned not in the extremities of the frontline but in the black-market and its archetypal criminals. The war, he believed, was dysgenic, sending Germany's most virtuous to be killed and leaving the 'quagmire plants' to grow in the 'semi-darkness' at home, replacing the best with the worst elements of citizenry. 'Yes, we possessed in the people such an ideal layer; but that rests outside today in cool earth.'[47] In Germany, chaplains' condemnation of the state of society formed part of a moral panic that swept the country. The peculiar conjunction of conspicuous pleasure-seeking and a resurgence of political radicalism troubled legislatures and officials. The bonds of cohesion, order and decency had been frayed by inflation, malnutrition, poverty, black-market trading, and after demobilisation,

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[45] J. Wehrmann, *Die Gemeinde, die Zukunft der Völker* (Königsberg, 1919), pp.36–38. (My translation.)
[46] Cited in M. Schian *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche im Weltkriege* (Mittler, 1921-5), p. 232.
[47] A.D. Reetz, *Predigten aus der Zeit für die Zeit* (Stettin, 1919), Nr.2, p.4.

crime and the spectre of venereal disease.[48] Chaplains stressed less the mechanics of transition, such as labour market adjustments and economic regulations, than the reconstitution of behavioural codes, patriarchal authority in social and family relationships, through faith in God, who had 'let us see the greatest time of our people' who would bring the enemy to justice. Hovering over his critique of postwar society was the finger of blame, as Protestant clergy actively propagated the 'stab-in-the-back' myth (*Dolchstoßlegende*).

Peace opened a new phase in their interpretations of the war, and a new chapter in a continuing spiritual struggle. For German Lutherans, the failure of the soldier's mission to redeem the nation's commitment to Kaiser and God and end class struggle through blood sacrifice climaxed in the German revolution of 1918-19. The organised official resignation from churches, that had been quelled by the war's domestic truce, rose to unprecedented levels. Hundreds of thousands formally renounced the church. Not including those who left the churches for other confessions or Judaism, in 1919 an astronomic figure of 175,485 people formally left the Lutheran churches (not including Hamburg, where figures were unavailable), compared with 22,996 in 1913 and 20,925 in 1914. In *Landeskirche* where the resignation movement had been small or almost nonexistent, resignations multiplied drastically, such as Sachsen-Koburg Gotha, where 22 and 50 had left in 1913 and 1914, 1688 left in 1919, and in Reuß ä.L., where one and three had left in 1913 and 1914, 1459 left in 1919.[49] Between 1919 and 1927, approximately 4.1 per cent (approximately 760,000 members) left the Old-Prussian church, and approximately 4 per cent left the German Evangelical

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[48] See R. Bessel *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford, 1993), pp.220-254.
[49] Figures derived from Table 'Austritte aus den evangelischen Landeskirchen 1913 bis 1918' in M. Schian *Die evangelische Kirche in der Heimat 1914-1918* (Mittler, 1921-1925), p.11.

churches.[50] As well as haemorrhaging members, the churches had been decapitated by the overthrow of God's anointed monarchs and princely houses, the churches' royal patrons who also held episcopal primacy. The sacred relationship of Throne and Altar was severed, God-given authority usurped. 'The blackest day in German History' was how former chaplain Ludwig Hoppe remembered the news of Germany's defeat in his memoirs. 'The horrific fate went its way into the deepest abyss, in dishonour and disgrace, in need and distress.' Hindenburg had kept the army in the field, 'unconquered, glorious, finest in the world — until it fell from the stab-in-the-back of the traitors.'[51] Written in 1939, it propagated the memory of the war as the betrayal of an undefeated army, a myth that had been taken up and orchestrated by the Nazi regime. It corresponds well with returning chaplains' contemporary reactions in 1919. Johannes Reetz, for example, lamented in 1919 that 'The German empire of glory has collapsed. That is bitter … An abyss of moral depravity has become manifest.'[52]

The world of Germany's Protestant churches was turned upside down. Humiliating defeat, with one in six combatants dead, was compounded by the humiliation of a punitive *Diktat* at Versailles. Everything they had held sacred was in disarray. Sole guilt, fastened on Germany by the Versailles treaty, inflamed a sense of wounded innocence. The reply to Versailles issued by General Superintendents of Old-Prussian Provinces in the *Manifesto of the Protestant Supreme Consistory* (*Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat*) lamented the injustices visited on Germany. 'We have lost the world war. We have been compelled to accept unheard of, most cruel armistice conditions from arrogant enemies. Kaiser and Reich, as they had become dear and precious to us

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[50] D. Borg, *The Old Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic* (Hannover, 1984), p.3.
[51] L. Hoppe, *Kleine Bilder aus großer Zeit: Frohe und ernste Erinnerungen* (Lichterfelde, 1939), pp. 171–73. (My translation.)
[52] A. D. Reetz, *Predigten aus der Zeit für die Zeit* (Stettin, 1919) Nr.2, p.1.

in an unparalleled history, are gone. We have been spared no bitterness and no humiliation.' The declaration diagnosed "inner discord," the culpable disunity of people, as the cause of defeat.[53] The matrix of the Weimar churches' war memory was set: war as a military struggle was primarily a trial of the nation's cohesion and capacity for self-renewal, and the wayward homelanders had invited defeat.

Thereafter, Germany's churches feared for their very existence. Before the hyperinflation of 1922–23 battered them economically, the Protestant clergy accustomed to the historical patronage of princes feared the newly triumphant social democracy and its aspirations to create a parliamentary secular state. Apprehensions were especially high under the rule of People's Commissars during the turbulent period before the elections for the Constituent National Assembly. For six weeks after the revolution, the Ministry for Spiritual and Educational Affairs in Prussia fell under the dual leadership of the majority social democrat, Konrad Haenisch, a moderate who regarded religion as a private matter, and perversely for the churches in the hostile new secular republic, the first Prussian Minister for Public Worship, was the staunchly anticlerical Adolf 'Ten Commandments' Hoffmann.[54] Hoffmann's appointment was branded one of the "indelible cultural humiliations of our fatherland."[55] The assault on the churches' privileges and social status, especially state financial subsidies, confiscation of property, intervention in ecclesiastical affairs, the dismantling of religious education, were all dangers augmented by the feared repeat of Bolshevik persecution in Germany. These fears of a religionless democratic

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[53] E. K. Bramsted, 'The Position of the Protestant Church in Germany 1871–1933,' *Journal of Religious History* 3:1 (June 1964), pp. 65–66.
[54] See J. Wright, *"Above Parties": The Political Attitudes of the German Protestant Church Leadership 1918–1933* (London, 1974), pp.12–14.
[55] R. Mumm, *Der Religionsunterricht und die Nationalversammlung: Rede des Abgeordneten D. Reinhard Mumm in der Nationalversammlung am 11 März 1919* (Berlin, 1919), p.4.

state had been especially sharpened since 1917, when Protestant leaders denounced Social Democrats, the Catholic Centre Party, and liberal reformers, and their policies of negotiating peace, ending Prussia's hierarchical suffrage system and the secularization of education.[56] Therefore they mostly associated reformist aspirations with the revolutionary subversion of the Fatherland. Secular humanists who promoted those policies were hostile to the divinely appointed monarchical order that was overthrown, favouring church disestablishment. These tendencies were reinforced by fears of a repeat of Bolshevik anticlerical persecution, especially because their Protestant tradition cherished the patronage and protection of secular rulers.

For the first time since the Reformation, German Lutheran churches were in a position of antagonism to the state. Through indices such as the high membership of the orthodox nationalist *Evangelischer Bund*, Dahm estimates that 80 per cent of the clergy sympathised with anti-republican opinion.[57] In their eyes, it was imposed by traitors in an unjust settlement. That the tainted Weimar Republic would collapse was assumed, as prelude to resurrection of the *Volk*. Liberal or revolutionary interpretations of the war were marginal amongst Germany's former chaplains. Germany's churches remained wedded to the death cult. On *Totensonntag*, the traditional day of remembrance on the last Sunday before Advent in November, clergy were urged to bring mourners 'the faith that these holy sacrifices will contribute to the resurrection of our nation', just as they had been implored to reawaken the 'spirit of 1914.'[58] In a similar spirit, at the commemoration of fallen university members in the Berlin Cathedral in May, 1919, theologian Rheinhold

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[56] D. R. Borg *The Old-Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic* (Hanover, 1984), pp. 44–53.
[57] K.W. Dahm *Pfarrer und Politik* (Köln, 1965), p.9.
[58] Cited in E. K. Bramsted, 'The Position of the Protestant Church in Germany 1871–1933,' *Journal of Religious History* 3:1 (June, 1964), pp. 65–66.

Seeberg used the motto 'Invictis victi victuri', (the undefeated, defeated for now, will be future victors).[59] This was the religious version of the revanchist sentiments in the official memorial book to the German fallen, 'to fight, to die, to be resurrected – that is the essence of being. From their death the *Volk* will be restored.'[60]

British preachers cast the same message of unfulfilled obligations in a more pacific inflection. At the Memorial Service for Trinity Men on 2nd November 1919, former chaplain Tom Pym reflected on the 'fiery trail the memory of the dead brings across our lives', inferring that 'Citizenship demands of us the same qualities essentially as the comradeship of arms.' The monument was 'more than a memorial.' To 'go on living our own lives simply for ourselves' would be 'disloyal.' He then recalled on oath he made to a dying soldier who 'asked me if I thought his pain was doing anyone any good or if when he was gone and thousands with him there would ever come a time when men would not have to die as he was dying, or suffer what he was suffering…I pledged him my own word…that those for whom he died would try to make the world a better place.' [61]

Britain's Tomb of the Unknown Warrior enshrined a padre's quest to reorder society in memory of the dead. It was suggested by padre David Railton, who had represented the fraternity of the trenches in September at the Somme as a model of egalitarian reconstruction. 'Why are people so less sacrificing in peacetime? If a Colonel…can give up his tent in a storm for the soldiers, why can't a gentleman of like position give up many luxuries for some injured workman. I hope such great things from this war. I

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[59] R. Seeberg, *Wir heißen euch hoffen. Vier akademische Reden*, (Berlin, 1919), p.43
[60] *Ehrendenkmal der Deutschen Armee und Marine* (Berlin, 1920), p.654.
[61] D. Pym, *Tom Pym: A Portrait* (Cambridge, 1952), pp.59-60, 72-3.

can almost see a new England…it will only be in the exact proportion in which we follow our Lord.'[62] The randomly selected body was interred in Westminster Abbey on Armistice Day 1920, to enable mourners to venerate a symbol of the missing dead. Draped in the Union Jack as an emblem, which united spiritual and national allegiances, buried by King George V, its founder hoped it would do more than comfort the bereft, or anchor a modern war in the medieval past. Railton intended the monument to preserve memory of service and to ensure that their deaths helped to sacralize a hedonistic, profane, and materialist society. This would have resonated with chaplains, often unable at the front to give a conventional Christian burial. The Shrine was more than an icon of mourning, a place of prayer 'for all those who took part in the Great War, for all those who still suffer from its effects.' Railton urged visitors to pray also that you may be given wisdom and strength to help in building up the Kingdom of God upon earth. Then this Unknown Warrior's grave will become no mere 'emotional anchorage' but a shrine of the child of God, who is a representative of all who fell in the Great War, known or unknown, and a shrine of the ideal soldier of Christ.[63] Beyond the catharsis of communal grief, the tomb was meant to incarnate its founders' ideal of a classless society. The unknown warrior embodied an equality in military death that should be replicated in the social order, for 'No one knows the Unknown Warrior's rank, his wealth, his education or his history. Class values become vanity here.'[64] To a priest who had ministered to the slums of Liverpool, this was no empty platitude. Intended to monumentalize his aspiration to a new social order, its ritualized creation was also a glittering royalist spectacle. In a ritual of thick symbolism, the King scattered earth from France onto the coffin, replete with a Crusader's Sword, and the tomb was studded with inscriptions proclaiming the burial

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[62] IWM 80/22/1(D. Railton, Papers) Letter Sept. 1916, undated.
[63] A. Twining, D. Railton, *What to Remember about Westminster Abbey* (London, 1931), p.93.
[64] *Our Empire* (1931), 7:8.

of an ordinary soldier amongst kings. The Unknown Warrior combined the contradictory elements of Anglican interpretations of the war, chivalric and egalitarian, monarchist yet emancipatory, revering sacrifices that were sacred yet incomplete. The music of these occasions signalled that the end of the war renewed a process that had begun in the first weeks and months of the war, when bereavement made sacrifice a reality for the people who articulated the rhetoric surrounding it. Dr. Martin Shaw had set to music the most famous commemorative hymn 'O Valiant Hearts,' which was sung at the service for the burial of the Unknown Warrior.[65] Shaw's brother had been reported missing in the war. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, British ambassador to the United States and author of the celebrated and avowedly Christian hymn 'I vow to Thee, My Country', praised in January 1918 the sacrificial love 'that lays upon the altar the dearest and the best.'[66] His brother had been killed in France. As with Tom Pym's vow to the dying soldier, the language of sacrifice was nourished by the deaths of intimates as well as the casualty lists of the nation.

Returning military chaplains presented mourning, and the search for meaning in loss, as an active process. Viewing the war as an incomplete struggle for a redeemed community, they sought to mobilize their congregations to honour their blood-debt to the dead. They did so by appealing to the collective conscience of survivors in the post-war generation. As an extension of their frustrated hope that war would transform society, they saw their duty as keeping the war and its ghostly armies ever-present, to sting the consciences of the living into completing the incomplete mission of the dead. War memorials and remembrance services were more than occasions for mourning or consolation. Soothing the bereft and affirming their belonging to a

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[65] See B. Bushaway, 'Name Upon Name: The Great War and Remembrance,' in *Myths of the English*, ed. R. Porter (London, 1992), pp.136–67, n55.
[66] S. Gwynne, *The Letters of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice: A Record* (2 vols. 1929) ii.pp.323-4, 432-3.

grieving community was a ritual of consolation, yet reminding congregations of their unpaid debt to the dead was potentially discomforting. Mobilizing the living meant arousing their collective consciences. If there was consolation to be had, it was not through assuring people that mass death had been worthwhile, but that citizens through their agency and code of living could bring meaning to the war's losses.

Conclusion

For the pious in the field, the rhetoric even survived defeat. As previous chapters have shown, it had promised that ultimate victory would come only when the nation overcame its divisions and repented for its sins. In the audit of war, unity and piety were the preconditions of victory. In turn, this made defeat intelligible as a divine judgment, God's 'thumbs down' against the nation. Paradoxically, the prospect of victory for British participants was vital but also troubling. Their war aims had usually been defined as more ambitious than defeating Germany in the field, and their relief at the success of offensives from mid-1918 and the growing probability of victory were tempered by the fear that victory might be hollow and that the sacrifices made could be wasted. For both, the war was depicted as an unfinished struggle of ideas that citizens had to fulfil in the days of peace ahead. Final judgement had been suspended. Victory and peace were almost as problematic as defeat.

Conclusion

Looking back, American chaplain Sherwood Eddy claimed that he could have fought at Thermopylae to defend Greek freedom, or fought for Charles Martel in turning back the 'Moslem hordes', or with Garibaldi 'against the tyranny of the old order', or with Washington at Valley Forge.[1] In 1914, pious patriots also claimed that wars, however brutal, could deliver. They derived this faith not from glamorous delusions about battlefield conditions, but from their own collective memory. The wars of their fathers and grandfathers had overthrown Napoleonic tyranny, or unified Germany into nationhood. The war embraced by American co-religionists had smashed the slavery of the American South. In 1914, the churches found another cause, the search for social harmony through communal sacrifice, a redemption that would be achieved through blood.

In tracing the evolution of this idea, this thesis has questioned one part of the folk memory of the First World War. It contends that the religious language of sacrifice was adaptable, flexible and resilient. While it could sometimes be nourished on innocent assumptions, it was usually premised on expectations of combat that were more realistic and even morbid than has been assumed. The rhetoric proved to be dynamic even as it was inflected across different levels of experience, such as rank, confession, age, politics, region and the longevity of an individual's military service. Though there were real differences in the political substance of German and British war theologies, in terms of their evolving interpretations of death, the similarities

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[1] Sherwood Eddy, *Eighty Adventurous years: An Autobiography* (New York, 1955), pp.109-110.

outweigh the differences. They shared a similar vision of sacrifice enabling the nation to transcend internal divisions, and their vision evolved mostly in parallel ways.

The arguments of this thesis have been confined to one specific group, pious Protestants who left a record. But it may also have a bearing on other interrelated issues, suggesting several directions for future research. Firstly, it demonstrates the importance of layers of experience. Ideas that were propounded by silver-tongued bishops and theologians were also given everyday expression by combatants. The notion of war as a test of manliness and faith was tapped into by chaplains over field altars. Though they may have raised their eyebrows at more grandiloquent language, combatants in censors' reports, parish newspapers and letters home expressed these ideas and loyalties more subtly, aligning themselves with the 'Christian Nation' that was embodied in their family, local parish or district. The educated officer corps, charged with tactical responsibilities in campaigns that were often bloody and immobile, were equipped by this language to find meaning in heavy casualties and military stalemates. Though religiosity could fluctuate between different phases of the war, the War Roll and field letters between frontline and homefront illustrate that the approach of combat stimulated combatants to display loyalty to the ideals that their families and communities embodied, even if some may not have been fully sincere. This in turn pressured them to keep going. Instead of seeing religious rhetoric as an abstraction remote from the realities of the conflict, it was a language reworked through intermediate levels of experience. Secondly, this thesis raises the problematic relationship between casualties, bereavement and morale. Both civilians and combatants defined their commitment increasingly in terms of their relationship with the dead. It would potentially be fruitful to take up this theme in examining how the

history of mourning more broadly affected combat motivation, and how it helped to construct ideologically the value of loyalty to the 'primary group' or military unit.

On a more general level, the thesis demonstrates the interplay between the actual experience of war and the discourse of war, and how each shaped the other in a feedback loop. The rhetoric predisposed the faithful to frame the war as a rite of passage, a test of faith, a benign punishment, or a war for civilisation. In turn, the rhetoric was recast by the landscape, by bereavement, by the nature of the theatre of operations, by enemy propaganda, or by fear of the war's social and political impacts. This suggests the potency of war 'cultures' to shape responses, while cautioning against the view of culture as an all-determining 'given.'

As well as these lines of inquiry, this thesis also points to an overarching question which has not been fully answered. If the language survived the war, did it survive the peace? In some respects, the motif of sacrifice was a popular one in the post-war decade. Evidence for this can be found in the appeal of novels and poetry that were replete with religious and patriotic rhetoric. Alongside the surge of supposedly 'antiwar' literature from the late 1920's, there were also lucrative markets for texts that validated sacrifice, such as Rupert Brooke's poetry, Ernest Raymond's novel *Tell England* which was printed 14 times in 1922 and 6 times in 1923, while Walter Flex's elevated novel about war as a rite of passage remained in high demand.[2] Though the conflict was over, the search for positive meaning continued.

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[2] S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1990), p.300; P. Parker, *The Old Lie* (London, 1987), p.281; D. R. Richards, *The German Bestseller in the Twentieth Century: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis 1915-1940* (Berne, 1968), p.128.

In other ways, visions of nations reunited and redeemed around the memory of sacrifice had several weaknesses. In Germany, the language of sacrifice had become tainted by the politics of domestic partisan conflict and recrimination. Ironically, the same set of words and concepts that were supposed to dissolve divisions in Germany now exacerbated them. When Reich President Friedrich Ebert announced in 1924 the objective of building a national memorial, it provoked an extended debate over its form and location. The beleaguered Republic had a crippling lack of social unity, unable to find a common public language or shared set of symbols, reflecting the lack of consensus regarding the war's meaning.[3] In Germany, the commemoration of the dead was too divisive to use as a way to rededicate citizens to fulfilling the wartime mission.

A common problem faced the churches in Britain and Germany: the disengagement of the returning veterans. Churches had hoped that returning soldiers would use their distinctive authority to educate the population in self-sacrifice, and remind people of their legacy. In doing so, they wrongly presumed a continuing military identity. Most veterans had entered the army as citizens rather than career professional soldiers. The majority of them wanted to return to civilian life. Most successfully found employment, or raised families and adjusted to daily life. In fact, during the war, most had never fully abandoned civilian life in the first place, bringing civilian entertainments and popular culture with them, in the form of music halls, gramophones, postcards and sport.[4] The violent disruptions and protests that accompanied the 1919 demobilisation of the British Army happened largely because

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[3] As W. G. Natter suggests, *Literature at War: 1914-1940 Representing the "Time of Greatness" in Germany* (New Haven, 1999), p.26.

[4] See J. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Trench Journalism among British and Dominion Forces in the First World War* (Oxford, 1990), pp.81-114; J. Winter, 'Popular Culture in Wartime Britain' in A. Roschwald, R. Stites *European Culture in the Great War* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.330-349.

frustrated soldiers wanted to return to civilian existence. Afterwards, although orators and prophets claimed that veterans should determine their nations' destiny, most veterans preferred assimilation to leadership. Similarly, dystopian fears that war veterans would return as a horde of diseased vigilantes foundered on the same false assumption. Even the paramilitary groups such as the *Freikorps* in post-war Germany involved only a small minority of ex-servicemen, finding school leavers more willing than soldiers to embrace political violence. The churches had partly based their visions of national salvation on a separation between soldier and civilian that failed to materialise.[5]

The war had bequeathed a language of solemn obligation to the fallen as a continuation of the struggle. As in wartime, this rhetoric took on both liberal and illiberal meanings. As we have seen, Padre David Railton envisaged that Britain's Tomb of the Unknown Warrior would symbolise the goal of a classless Britain, hoping it would inspire visitors to help in 'building up the Kingdom of God on earth.' In a less militarist way than in the Weimar churches' memorial culture, it invited the living to join the struggle. The Tannenberg Memorial, consecrated by military chaplains amongst others, entombed fallen soldiers in 1924 and 1927, whose spirit should inspire the living to carry out their mission. Protestant Field-Marshal Hindenburg struck its foundation stone three times, first to thank the fallen, the second to the living for remembrance, the last to 'coming generations that they might vie in achievement with their ancestors.' From exile, Kaiser Wilhelm telegrammed

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[5] On British veterans' reassimilation, see S. Ward, 'Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost' in S. Ward (ed.) *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War* (Port Washington, 1975), pp.10-35, 34; A. Gregory, 'Peculiarities of the English? War, Violence and Politics: 1900-1939', *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2003), pp.44-58, 51; on the desire of German veterans for civilian normality see R. Bessel, 'The Great War in German Memory: The Soldiers of the First World War, Demobilisation, and Weimar Political Culture', *German History* 6:1 (1988), pp.20-34.

Hindenburg, hoping that the heroic spirit of Tannenberg would unite divided Germany, that the dead men commemorated 'will not have died in vain,' that Germany with God's help would rise again.[6] It would be for the Nazi regime to take this logic to its brutal conclusion. On the eve of World War Two, an approved volume of extracts from World War One letters proclaimed that from 'reverence' for 'our forefathers', 'we take up the duty which the blood sacrifice of the World War has laid upon us', a devotion to transmit to 'our children.'[7] In Nazi Germany, war itself became an act of commemoration.

In interbellum Britain and Germany, the utopian aims of the rhetoric were not fulfilled. Fascist regimes then appropriated the language, deploying it in wars of aggression that only delivered catastrophe. But this does not mean that the language has now been dispelled. It remains an open question when precisely it 'died,' or whether it has truly disappeared at all. It would be tempting to assume that Hiroshima and the Holocaust discredited any veneration of war in the West. British and German churches would now regard as alien and startling the concept of redemptive blood sacrifice in war. Germany's present-day commemoration of war emphatically demythologises warfare, repudiating militarism. But even as it weakens in some places, the reverence of sacrifice continues to resurface in others. The British *Daily Telegraph* on Remembrance Sunday 2005 claimed the memory of war should inspire present generations in self-sacrifice.[8] In Australia, increasing numbers of pilgrims are drawn to the Anzac legend. It presents the Gallipoli campaign as a creation myth, a

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[6] 'The Tannenberg Anniversary Battlefield Ceremony', *The Times* 2 Sept. 1924, p.9, and *The Times* 22 Sept. 1927, p.14.
[7] Cited in W. Natter, *Literature at War: 1914-1940 Representing the "Time of Greatness" in Germany* (New Haven, 1999), pp.20-21.
[8] 'Remembrance Day Reminds us how to live' *Telegraph* 12 Nov. 2005.

baptism in blood that defines a national character.[9] In America, the 2004 Republican Convention charged the memory of September 11 with Christian martyrdom. It proffered memories of the murdered civilians as tragic but also 'something to cherish, even to celebrate, as a source of unity and purpose.'[10] Beyond the Christian and Anglophone perspectives, the recent commemoration of the Soviet Victories in World War Two in Moscow showed that its secularised form retains its vigour. A basic assumption of much cultural history, that at some historical point the rhetoric expired, may be wrong. As the war's centennial anniversary approaches, the issue is not when the language died, but where, how and why it lives on.

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[9] See J. MacLeod, *Reconsidering Gallipoli* (Manchester, 2004), pp.1-2, 238-43.
[10] P. Gourevitch, 'Bushspeak: The President's Vernacular Style', *New Yorker* 13 Sept. 2004.

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