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British Catholic Identity during the First World War: The Challenge of Universality and Particularity

This thesis looks at ways in which the British Catholic Church confronted the issue of Catholic unity and authority during the First World War. In a period when it was already attempting to articulate its position in relationship to the establishment and in the context of their Catholicity, the First World War offered the British Catholic Church both added difficulties and increased opportunity to express its position. For Catholics, the claim of universality was not only that they were the Church Universal in the sense that they were a supra-national church but that their Church was complete. Catholics argued that the Church was held together as a body united by and under the authority of Christ, the pontiff of Rome and the traditions maintained and accepted by the Church. These factors made it necessary for Catholics not only to make evident the advantage of their practices but to demonstrate that the fullness of the Church in its sacraments, doctrines and structure was neither in internal religious conflict nor fragmented by political or cultural differences; in short, that it was in itself complete. In the context of a world war in which Catholics were fighting one another and an unresolved political situation in Ireland, maintaining this position was both complicated and yet vital to the Catholic understanding of unity, authority and universality. In this thesis are analysed some of the ways in which the British Catholic Church addressed these challenges of self-definition.

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The First World War provided the British Catholic Church with both the challenge and the opportunity to set out more clearly the place of Catholicism in Britain. The thesis examines official British Catholic presentations of Church teaching during the First World War, and looks at the ways in which such presentations shaped lay and clerical perceptions and practice in the context of wartime Britain.

Specifically, the thesis explores ways in which the British Catholic Church defined the national and universal qualities of British Catholicism during the war, taking into account the Church's articulation and presentation of national patriotism, religious loyalty and Catholic obligation, and the relationship of these to Catholic unity and authority. It uses the context of the war, both at home and at the front, to explore challenges which the British Catholic Church faced in expressing its 'British-ness' and its 'catholicity'; the two potentially conflicting aspects of British Catholic identity.

The thesis focuses on the concept of universality as a fundamental, but also ambiguous, feature of Catholic identity which was closely connected to the question of Catholic unity. It accepts, and in fact relies on the point, that substantial differences existed within the Catholic Church at large and the British Catholic body specifically, not least of all, between its Irish, English, Welsh and Scots members. It also

recognises that most Catholics did not see themselves to be a united body in social, economic or political terms. Whilst challenges to Catholic unity were created by such heterogeneity, such differences within the Catholic body, far from threatening the essence of Catholic unity, helped British Catholics more clearly to define and locate the source of their agreement in the Church's liturgical and sacramental practices, dogmatic teachings and central hierarchical authority. This thesis therefore examines their presentation of Catholic teaching and seeks to assess Catholic unity in terms of dogmatic, devotional and practical agreement rather than political or social affinity.

In exploring the Church's presentation of Catholic unity during the war, this thesis recognises the pre-eminence of tradition and form in establishing the basis of Catholic teaching and practice. It considers British Catholic devotion and teaching in the light of the broader context of Catholicism, examining ways in which British Catholics employed the devotions and teaching of their Church within their specific national context. Although there were not substantive changes in the basis of Catholic teaching, it examines the innovative ways in which the Church employed Catholic doctrines to fit the needs of wartime Britain. In particular the thesis examines how Catholic unity could be, and indeed was, interpreted by the Church in Britain in such a way that British Catholics could shape their religious opinions in a nationalistic or patriotic mould while also accepting the obligations of religious unity; thus remaining essentially faithful to the nation as well as to the teachings of the Catholic Church. It therefore explores how the Catholic use of and reliance on tradition, rather than their rejection of it, was not only what centred and defined the terms of British Catholicism but what helped them to show the compatibility of their national loyalty and their Christian faith in the new and challenging circumstances which were presented by the war.

This thesis hopes to advance on previous studies by looking at Catholicism in its fuller religious and social context. With the important exception of Michael Snape's recent article, 'British Catholicism and the British Army in the First World War' (in *Recusant History* vol. 26 No. 2 (2002), pp. 314 –358), studies of religion in wartime Britain have focused on the Church of England or Nonconformist churches, or they have looked at aspects of Catholic leadership or teaching without acknowledging the significance of the wider context of British Catholicism. Some previous works have explored elements of Catholicism such as the sacraments, the liturgy, and the celibate priesthood from an abstract theological position which has not addressed wider experiences of Catholics. Others have looked at the Catholic Church from a social perspective and have not accounted for the important religious basis of Catholic thought and practice. In their failure respectively to acknowledge the context in which Catholicism was practised or to recognise the importance of the Church in shaping Catholic identity, these studies have neglected to locate the British Catholic Church in its fuller context. This thesis hopes to remedy these shortcomings not only by examining British Catholic teaching in the particular national and historical situation of the First World War but also by demonstrating the critical importance of official presentation and articulation of Church teaching in shaping the Catholic Church in Britain both as a Church and as an influential element of society.

The first chapter of the thesis explores the challenges created by broader social and religious currents within pre-war and wartime Britain, namely the growing acceptance of Nonconformists and Catholics within the British polity, the greater openness to ecumenism within Evangelical circles and the advent and growth of Anglo-Catholicism within the Anglican Church. It explores ways in which Catholics attempted to articulate the universality of their Church during the war and at how the

Church's presentation of Catholic unity and their location of Catholic authority in the sacraments, dogma and hierarchy of the Church shaped Catholic understanding of religious and national loyalty in wartime Britain. It then examines ways in which the Catholic Church presented itself by means of the catechism, pastorals, homilies and official Church documents and at how British Catholics positioned themselves theologically both within and at times apart from the range of British Christianity during this period of change. It also considers how Catholics located themselves within the universal Catholic Church and under the authority of the bishop of Rome. It looks at how Catholics were taught to practise their faith and it explores ways in which Catholics set out both the nature and limitations of their unity as well as the requirements of their separation from other British Christians.

In chapter two the thesis turns to ways in which Catholics addressed the circumstances of the war and the duties which they perceived themselves to have both as Catholics and as British citizens. Although on a practical level the benefits of Catholicism were being thrust into the spotlight in France and Belgium, British Catholics faced the dilemma of expressing how they could justly fight for Catholic Belgium in opposition to Catholic Austria, particularly as they did so from within the confines of their own predominantly Protestant country. They also confronted the necessity of accounting for internal difficulties related to Ireland and the appropriate political relationship between Britain and Ireland. Although political in nature, this matter was religiously charged and thus had some bearing on Catholic understanding, therefore requiring clear definitions and specifications of Catholic unity. This chapter then considers how, in the light of these challenges, the Catholic hierarchy interpreted Catholic duties in such a way that the hierarchy not only accepted the need to

participate in the war but asserted that Catholics were bound to serve in the war for a higher cause than mere civil duty; they were also bound by their Christian obligations.

In chapter three, the focus shifts to the policies of, and British Catholic reactions to, Pope Benedict XV. After examining ways in which Benedict XV approached the outbreak and continuation of war, namely by calling for peace but also allowing for Catholics to support their own countries if inclined or called upon to do so, the thesis turns to Catholic defences of the Pope's position given in response to Protestant complaints about the Pope. In looking at Catholic defences of the Pope, it explores ways in which British Catholics expressed their Catholic loyalties so that, while not abandoning them, they nevertheless fitted more comfortably within the parameters of British nationalism.

In chapter four the thesis turns its focus on to practical challenges which Catholics faced during the war, particularly within the military Chaplaincy; and at the opportunities which the war created for the Catholic Church in Britain. It looks first to determine the specific goals of the Catholic Chaplaincy and at how these were similar to and distinctive from the goals of non-Catholic chaplains within the military Chaplaincy. It also examines the practicalities of military life and the ways in which Catholic chaplains dealt with the challenges of military regulations. It assesses the practical difficulties which existed for Catholic chaplains in providing the sacraments and the general assistance of the Church to Catholics who were at times scattered widely around the front and looks at ways in which, through service in the military, the war provided opportunities for Catholics and non-Catholics to interact with one another on a more intimate level than they might otherwise have done.

The fifth chapter examines ways in which Catholic teaching and practice at the front, particularly in Catholic Belgium and France and in prisoner of war camps,

were used to underpin the Catholic understanding of supra-national and supernatural unity. It relies in part on three case studies of individual chaplains, which highlight the emphasis on the central and uniting elements of Catholicism and, at the same time, demonstrate the wide range of approaches which were used by Catholic chaplains at the front. Moreover, it considers the effects of fighting the war in the overtly Catholic lands of Belgium and France. While recognising that these factors did not necessarily lead to greater openness to Catholicism, this chapter assesses ways in which these circumstances allowed for Catholicism to be more openly practised and more generously accepted by non-Catholics.

The sixth chapter turns to ways in which Catholic devotion was presented to the men at the front and at how Catholic responses to religious obligations and Church teaching both reflected and shaped lay and clerical opinions of Catholic devotion. It looks in particular at the two religious polls taken at the time, *Catholic Soldiers* and *Army and Religion*, (both published in 1919), exploring ways in which expectations and perceived religious understanding or lack of understanding shaped lay views of the churches, the churches' views of their members and, ultimately the churches' measurement of their own success or lack of success.

Throughout, the thesis addresses the ways in which the British Catholic Church presented and articulated the requirements of Catholicism in a period which called into question the possibility of universality. It concentrates in particular on how the Church's presentation of unity and authority affected actual Catholic practice as well as broader perceptions of the Catholic Church by non-Catholics. It thus examines how the presentation of Catholicism by the Church, the implementation of Catholic thought on a practical level and the consequent perceptions of Catholicism by both

Catholics and non-Catholics were significant factors in shaping the understanding of British Catholicism in the context of wartime Britain.

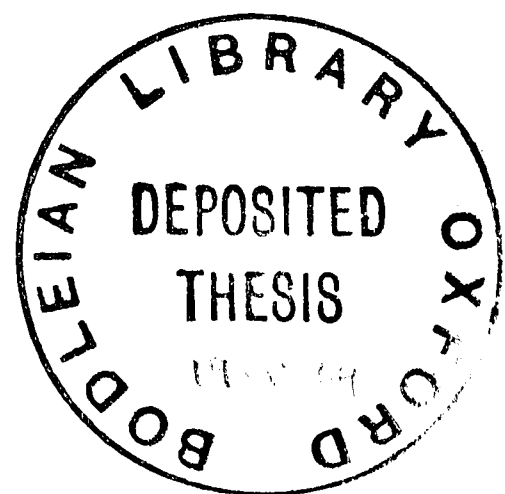
Because of its focus on Catholic thought, dogma and liturgy, this thesis approaches the study of British Catholicism by looking primarily at the Catholic establishment; namely the Catholic hierarchy, the Catholic press and the Catholic military Chaplaincy. These were the organs which were most obviously responsible for interpreting doctrine and dogma, for shaping the basic practices of British Catholicism and for defining and expressing Catholicism in a way which could be accepted as 'British' by Britons and as 'Catholic' by those Christians in communion with Rome. The primary sources for this thesis are, therefore, homilies and pastorals, official correspondence to and from bishops and senior Catholic military chaplains, and the accepted organs of the Catholic press. In adopting this focus, the thesis recognises these official organs as the institutions which held primary responsibility for shaping the specific positions of the Catholic Church and determining the most legitimate definition of Catholicism within its British context.

Given this emphasis, the thesis does not focus on the non-clerical implementation of and lay responses to Catholicism nor does it look at the Catholic writing of celebrities or politicians within the Catholic Church. It recognises that although popular Catholic beliefs were not confined to the Church's official teachings, they were certainly shaped by the official positions, whether through acceptance or rejection of them. To this extent the thesis has some bearing on the understanding of popular Catholic devotion. However, this is not its focus. Rather, it deals more explicitly with official Catholic teaching and the practical presentation and implementation of that teaching, looking most closely at those positions which were accepted and taught by the Catholic Church, promulgated by the pope and the British

bishops and established through tradition. In approaching British Catholicism from the official positions maintained by the accepted leaders of the Catholic Church, this thesis seeks to provide a solid basis on which to assess the goals and expectations of Catholicism as set by the Church. In so doing, it can suggest ways in which the official presentation of Catholicism affected both practice and perceptions of Catholicism within Britain. In studying the nature and location of Catholic unity and authority as it was articulated by the Church, the thesis acknowledges the importance of the Church's teachings in any study of the Catholic body and accepts that for Catholicism to be properly understood either as a religious body or as a social institution, it is necessary first to recognise and assess the Church's self-understanding and self-presentation.

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Abbreviations

B.A.A.	Birmingham Archdiocesan Archive
C.T.S.	Catholic Truth Society
D.A.A./R.C.	Downside Abbey Archive/Rawlinson Collection
E.B.C.	English Benedictine Congregation
F.S.	Farm Street
I.W.M.	Imperial War Museum
L.C.	Liddle Collection
S.D.A.	Salford Diocesan Archive
W.A.A.	Westminster Archdiocesan Archive

* All works cited in this thesis were published in London except where otherwise specified.

Introduction

Catholic Unity is a perpetual miracle. It is the world's greatest fact – and the greatest fact of history. Yet it cannot be attributed, in the ordinary sense of the word, to an efficient earthly cause. It is like the shrine of the prophet – suspended between heaven and earth.¹

So claimed the Bishop of Newport, John Headley, in July 1914. A month later at the start of the First World War, the Catholic Church in Britain faced the challenge of articulating the characteristics and benefits of this 'miracle', and it was given an opportunity to show how critical a part Catholicism could play in shaping British Christianity and in defining legitimate Christian patriotism. For the British Catholic Church to take advantage of this situation, Catholics needed not only to demonstrate the supra-national and spiritual sources of Catholic unity. They needed also to convey how this universality could be compatible with national patriotism.

Catholics were very self-conscious about asserting their own patriotism and their British identity. As *Catholics of the British Empire and the War*, an account which was written in 1916 expressed it: 'Good citizenship is the first of Catholic social dogmas.' Thus, during the war it was:

...Not surprising that Catholics should have flocked to arms for the defence of the country they loved – and loved, not because it has admittedly treated them so generously and respected their devotion, but because it is their country and

¹ *The Tablet* 18 July 1914, p. 91.

the instincts of patriotism are so deeply in-rooted in all who bear the Catholic name.²

As demonstrated in this statement, Catholics, like the bulk of their compatriots, recognised their obligation to, and identity within, the British nation. Thus among Catholics, national patriotism was not generally questioned but was considered to be part of the duty which they accepted as devoted Britons; a duty which at times overrode their fidelity to the Catholic Church.³ Given this situation, the Church needed not only to acknowledge the basic duties which Catholics owed to their country. More urgently it needed clearly to express the religious obligations which existed for Catholics and to demonstrate that these obligations did not contradict national loyalty but, rather, set patriotism within its appropriate framework and, in so doing, purified it.⁴

Moreover, the Church needed to articulate its position so that it could adequately respond to non-Catholic suspicions of Catholic disloyalty. Indeed, loyal as Catholics understood themselves to be, this strongly-felt sense of Catholic patriotism was not always recognised outside the Catholic body. Instead, it was generally accepted that to be British was, more or less, to be English or at least 'Anglicised' and to be English was to be Protestant.⁵ Thus convincing the British nation of legitimate Catholic nationalism and expressing the compatibility of Catholic loyalty and national patriotism was no small task.

² Anon., *Catholics of the British Empire and the War* (1916), p. 4. Michael Snape also relies on this document, see , M. Snape, 'British Catholicism and the British Army in the First World War', *Recusant History* vol. 26 no. 2 (2002), p. 318 –319.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 318 –319.

⁴ See J. P. von Arx, SJ, 'Interpreting the Council: Archbishop Manning and the Vatican Decrees Controversy', *Recusant History* vol. 26, no. 1 (2002), pp. 232 –234.

⁵ See A. Hastings, *History of English Christianity 1920 –1990* (1991), pp. 30 –140.

This was more difficult still because of the historical conflict which existed between the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Britain. Although Catholics had attained a substantial degree of freedom over the course of the nineteenth century so that by the time of the First World War they were more socially and politically integrated within Britain, in religious terms Catholics were still generally recognised not as 'British' but as 'Roman' or 'Irish' or 'English'.⁶ Even where the Catholic Church was able to overcome the practical challenges of internal diversity, the separate positioning of Catholicism as 'Roman' and 'Ultramontane' was assumed.⁷ Consequently, even during the First World War, there existed in Britain an underlying but enduring anxiety about Catholic loyalty and British patriotism.⁸

This challenge to the relationship between faith and nationality and the need for Catholics to express the compatibility of their national allegiance and their Christian faith existed before the war, but intensified for British Catholics after August 1914 when the demands of national loyalty and the expression of Christian faith became more closely intertwined.⁹ Throughout the war, Catholics recognised this heightened need to express the nature of their loyalty and the way in which they could be both fully 'British' and fully 'Catholic'. However, to express the internal coherence of British Catholicism and its compatibility with patriotism not only to non-Catholics but even to the Catholic body itself presented no small challenge. To begin with, British Catholics were well aware that their co-religionists on the opposing side of the conflict considered their cause to be both just and 'Christian'.¹⁰ Moreover, difficulties regarding British Catholic loyalty arose in conjunction with the

⁶ J. D. Holmes, *More Roman than Rome* (1978), p. 13 and ff. Hereafter referred to as *More Roman than Rome*.

⁷ See M. Heimann, *Catholic Devotion in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1995), p. 5.

⁸ D.G. Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Victorian Britain* (Stanford, California, 1992).

⁹ See Hastings, p. 132.

¹⁰ See 'German Catholics and the War', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, pp. 13–14.

Vatican's official 'impartiality' in the war.¹¹ These challenges were compounded by the strained relationship between Britain and Ireland. Because they were on the brink of civil war when the First World War broke out, the populace of Ireland, although generally supportive of the Belgian cause, were suspicious of British motivations in the war. Consequently many Irishmen had strong reservations about serving in the British military forces.¹²

Even the practical difficulties in confronting the challenges presented in the war were numerous. To begin with, the Catholic Church and the Catholic Chaplaincy needed to obtain a sufficient number of priests to serve as chaplains. This was no small task given the heightened religious needs of British Catholics serving in the ever-expanding military. It was more difficult still because they had to organise the Chaplaincy in an efficient way which ensured that the spiritual needs of the Catholic soldiers were provided for even when the men were widely scattered and difficult to reach.¹³ In addition, they had to provide for Catholics within the secular and at times antagonistic organisation of the British military, under the headship of a Nonconformist Principal Chaplain, John Simms, and within the largely Protestant Chaplaincy.¹⁴ Likewise, the Church had to provide for the non-British Catholics who were under their charge. These included Belgian refugees, enemy prisoners in Britain

¹¹ See chapter 3 of this thesis.

¹² See P. Travers, 'The Priest in Politics: the case of Conscription' in P. Travers, O. MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle (eds.), *Irish Culture and Nationalism 1750–1900* (Canberra, Australia, 1983), pp. 161–177, T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki* (Dublin, 1992), P. Callan, 'Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War' PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 1984; and A. Gregory and S. Paseta (eds.), *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite us all?* (Manchester, 2002), hereafter referred to as *A War to Unite us*.

¹³ See M. Snape, pp. 314–359. See also J. Hagerty, 'Benedictines Military Chaplains during the First World War' (EBC History Symposium, 1998), p. 39, hereafter referred to as 'Benedictines'. (Thanks to James Hagerty for directing me towards this article.)

¹⁴ See T. Johnstone and J. Hagerty, *Cross on the Sword, Catholic Chaplains in the Forces* (1996), pp. 46–57; hereafter referred to as *Cross on the Sword*. See also S. Loudon, *Chaplains in Conflict*, (1996), and E.L. Langston, *Bishop Taylor Smith*, (1939).

and enemy prisoners at the front.¹⁵ With resources already stretched, and an unavoidable animosity felt by some chaplains towards the enemy soldiers, finding priests who could serve Mass and hear confessions, especially for those refugees and prisoners who did not speak English, was a substantial challenge.¹⁶

How British Catholics approached these difficulties and fulfilled their religious obligations in this time of strain was of primary consequence to the Catholic hierarchy and to practising Catholics. The presentation and practice of Catholicism were also important more broadly because they shaped the British perception of the Catholic Church and the response of non-Catholics and nominal Catholics to the Catholic faith. In many cases, the war provided an opportunity for soldiers to come into contact with the Catholic faith for the first time and, even more often, for lapsed Catholics to approach their childhood faith in a new ‘Catholic’ environment; namely Belgium and France. The Catholic clergy, therefore, were given unique opportunities for Catholic evangelisation and on a large scale they set out to demonstrate the unique advantages of the Catholic faith. These, they claimed, could be found in the ‘Catholic’ sacraments, papal authority and above all in the understanding of Catholic unity which was secured by the dogmas, liturgy and traditions of the Church.¹⁷ These aspects of Catholic practice were presented not only with the goal of demonstrating the immediate benefits of Catholicism but also with the intention of validating the Catholic claim that their Church was preferable in a more general and overarching sense for shaping dutiful citizens and devout Christians.¹⁸

¹⁵ See J. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope* (1999). See also M. McNelly, *Edward Illsley, Bishop of Birmingham 1880–1911, Archbishop 1911–1921* (2002), pp. 112–139.

¹⁶ See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 84–99.

¹⁷ This is most evident in *The Tablet*, *The Dublin Review* and in pamphlets such as B. Pike, *On Active Service* (1916).

¹⁸ See for instance, Cardinal Archbishop Bourne’s address to the troops printed in *The Tablet*, 17 February 1917, p. 213.

Whilst this was the objective, further challenges made these advantages difficult to exploit. To begin with, many people who claimed to be Catholic were only nominally so. In such cases where British Catholics were not distinctively Catholic in their practices or in their religious beliefs, the Catholic Church faced challenges in expressing the actual positions which the Church supported. On the one hand, the authority of Catholicism rested not with those who practised the faith but rather with the Magisterium, the liturgy and the traditions of the Church. However, for Catholicism to be recognised as an effective, working religion, Catholics had to know, understand and practise their faith not only at the highest levels but in the ranks of the less pious as well.

The Catholic Church also faced the difficulty of responding to the changing definition of the term ‘Catholic’ in Protestant circles and the growing sense of ecumenism in this age of modern British Christianity.¹⁹ While they benefited from political liberalism in that they gained greater social acceptance and political freedoms, the Catholic Church was wary of compromising its Catholic distinctiveness in a time when denominational and theological bounds were increasingly blurred in other churches.²⁰ Distinguishing politics and religion, doctrine and devotion was at times a testing business.

This challenge was compounded by the difficulties which arose out of the Anglo-Catholic Movement. Because of their acceptance of certain ‘Catholic’ practices or doctrines and particularly of sacramental ritual, Anglo-Catholics claimed to be part of the universal catholic church, even if not the Roman Catholic Church.²¹

¹⁹ See P. Hinchliff, *God and History, Aspects of Theology 1875–1914* (Oxford, 1992), and W. S. Smith, *The London Heretics 1870–1914* (1967).

²⁰ H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century 1900 to the Present* (Michigan, 1996), pp. 121–175.

²¹ See J. Bickersteth, *Bickersteth Diaries 1914–1918*, (1995), G.A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Best of G.A. Studdert Kennedy By his Friends* (1947), and P. Clayton, *Plain Tales from Flanders* (1930).

In response, Catholics argued that acceptance of certain elements of the Catholic faith such as the sacraments, the liturgy or the doctrine of purgatory did not provide the coherence of the Catholic faith nor did it make a person or a church 'Catholic'.

Rather, Catholic leaders stressed that submission to the authority of Rome and the dogmas and rubrics of the Catholic Church was the only means of attaining the cohesiveness and exclusivity of the Catholic faith.²² In asserting this, Catholics sought to express their religiously distinctive and, to the Catholic mind, superior, position. This was to be achieved by separating the Catholic body from the Anglican and by showing how the diverse elements of British Catholicism could be brought together into a united and universal Church by means of dogmatic and liturgical uniformity and by submission to hierarchical authority.

This thesis explores this conscious attempt by the British Catholic leadership to demonstrate Catholic agreement by presenting the Catholic faith as a coherent whole. It looks at the Church's attempt to instil a sense of unity and exclusivity in matters of Catholic faith and practice in the context of wartime Britain and its simultaneous attempt to show itself not to be restrictive and imposing but rather liberating and thus a source of appropriate religious freedom. In particular, it looks at the ways in which the British Catholic hierarchy approached the war and the Church's place in the war as both Catholic and British. It also addresses practical matters of worship and belief which distinguished Catholics from non-Catholics in the ways in which each approached both the war and the religious faith which they claimed. The different socio-economic, political and cultural positions of British Catholics are indicated to provide a context for this discussion. Most notably, this thesis looks at the ways in which the Catholic Church in Britain presented itself to the British nation as a

²² See the series 'Pretending', in *The Tablet* March –April 1916.

coherent religious body and international organisation in the face of world events and religious trends which called this unity into question. It suggests, finally, that this particular presentation of the Catholic faith by the Catholic Church may have helped to shape the way in which Catholics in Britain viewed themselves as a body and to influence how the British nation viewed the Roman Catholic body in relationship to the British nation.

Scope of this Study

Although the thesis deals primarily with ‘Roman’ Catholicism in England, it uses the term ‘British’ rather than ‘Roman’ or ‘English’ throughout. It does not use the term ‘Roman’ because, as is emphasised, Catholics in Britain were as nationally bound to Britain as they were spiritually bound to Rome. Their Catholicism was, therefore, of a distinctly ‘British’ rather than ‘Roman’ variety.²³ It does not use the term ‘English’ for four primary reasons. First, although the thesis focuses chiefly on English Catholics, it is not possible clearly to separate ‘English’ from other forms of ‘British’ Catholicism either in terms of the hierarchy or the military Chaplaincy.

Although Scottish and Irish dioceses are divided along national lines, no such distinctions exist between Wales and England. For instance, the county of Cheshire, although English, is located within the predominantly Welsh diocese of Shrewsbury, thus blurring the regional or national distinctions which could otherwise serve as parameters to the study.²⁴

²³ See M. Heimann, pp. 30–36. See also *The Tablet* 19 April, 1910 p. 570. In this *Tablet* article the editor recognises the validity of those Catholics who have ‘gross objections’ to adopting this ‘more cumbrous compound name.’

²⁴ See E.R. Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England* (Oxford, 1985), G. Beck, *The English Catholics, 1850–1950* (1950), V. A. McClelland and M. Hodgetts (eds.), *From Without the Flaminian Gate: 150 years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales* (1999).

Secondly, during the First World War, the Catholic Chaplaincy was not divided along national lines and the national boundaries were blurred when Irish or Scottish chaplains served English troops or English chaplains served Irish or Scottish troops. They were blurred further when English-born Irish served in Irish regiments. Likewise, the hierarchy of the military was not separated along national lines. This was particularly notable after 1917 when William Keatinge was appointed as the Bishop to the British Forces. In this role he was bishop over all of the British army, whether English, Welsh, Scots or Irish.²⁵

These two practical difficulties of using 'English' rather than 'British' are compounded by two additional factors which relate specifically to Irish Catholicism. The first consideration is that Irish identity was not limited to those who lived in Ireland but included those of Irish heritage in the rest of the United Kingdom. Because of this, the term 'English' is too specific to address appropriately the subject of all British Catholics in England. With so many Irish emigrating during the potato famine of the 1840s, not only individuals relocated but whole Irish communities developed in Britain.²⁶ Even when they were a generation or two removed from their Irish ancestors, the Irish aspect of their identity, especially as it related to their Catholicism, was not lost. While it developed differently from Irish Catholicism within Ireland, in many cases it did not become more 'English' so much as it became a distinctive hybrid between Irish and British. Conversely, Catholics in Ireland were still technically 'British', since, at the time of the First World War, Home Rule had not yet been adopted and would not be until 1922.²⁷ Although this relationship to Great Britain was in transition during the war, on this formal level the whole of

²⁵ See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 186–189. See also E. Oldmeadow, *Francis Cardinal Bourne* (1940) p. 201.

²⁶ See G. Davis, *Irish in Britain 1815–1914* (Dublin, 1991), especially pp. 124–129.

²⁷ See Travers pp. 161–171 for further discussion on home rule.

Ireland was still politically connected with Britain. That this British-ness was not denied even by many Irish can be seen in part by the fact not only that many Irish Catholics supported the war but also that 500,000 Irishmen agreed to fight as members of the British Army.²⁸

Of course, there were important differences between ‘Irish’, ‘English’, ‘Scots’ and ‘Welsh’ Catholicism.²⁹ These are taken into account and when necessary distinctions between the several parts of ‘British’ Catholicism are made. However, when referring to the Catholic Church in Great Britain and in the British Forces, the general term ‘British Catholicism’ is most appropriate to this study.

Because of my attempt to explore both the ‘British’ and ‘Catholic’ qualities of British Catholicism this thesis focuses neither on particular British Catholic groups nor on Catholicism as practised and expressed by individual British Catholics. It looks rather on British Catholicism as a system of faith and a determination of Christian identity. The thesis does not, therefore, look at the personal opinions of Catholic politicians such as Mark Sykes or the Duke of Norfolk, at leading lay Catholics such as Hilaire Belloc or Friedrich von Hügel or even at the personal positions of the Catholic clergy. Rather, it examines the establishment of the Catholic Church in Britain and focuses on how the Catholic Church as an institution, and those people responsible for asserting the official or accepted Church positions, presented and in so doing shaped the understanding and practice of, the Catholic faith to the body of British Catholics and to the wider British public.

Because of this, Cardinal Archbishop Bourne is a key figure in this thesis. Bourne was Bishop of Southwark from 1897 –1903 and in 1903 was appointed

²⁸ Callan, p. 366.

²⁹ See P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers?* (Liverpool, 1995).

Archbishop of Westminster where he presided until 1935.³⁰ Towards the end of his episcopate in Southwark he was named head chaplain to the forces, and when he moved to Westminster he took this title and responsibility with him.³¹ He was, therefore, the ecclesiastical head of the Catholic Chaplaincy at the outbreak of war, a position which he retained until 1917 when William Keatinge was appointed as Bishop to the Forces.³² Bourne's oversight of the Catholic military Chaplaincy added to the already substantial weight of his authority as a cardinal and as primate of Britain. Thus, his statements on the war, his support of the military and his strong patriotic sentiments were particularly important in formulating British Catholic thought and in shaping the ways in which British Catholics approached the war.

Monsignor William Keatinge was also a key figure in shaping the understanding of British Catholicism in this period, particularly in the military Chaplaincy. Keatinge had served in the army during the Boer War and at the outbreak of the First World War he was appointed as the Assistant Principal Chaplain to the British Expeditionary Force. In 1916, he was appointed Principal Chaplain to the Macedonian Army. In October 1917 he was named *Episcopus Castrensis* replacing Bourne and limiting the duties of the primate of the British Catholic Church.³³ Although his influence was limited to the military and, primarily, to the Catholic chaplains in the military, his leadership and the ways in which he secured religious provisions for Catholic soldiers fundamentally shaped the way in which the

³⁰ See K. Aspden, *Fortress Church* (Herefordshire, 2002) pp. 20–75 for a study of the British Catholic hierarchy during the twentieth century.

³¹ Oldmeadow, pp. 196–202.

³² See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 186–189.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 196–199.

Chaplaincy operated. Thus he affected British Catholicism as it was understood and practised in the British forces and in a more limited sense, in Britain at large.³⁴

Dom Stephen Rawlinson, Keatinge's second-in-command and a Benedictine monk from Downside was also influential in shaping the Catholic military Chaplaincy and, thus, the experience of Catholicism in the British army.³⁵ Like Keatinge, Rawlinson served in the army during the Boer War. Based on his success there and in the early days of the First World War, he was promoted to Assistant to the Senior Chaplain in 1915.³⁶ When Monsignor Keatinge was promoted in 1916, Rawlinson was selected to serve as Assistant Principal Chaplain by Dr. John Simms, the Principal Chaplain.³⁷ This placed Rawlinson in charge of the 800 non-Anglican chaplains in France, 400 of whom were Catholics.³⁸ Thus, in ecclesiastical matters, he was the head to whom Catholic chaplains on the Western Front turned. In this role he was responsible for obtaining Chaplaincy appointments and for ensuring that the Catholic chaplains were well provided for and kept in check in terms of both religious and military obligations. During his time in the army, Rawlinson attempted to organise the Catholic military Chaplaincy more comprehensively and to bring coherence to its structure.

Désiré Joseph Mercier, the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, the primate of Belgium, and an important wartime symbol of Belgian Catholic piety, was also influential in shaping the understanding which British Catholics had of appropriate

³⁴ According to Snape about six percent of the British Army was Catholic. See Snape, p. 341. According to Mews, the percentage was closer to eleven percent. See S. Mews, 'Religion and English Society in the First World War' unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1973; p. 180, hereafter referred to as 'Religion and English Society'.

³⁵ Rawlinson left extensive records of his time in the Chaplaincy which are housed in the Rawlinson Collection at Downside Abbey.

³⁶ 'Benedictines' p. 135.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

³⁸ Downside Abbey Archive, Rawlinson Collection, Rawlinson Correspondence 1918–1919, Rawlinson to Butler, 21 February 1918. Hereafter, the archive is referred to as D.A.A./R.C.

patriotism and Catholic loyalty.³⁹ Influencing British Catholics in a more national context were the British bishops. These leaders played an important role in shaping the attitudes of their diocese, both directly and also through the influence they had on the individual parish priests under their charge. Among the British bishops, Archbishop Edward Ilsley of Birmingham (1888 –1921), Bishop Louis Casartelli of Salford (1903 –1925), Bishop Peter Amigo of Southwark (1904 –1949) and Bishop Frederick Keating of Northampton (1908 –1921) were particularly influential at not only a diocesan but a national level. The Jesuits, Bernard Vaughan and Charles Plater, were also significant because of the popularity and range of their work, both written and spoken. These clerical figureheads all helped to shape the understanding which British Catholics had regarding their positions as Catholics and how their Catholicity blended with their patriotism and nationalism within the setting of wartime Britain.⁴⁰

Structure and Sources for this Thesis

In assessing the place of British Catholicism during the First World War, the thesis addresses the ways in which British Catholics articulated their position in the light of their identity both as Catholics and as British citizens. On one level it examines how national allegiance affected the ways in which British Catholics expressed and supported the position of the Pope and the Church. It looks in particular at how they interpreted church doctrines so as to demonstrate or try to demonstrate the justice of their national cause. At the same time, it considers how Catholic religious loyalties necessarily qualified Catholic national patriotism. Hence, it looks at how the Catholic Church attempted to bring synthesis and agreement to these

³⁹ Pollard, pp. 118 –119.

⁴⁰ See Aspden, especially pp. 120 –171 for further discussion on the hierarchy.

contrasting loyalties. In terms of devotion and practice, it looks at the effects of the sacraments, dogma and Catholic ritual and at what obligations actually existed for Catholics. In this way it explores how and to what extent the precision of dogmatic and sacramental religion, as it was understood and practised by British Catholics, could be adapted to the wartime conditions without compromising the integrity of British Catholicism in either its 'British-ness' or in its Catholicity.

The first chapter examines Catholic unity and exclusivity as these were understood and presented by the Catholic Church to the Catholic body. It looks at both the spiritual preparation of Catholics and at the cohesion which Catholics claimed to exist because of papal authority, dogmatic agreement, sacramental unity and the uniformity of Catholic devotions. It looks also at the ways in which the Catholic Church attempted to distinguish Catholicism from Anglo-Catholicism. The second chapter sets out the elements of British Catholic patriotism, demonstrating both the firm nationalistic element of their patriotism and yet the distinctively Catholic form which the Church insisted that this patriotism take. In particular it explores how British Catholics responded to and, in most cases justified, their national positions in the war. It also addresses the obstacles which Catholics faced in their desire to support both their country and their Church. It looks specifically at the internal difficulties which existed in the matter of Irish home rule and at the strained relationship between the two British islands. It also explores how British Catholics dealt with the fact that they were at war with Germany and Austria, each of which had a significant Catholic population. The third chapter turns to the person of Pope Benedict XV and examines the Vatican's approach to the First World War as well as the British Catholic understanding of Catholic authority. It focuses on the reactions of the Catholic Church and of the British nation toward the Pope and his 'impartial'

position in the war, noting the effects which the official Vatican position had on British Catholic understanding and presentation of the Catholic faith at this time. The fourth chapter addresses the practical difficulties which the chaplains faced due to the wartime conditions and the military regulations to which they were subject. It looks also at the ways in which the chaplains responded to the inter-denominationalism of the military Chaplaincy and at how, in a largely uniform body, Catholics attempted to assert their distinctiveness. The fifth chapter discusses challenges which existed for the Catholic military chaplains in asserting their unity, particularly as this related to German Catholics, Catholics in the non-Western world and in the British army itself. It turns then to the responses of the Catholic body, both at the front and in Britain, to the idea of Catholic unity as it was expressed during the First World War. It looks also at the ways in which the Catholic Chaplaincy faced the practical difficulties which were presented by the war and at the Chaplaincy's response to such challenges. The sixth chapter examines the consequences of the Catholic presentation of Catholicism both in terms of actual responses to Catholicism and particularly in terms of clerical responses to lay belief. It looks also at the ways in which Catholics viewed and acted upon their obligation to pray for the souls of the war-dead in purgatory. Keeping in mind the presentation of Catholicism by the Church it looks at the way in which the Church then judged the men in terms of the practice of their faith and the way in which this shaped Catholic understandings of the Church's success as a religious organisation.

This thesis relies on a diverse combination of sources which indicate the Church's official positions as well as the dominant interpretations of these positions by the British clergy during this period. The most significant of the archival resources is at Downside Abbey where the Rawlinson Collection is housed. This collection

contains a vast number of letters which relate to the Catholic chaplains on the Western Front. Most of these were written to or from Father Stephen Rawlinson, a Benedictine monk and the Senior Catholic Chaplain on the Western Front. Through Rawlinson's papers it is possible to assess what was maintained as important by the Catholic Chaplaincy and how the chaplains at the front actually put into practice the objectives of both the military Chaplaincy and the Catholic Church. The central Jesuit archive at Farm Street contains a number of records from Jesuits who served as chaplains in the military. These provide personal accounts of the chaplains and offer some sense of the overall Jesuit involvement in the military effort. This is of particular importance given the military prowess of the Jesuit schools, particularly Stonyhurst and Beaumont whose Old Boys combined to supply over 1800 soldiers to the war effort.⁴¹

The thesis also draws on material collected in several diocesan archives. Given the need for wide-ranging archival material and the theological rather than political emphasis of this thesis, I have looked at a cross-section of English dioceses, focusing on Westminster, Leeds, Salford, and Birmingham. In my research in these archives I have attempted to draw out and account for some of the differences which existed within Catholicism in different parts of Britain while also recognising the dogmatic and liturgical obligations which prompted Catholic uniformity and accounted for Catholic unity. In Westminster, I have looked at the wartime correspondence of Cardinal Archbishop Bourne as well as the surveys which he sent to each of the dioceses in 1916 in which he asked for specific information regarding provisions for prisoners and enemy aliens interned in these areas. These indicate the ways in which

⁴¹ See *Stonyhurst Magazine* especially 1918 and 1919 issues and F. Irwin, *Stonyhurst War Record* (1927).

British Catholics addressed wartime concerns and particularly how they faced the consequences of their Catholicism in terms of pastoral and sacramental provision for all Catholics, both British and 'enemy'. In Leeds I have looked almost exclusively at pastoral letters and official Church documents in an attempt to locate the position of the diocese in relationship to other areas of Britain. In Salford I have looked both at the equivalent pastoral documents and also at documents which address matters of Catholic education. These provide a comparison with the Leeds pastorals as well as a particular insight into the religious preparation of Catholics in Salford. In Birmingham, I have looked primarily at the diocesan newsletters and at the extensive diaries of Francis Drinkwater, a priest from the Birmingham archdiocese who served as chaplain from 1915 to 1918. His papers provide both the diocesan context and some material relating specifically to the diocesan contribution to the military Chaplaincy.

I have also looked at the archive at Oscott, the Catholic seminary in Birmingham diocese. This archive is useful because it provides unique insights into the Catholic understanding of the clergy and clerical responsibilities. It contains substantial correspondence dealing with voluntary, and later conscripted military service of seminarians, addressing quite pointedly the problem of clerical military service. This material therefore is particularly valuable in that it provides scope for better understanding the Catholic view of the priestly vocation.

In addition, the thesis uses unpublished collections of specifically military significance: notably the Liddle Collection at the University of Leeds and The First World War collection at the Imperial War Museum. Both the Liddle Collection and the collection in the Imperial War Museum are vast and eclectic. Broadly speaking, they do not look at the questions of religious importance on which this thesis

concentrates. Because of this, I have looked solely at those papers which touch on Christian practice or which address a religious aspect of the war or of a person's life. I have used the wide-ranging nature of these archives as an opportunity to look at the views of Christians who were non-Catholic. Although much of this research is not directly cited in this thesis, it has helped to shape a more specific understanding of Catholicism based on the broader Christian context of those British Christians in, or involved with, the military.

In addition, the thesis draws on materials published during the war, paying special attention to the two religious surveys taken during the war, *Army and Religion* and *Catholic Soldiers*.⁴² *Army and Religion* and *Catholic Soldiers* both offer useful insights into the actual practice of British Christianity at the front and, of equal or greater importance, into the clerical perceptions of this 'trench' religion. A comparison between these two surveys provides a helpful way of assessing the different expectations held by the churches toward the religion of the soldiers and the ways in which each of them viewed the clerical responsibility in helping the men to meet these expectations.⁴³ When viewed next to one another, these two surveys lay out the differences between Catholic and Protestant views regarding not only the religion of the laity but the role of the clergy as priests, pastors and Christians, and the ways in which these different roles affected clerical interactions with the men and the perceptions which the churches had of themselves.

In addition, the thesis draws on the journals of most of the Catholic schools in Britain.⁴⁴ These institutions strove to demonstrate the ways in which their institutions and the boys in them were both demonstrably British and yet distinctively Catholic.

⁴² D.S. Cairns, *Army and Religion* (1919), and C. Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, (1919).

⁴³ Snape has begun this research. See especially Snape, pp. 344–352.

⁴⁴ I have looked at *The Ampleforth Journal*, *Stonyhurst Magazine*, *Downside Review*, *The Raven*, *Baeda*, *The Oscotian*, *Beaumont Magazine*, *Saint Aidan's Magazine*, *The Edmundian*, and *The Xavier*.

Because of this, the positions conveyed in these journals, particularly in letters from soldiers, articles about the war and obituary notices, give a clear sense of how self-consciously ‘British’ or, more often, ‘English’, some Catholics were and how this national identity was fused with their religious identity as Catholics. Notably, these school magazines took the same format as other school journals; they reported the outcome of sporting events, announced the recipients of school prizes, reported the activities of school clubs and, during the war, gave notification of the type and degree of participation in the war as well as military honours awarded to Old Boys. However in feature articles and in reports of the military service and deaths of Old Boys, sections which were invariably situated prominently in these magazines, they were overt in their attempt to express the distinctive and preferable position of Catholicism over Protestantism and to express the positive ways in which Catholicity was a defining characteristic of both their religious and national identity.

This self-conscious attempt to convey the benefits of Catholicism stretched beyond the schools to the publications of the *Catholic Truth Society*; these pamphlets and books are also an invaluable resource for this thesis. The CTS publications do not strive to locate the actual significance of Catholicism in Britain and they have no pretence to objectivity. However, they do help toward an understanding of Catholic self-perception during the First World War. They are particularly valuable because they were widely circulated during the First World War both in Britain and at the front.⁴⁵ As a consequence, they helped to shape the opinions which Catholics had of themselves, their faith, and their responsibility to their nation and their Church. Thus for the purpose of this thesis they offer a vivid statement of the wartime Church’s positions on matters of controversy or debate.

⁴⁵ *The Tablet* 10 October, 1914, p. 513.

The thesis also draws largely on periodicals which were circulating during the First World War, most significantly *The Tablet*, *The Dublin Review* and *The Month*. Like the school journals, these newspapers and journals adopted the common format of other religious newspapers reporting on the government and the war, political controversies, church disputes and of more specifically Catholic concern, Ireland, Rome and the individual British dioceses. Although they were not always overt, even in their reports about general events in Britain, their Catholic position is evident. This positioning is even more evident in feature articles, letters to the editor, 'Notes', reviews and homilies. The papers demonstrate the ways in which the British Catholic leadership hoped to present itself as a Christian body and as a force within the British nation. Of great significance to this thesis, they elucidate British Catholic positions and enter into the debates over the appropriate relations between Catholics and Anglicans, especially Anglo-Catholics. Moreover, they publish sermons which would not only have been significant to those who heard or read them but which would have affected the way in which other Catholic priests presented the war in their own parishes. The editors of these Catholic newspapers, particularly John George Snead-Cox of *The Tablet* and Sydney Smith of *The Month* are significant to this thesis because of the control they inevitably had over the content of these magazines. However, unlike the bishops whose recognised authority justifies their opinions being taken into account as representative of the Church, the editors' importance to this thesis lies in their influential positions over these Catholic organs rather than as individual voices.

Given their significance to the understanding and contextualisation of Catholicism in Britain, the thesis also draws upon Anglican periodicals such as *The Church Times* and *The Guardian*. These provide non-Catholic perspectives on

Catholic practice and worship during this period. Moreover, and specifically with regard to *The Church Times*, they demonstrate the tensions which existed between ‘Anglo’ and ‘Roman’ Catholics and show to some extent how these religious bodies acted and reacted to one another. For this same purpose the thesis makes limited use of secular newspapers such as *The Daily Mail*, *The Times* and *The Telegraph*, especially when they entered the debates over the 1916 Easter Rising and the 1917 Papal Peace Note.

The thesis does not make extensive reference to the wider range of Catholic periodicals, in large part because of its theological rather than political emphasis. The limitation inherent in this decision is that in relying on *The Tablet*, *The Dublin Review* or *The Month* the positions of aristocratic and highly educated Catholics are emphasised at the expense of the working classes. In a study which looked at the political or social activities of Catholics this would be an inexcusable oversight because the positions which each of these organs held with regard to matters such as Home Rule and the Conscription Crisis varied widely based on their national and socio-economic ties.⁴⁶ However, the concern of this thesis is to analyse the consequences which the demands of dogmatic and liturgical uniformity had on the Catholic understanding of unity and how this shaped the perceptions which people, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, British or otherwise, had of the Catholic Church. Given this objective it is justifiable to rely on those papers, namely *The Tablet*, *The Dublin Review* and *The Month*, which elucidate most thoroughly the matters of theological concern and which focus more heavily on the official positioning of the Catholic Church, and to refer to other Catholic papers only on matters where their different political perspectives shed light on this primary objective.

⁴⁶ See Aspden, especially pp. 76 –109.

British Catholicism and Studies of the First World War

Both Catholic and non-Catholic historians have widely asserted the success of the Catholic Church in Britain during the First World War, but as yet there has been no comprehensive study of British Catholicism during this period.⁴⁷ Preliminary works have been published by James Hagerty and Tom Johnstone in 1996; and more notably by Michael Snape in 2002. These provide a useful starting point for this study. In *Cross on the Sword, Catholic Chaplains and the Forces* Hagerty and Johnstone look at the organisation and development of the military Chaplaincy in modern Britain. They look also at the practical experiences of individual Catholic chaplains including several who served during the First World War. Although useful up to a point, Hagerty and Johnstone do not analyse these cases critically but let them stand as personal testimonies to the experience of war and the Catholic Chaplaincy.⁴⁸ They do not use them as particular examples which would contribute to a wider synthesis or general assessment of the overall running of or experiences in the Chaplaincy. Moreover, they do not set their study within the context of the Catholic Church but locate it instead within the military Chaplaincy.⁴⁹ Because of this they do not provide the necessary means of looking at these chaplains from a religious, let alone a uniquely Catholic standpoint. Rather, they assess the ways in which the Catholic Chaplaincy changed from its inception in the late eighteenth century through

⁴⁷ See A. Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (First published in 1978; republished in 1998), hereafter referred to as *Church of England*. See also S. Mews, 'Religion and English Society', A. Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World* (North Carolina, 1974), J. Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell*, (1976), and Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*.

⁴⁸ This is particularly true in the chapters which deal with individual chaplains. This is also true of M. Moynihan's volume, *God on Our Side* (1983).

the two world wars and up to the present in terms of chaplaincy duties and numerical force. Because of this, the description they offer of the Catholic Chaplaincy as a department is certainly useful but the differences between Catholic and non-Catholic chaplains which they set out to demonstrate are not clearly conveyed.

Michael Snape has recognised this shortcoming and in his recently published and significant article, 'British Catholicism and the British Army in the First World War', he comes a long way towards rectifying it. In this piece Snape recognises some of the particular difficulties which existed for Catholics in the military regarding the 'Irish question' and the position of Pope Benedict XV. He also calls into question generalisations which have been made about the Catholic Chaplaincy and the effects which Catholic ministrations had on shaping the religious devotion of the Catholic soldiers. In a substantial section of the article, he compares *Army and Religion* to *Catholic Soldiers*. Until Snape's article, *Army and Religion* had not been critically assessed or contextualised within the broader scope of British religion during the First World War.⁵⁰ Thus the opinions regarding popular religion which were expressed in this survey were largely regarded as a fair assessment of the actual situation within lay Christianity rather than as a statement of clerical understanding of lay belief and practice. Snape, however, gives evidence from *Catholic Soldiers* that while Catholic practice might have been somewhat more overt and even more widespread than non-Catholic practice, Catholic devotion was not necessarily of a deeper nature.⁵¹ He argues that the religious difference between Catholics and non-Catholics was as much a matter of clerical perception and religious form as it was a difference in fervour in

⁴⁹ Rather than establishing the historical context of British Catholicism, *Cross on the Sword* details the history of the military chaplaincy and the evolution of Catholics within this institution. Therefore, in assessing their subject they are limited to assessing it from a military standpoint. See pp. 100–178.

⁵⁰ See *Church of England*, pp. 153–168.

⁵¹ See Snape, pp. 344–352.

popular devotion and piety. In this way he shows that the two works offer substantially

different pictures of the clergy and their expectations of the soldiers, rather than of absolute differences in the piety and devotion of the soldiers. Because of this Snape points out the need to look more critically at the results of *Army and Religion* in the light of the discussion in *Catholic Soldiers*.⁵²

Snape raises vital questions about the situation of British Catholics who served in the army during the Great War which serve as stimuli for this thesis; some of which can in this context be pursued in greater detail. For instance, he demonstrates that Catholics supported the national cause in the war, particularly through volunteering for military service.⁵³ However, he does not explore in depth the tensions which existed for British Catholics in maintaining the integrity of both their British patriotism and their Catholicity. Moreover, while he looks at the devotion of the Catholic soldiers and rightly asserts that they were not as pious as has often been suggested, he does not look at how this related to their identity as either Catholics or British citizens.⁵⁴

Most important to this thesis, Snape looks at the effect of clerical perceptions on the understanding of lay piety among the soldiers but he does not go on to look at how this prescriptive and cohesive approach to religious understanding and practice could be and was applied to matters which extended beyond religious education and sacramental obligation. Nor does he look at the vital role of dogmatic theology in this approach to Catholic worship and practice. He emphasises the difficulties created for Catholics by the relationship between Ireland and Britain.⁵⁵ Likewise, he

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 350–351.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 316–321.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 345–348.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 315–318.

acknowledges the difficulties which patriotic British Catholics had in acknowledging and, to some extent, accepting the impartiality of Benedict XV during the First World War.⁵⁶ However, Snape does not look at the Catholic approaches to these difficulties to see how these problems were treated in the light of the dogmatic and institutional limitations of Catholicism, or at how the Catholic approach to these matters related to their approach to dogmatic religious education and practical Catholicism. Thus, while he asserts and shows plainly that Catholic uniformity and cohesion affected the religious education and clerical perceptions of the soldiers' Catholicism and orthodoxy, he does not elaborate on the root cause of this uniformity nor does he assess if or how the Church's claims of universality and 'completeness' extended to the broader scope of British Catholicism.

Because of this, substantial work remains to be done, some of which has been recently undertaken by Kester Aspden and Youssef Taouk. Aspden looks at British Catholicism during the period of the war and particularly at issues of Catholic unity and internal division from a political and social perspective, concentrating primarily on the Catholic hierarchy in Britain.⁵⁷ While he covers the period of the war and its aftermath, he does not address the particular effects which the First World War had on the Catholic Church in Britain nor does he look at the way in which the teachings of Catholicism affected its actual practice during the war.

Youssef Taouk's recently completed PhD thesis is on the political role of British Catholics during the First World War.⁵⁸ In this thesis Taouk focuses on the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁵⁷ Aspden explains his methodology on his first page saying that although it is unpopular to study the 'men at the top' this was nevertheless a justifiable subject of inquiry and, notably, the focus of his study. K. Aspden, *Fortress Church, The English Roman Catholic Bishops and Politics 1903–63*, pp. 1–2.

⁵⁸ Y. Taouk, 'The Roman Catholic Church in Britain during the First World War: A Study in Political Leadership', PhD Thesis, University of Western Sydney, submitted in June 2003.

role of Catholics in government and official diplomacy, addressing matters of political and social concerns which arose amongst Catholics during the war. However, he does not address the Chaplaincy or the popular response to the war. Moreover, he does not look at the theological implications of Catholicism during the war except where they related to matters of official policy. Rather than looking at devotions and practice, Taouk looks at matters such as the British government's relations with the Vatican and at the responses of the British hierarchy and of Catholics in the British government to the 1916 Easter Uprising, the Papal Peace note of 1917, and the 1918 Conscription crisis in Ireland. Therefore whilst his thesis covers the same period and subject as this thesis does, it looks at substantially different aspects of British Catholic experience and identity during the First World War.

In addition to these works which are directly related to Catholicism in Britain during the First World War are three studies which have been written on the Anglican Church during this period by Alan Wilkinson, Stuart Mews and Albert Marrin respectively.⁵⁹ Wilkinson focuses primarily on the practice of and reception to Anglicanism at the front, and on the implications which the experience of war had for the national church. Regarding the military in particular, he clarifies the Anglican position by providing case studies of chaplains.⁶⁰ He sets the Anglican response to the war in the context of the place of the national church in the British nation. He also looks at *Army and Religion* and in so doing suggests some of the ways in which the church viewed the religion of the soldiers. Unlike Snape, Wilkinson does not provide inter-denominational context for *Army and Religion* and because he does not set it in its context he does not regard *Army and Religion* with a sufficiently critical eye.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See Wilkinson, *Church of England and his Dissent or Conform?* (1986). Hereafter referred to as *Dissent or Conform*. See also 'Religion and English Society', and see Marrin, pp. 63 –82.

⁶⁰ See *Church of England* pp.136 –152.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* pp. 153 –168.

Stuart Mews' PhD thesis, 'Religion and English Society in the First World War' (1973), is a more critical and systematic work which provides historical and ecclesiastical context for this thesis. In it Mews looks more thoroughly at the Anglican Church on the home front rather than in the military. Mews' work is of particular note where he discusses the theological controversies of Anglicanism at the time of the First World War. In this respect he focuses more sharply than Wilkinson, who looks broadly at the consequences of these divisions but does not carefully assess the reasons underlying them.

Albert Marrin also makes a significant contribution, concentrating on the Anglican political response to the First World War and the Anglican Church's reaction to its members fighting in the war. In particular, he looks at the Anglican Church's view of the clergy and the Church's response to fighting in or even supporting a 'total war'.⁶² He takes the view that the Anglican Church was primarily part of the political establishment and maintains that this was one of its major flaws.⁶³ In this he differs from both Wilkinson and Mews who look at the Anglican Church more as the official religious body of the British nation.

Providing further context for this study is Wilkinson's *Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900–1945*. Wilkinson there addresses the complexities faced by the Nonconformist churches in participating in the British war effort. He looks in particular at the difficult position with which Nonconformists were faced when choosing between supporting the war and thus taking up the British and typically Anglican position, and taking a more pacifistic and traditionally 'non-conforming' stance. This book is particularly relevant for this thesis because it takes as its subject non-established religious denominations and looks at their responses to

⁶² Marrin pp. 63–82.

the war. However, since Nonconformity is by definition opposed to establishment it has only restricted application to this study which looks at the highly organised institution of the Catholic Church.⁶⁴

Addressing more specifically the unique challenges faced by Catholics from a religious and social point of view are the works of Annette Becker, Mary Heimann, and Dermot Quinn. Annette Becker shows something of the challenges faced by French Catholics during the Great War, particularly in the light of the more secularised French state.⁶⁵ She considers the consequences of French anti-clericalism, the conscription of French priests as combatant soldiers and the consequences of German invasion. In these respects her work has an obviously different scope from that of my thesis. However, she also examines French devotion, focussing on the cults of Mary and the saints, the use of objects of piety and the responses to wartime masses for victory and for the war dead.⁶⁶ By these means she addresses the distinctive elements of Catholic piety as it was formulated in France and she establishes a framework in which to explore more fully and comparatively the practice of Catholicism during the First World War. In this way, and particularly when she discusses the roles and duties of French priests, the primary expressions of lay devotion and the reception of Catholicism by the general French population, Becker's work proves relevant to my study of the presentation, perceptions and practice of British Catholicism during this period.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁴ See also S.J. Brown, 'A Solemn Purification by Fire: Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol. 45, 1994, pp. 82–104; D. Pugsley, 'Methodism and the Great War', unpublished M.Phil thesis, University of Birmingham, 1995, and J.H. Thompson, 'The Free Church Army Chaplain 1830–1930' unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1990.

⁶⁵ Annette Becker, *War and Faith: the Religious Imagination in France 1914–1930* (Oxford, 1996). See also S. Mews 'Nationality and Liberty, Protestant and Catholic: Robert Southey's Book of the Church', in *Studies in Church History* Vol. 18 ed. S. Mews, (Oxford, 1982), pp. 410–419. Hereafter referred to as 'Nationality and Liberty'.

⁶⁶ See Becker's chapter on intercession pp. 61–113.

In a similar way Mary Heimann and Dermot Quinn both look at matters of Catholic unity and distinctiveness in late Victorian Britain in attempts to contextualise Catholic belief and practice within a social framework. Heimann addresses matters of Catholic agreement and particularly devotional unity, looking specifically at the types of devotional practices which were most prevalent in British Catholicism between 1850 and 1900.⁶⁷ She does this against the backdrop of their diverse socio-economic status and often disunited political positions, showing the unique demands and even the unique nature of Catholic universality whose theological and hierarchical unity extended to more practical forms of supra-national religious unity. In asserting the similarities of practice across British Catholicism, Heimann challenges the supposition that English and Irish Catholics were dramatically divided in their understanding and practice of the Catholic faith in the pre-war years and in so doing she explores the more subtle roots of Catholic agreement. In this way her work is distinctive from that of Dermot Quinn which looks at the political and social positions of Catholics in Victorian Britain. Instead of drawing out points of unity, Quinn explores the many divisions which existed among Catholics in terms of politics and social positioning.⁶⁸ Quinn adopts the stance that political unity among Catholics was something to be expected and infers, therefore, that this was the litmus test for the universality of the Catholic Church. Thus the fact that this was not achieved leads Quinn to identify certain shortcomings in Catholicism and the Catholic hierarchy.⁶⁹

The different ways in which Quinn and Heimann understand and thus measure the sources of Catholic unity and cohesion lead ultimately to their divergent conclusions. They also point to an important distinction which this thesis makes

⁶⁷ M. Heimann, *Catholic Devotion in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 40–88.

⁶⁸ D. Quinn, *Patronage and Piety: the Politics of English Roman Catholics 1850–1900* (Basingstoke, 1993). See especially pp. 1–15.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

between political and religious unity; particularly when it questions what can legitimately be required and expected under the categories of social, political and religious unity. While disunity within a political party would certainly limit the party's effectiveness and could ultimately be detrimental to that party, the supposition that internal religious unity is necessary for the success of a political party is faulty. So, too, is the assumption that political unity within a religious denomination is necessary for the success of that denomination. Indeed Catholic unity, with its clear limitation to the realms of faith and morals, has to be measured by the parameters established by the Church in its doctrines, dogmas and practices just as political unity has to be understood within the parameters set by the system of government and the aims of the particular political party. Although clear advantages exist for Catholics in instances where political unity is attained, it must be recognised that such agreement is not a requirement of Catholic unity in the strictest sense nor can it be viewed as an essential requisite of Catholicism by historians who look at questions of Catholic unity.

In this thesis I do not, therefore, look to discuss political or social unity but rather to examine the matter of Catholic unity and British Catholic identity as it was officially presented and then practically formulated for the purposes of Catholic teaching and devotion. In this way my objective is different from the recent work of Kester Aspden and Youssef Taouk, much as Heimann's approach is different from Quinn's. Consequently, this thesis does not look primarily at political elements of the church nor does it look at Catholics, particularly Catholic soldiers, from the standpoint of the military or even as individual believers. Rather it looks at how official Catholic teaching as well as dogmatic and liturgical obligations and the underlying recognition of Catholic authority sought to shape the ways in which

British Catholics understood nationalism, supra-nationalism, patriotism and universality. From this perspective it explores how Catholics interpreted Catholic teaching so as to make it compatible with British nationalism and, at the same time, how the official teaching of the Church shaped both Catholic understandings of British Catholics and non-Catholic perceptions of Catholicism during the First World War. More specifically it looks at the way in which the Catholic Church presented Catholicism in both theological and practical terms and at how this set out to shape the ways in which Catholics coped with numerous conflicting loyalties whether national or regional, religious or practical, as part of the Catholic Church, British society and at times, the British armed forces.

In this regard this thesis is distinguished from other works about religion in the First World War since its aim is not to demonstrate the social or political place of British Catholicism during the First World War or even to measure the actual success of the Church in terms of numbers of mass attenders or level of devotion. Rather, its attempt is to locate the debate about Catholic coherence and unity in the light of dogmatic, sacramental and liturgical obligations and to assess some of the practical challenges of official Church teachings in Britain during the period of the First World War.

Perceptions of British Catholicism in the First World War

While no extensive study of British Catholicism during the war has been attempted, even the most general studies of this period take some notice of the British Catholic Church. In his autobiographical account, *Eye Deep in Hell* (1976) John Ellis asserts that: ‘The Catholic faith was much more appealing to the troops since mass, confession and the last rites were all impressive ceremonies with the assurance of

formality.’⁷⁰ Although Catholicism is acknowledged in most social histories of Britain in the First World War which have been written since the 1970s, because they look for the appeal of Catholicism and do not look to assess the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church, these works have made broad and often inaccurate generalisations about Catholicism during this period. Several studies rely on war memoirs in their attempt to locate the place of the Catholic Church in the social setting of Britain.⁷¹ For instance, Ellis relies on Guy Chapman, a soldier during the First World War and author of *A Passionate Prodigality* (1933), to argue for the attraction of Catholicism, quoting Chapman’s war memoirs: ‘Already there was a growing dislike of these [Anglican chaplains]...The Church of Rome sent a man into action mentally and spiritually cleaned. The Church of England could only offer you a cigarette.’⁷² Likewise, both Ellis and Allan Lloyd use Robert Graves’ account in *Goodbye to All That* to argue for the preference among the troops for Catholicism over Anglicanism:

The colonel in one battalion I served with got rid of four new Anglican chaplains in four months; finally he applied for a Roman Catholic; alleging a change of faith in the men under his command. For the Roman Catholic chaplains were not only permitted to visit posts of danger, but definitely enjoyed to be wherever the fighting was, so that they could give extreme unction to the dying. And we had never heard of one who failed to do all that was expected of him and more.⁷³

Such references generally emphasise the heroic work of Catholic chaplains and the impressive nature of Catholic ritual in contrast to and in criticism of Anglicanism.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ellis, p. 154.

⁷¹ See P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975), and S. Hynes, *A War Imagined* (New York, 1991).

⁷² G. Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality* (1933), see also Ellis, p. 156.

⁷³ R. Graves, *Goodbye to all That* (First edn., 1929; Penguin edn. 1960), p. 198. See Ellis, p. 156, and A. Lloyd, *The War in the Trenches*, (1976), p. 138.

⁷⁴ See for instance, Ellis, Fussell, Hynes and A.J. Hoover, *God Germany and Greater Britain* (New York, 1987).

Although such works give some sense of the British Catholic response to the war, they do not provide a fuller context of British Catholicism whether in terms of national, theological or social significance. Because Catholicism is treated as a social rather than a religious institution, neither the real differences between the denominations nor the distinguishing aspects of Catholicism are explored.

Moreover, although interesting in themselves, these passages are based on individual experiences and they serve more as commentary on Anglican attitudes rather than as evidence regarding the Catholic Church. As Boris Ford notes: 'These unofficial histories were only attempts, self-evident and often self-confessedly partial, to communicate the incommunicable: mute testimonies to the inadequacy of words in the face of death.'⁷⁵ Although they offer some insight, they are heavily biased and neither try to nor can by right speak authoritatively on the matter of Catholic practice or its implementation by the Catholic chaplains.

Other works, such as Myles Dungan's *They Shall Not Grow Old, Irish Soldiers in the First World War* (1997) make comparisons based on church attendance statistics. Dungan suggests that the growth of Catholicism in the post-war years was directly linked with the ministry of the Catholic chaplains in the war.⁷⁶ In his chapter on Irish chaplains, he asserts:

Attendance at C of E services declined in the immediate post-war period, a dip which could not be totally explained by battlefield fatalities. Much of the decline was probably due to the disillusionment of ordinary soldiers with the quality of many of their Church of England chaplains...[Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy's] advice to all the chaplains was simple: 'Work in the front line and they will listen to you.' But it was advice which was not heeded by his own religious authorities. Anglican chaplains were not allowed to accompany troops to the front line; Roman Catholic chaplains were. The decline in Church of England attendances was accompanied by the alleged conversion of

⁷⁵ B. Ford, (ed.) *Cambridge Cultural History, Vol. 7* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 19.

⁷⁶ M. Dungan, *They Shall not Grow Old, Irish Soldiers in the First World War* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 60–62.

over 40,000 Church of England soldiers to Roman Catholicism. Such was the influence of the chaplain in the Great War!⁷⁷

Such claims of causation are not to be dismissed outright. However, they are to be qualified heavily, particularly because such studies rely on statistical evidence which does not focus on this question of causation. On one hand they demonstrate how both in real numbers and percentage terms the Catholic Church gained more in the twentieth century than other denominations in Britain.⁷⁸ Indeed, although such gains were called into question in the 1970s in the seminal work of Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, Robin Gill has more recently argued that Catholicism was the only major denomination to increase in real and proportional numbers in the post-war period.⁷⁹ Moreover, Gill demonstrates that both before the war and during it, the Catholic Church had consistently increased in attendance. This differed substantially from the trends in the Anglican and most Nonconformist churches. John Wolffe, even asserts: ‘Even if the absolute numbers should be scaled down somewhat, the trend is significant, showing the capacity of the Roman Catholic Church to retain and even extend its support at a period when otherwise the position of major religious groups was weakening.’ While Nonconformity and Anglicanism declined after the Edwardian period, ‘In numerical terms the most successful religious group in the twentieth century has clearly been the Roman Catholics.’⁸⁰ This growth was undoubtedly real. However, it was neither exclusive to the Catholic Church nor to the wartime circumstances. Anglo-Catholicism grew during this period⁸¹ and Roman

⁷⁷ Dungan, p. 61.

⁷⁸ R. Gill, *Myth of the Empty Church* (1993) pp. 168, 170 and 179–182. In his final section Gill looks specifically at the *Army and Religion* survey. See chapter 6 of this thesis for a more detailed account of *Army and Religion*. For more statistics on church attendance see also R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford, 1977) pp. 113–115.

⁷⁹ See Currie, pp. 116–123 and Gill pp. 165–189.

⁸⁰ See J. Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain 1843–1945* (1993), pp. 68–73 for fuller discussion.

⁸¹ See Gill, p. 7 and p. 12 and Currie especially, pp. 116–123.

Catholic growth had already begun before the war just as the decline in Protestant attendance was already evident before 1914.⁸² Thus specific links between the war and Roman Catholic growth must be more carefully examined.⁸³

This is the case particularly where these statistics are employed to demonstrate the preference of Catholic devotion and practice over Protestant worship as seen in Dungan's assertion cited earlier. Such authors look to verify the success of the Catholic institution and more often, particular Catholics, rather than to assess Catholicism as a faith system with specific goals and consequences. Moreover, they look at what drew people to aspects of Catholic services but they fail to address the intricate structure of Catholic teaching and worship or the basis of Catholic practise and thus do not take into account the attempt of Catholicism to be a distinctive and coherent faith system. This is a detrimental oversight given the institutionalised nature of Catholicism. It is all the more so in light of the claims of Anglo-Catholicism to be Catholic and the strong emphasis on unity, distinctiveness and internal coherence in the British Catholic Church.

The effects of this shortcoming can be seen in various works. For instance, Alan Wilkinson proposes that the success of Catholicism was largely due to its novelty, explaining that Anglicanism was 'all too familiar'.⁸⁴ While he is right that Anglicanism as the established church was in some respects commonplace, negative responses to the church-state relationship must be separated from responses to the familiar aspects of that religious institution. This is particularly true given that, among Catholics, especially those who had not practised their religion for some years, the familiar aspects of their faith were shown to be beneficial rather than harmful.⁸⁵

⁸² *More Roman than Rome*, pp. 13–47.

⁸³ See Currie pp. 89–123 and Gill p. 17.

⁸⁴ *Church of England*, p. 132.

⁸⁵ Plater, pp. 33–39.

Catholic chaplains claimed that it was through these means that many Catholics returned to their faith during the war period.⁸⁶ Moreover, since it was largely the trend of lapsed Catholics returning to their faith rather than new recruits converting from Protestantism which led chaplains to talk about revival, this assumption that Catholic ‘success’ was based largely on its novelty does not hold up to close scrutiny.⁸⁷

Another ill-founded claim regarding growth in the Catholic population is that Catholic chaplains found it easier than Anglicans to relate to the soldiers because they were of the same social class as the men and could, therefore, relate more easily to their situation.⁸⁸ This falls down insofar as many of the most successful chaplains, such as Henry Day or Dominic Devas, were not from the working class. In addition, priests had substantially more education than people of the working classes. Even if they came from the working classes originally and worked with them after ordination, the six years of seminary training, especially if combined with preparatory years as a church student, separated Catholic chaplains from their working-class charges as well as from their working-class roots. Moreover, given that an influential section of the Catholic population came from the middle and upper classes, many priests who might have begun life in the working classes lived and worked in clearly middle, or even upper-class surroundings rather than among the poor.⁸⁹ Those priests who came from less privileged backgrounds might, presumably have had more difficulty in helping these upper-class Catholics. This does not, however, seem to have proved problematic for Catholics.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–57.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁸⁸ Wilkinson makes this generalisation from the comment of Cardinal Heeman who noted that both Griffin and Masterson, who became archbishops of Birmingham and Westminster respectively, had served as sergeants in the war effort. *Church of England*, p. 134.

⁸⁹ The monks at Downside and Stonyhurst as well as the Jesuits at Beaumont and Stonyhurst taught the children of and interacted with Catholics of the wealthier classes and were often from privileged backgrounds themselves.

What is more, there are indications that extensive education and privileged backgrounds were not major obstacles among Anglicans. Some of the more successful Anglican chaplains such as Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, Julian Bickersteth and Tubby Clayton were upper-middle-class and yet proved quite capable of winning the affection and respect of the men.⁹⁰ These points all call into question the validity of these assumptions regarding the link between social class and Catholic success.

The claim that the presence of Catholic clergy distinguished Catholics from non-Catholics has also to be questioned.⁹¹ Priests like Father William Finn, who stated: 'A priest's place is beside the dying soldier',⁹² or William Doyle who was known for spending nearly all of his time in the trenches with his men, point to the bravery and devotion of the Catholic chaplains.⁹³ However, Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy's advice to the Anglican chaplain Theodore Hardy points to this also. He said: 'Live with the men; go everywhere they go... Work in the very front, and they will listen to you... you can pray with them sometimes but pray for them always.'⁹⁴ Such advice gives a clear demonstration that it was not only Catholics who recognised the importance of being present at the front. Although the bravery of these Anglican chaplains does not downplay the good effects of Catholic chaplains it does call into question the usual assumption that being present at the front was a fundamentally Catholic practice with benefits primarily for the Catholic Church. It also neglects the more important question of why the different denominations considered it important to have a presence at the front.

The argument that the sacramental emphasis of Catholicism was its distinctive

⁹⁰ Clayton, Bickersteth and Studdert Kennedy were all Oxford-educated.

⁹¹ Such instances are cited especially in *Cross on the Sword* pp. 100–189.

⁹² E. I. Watkin, *More Stories of the War* (1916), p. 6.

⁹³ E.M.G., *A Brave Soldier* (Melbourne, 1942), pp. 18–20.

⁹⁴ W. Purcell, *Woodbine Willie* (1962), p. 8.

feature has also to be questioned in the light of the increased sacramentalism and ritualism in Anglo-Catholicism. Anglo-Catholic chaplains such as Julian Bickesteth, Tubby Clayton and Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy show that parts of the Anglican Church stressed the importance of the sacraments and that Roman Catholics were not the only British chaplains who relied on a sacramental system of worship.⁹⁵

Such over-simplified explanations also neglect important respects in which Catholic priests actually differed from non-Catholic clergy. For instance the celibacy and the extensive seminarian training of Catholic priests certainly played some part in separating Catholics both from other chaplains and from identification with any one social class. If anything, their training and marital status set them apart from, rather than above or within, a particular class, whether working, middle or upper.

Moreover, while particular Catholic rituals and even specifically 'Catholic' doctrines did not distinguish Catholics who were in communion with Rome from all other forms of British Christianity, Catholicism was distinctive in its acceptance of ecclesial and specifically papal authority. The underlying point of Catholicism was that as a body the Catholic Church was coherent and unified; the external manifestations of this existed in the dogmas, hierarchy and liturgy of the Church. These individual aspects only reached their full potential when they were the component parts of the universal Catholic faith. This claim of universal Catholic authority and the way in which it was applied on a practical level shaped the ways in which the Church hoped that Catholics would understand themselves, their allegiances and their duties. Catholic practice, doctrines and sacraments as well as

⁹⁵ Talbot House began as a house for soldiers which was located in the town of Poperinghe. It contained a library, sitting rooms and a chapel and was particularly popular because it was not simply a church hut but a 'home' from which Clayton and his fellow chaplains ministered to the men at the front. Toc H. continued to develop as a Christian outreach in the years that followed the war. See Clayton, *Plain Tales from Flanders*.

papal and magisterial authority were all important individually. However, the deeper significance of each of these was that they claimed to be complementary and mutually compatible. This was also the deeper challenge, however, since it made spiritual unity and submission to authority all the more important. Whatever else it succeeded in doing, if it failed to be unified above the common level of politics and nationalism, Catholicism could not in fact be ‘Catholic’. In terms of practising the faith, this meant that Catholics had not only to understand the obligations and limitations of their national and religious devotion but also to determine how their national allegiances could be maintained without compromising the integrity of their Catholic faith.⁹⁶

This different understanding of Catholicism and unity had far-reaching consequences. To begin with it affected Catholic self-perception, making even wider the chasm between Catholics and non-Catholics, particularly after Leo XII asserted the invalidity of Anglican orders in 1896 with the papal document *Apostolicae Curae*.⁹⁷ This shaped both the practice and presentation of Catholicism, especially with regard to the understanding of the ‘failure’ or ‘success’ of the Church in the modern era. The leadership, liturgy and doctrine of the Anglican Church were all under pressure at this time and the general consensus was that the institution had not stood the test as well as it might have done.

Among Catholics, on the other hand, the validity and necessity of the institution were not generally questioned. Although the mid-nineteenth century saw

⁹⁶ Catholics expressed this position especially when dealing with Anglo-Catholicism. See for instance, J. Britten, *Anglicanism at the Front* (1916).

⁹⁷ In the 1896 encyclical, *Apostolicae Curae*, Leo XIII affirmed the position that Anglican orders were null and void. In so doing, he spoke definitively on the matter of reunification between the Anglican and Catholic bodies. *Apostolicae Curae*, Anglican orders (English): the bull of His Holiness Leo XIII. September 13, 1896 and the answer of the Archbishops of England, March 29, 1897 (1932). See also *The Tablet* 19 March 1916, p. 442. *More Roman than Rome*, Beck, and Norman for discussion on the trends of late 19th century British Catholicism.

the rise of Modernism and with this a scepticism of institutional authority, in the Catholic Church it also saw the affirmation of the Catholic hierarchical structure by means of the definition of papal infallibility and the avowal of dogmatic and doctrinal authority with the suppression of modernism.⁹⁸ Because of this, the positions of the Church were more forcefully insisted upon and more readily accepted by Catholics than by most non-Catholics or even Anglo-Catholics during the First World War. Although disagreements existed in the hierarchy and within national bodies, the validity of the hierarchy and the institution of the Catholic Church were not openly questioned by British Catholics. Neither was the necessity of supporting the British cause in the war. Demonstrating how these two allegiances could be maintained without compromising the integrity of either was the challenge which British Catholics faced. This challenge intensified on 4 August 1914 when Britain declared its involvement in the First World War.

⁹⁸ See B. Reardon, *Roman Catholic Modernism* (1970), *More Roman than Rome*, and Hinchliff.

Chapter 1: British Catholics and Universality: Devotions and Loyalty

There is but one organic society in history which has appealed to men upon the ground of its universalism ...and that is the Catholic Church; but then its universalism is of a 'supernatural' not of the secular order.¹

Father Cuthbert's statement in his 1916 *Month* article, 'A Plea for Nationalism', indicated the Catholic agenda of both asserting and defining the nature of Catholic unity and of demonstrating the necessity for Catholic distinctiveness. Although affected by temporal matters, Catholics argued that both their unity and their exclusivity were shaped most significantly by dogmatic and doctrinal teachings and, in a practical sense, by the devotions and practices of the Catholic Church and the universal use of Latin rather than the vernacular in liturgy.² In expressing Catholic unity, therefore, Catholic dogma and magisterial authority were given the highest importance. These set parameters and established a basis for agreement in the Catholic faith just as Catholic worship and liturgy provided structure and definition for Catholic practice. Although these features were shared in varying degrees by other denominations, the defining element of Catholicism, namely its claims of universality, and its specific understanding of the sacraments, demanded of Catholicism a heightened sense of agreement and a more coherent and encompassing system of

¹ Father Cuthbert OSFC, 'A Plea for Nationalism', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, p. 41.

² *More Roman than Rome*, p. 223; Heimann, p. 40.

faith. Consequently, even when cultural and linguistic differences limited a fuller interaction between Catholics of different countries and when the external bonds of national and international agreement were upset, the Catholic Church both in Britain and more widely insisted, and was intent on demonstrating, that the unity of the Church could be, necessarily had to be, and indeed was, maintained.³

These specific elements of dogmatic agreement, sacramental obligation and magisterial authority were the obvious points of Catholic unity; the skeletal frame which supported the body of the Church.⁴ However, Catholics claimed that it was not only in these specific manifestations that the Church found its unity. Rather, this unity, they claimed, was diffused throughout the whole body of the Church which was grounded in the truth of Christ as preserved by scriptures and traditions.⁵ Because of this, Catholics claimed that all legitimate off-shoots from this foundation had, necessarily, to be unified by this one source. The fullness of Catholic unity was not then, as was often claimed by non-Catholics, held to be in the hierarchy or the Pope or even in the sacraments, although these were obvious manifestations of Catholic agreement. Rather, it was based in the coherence of the Church as a whole body of which these elements, as well as the laity, the souls in purgatory and the saints in heaven, were a part.

Because of this understanding, Catholics expressed their unity both by emphasising their own theological agreement and by asserting their exclusivity and distinctiveness from other British Christians. Among Catholics, broad doctrinal interpretations, particularly if they risked being turned in opposition to any dogmas of the Church, were strictly guarded against. Although there were certainly Catholic

³ See H. McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 43–45 and p. 111 for practical consequences of Catholic unity and uniformity in terms of British perception of Catholicism. Hereafter referred to as *Religion and Society*.

⁴ See Heimann, pp. 45–69.

⁵ See Arx, pp. 232–233.

modernists such as Alfred Loisy, George Tyrrell and Friedrich von Hügel, Pius X's pre-war stance against modernism and progressive theological thinking was firmly maintained both before and during the war as indicated by the excommunication of Loisy and Tyrrell.⁶ As was evident even in these Catholic modernists, theological openness for Catholics did not equate to widespread ecumenism on a more practical level of worship. Upon excommunication, Tyrrell quite notably did not become Protestant but instead remained a Catholic in exile from the Church.⁷

For the Catholic Church at large, an acceptance of Church teaching was closely monitored by means of Pius X's three-pronged reform initiative which comprised his anti-modernist campaign, the codification of canon law and an increased emphasis on catechism and frequent communion.⁸ In these three initiatives, Pius X laid out for Catholics the need not for political or national unity but for orthodoxy, 'right worship', on all fronts, from the positions of leading theologians to the rubrics of the Mass and the office to practical Catholicism as implemented by the clergy as well as the laity.⁹ In this emphasis, Pius X led the way not so much in theological and doctrinal reform but in consolidation and maintenance of the Church's historical line.¹⁰ Thus in the pre-war period and even in the more moderate wartime papacy of Benedict XV, the only innovations which the Church regarded as acceptable and Catholic were those which showed how the modern world fitted into the Catholic understanding and approach; those which called into question any premise of the Church were firmly rejected.¹¹

⁶ See B. Reardon, p. 17.

⁷ See Smith, pp. 227–228.

⁸ See Kent and J. Pollard, *Papal Diplomacy in The Modern Age* (1995), p. 16.

⁹ See *Acerbo Nimis* (1905) and *Quam Singulari* (1910) in C. Carlen (ed.), *The Papal Encyclicals 1903–1949*, vol. 3, (Raleigh, 1981) pp. 29–36, and 135–140.

¹⁰ See Heimann, p. 33.

¹¹ See O. Chadwick, *History of the Popes* pp. 515–602.

The main distinguishing feature of Catholicism was that of Catholic acceptance of papal and, more to the point, magisterial authority, and it was this difference which Catholics used to separate themselves from Anglo-Catholics.¹² Although Catholic ritual, liturgy and devotion had been unique to the Church of Rome in earlier decades, by the time of the First World War, many Anglo-Catholics accepted transubstantiation, devotion to saints and the doctrine of purgatory. One *Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet noted with satisfaction that many Anglo-Catholics adopted Catholic devotions such as exposition of the Sacrament, Forty Hours, Masses for the dead, the Rosary and the stations of the Cross. This noted that, even more remarkably, some Anglo-Catholics accepted the primacy, although still not the infallibility, of the Pope.¹³ While such steps were notable, Catholics were reminded that because Anglo-Catholics were not in communion with Rome, they were not Catholic and did not, therefore, have the right to use the title 'Catholic'. Because of this critical distinction, Catholics, particularly those who had converted from Anglicanism or who had a recusant heritage, voiced their denominational disagreements loudly, proclaiming their own position to be not only preferable but also more legitimate and distinctive.¹⁴ It is not surprising then, that the Catholic Church used the circumstances of the war to point out the advantages of Catholic uniformity and submission to Rome, asserting that although most of its beliefs and practices were commendable, the lack of authority in Anglo-Catholicism was its key

¹² The dividing line for the various types of Anglicanism was difficult to draw as seen during the Anglican congress of 1915. See *The Church Times* February 1915.

¹³ L. Walker SJ, *Our Separated Brethren* (1921), p. 3 discusses this in depth. However, such devotion was mentioned long before the war; see *The Tablet* 19 April 1910 p. 570. For wartime discussion see for instance, *The Tablet* 10 July 1915, p. 42, 11 March 1916, p. 331, 2 November 1918, p. 485.

¹⁴ See 'Pretending' *The Tablet* 4 March 1916, p. 298, and A.H. Nankivell, *Higher Anglicanism* (1916), p. 12, hereafter referred to as *Higher Anglicanism*.

failing and the primary obstacle which separated Anglo-Catholics from the Catholic Church.¹⁵

In a 1916 article entitled ‘Pretending’, *The Tablet* asserted this point of separation, saying that it would be unfair to accuse all Anglicans of pretending simply because, in the Catholic estimation, they happened to be mistaken. Although Catholics did believe that ‘the half-dozen different religions included in the Establishment of this country’ were ‘disastrously mistaken’, this article asserted that Catholics did not think that these Anglicans were pretending but that they were confused.¹⁶ Anglo-Catholics, on the other hand, were not to be pitied but reproached because of their assertion that they, as well as the rest of the Anglican communion, were a part of the Catholic Church even after Rome had ruled in the 1896 papal document, *Apostolicae Curae*, that they were not.¹⁷

This position was also asserted in a 1916 *Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet in which the author said that Catholics had very little sympathy with Anglo-Catholicism because Anglo-Catholics were ‘ecclesiastical smugglers’ who enjoyed ‘some of the good things of the Catholic Religion without paying the market-price’. The author maintained that Anglicans could ‘shirk fasting and going to confession...evade obedience to a definite authority’ and just as important, they could avoid ‘the stigma of being Papists’.¹⁸ Thus while Anglo-Catholics might appear ‘Catholic’ in their ritual, Catholics claimed that this voluntary adoption of Catholic practices, even if embraced wholeheartedly, did not place a person within the Catholic Church.¹⁹

¹⁵ See *Higher Anglicanism*, p. 12.

¹⁶ ‘Pretending’ *The Tablet* 4 March 1916, p. 298.

¹⁷ See S. Leslie, *Cardinal Gasquet* (1954), pp. 62–75, for more on *Apostolicae Curae*.

¹⁸ *Higher Anglicanism*, (1916), p. 2.

¹⁹ This was noted with regard to the Anglican use of *Garden of the Soul* even before the war. *The Tablet* 9 April 1910, pp. 577–578.

Even so, Anglo-Catholics defended the Anglican place within the ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’ by relying on one or another incarnation of the Branch Theory or the Continuity Theory to argue their legitimate claims to Catholicism.²⁰ One *Church Times* correspondent in 1917 even complained that Catholics, especially Ultramontane Catholics, referred to Anglo-Catholics as Anglicans. He said in a letter which was printed in *The Church Times* that this title appeared to be given out of politeness due to the obvious dislike that some Anglicans had of the term ‘Protestant’. However this writer also recognised the unwillingness of Catholics to call Anglicans ‘Catholic’. He argued that this reluctance was confusing since Catholics appeared to have little difficulty in calling Russian Christians ‘Orthodox’ and also remaining separate from them.²¹ Another Anglo-Catholic even argued that to disallow this claim of Catholicism to Anglicans was, in fact, against the very principles of the Catholic Church and its catholicity. This *Church Times* contributor even asked in his article, ‘Unity or Federation?’:

Is it right for Christians to be divided? Is it even tolerable? No man who is touched with Catholic spirit can answer even provisionally in the affirmative, and the pressure alike of common sense and of religious sentiment is breaking down the complacency with what others have been wont to regard the ‘dissidence of Dissent’.²²

While such arguments were put forward, other Anglicans recognised that the Church of England faced not only the rejection of the Catholic Church but substantial divisions within the Anglican Church itself.²³ In recognition of this lack of cohesion,

²⁰ ‘The Branch Theory’ holds that the true and universal church includes all those who agree on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity as laid out in the Creeds and as are agreed upon by the Anglican, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. See *The Church Times* 10 December 1915, p. 601. ‘The Continuity Theory’ argued that the Anglican Church had never officially been excommunicated as a body and, consequently, they still had apostolic succession. This, it was claimed, meant that Anglican priests were still validly ordained and, therefore, part of the Catholic Church. See ‘An Object Lesson of Anglican Continuity’, *The Tablet* 3 August 1918, p. 120.

²¹ *The Church Times* 13 April 1917, p. 323.

²² ‘Unity or Federation?’ *The Church Times* 29 September 1916, p. 264.

²³ *Dissent or Conform* p. xv.

Sibyl Sheringham, a regular contributor to *The Church Times*, wrote in 1914 that the Anglican Church had not placed itself in a position which would facilitate reunification with other churches, particularly the Orthodox Church. She asserted that if she were Orthodox she would label the Anglican Church as schismatic because even while it claimed to be a branch of the Catholic Church, there were two parties in the Church of England which interpreted official documents in contradictory ways. Sheringham argued that because of this division, the ‘Catholic’ element of the Anglican body would have first to ‘purge itself of heresy’ before it could expect to be accepted as part of the Orthodox Church.²⁴

Indeed, even when divisions were not recognised as detrimental, they were nevertheless acknowledged as characteristic of Anglicanism. The dividing line between the various types of Anglicanism was difficult to draw, as was seen in a *Church Times* article in February 1915. This offered twenty-four defining characteristics which helped to differentiate between types of Anglo-Catholics such as ‘moderate high church with broad sympathies,’ or ‘bachelor priest’ or ‘Eastward position, lights.’²⁵ Catholics criticised this division within the Anglican body, maintaining that for Anglo-Catholics, the only satisfactory answer existed in the Church of Rome.²⁶

Both in discussions among themselves and in dialogue with non-Catholics, Catholics firmly asserted their distinction from the Anglo-Catholic body, particularly during the war when national biases made Catholic unity so much more difficult and yet, at the same time, all the more critical to demonstrate. Catholics did not only express their distinctiveness but very often tried to demonstrate their superiority over

²⁴ *The Church Times* 27 November 1914, p. 544.

²⁵ See *The Church Times* on Prayerbook revision February –March 1915.

²⁶ See *Higher Anglicanism*, (1916); ‘Pretending’ *The Tablet* 4 March 1916, p. 298; and Pike (1916).

the Anglican Church and its Anglo-Catholic wing.²⁷ For instance, in a six-part series in 1916 entitled 'Church Without a Theory', *The Tablet* refuted the Catholic claims made in a *Church Times* article by the Anglican Athelstan Riley. The series concluded:

Athelstan Riley is largely sympathetic with the Roman Catholic Church but cannot accept the Papal claims. He thinks that is the only problem but it seems that it cannot be. What it comes to is that Rome will not admit anyone who does not agree with every point of Roman doctrine...After finding it impossible to accept Rome or Orthodoxy, [Riley] says that he is left with the Church of England as his only option.²⁸

To the writer of this article the Anglican inability to find a better alternative was not reason enough to be part of a church whose teachings were, in the Catholic opinion, questionable at best. *The Tablet* argued that Anglicanism, even Anglo-Catholicism, could not make any claims to legitimate catholicity since at its very root Anglicanism made compromises on the fundamental principle of the Catholic Church: that of unity and its foundation in the see of Rome. During the war, Catholics highlighted the results of this compromise of Christian for national unity, and at the same time asserted their own contrasting supra-national as well as Christian unity. Catholics maintained that the ideas of Catholicism could not peacefully coexist with the principles on which the Anglican Church was based and that Christian unity had to be based on something higher and more authoritative than national allegiance.²⁹

A.H. Nankivell, a Catholic convert and apologist, explained this position in his 1916 *Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet, *Higher Anglicanism*, distinguishing Catholic unity from that of Anglo-Catholicism. He maintained that the Church was a visible institution which was and had, therefore, to be 'visibly one'.

²⁷ See 'Pretending' *The Tablet* 4 March 1916, p. 298.

²⁸ 'Church Without a Theory' *The Tablet* 29 January 1916, p. 139.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

Unity is, after all, a necessity that cannot be dispensed with. In the stress and strain of everyday life even the most large-minded Anglicans have too often come to lose the international outlook and to think English opinion more important than Catholic opinion. But now unity outward and visible is more and more felt to be the one thing needful.³⁰

Nankivell explained this further, when he took into explicit consideration the claims of Anglo-Catholicism, separating the Catholic position from that of Anglo-Catholicism. On the one hand he set out that Rome was the centre of unity but he also asserted boldly: 'EPISCOPACY BY ITSELF DOES NOT LEAD TO UNITY'.³¹ He maintained that the Church's unity rested in the Church itself and that because of this, Anglicans should not ask whether or not they could stay within the Anglican fold and practise the Catholic faith as they increasingly understood it. Rather, they should ask the 'main question', namely: 'Where is the Catholic Church?'³² Only from this basis could they even begin to understand the necessity of locating Catholic authority in the Catholic body which, Nankivell maintained, was not only unified in its headship but throughout time and space by means of the traditions of the Church and the acceptance of Catholic teaching and practice.³³ This factor of authority, Nankivell claimed, distinguished Catholics not only from Protestants but even from Anglo-Catholics.

Catholics argued that although Anglicans did have a measure of authority in the form of the thirty-nine articles, these set out only a very basic framework of belief and were not binding to the same degree as Catholic dogma was.³⁴ A writer in *The Tablet* asserted his position against such dogmatic ambiguity in a 1918 article 'Sacred Studies', in which he argued that if the Anglican Church could allow the freedom to

³⁰ *Higher Anglicanism*, p. 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–20.

³⁴ T. Thomas, *The British* (1988), pp. 48–49.

reject basic Christian tenets such as the virgin birth or the bodily resurrection of Christ, Anglicans might have to 're-examine the foundation of an article of the Creed'. He also suggested quite severe implications when he asked: 'But what would happen if she found she had to repudiate an article? She would clearly have to abandon all claim to be divine, as well as all right to teach.' This writer further asserted that any confidence which people could have in the Church would be damaged irreparably and the basis on which people built their Christian beliefs would be turned to such an extent that rather than the Church being the provider of truths, those within that particular Christian body would 'sit in judgment on the Church!' This author concluded: 'such a Church cannot be divine nor can it claim our adherence to its teaching'.³⁵

United We Stand: The Claims of Catholic Authority

Just as Catholics pointed to the difference in authority when discussing more general matters of theology and church policies, they also felt it to be the primary weakness of Anglicanism in more specific matters which arose.³⁶ This was evident in the Kikuyu Controversy, a disagreement which developed over an ecumenical service which took place in East-Central Africa in 1913. This involved Anglican and Nonconformist parishioners worshipping together in a Scottish Presbyterian Church and hearing a homily given by the Anglican Bishop of Mombassa. Perhaps the most divisive element of this service was that all those present except for the Friends had

³⁵ *The Tablet* 2 March 1918, p. 277.

³⁶ Debates over the 1917 appointment of the Bishop of Hereford and the theological position of William Sanday were occasions for such Catholic responses. See *The Tablet* 'Letters to the Editor' throughout 1918.

received communion, a decision which led to the Bishop of Zanzibar attempting to excommunicate the Bishop of Mombassa.³⁷

Although such an event might seem unimportant to Catholics or even Anglican churchmen in Britain, particularly given the general preoccupation with the events of the war, the Kikuyu Controversy brought to light many of the contradictions which existed within the Church of England as well as the differences between the Anglican and Catholic Churches. Of the greatest importance, the Kikuyu Controversy exposed the problems of Anglican division and the lack of Anglican authority.³⁸ This second point was highlighted both in the debate which arose over whether or not the Bishop of Zanzibar had the authority to excommunicate another bishop (it was decided that he did not) and also in the fact that the Kikuyu Controversy was not satisfactorily resolved even in 1915, when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, made his official ruling that such services were inappropriate.³⁹ Rather than ending the debate this ruling indicated the challenges which the Anglican Church had still to face, particularly because Davidson did not say that such services were inherently inappropriate but that they were not suited for the present time.⁴⁰ This provided grounds for Catholics to assert that the Anglican authority was weak, ineffective and ungrounded. For instance, *The Tablet* asserted in a May 1915 article entitled 'The Archbishop of Canterbury on Kikuyu':

Canterbury has spoken. There is not much in common between Roman decisions and the rare ones that come from Canterbury; but Rome and Canterbury agree, at least, in being each consistent to its own policy. There is nothing the Pope fears more than to compromise the Catholic faith in even the

³⁷ The topic of Kikuyu continued to appear in both *The Church Times* and *The Tablet* well into 1916 and was also given attention by *The Month*, July 1914, p. 1; *The Oscotian* (1914), pp. 10–25; and *The Harvest* May 1915, p. 104.

³⁸ See *The Oscotian* (1914), pp. 24–26.

³⁹ 'The Archbishop of Canterbury on Kikuyu', *The Tablet* 22 May 1915, p. 655.

⁴⁰ *The Church Times* 5 February 1915, p. 124.

least point; there is nothing the Archbishop of Canterbury fears more than to frighten away any member of the Church of England by being too narrow.⁴¹

The matter of Anglican agreement and authority ran even deeper than the isolated case of Kikuyu and it was this underlying lack of authority which was regarded as the greater concern. A 1916 *Tablet* article entitled 'The Anglican Place in Christendom' asserted this shortcoming, saying that if one thing ought to be expected from a church or religious group it was that it would 'stand for something'. The article argued that the Church existed to teach the truth and that, when a body did not teach anything definite it could not possibly teach the truth. It then declared that with Anglicanism there was, on the one hand, the claim to be Catholic and, on the other, the admission of high churchmen that it was possible to be Anglican while also proclaiming doctrines which were unorthodox. The author maintained that because of this dualism, the Anglican Church was necessarily handicapped as a religious body.⁴²

Catholics capitalised on this sign of doctrinal and ecclesiastical division within the Anglican body and published numerous articles which attempted to demonstrate, either by argument or example, the superiority of Catholicism over Anglicanism and especially over Anglo-Catholicism. For instance in 1914 *The Oscotian* recorded the story of a convert who claimed that he had believed initially that there was no real difference between Anglo and Roman Catholicism 'except for the Pope'. However, after the Kikuyu Controversy this same individual could no longer accept the Catholicism of the Anglican Church. He explained that the dispute demonstrated how the fundamental doctrines of the church had been undermined. Once this had happened, 'The whole superstructure would necessarily collapse', since 'there was no

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, *The Tablet* 22 May 1915, p. 653.

⁴² 'The Anglican Place in Christendom', *The Tablet* 4 September 1916, p. 294.

seat of authority, no definite creed, no discipline, in fact nothing but a City of Error and Confusion.’⁴³ Troubling as this was made out to be, *The Oseotian* claimed that the solution to this trouble was readily found in the Catholic Church since Catholicism not only ensured a ‘safe and prosperous journey’ to travellers who were perplexed but it gave ‘the charm of infinite variety’ to the many pilgrims who moved from ‘the City of Confusion to the City of that Peace which passeth understanding’.⁴⁴

Catholics could be expected to use this situation to their advantage. However, it is notable that the Church of England, and particularly Anglo-Catholics, also acknowledged the temptation which existed for its members to adopt a Catholic position.⁴⁵ For instance, *The Church Times* reported that not only in Britain but even at the front, the divisive matter of Kikuyu had produced converts to Rome. One article reported that a ‘gallant young officer’ who was an heir to a peerage returned to Britain with the surprising news that he had entered the Catholic Church. He claimed that the reason for this decision was the ‘Kikuyu-like proceedings of certain C of E Army chaplains’. He was, it was reported, ‘Ashamed to belong to a Church the ministers of which seemed to be at liberty openly to flout its fundamental principles on a point of first importance.’ To Anglicans what was recognised to be even worse than this singular instance was the growing trend in this Roman direction. The reporter of this incident said that although such ‘secessions’ were not defensible, given the state of the Anglican Church, they were not surprising either.⁴⁶ Even more forcibly than the Catholic arguments, this Anglican recognition of the benefits, not only of Catholic ritual but Catholic authority, offered support for Catholic claims.

⁴³ J.H. Falconer Morgan printed in *The Oseotian* (1914), p. 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ D. Thompson, ‘War, the Nation and the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope,’ *Studies in Church History*, vol. 20 ed. W. Shiels, (Oxford, 1984), pp. 341 –344.

⁴⁶ *The Church Times* 13 August 1915, p. 148.

Even in cases which did not end in conversion, instances of ‘Kikuyu at the Front’ proved challenging to the Anglican body. In 1915, *The Tablet* published a letter written by Reverend J.B. Ward to his father:

One thing does come home very forcibly to me now, Father, and that is the two parties in the Church of England. We have two chaplains attached to our Field Ambulance, a Wesleyan and a C of E. The former naturally is what we term Low Church, and so is the latter; in fact, one is as Low as the other, and one wonders why they are not of the same Communion...they repeat the Kikuyu trouble, they have general evening Communion, when all partake, irrespective of what they are – C of E, Wesleyan, Baptist, Methodist or any other denomination. It is very pleasant from their point of view, the unity of Christians generally, and certainly saves time, but is the C of E a Church on the same footing as the Orthodox or Catholic Churches are? ...Our French interpreter, who is a priest, says that he cannot understand it. I don't blame him.⁴⁷

Catholics did not blame him either, and in addressing the difficulties created by ecumenism they tried to demonstrate the necessity of their distinctiveness.⁴⁸ To what extent the Catholic Church actually met the standards it set for the Anglican Church is subject to debate, but the Catholic attempt at least to appear superior to the Anglican position, both in the Kikuyu controversy and more generally, is clear.

Catholic Distinctiveness

Although in some instances such as Kikuyu, Catholics pointed to legitimate weaknesses in the Anglican structure, many of the ‘flaws’ which Catholics claimed to exist in Anglicanism were not actually weaknesses, but rather points of doctrinal difference and practical response. These separated Catholics and non-Catholics but by no means favoured a particular denomination. The understanding of confession was one obvious point of difference which separated Catholic from non-Catholic teaching

⁴⁷ Printed in *The Tablet* 13 November 1915, p. 626.

⁴⁸ See ‘Pretending’, *The Tablet*, 4 March 1916, p. 298, and *Higher Anglicanism*.

and which, in turn affected the churches' understanding of its role and responsibility in practical Christian life. Rather than resting solely on a person's ability to obtain forgiveness of sins by means of a private audience with God, Catholics relied on intercessors and particularly on the sacrament of reconciliation. This was not least because of their different presuppositions regarding church authority, the sacraments and means of salvation.⁴⁹ Because of this different understanding of penance and reconciliation, although neither the Catholic nor the Protestant churches condoned immoral behaviour, the premise by which each judged sinfulness and repentance differed. To begin with, the Catholic distinction between venial and mortal sins allowed them to distinguish the severity of different types of offences in a way that Protestants could not. This distinction played out in the way in which Catholics and Protestants acknowledged specific instances of sin. Notably, Catholics and non-Catholics differed in their definitions of sinful behaviour, particularly vices such as drinking, gambling and swearing.⁵⁰ On the one hand, some Anglicans and Nonconformists considered these to be grave offences. Hastings explained: 'The pious Free churchman had a horror of alcohol, dancing, cards, the theatre and observed on Sundays a still more disciplined lifestyle.' Catholics, on the other hand, generally considered any excesses in these areas to be troubling but not such as to bring into question the sincerity of a person's religious devotion. A pious Catholic could both drink and dance. What is more: 'He might play cards with the local clergy when they visited his home, and if he did not play tennis on a Sunday it was only so as not to upset Protestant relatives or neighbours.'⁵¹

⁴⁹ Plater, pp. 70 –88.

⁵⁰ See Hastings, pp. 135 –137.

⁵¹ Adrian Hastings demonstrates that while Catholics shared some sectarian aspects with nonconformity, they parted ways regarding their approach to morality. Hastings, p. 137.

Whereas some Protestants regarded Catholics as being lax, Catholics claimed that Protestants at times separated ‘that which God has joined together’ and that in doing this, they mistook many things to be sinful in themselves which were actually good but had been made bad because of improper usage. In an attempt to express this difference, a *Dublin Review* article of 1918, ‘Simplicity in Religion’, maintained that Catholicism, by its very nature, attempted to draw people and the whole of human experience into unity. This, the article claimed, united rather than separated: ‘the Human and the Divine, the Mother and the Child, the external and the internal, the Law of God and the freedom of man, the body and the spirit, the Pope and the Episcopate, the natural and the supernatural, poetry and prose, art and religion.’ Thus, when used ‘lawfully’ all things could be beneficial and, therefore, could be part of the ‘divine scheme for the blessing and redemption of mankind... All comes from God. That which the Hand of God has joined in one, let no man tear asunder.’⁵² Based on this premise, Catholics asserted that the things of the world did not have to be abandoned but that, instead, they had to be made pure through repentance, penance and absolution.

This difference regarding sin and absolution was combined with a more practical difference related to the timing of confirmation and first communion.⁵³ The Anglican Church officially held that confirmation allowed access to communion. Therefore these two rites were inextricably tied. In theory this was not a problem as it was also held that confirmation should be conferred at a young age, namely: ‘As soon as the child can profess the Christian Creed intelligently, resolve on obedience to God’s commandments... and address Him in the language of filial love, consciously

⁵² O.R. Vassall Phillips, ‘Simplicity in Religion’, *The Dublin Review* April 1918, p. 280.

⁵³ A.H. Baverstock, *When Should Children be Confirmed?* (1916), pp. 60 –75.

used.’⁵⁴ However, as confirmation was also seen as a deepening of faith, it was often the case that children were not confirmed until late childhood or early adulthood, generally at the age of twelve for girls and fourteen for boys.⁵⁵ Because most working-class Anglicans left school to work at around the age of fourteen, the vast majority of working-class children were never confirmed.⁵⁶

The Catholic experience was different. Whereas Anglicans withheld communion until confirmation, from the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially after *Acerbo Nimis* and *Quam Singulari*, Catholics were not only permitted but encouraged to take their First Communion at the age of seven. Thus, they could wait for confirmation until they were more mature but in the meantime they did not have to abstain from the sacraments and they could, therefore, participate in and come to know experientially, the Church’s liturgical routine. Pius X highlighted the importance of this, refuting the Jansenist errors of those who saw the Eucharist as more of a reward rather than a remedy for human frailty.⁵⁷

Although they did not necessarily act on it, most Catholics supported the soundness of this position. The saying which was credited to the Jesuits: ‘Give us a child till he is seven and we will mould him for life’ was perhaps an exaggeration. However, in many respects it was very much in keeping with the ideal for catechism and first communion in the Catholic Church.⁵⁸ Catholics did not suggest that religious teaching should end at the age of seven, but they emphasised the need for practical exposure to the Church’s resources during those foundational years. In a homily which he gave in 1915 Cardinal Archbishop Bourne hailed the importance of this early training and claimed with some satisfaction that among the lessons which the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁶ S. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, 1880–1939* (1999), pp. 140–142.

⁵⁷ *Acerbo Nimis* and *Quam Singulari* in Carlen, pp. 29–36 and 135–140.

⁵⁸ Baverstock, 78.

war was revealing was the vital importance of ‘definite religious teaching for the children of Catholic parents’. He claimed that the war demonstrated the ‘enormous difference’ between Catholics who were prepared through definite instruction from the time of childhood and those people who did not have this religious advantage. He noted: ‘Both may be equally courageous in the face of danger, but whereas the one knows exactly what to do to prepare his soul to pass into the presence of his Maker, the other, although he may desire to do so, scarcely knows how even to begin.’⁵⁹

This comparison obviously did not take into account those non-Catholics whose faith was devout and whose religious preparation was solidly in place. However, it did not necessarily exclude those non-Catholics who were by family background and upbringing nominally ‘Christian’, or even those who attended church regularly. Indeed, Bourne’s point was not a suggestion that non-Catholic men lacked good intentions regarding the Christian faith, but that the churches lacked a clear structure for teaching them the tenets of Christianity and how to apply these to daily living. His counterpoint was that in contrast to this, Catholics were much better equipped with a way in which to approach both daily Christian practice and periods of particular trial by means of dogma, liturgy, and the sacraments.⁶⁰ During the war this preparation proved all the more critical to Catholic devotion and practice.

Diversity of Catholics: Unity of Catholicism

Although Catholics accepted the importance of both their religious distinctiveness and their dogmatic uniformity in establishing the basis of their universality, they had still to recognise the limitations of their unity as it related to

⁵⁹ *The Tablet*, 13 March 1915, p. 349.

⁶⁰ See Pollard, pp. 40–50.

politics, culture and society. Doing this was no small challenge. On the one hand, universality was, as Catholics reminded their more ecumenically-minded fellows, a sense of being ‘complete’ or ‘whole’. In matters of dogma or liturgical practice it could not, therefore, allow for latitudinarianism or pluralism so as to be inclusive.⁶¹ However, Catholicism, by its very name and nature, required a high degree of flexibility so that its basis and goals could be properly recognised and fitted into the various polities, cultures and societies where it was practised. Difficulties developed where politics, culture and religious teachings intersected.

This difficulty in locating and asserting Catholic unity was not, of course, created by the war even if it was exacerbated by it.⁶² In her study on unity in Victorian Catholicism, Mary Heimann highlights the differences which existed within British Catholicism, particularly in terms of nationality, culture and socio-economic background.⁶³ Likewise, Hugh McLeod addresses the differences which existed in terms of social and political positioning.⁶⁴ Whereas Germany, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland all had Catholic political parties, Britain did not even attempt to demonstrate this level of agreement with regard to these wider spheres.⁶⁵ McLeod says of this:

The possibility of mobilising Catholics as Catholics was limited by the fact that ethnic loyalties were as strong as sectarian loyalties, and when the two came into conflict, ethnic loyalty often received a higher priority than explicitly Catholic concerns. Thus in pre-war Britain, preoccupation with Ireland meant that Catholics voted overwhelmingly for Liberal candidates in most elections, in spite of the insistence by many of the clergy that Catholic schools would fare better with the conservatives.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *The Tablet* 10 July 1915, p. 62.

⁶² Davis, pp. 124–129.

⁶³ M. Heimann, pp. 170–173.

⁶⁴ See H. McLeod, ‘Building the Church Ghetto’, *Studies in Church History*, vol. 23, eds. W.J. Shiels and Diana Wood, (Oxford, 1986), pp. 420–426. Hereafter referred to as ‘Building the Church Ghetto’. See also Hornsby-Smith, *Roman Catholics in England* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 24.

⁶⁵ ‘Building the Church Ghetto’, p. 414.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

Divisions amongst British Catholics extended beyond politics into matters of social standing and cultural background.⁶⁷ There was, to begin with, a pointed difference between the approaches of Old Catholics and converts. Although they were similar in matters of social, economic and political positioning, their understanding of the Catholic Church and its relationship to the British nation separated these groups. Catholics with a recusant heritage often harboured both a defensive spirit and a sense of entitlement which converts did not share. This was due primarily to the fact that Old Catholic families had made the choice to be both English and Catholic in spite of the establishment pressure against this. This did not amount to a deeper nor a more shallow faith but rather to a particular understanding of what distinguished Catholics from non-Catholics. For those Catholics who converted, there was, conversely, a greater sense of personal choice in their religious beliefs. Their Catholic identity was not shaped by a sense of having been politically marginalised but focussed rather on the ideological and theological ideas which played into their conversion to Catholicism.

Even more dramatically than the Catholicism of British converts, Irish Catholicism took a different form from Old British, and particularly English, Catholicism. In Mary Heimann's estimation, for Irish Catholics in Britain in the decades preceding the war:

Religious intuition involved attitudes qualitatively different from the discipline of Tridentine Catholicism... not... better or worse: simply different. Numbers of Catholics in Ireland may have remained, and assuredly did remain, personally devout without frequent recourse to the Sacraments, and maybe even with only minimal contact with the official Church.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ J. Hickey, *Urban Catholics* (1968), pp. 45 –50.

⁶⁸ Heimann, p.14.

Such differences had to be accounted for if the Catholic Church was to understand the extent of their practical unity and internal agreement.⁶⁹ However, as Heimann demonstrates for the late Victorian period, and the Church attempted to convey in the period of the war, that if the location of Catholic unity was properly understood to exist on a spiritual plane, these differences in political leanings and social positioning, while threatening to the social cohesion of Catholicism, did not affect the basis or reality of Catholic agreement.⁷⁰ Ensuring that this unity was properly articulated and protected was a high concern in Britain, not least because of the other differences which threatened to divide the Catholic body. Thus the catechism was of heightened importance in establishing the requirements and setting out the parameters of Catholic unity. The catechism outlined in plain terms the basic requirements placed on Catholics by dogmatic teaching, religious obligations and magisterial authority. Although the development of varying catechetical books in different countries called into question the uniform teaching of the supra-national Church, the reliance on the Penny Catechism in Britain resulted in clear and uniform catechesis within Britain. This ensured that the laity understood what was expected of them and what they could expect from their clerical counterparts. The Catechism comprised a series of questions and answers regarding Church teachings which explicitly conveyed the basic dogmatic and doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church. Such a tool profoundly affected the Catholic approach to religious education since it was by the students' knowledge of this that their preparedness for full reception into the Church was measured. Indeed, Bishop Casartelli stipulated in 1915 that before catechism was completed:

1. The prayers and text of the catechism are to be learned accurately by heart.

⁶⁹ Hastings, p. 134.

⁷⁰ Heimann, especially p. 100.

2. The meaning of the answers of the catechism assigned to each class should be known by the children in accordance with their age.
3. The sacred history must be known by heart. It should be taught as simple stories to be narrated by the children in their own simple way.
4. All the scholars in each class are expected to know the whole previous course of prayers, catechism, doctrine and sacred history.
5. A record of the catechism, doctrine and sacred history lessons given, is to be kept by the teacher of each class and marked weekly. This record is to be checked at intervals by the head teacher and presented to the inspector on the day of religious inspection.
6. In those schools where, owing to exceptional circumstances, the full syllabus cannot be prudently attempted, a syllabus based upon the diocesan syllabus may be submitted by the head teacher to the chief inspector for approval, but under no circumstances ought the doctrine to be omitted.⁷¹

Although it was not extraordinary for Catholics to disregard these teachings in the concrete matters of their lives, the Church's positions were not ambiguous and the requirements for Catholic living were clearly set out in the Catechism.

Given the concrete manner and content of Catholic catechesis, Catholics, to a much greater extent than other British Christians, generally knew the fundamental requirements of their faith and how to put these into practice. Moreover, when assessing the validity of a person's Christian faith or the level of his commitment, Catholics, in contrast to Evangelicals, relied less on an understanding of personal salvation or a particular moment of conversion but rather on an acceptance of the Church's dogmatic and doctrinal teachings and the maintenance of Catholic obligations and devotions. As John Wolffe argues, because Catholicism stressed the divine authority of the Church on earth: 'Salvation for the individual was not seen as a result of an internalised personal conversion but in faithful participation in the rites of the church and in deference to its authority.'⁷² Given this starting point and the objective of the Church to maintain orthodoxy through dogmatic teaching and

⁷¹ Salford Diocesan Archive, *Salford Acta*, 1915, Syllabus of Religious instruction in Elementary Schools, p. 77. Hereafter, archive referred to as S.D.A.

⁷² J. Wolffe uses this to explain that Catholicism is a religion more emphatically official in its nature than evangelicalism. Wolffe, p. 30.

hierarchical authority, the goals of catechism and religious education were not seen as the means to bring a person to a moment of ‘salvation’ but the necessary tools to equip Catholics in their participation in and understanding of the life of the Church. The point of catechism was not only to convey the Christian message, but more important, to show systematically how this message was revealed in the sacraments and devotions of the Church.⁷³

As a consequence, Catholics were considered to be prepared, not when they were ‘saved’ but when they knew and understood the Mass, the sacraments, and the basic dogmas and doctrines of the Church well enough to accept them and to incorporate them into their own religious life within the Church. This meant weekly attendance at Mass and occasional trips to the confessional for the ordinary Catholic; and frequent confessions, weekly or even daily Mass attendance and the adoption of Catholic devotions for the more devout. Canon Pool, the head official who compiled data and reported on religious education in Salford diocese acknowledged the necessity of asserting these priorities:

The children must realise what the Mass is, and if they realise it they will love it, and if they love it they will not miss it. Then they must be taught devotions suitable for Mass. I am of the opinion that there is too much hymn singing during mass. What is a child to do during Mass when school days are over if it has been accustomed to nothing but singing hymns? Our chief aim ought to be to teach our children how to pray during Mass and in this, as in all else in their school life, prepare them for their life to come.⁷⁴

Although some Protestants argued that this approach led to mere religiosity, Catholics held that it was in the sacraments that salvation and a true knowledge of God could be obtained. This different understanding of the place of dogma and sacraments was of fundamental importance with regard to the varying approaches to religious education.

⁷³ See Heimann, pp. 111 –120.

⁷⁴ S.D.A. *Acta*, 1915, Syllabus of Religious instruction in Elementary Schools, p. 55.

This basic agreement on the fundamentally important elements of Catholic faith and practice provided Catholics with a platform on which they could agree as Catholics even when their political, cultural and socio-economic positions did not match up.

Sacramental Unity

Because of this firm educational foundation, Catholics shared in a general agreement that their central and unifying point as Catholics was that of the Eucharist and magisterial authority. The Bishop of Newport emphasised this Catholic unity and insisted on its central importance in July 1914 in a homily on ‘The Blessed Sacrament and Catholic Unity’. After noting the general opposition to Catholicism which was posed by society, wherein ‘public opinion and speech’ as well as ‘the whole modern spirit’ challenged the basis of Catholicism, he insisted that Catholic unity was nevertheless firmly grounded because of the unifying factors of magisterial authority, dogmatic agreement and Eucharistic unity which characterised the Catholic Church.

I am not proposing to give a theological lecture on the unity of the Catholic Church. We all know – all here present know – that it is the effect of the constant presence and operation of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is Himself always living and always working... By Him the flock obeys the Bishops, and the Bishops are confirmed and bound in unity by the successor of Saint Peter. By Him there is oneness of worship, in the use of the sacraments, and especially in the sacrifice and in the sacrament of the Christian altar.⁷⁵

Although this unity was grounded in Christ, Catholics claimed that this was practically understood and expressed in Catholic devotions and particularly in communion.⁷⁶ Catholics maintained that while all the sacraments conferred grace, the Eucharist was unique because its grace came to the soul ‘from the actual presence of

⁷⁵Printed in *The Tablet* 18 July 1914, p. 91.

⁷⁶See Heimann pp. 171 –173.

Christ.’ Because it was the union of the human soul with the ‘living Jesus’ it was, therefore, ‘above all others, the sacrament of love’.⁷⁷ Based on its strength, Catholics were reassured that the bond of the Church was more substantial than any other.⁷⁸

This understanding of the Eucharist as the bond of Christian unity was not unique to the Catholic Church. However, some of the specific Catholic doctrines surrounding the Eucharist, namely transubstantiation, were. Moreover, the Catholic Church taught that only Catholics were allowed to participate in Catholic communion. This was significant both because it separated them from other Christians and also because it united them with other Catholics. Thus, while many Nonconformists and, increasingly, Anglicans were open to the idea of interdenominational communion, Catholics proved unwilling to share in the Eucharist with those who did not accept Catholic teachings. Furthermore, ‘Roman’ Catholics were unwilling to share in communion with ‘Catholics’ who were not recognised by the Church of Rome; namely Anglo-Catholics. Thus, unlike Anglo-Catholic, who could choose whether or not to accept transubstantiation and who could choose to be exclusive or not, Catholics maintained that their dogmatic teaching and sacramental exclusivity were not by choice but by authoritative command from their Church. This submission to Church authority in the matter of communion was emphasised during the war when it was not only expected but commanded that Catholic priests assist Catholics of all nations, even Germany and Austria, in their religious obligations.⁷⁹

This position was also contrasted with the Anglican situation. Like Catholics, some Anglicans believed in the real presence in the Eucharist and some Anglo-Catholics even believed in transubstantiation. However, Evangelical Anglicans held a

⁷⁷ A. Ross, *The Grace of Frequent Communion* (1919), p. 3. Hereafter referred to as *Frequent Communion*.

⁷⁸ See ‘Impressions from a Chaplain’, *Stonyhurst Magazine* October 1917, p. 36 ff.

⁷⁹ *More Roman than Rome*, p. 223; Heimann, p. 40.

more Protestant understanding of the Eucharist as a symbol of unity. Thus if they came together as a body to be united in communion Anglicans could all participate but they did not have a united position regarding what it was that they were participating in or in what specific way their act was unifying.

Although it was at times difficult to implement, Catholics recognised the relative strength of their more unified position. The Bishop of Newport even argued that if it was worthily received, communion carried with it a ‘super-national loyalty to the whole of the kingdom of the Son of God on earth’ as well as obedience to hierarchical authority whether ecclesiastical or national. Moreover, in an article which was published only weeks before the outbreak of the war he asserted that: ‘The Blessed Sacrament would stand us in stead even if things became much worse – as, indeed, they might, for a time.’⁸⁰

The Eucharist was not the only point of Catholic unity, however. Given his role as head of the Church, the supreme pontiff was, like the sacrament, an obvious point of Catholic unity and in a much more tangible sense, an authoritative voice which insisted on Catholic agreement. Given the infallible position of the pope and the central place of dogma in Catholic teaching, this authority was distinctive from other forms of episcopal leadership, whether Anglican or Orthodox. The Archbishop of Canterbury could make statements about matters of doctrine or practice and the Anglican body could call councils to discuss the teachings of the Church. However, as seen already in the Kikuyu controversy, unlike the supreme pontiff of Rome even Canterbury could not speak authoritatively for the whole of the Anglican Church.⁸¹ Although it was supreme, Catholics made a point to demonstrate that papal authority was not grounded in the Pope’s ability to assert new ideas but in his authority to

⁸⁰ ‘The Blessed Sacrament and Catholic Unity’, *The Tablet* 18 July 1914, p. 94.

⁸¹ *Higher Anglicanism*, p. 12.

judge, by means of Catholic teaching, what the Church actually believed and what the traditions, liturgy and dogmas implied. Catholics recognised that this definition of papal authority not only limited the human powers of the pope but pointed back to the basis of Catholic unity, the teaching of Christ, which Catholics believed to be preserved in dogma, revealed in the sacraments and protected by the Magisterium.⁸²

Unity in Devotion

Sacramental and papal authority were certainly the strongest points of Catholic unity and authority. In addition to these, however, Catholics also shared in the practice of popular Catholic devotions such as the rosary and benediction. These helped to unite Catholics in their corporal act of prayer.⁸³ Catholic devotions were numerous and varied. There were devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or to the Blessed Mother of God, as well as specific devotions of various sodalities and guilds, all of which had ‘some special way of doing honour to God, Our Blessed Lady or the Saints’ and devotions to individual saints for whom people harboured particular affection.⁸⁴ Although at times confusing, Bourne explained that the devotions of the Church were complementary and compatible, not contradictory or disharmonious. Thus, even when devotions varied, they did not divide.⁸⁵ Bourne asserted the benefits of these devotions in a homily which he gave in 1917:

The first thing we have to remember is that the Catholic Church is the home of liberty; the second, that the Catholic Church is the source of an immense profusion of graces of Almighty God. We may liken the Catholic Church to some garden filled with beautiful flowers which we may pluck or not, as we like. Some we may admire and choose as our own; others we may pass by in seeming neglect; and the Church will not condemn us though we have not given the same appreciation to all those beautiful flowers of devotion we see

⁸² See J.D. Mercier *The Voice of Belgium* (1917), especially the preface by Bourne, p. 49.

⁸³ ‘Building the Church Ghetto’, p. 428 and Heimann, p. 35.

⁸⁴ Printed in *The Tablet* 13 October 1917, p. 465.

⁸⁵ See Becker, pp. 61–113, and Heimann, p. 100.

before our eyes...The Church does not call upon us to adopt for our private devotion all the many means, one only is essential, and that is the offering up of the Sacrifice of the Mass.⁸⁶

Because this was the case, extra-sacramental devotions were seen as additional acts of piety, not the definitive aspects of Catholic worship. Even so, they were seen as beneficial and therefore, important to the practice of the Catholic faith.⁸⁷

This idea that Catholic devotions enriched but were not required as obligatory parts of Catholic life was key to understanding the basis of Catholic devotion. Of equal importance was the effect which such Catholic devotions had on the relationship between individual Catholics and their Catholic community. Due to the way in which Catholic devotions were structured, there was a blending of private and public devotions and a constant return to the Church body. This was because, for the most part, devotions said privately were nevertheless part of the set devotions of the Church and devotions said commonly allowed for individual prayer and involvement in the corporate setting. Thus, as Mary Heimann explains, the more devout an individual Catholic aspired to be, the more that person was brought back into contact with other Catholics. Even in joining 'this worldly' clubs, Catholics were given Catholic prayers to recite and were 'at the very least, nominally under the patronage of a particular saint, or of a divine or Marian attribute'. Moreover, if Catholics aspired to some greater form of spirituality by joining an order or the 'Apostleship of Prayer', they subjected themselves to the rules of that devotional society. As a consequence of this, their spiritual life was increasingly bound up with the social role which they maintained within the wider Catholic community. This was, as Heimann asserts: 'not

⁸⁶ Printed in *The Tablet* 13 October 1917, p. 465.

⁸⁷ See Heimann, p. 127 ff.

only through his church, school, hospital and at times of socially recognised importance such as his birth, marriage and death, but also in his leisure hours.’⁸⁸

These devotions not only brought Catholics into contact with other members of the Catholic Church on earth but offered reminders that they were in communion with the saints in heaven. Their reliance on this relationship was personal and specific, as was evidenced during the war. For instance in 1915 *The Harvest* suggested that Catholics turn to the patron saints of their countries by praying ‘A Soldier’s Litany’. This included Saints Michael, Patrick, George, Andrew and David, and was to be sung to ‘Lourdes’ Hymn’ or ‘Hail Glorious Saint Patrick’. The refrain for all verses was ‘O come to our aid, O come to our aid, O come to our aid, in our battle take part.’⁸⁹ Such prayers were held to be efficacious and Catholics believed that with the aid of the saints, they would be protected both in body and particularly in soul.

Not only the devotions attached to the saints but the stories of the saints themselves were considered to be useful sources of devotional assistance and practical teaching. These were popular among Catholics as was demonstrated by the constant requests by chaplains for pious literature. In a survey taken from Westminster to determine what was required and desired by war prisoners in terms of religious aids, the most common response was that the men wanted religious literature and, particularly, stories of ‘saints’ lives’. The chaplains also asked for these regularly, and their popularity can be seen in that they were included in the care packets which were sent to Catholic soldiers by a Catholic group which was supported by *The Tablet*.⁹⁰ In one of these pamphlets, entitled *Saints for Soldiers* (1916), the author spoke of the devotion which soldiers ought to cultivate for saints who had distinguished

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁸⁹ *The Harvest* (1915), p. 119.

⁹⁰ See Westminster Bo. 52 a–g and *The Tablet* 10 October 1914, p. 513; 17 October 1914 p. 547.

themselves by their brave actions. As her justification for writing such a work, the author explained: ‘Saints taken up in any way are profitable company. You cannot think about great men and women without gaining something of their radiance.’ She explained that this was particularly important for the young men at the front. She then expounded the importance of various saints, giving a virtual litany which included Saint Christopher, Saint George, Saint Lawrence, the Blessed Joan of Arc⁹¹ as well as several less prominent saints.⁹²

While this understanding of communal prayers and devotion to the saints was certainly recognised in a general sense, devotion to Mary was more prominent than any other.⁹³ This was the case before the war and the popularity of Marian devotions continued and, if anything, increased during this time of increased petition and prayer. Mary’s importance was generally recognised; Cardinal Mercier made it clear that while Christianity could conceivably exist without the Angels and Martyrs and that Christian piety could exist without the cult of the Saints, it could not exist without Mary. He explained that there was a time at the beginning of Christianity when ‘the Apostles, Confessors, Virgins and all our Saints’ did not figure upon Christian altars because at that time they had not passed onto the next life. However, Christianity without Mary’s presence was utterly impossible because:

Christianity is Christ and his work; and in the supernatural economy that divine Wisdom pleased to conceive and divine Love pleased to realise, the anointed Son of God is the Son of Mary... Mother of Jesus and our own Mother, Mary is also the Mother of the Church.⁹⁴

Since she was recognised to be not only the Mother of God but also the mother of the whole Church, Mary was recognised as a source of Catholic unity which was more

⁹¹ Joan of Arc was not beatified until 1922.

⁹² A. O’Connor, *Saints for Soldiers* (1916), p. 4.

⁹³ See Heimann, p. 33.

⁹⁴ Mercier, p. 97.

potent than national characteristics of worship or loyalty. As a woman and mother, Catholics claimed that Mary hurt at the loss of her son and as a follower of Christ they held that she recognised and accepted the necessity of His sacrifice. During the war Catholics maintained that just as she wept for her Son, so Mary wept for her sons involved in the scourge of war. As Christ was innocent, so were her soldier sons.⁹⁵ This made her the perfect intercessor in time of war.

Although she could be invoked for victory, Mary was turned to even more often in petitions for peace, protection, succour and in thanks for miraculous escapes.⁹⁶ Even when she was asked for help as a conquering hero she was rarely separated from her position as Lady of Sorrows, Lady of Dolours or protector of Christians. Cardinal Bourne encouraged this devotion to Mary in a homily which he gave in 1916 explaining: ‘We were living in a time of intense sorrow and anxiety... And what was the answer that the Blessed Lord was giving us in such a moment as this? “Behold thy Mother.” To whom should we turn in greater confidence than to her?’⁹⁷ This widespread devotion was also encouraged by the Pope who asked in his Christmas Allocution of 1915:

Will Mary, who is queen not of wars and slaughter, but of the kingdom of peace, disappoint the trust and the prayers of her faithful children? ... When man has hardened his own heart, and his hates have overrun the earth, when fire and sword are raging, and when the world rings with the sound of weeping and the noise of arms, when human reason is found at fault and all civilised rights are scattered like thistledown, faith and history alike point us to the succour, to the omnipotence of prayer, to the Mediatrix, to Mary. In all security and trust we cry *Regina pacis, ora pro nobis*.⁹⁸

Catholics were quick to assert that Mary was not simply a powerful intercessor because of her faithful petitions. Her prayers were considered to be potent

⁹⁵ See Benedict XV ‘The Pope’s Christmas Allocution’ *The Tablet* 1 January 1916, p. 7.

⁹⁶ D.A.A./R.C., ‘Lourdes’.

⁹⁷ Printed in *The Tablet* 18 November 1916, p. 685.

⁹⁸ Benedict XV, ‘The Pope’s Christmas Allocution’, p. 7.

because she felt a true sorrow about the situation which existed in the war-torn world.⁹⁹ This, Catholics claimed, made her more sympathetic. However, as the Bishop of Plymouth warned in his Lenten pastoral in 1917, the fact that Mary understood rightful sorrow, made it necessary for Catholics to approach Jesus and Mary with ‘positive deeds of self-denial’ because without these there was ‘no real earnestness in prayer’. Thus, while they were ‘far from the days when kings wore sackcloth and even so clothed the beasts of the field,’ Catholics could still be earnest in their prayers, especially when so many young lives were at stake.¹⁰⁰

Purgatory and Devotion to the Dead

In addition to the devotions to saints and the expectation that the saints were praying for the souls on earth, Catholics were also united both in their beliefs regarding the dead and in the obligations which they believed to exist for them in their prayers for the dead. This was a point both of unity and distinctiveness for Catholics. Most Christians agreed about the basic creedal tenets of the Christian faith but there were still several points of contention, particularly regarding the appropriate preparation for and assurance of heaven, whether or not purgatory existed and what relationship existed between the people on earth and the saints in heaven.¹⁰¹ Given its wide theological base, the Anglican Church was most seriously divided about such matters; a distinguishing factor between their own communion and that of Rome. In contrast, Catholics made an effort to demonstrate that among their own body there existed not only a unity of belief within the earthly communion but a continuity of faith between this world and the next. Catholic teaching explained that the prayers of

⁹⁹ See Cardinal Bourne’s address of 18 November 1916, in *The Tablet* 18 November, 1916. p. 673.

¹⁰⁰ *The Tablet* 3 March 1917, p. 292.

¹⁰¹ *The Church Times* 28 August, 1914, p. 222.

those on earth were of use to the souls in purgatory and the prayers of those in heaven benefited the church on earth. Such positions separated Catholics from other Christians even before the war. However, this difference in their understanding of death and the afterlife was even more important during the war given the heavy losses and the desire felt to understand and make sense of them.¹⁰²

Because Catholics had a clear position about death and about what they held to be the necessary preparation for the afterlife, they at least knew how they were supposed to prepare for and respond to death, whether their own death or that of a loved one. Because of this, some Catholics triumphantly claimed that they were in a better position than their fellow soldiers who were Protestant. During the war, a *Tablet* correspondent who penned himself 'Missionarius' asserted that the Catholic Church had 'come down to the level of the battlefield' in her 'supernatural colours'. She was thus: 'a jolly good church to live out of' and when people were faced with death she proved to be a: 'damned good church to die in'.¹⁰³ Catholics maintained that it was therefore, understandable when Irish Catholics flocked to their priests for absolution, 'receiving the Bread of Life with a faith that throws the heavens as wide open as they were to the eyes of Stephen.'¹⁰⁴

Although this was a simplified image of the Catholic response, it was the perception most widely offered by the Catholic Church in Britain and it certainly contained within it the germ of Catholic thought. Whereas many Protestants believed there to be a wide gap which separated this world from the next, Catholics were taught to believe that the next life was near at hand. For those who were unprepared for heaven, there was the possibility of purgatory to help them prepare. Moreover,

¹⁰² See A. Ross, *A Little Book for Mourners in the Great War 1914–1918* (1919). Hereafter referred to as *Mourners*.

¹⁰³ Missionarius, 'The War and the Conversion of England', *The Tablet* 20 February 1915, p. 234.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

through the help of the sacraments and intercessory prayers, Catholics claimed that they could actually know Christ and the saints even while they were still on earth, a point which proved especially important at the front.¹⁰⁵ Because of the Catholic understanding that heaven could be experienced on earth and that a soul might need further purification before reaching its final eternal destiny, the separation between the living and the dead was recognised to be less dramatic for Catholics. Cardinal Mercier explained the consequence of this for Catholics:

There are not two churches, one on the earth, another in Heaven: there is but one, which passes through two phases – the first, an earthly, the second a heavenly phase. To pass from earth to Heaven is to change place of habitation, to go from the less good to the better, but it is not to change one's nature nor even strictly speaking, one's condition. Christ our King desires but one attendant company which is organised here and which displays its splendour on high. What the elect see, we believe, what they possess we hope for, those whom they love, God, Christ and His Mother the Angels and saints we also love; humbly no doubt but with a love like theirs.¹⁰⁶

This belief in the continuity between this life and the next was significant to the way in which Catholics faced death themselves, in the way in which they grieved for their loved ones who died, and in the way in which belief about death shaped their understanding of their Catholic duties.

This Catholic understanding of the next life was also important because of how it affected the views of non-Catholics with regard to Catholicism. For instance, when R.J. Campbell, the promoter of the Anglican New Theology, went to France, he acknowledged that a substantial separation between Protestant and Catholic belief was created by these different views. Although far from showing any personal acceptance of these Catholic views he acknowledged their merit, saying that there was a 'yawning gulf' between the Protestant ideas regarding the living and the dead or, as

¹⁰⁵ See Pike, pp. 1 –6.

¹⁰⁶ Mercier, p. 55.

he corrected himself: ‘between those still in the flesh and those who have done with it’. In contrast he claimed that Catholics demonstrated a ‘simple-minded earnestness’ and that it was impossible not to be moved by Catholic devotion to the dead, for in Catholic Churches there was ‘a strange unearthly power in the very atmosphere’. Given its powerful effects on Catholics, he claimed that if he was told that the exercise of praying for the dead was in vain and ‘that heaven neither desired nor heeded it’ he would have to disagree with this. He offered the reminder that although Protestants did not adopt such devotions, devotion to the dead was practised by the majority of Christians. Moreover, he argued: ‘It has antiquity on its side and though greatly abused in pre-Reformation days, satisfies such a natural instinct and is such a solace to the bereaved that it is a pity Protestants everywhere should not be encouraged to return to it forthwith.’¹⁰⁷

As indicated, this solace affected not only those who were about to die but also those who were left behind since it was they who felt the need for the assurance that their grief was not in vain and that there was some hope for their loved ones who had died. As with other Christians, among those Catholics who lived devout lives, death was shown to be something completely beneficial for the one who passed away.¹⁰⁸ Catholics believed that they not only ought to be prepared but that they were in fact equipped to face their finest hour: death. In his 1917 pamphlet on purgatory, the Benedictine Roger Hudleston explained: ‘Most of all we must school ourselves to recognise that the hour of Death is our supreme and final opportunity, the last great chance we shall have; so that in it we can and ought to surrender ourselves, deliberately yielding our lives up to God with perfect trust and love and

¹⁰⁷ Printed in *The Tablet* 20 November 1915, p. 653.

¹⁰⁸ See W. Meynell, *Aunt Sarah and the War* (1915), pp. 14–20.

confidence.’¹⁰⁹ Catholics recognised that those within the Catholic Church had the assurance of life with God and could, therefore, be confident. Although people feared death, Catholics were reminded that this fear was not in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church. They were told further that they had only to look at the devotions of the Church to see the proper approach to death. Indeed, each of the liturgical offices concluded with prayers for the faithful departed and each Mass acknowledged the blessed dead. Moreover, as Hudleston reminded his readers, no one could say a ‘Hail Mary’ without remembering the hour of death.

Familiarity with death, then, is a characteristic of the Catholic spirit. Indeed, it would hardly be too much to say that its presence in the mind is a test of the true child of the Church; for, as St. Benedict reminds us in his famous chapter on the Instruments of Good Works, ‘To keep death every day before our eyes’ is the way a Christian ought to live.’¹¹⁰

During the war, this was especially important. Whether or not this was a comfort to the men at the front, death was certainly ‘before their eyes’ and the fact that the Church had a well-articulated position regarding the afterlife and the necessary assistance which would allow them to get to heaven provided some security for Catholics.

Of course, hell was always recognised as a possible end. A homilist in Westminster claimed that only one thing in life was absolutely certain:

... and that is death. And then the church recognises and knows and proclaims that death is not the end... Judgment too, cannot be the end. There must be an after life to carry into effect that judgment; and revelation teaches us with unhesitating, unfaltering voice that there is the possibility for every human creature that by his own fault he cast himself away from the presence of the Almighty God and be doomed to be banished from God’s face for all eternity. In other words, the Church never fails to remind us of the possibility of hell.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹R. Hudleston, *God’s Will and Death* (1917), p. 10.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹¹Printed in *The Tablet* 23 June 1917, p. 799.

While this was true, Catholics were also reminded that it was God who chose people to go to heaven and hell. Humans could not know what was in each other's hearts. Therefore, Catholics could hope for the salvation of others even if it was not clear that they had lived Godly lives. While this was the case for both Protestants and Catholics, there was a substantial difference. With other Christians there were only the possibilities of heaven and hell and this was decided as soon as a person passed from life to death.¹¹² For Catholics, on the other hand, there was the additional possibility of purgatory. The orthodox understanding of purgatory and its purpose of cleansing saints from sin was one which introduced hope to many Catholics. The period of purgatory was not argued to be a pleasant one, but eventually it led to heaven even for those who died unprepared. This was seen as an end which was certainly worth the struggle which purgatory demanded.

In accepting the doctrine of purgatory, Catholics necessarily maintained that people had the chance to become perfect even after life on earth had ended. However this did not take from Catholics the accountability to live godly lives while on earth. Rather, it brought into closer contact this world and the next and introduced a period of further purification which reason suggested might well be possible for some Catholics. This Catholic position regarding purgatory created a fundamental difference between Catholic and Protestant views of the afterlife. In particular, because there was always a hope of salvation, even for those who seemed unlikely to go to heaven, among Catholics, prayer for a soul was never seen as unnecessary or disadvantageous. This helped Catholics to maintain a connection with those whom they lost. Although Catholics maintained that some people did, in fact, go to hell, they were also allowed the chance to pray for souls with the hope that they were in

¹¹² The Thirty-nine articles explicitly condemned the doctrine of purgatory.

purgatory and could eventually be saved. Because no one knew who was condemned to hell, Catholics maintained that it was acceptable to hope that someone could be in purgatory. Catholics therefore recognised the great importance of praying for souls in the hope that they were not condemned to hell. Hudleston said of this:

And we can pray for all, for we need not despair even in the case of those who have led bad lives, and who do not seem to have died good deaths. Who are we that we should judge? God is infinitely merciful; he takes all things into account and at the very end the sinner under the influence of grace may have turned to God... we can pray for all despairing of none and we know by faith that by our prayers and good works we can bring help and relief to the suffering souls.¹¹³

This likelihood that a soul would spend some time in purgatory created in Catholics both a need to pray for their loved ones and a hope that, although imperfect presently, the dead might still eventually be in heaven.¹¹⁴ This idea was explained in a CTS pamphlet in a section entitled ‘The Consolation of Purgatory’. This claimed that the doctrine of purgatory was not only reasonable but that it was ‘full of consolation for the mourner’ since violation of God’s law was necessarily followed by punishment but that if this punishment was completed in purgatory it was done so that the soul could be ‘purified from the traces of its earthly pilgrimage and fitted for the presence of God’.¹¹⁵ This consolation was, therefore, possible. However, it could only be found when Catholics prayed for the dead and thus joined their hopes for salvation with the Church on earth as well as the souls who had passed beyond this life.

This understanding of purgatory was not only a potential source of comfort but it reinforced the central point which British Catholics attempted to convey about Catholic unity. Although they were faced with insurmountable divisions in terms of political and social unity, Catholics asserted that in the sacraments, the Magisterium

¹¹³ *Mourners*, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–6.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

and dogmatic teachings of Catholicism they had access to a spiritual unity and a unity of purpose. This, Catholics claimed, not only overcame the divisions of the world but overcame the power of death. This power of unity, although fundamentally offered through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, was recognised by Catholics to be available in the sacraments, practically understood in the teachings of the Church, protected by the magisterium and in all of these ways, secured in the Catholic faith. During the war these elements of Catholic unity, and particularly the central spiritual source of Catholic cohesion, were of heightened importance both for the practice of Catholicism and for the assertion of Catholic unity and distinctiveness. By keeping a clear distinction between spiritual and natural or temporal unity and by submitting to magisterial authority, Catholics attempted to demonstrate their Church's unique ability to hold together even the most diverse individuals by means of the strong supernatural bond of the Catholic faith.

Chapter 2: Catholic Duty: National Patriotism and Catholic Loyalty in Britain

Many times in her history has the Church suffered grievous wounds in the moral sundering of her children under the stress of war, and many have been the scandals and distresses that have afflicted her in the course of political, national, racial contentions between then. Yet always when those wounds went no deeper, she has presently emerged with renewed strength. *Dabit Deus his quoque finem.*¹

This optimism with regard to the supernatural bonds of Catholicism was characteristic of Catholic teachings and during the war the British Catholic Church hoped that this supra-national bond would help Catholics to understand both the duty and limitations of national patriotism. Given the heightened emotions which developed under the stress of the First World War, the Church recognised the great need to set out clearly not only the requirements of spiritual unity but the duties and limitations of national patriotism. If it was to succeed in doing this, the Catholic Church needed both to justify national patriotism within a Catholic context and also to express how Catholic patriotism was distinctive from and superior to other forms of patriotism. Most critically, Catholics had to express how their patriotism was shaped by their Catholic faith and how it was therefore driven by Christian duty and not simply by national allegiances.

¹ 'German Catholics and the War', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, p. 35.

The Catholic Church attempted to distinguish itself first by highlighting the patriotism and devotion of British Catholics in their response to the war.² Michael Snape shows that even in the centuries before the war when Catholics were not officially allowed commissions in the British military, Catholics had considered military service as being closely attached to Christian and Catholic devotion. He demonstrates further that at the time of the war, the connection between Catholic patriotism and Catholic piety was still firmly maintained.³ Indeed, during the First World War, Catholics were unambiguous in their national loyalties and in their belief that national and Christian duties were closely related. For instance, in 1916 the exuberant Farm Street Jesuit, Bernard Vaughan praised the military response of his parishioners at Commercial Road, saying:

Let me tell you how proud I am to think that so many from this parish – one in ten – have joined the colours, to fight for the victory of moral force over brute force... We are fighting in a crusade, not like our forefathers of old, to rescue from the hands of the Saracens the sepulchre of Christ, but to proclaim to the world the living Gospel of the message of Christ.⁴

Similar figures were given for parishes across Britain, and clerics around the country praised this high level of patriotism which was presumed to accompany their military involvement.⁵

However, it was not only their patriotism but also their Catholic devotion for which Catholics were applauded. Because national patriotism and Catholic devotion were often connected, masses which were well-attended by men in uniform were recognised as particularly significant expressions of British Catholic piety. A week after the war broke out, *The Tablet* reported from Westminster:

² See Snape, pp. 319 –328 and Callan, pp. 360 –383.

³ See Snape, pp. 314 –315.

⁴ Printed in *The Tablet* 22 January 1916, p. 126.

⁵ See Snape, especially pp. 318 –326. See also *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 71 –99 for statistics of Catholic military involvement.

The West Central districts of London resounded with martial music on Sunday as battalions of soldiers marched through the streets to the temporary barracks assigned to them. Never before in the history of London have the Catholic churches been so largely attended by soldiers and sailors as they were on Sunday last.⁶

Even when the churches were not full of Britain's young soldiers and sailors, the British Catholic press still held that Catholic soldiers were devout. The predominance of women at church was not looked at as a reason for concern but was seen as an indication that the Catholic men were where they should be, at the front. *The Tablet*, for instance, noted in a report on the Holy Week celebrations in 1916 that in South London the marked increase of women in church was: 'due to the fact that the manhood of every mission in the diocese without exception has responded to the nation's call, and the roll of honour placed in each church is a testimony to their patriotism.'⁷

While such claims about British Catholic patriotism were to be expected, the few available statistics do indicate that Catholic participation in the war was proportionally higher than that of the average British citizen of military age. Most of the relevant records were destroyed during the Second World War, so accurate figures are impossible to obtain. However, as Mike Snape shows, a survey of the casualty list of the Accrington Pals suggests that Catholics from East Lancashire were over-represented at the Somme. This figure is particularly indicative of Catholic voluntary support since this survey was taken before conscription was implemented. It does not, therefore, include those soldiers who were there due to government compulsion but only those who volunteered. Moreover, while Catholics often went to 'Catholic' regiments such as the Irish or Coldstream Guards, because the Pals drew men

⁶ *The Tablet* 15 August 1914, p. 249.

⁷ Reported in *The Tablet* 29 April 1916, p. 576.

regionally, this proportional comparison can be seen as a more or less accurate reflection of the relative involvement of the denominations.⁸

These estimates are supported by claims which were made in the dioceses. The diocese of Leeds asserted that 10% of their total Catholic population had joined up.⁹ Similarly, the diocese of Salford reported in 1914 that in 128 parishes, a total of 16,736 men had enlisted – an average of 130 per parish.¹⁰ Based on the numbers available to them, the hierarchy in Salford claimed in their official diocesan records that among men of military age, the ‘proportion would be found to be very large, probably much larger than that of any other section of the community.’¹¹ Although exaggerated, this statement was to some extent justified since Catholics did serve in higher proportion than the national average. However, there is no evidence to indicate that Catholics were more patriotic than other Christian groups; only that they were more patriotic than the average British citizen. Indeed, Marrin and Wilkinson both demonstrate that the more actively involved a man was with a religious organisation, with the exception of the Friends, the more likely he was to serve during the war. Accordingly, Anglicans and Nonconformists who were sons of clergymen, members of church-affiliated organisations, altar-servers, or participants in Boys’ Brigade all signed up in large numbers.¹²

Of course, among all of these groups, including British Catholics, religion was not the only reason for participation in the war. Although religious understanding shaped patriotism on some level, Snape has shown that among both Catholics and non-Catholics in the lower working classes, the draw of the King’s Shilling was an

⁸ See Snape, p. 326.

⁹ ‘Leeds’, p. 39.

¹⁰ Bishop Casartelli asserted this. See *Catholic Federationist* February 1915, p. 1. See also, *The Tablet* 16 December 1916, p. 565.

¹¹ S.D.A., *Salford Acta* 18 December 1914, p. 90.

¹² See Marrin, pp. 139–157 and *Church of England*, p. 33–40.

equally effective recruiting tool.¹³ For others, the excitement of being in the action or the pressure to follow peers provided motivation.¹⁴ The spirit fostered at school also added to patriotism. For Catholics who went to denominational schools in the years leading up to the war, school provided not only a thoroughly Catholic education but, as with Anglican and Nonconformist schools, a thoroughly English one as well.¹⁵

In addition to this basic sense of nationalism which Catholics acquired at school, Catholics, like Nonconformists and Anglicans, were influenced by the advent and rapid expansion of boys' brigades and officer training corps in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁶ The huge growth of the boys' brigade was evident in the diocese of Salford where the organisation grew from 250 to 3,000 members between 1910 and 1913.¹⁷ Like the boys' brigade which motivated the working classes, the Officer Training Corps added to the spirit of patriotism among the Catholic middle and upper classes. In part because of this martial influence, Stonyhurst became well known for its military prowess, producing three VCs and over 1,000 old boys who served during the war effort.¹⁸ Ampleforth, Downside, Beaumont, the Oratory School and most other large Catholic schools had their own corps as well and these served as reservoirs of patriotic sentiments and potential military recruits.¹⁹

¹³ See Snape, pp. 315–316 and Callan, pp. 138–145.

¹⁴ See P. Parker, *The Old Lie* (1987), p. 27.

¹⁵ Snape, p. 315.

¹⁶ The lads' brigade which was started by the Nonconformist William Smith in 1883, had 60,000 Nonconformist and Presbyterian members by 1910. Likewise, the Anglican lads' brigade which was formed in 1891, grew to a strength of 70,000 by 1908. Although small by comparison, the Catholic Boys' Brigade was popular among many Catholic boys. See Wolffe, p. 230, and J. Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (1977), regarding boy's brigades. For more detailed statistics, see Snape, pp. 323–326.

¹⁷ Snape, p. 316.

¹⁸ See *Stonyhurst Magazine* especially 1918 and 1919 issues and Irwin.

¹⁹ There were 300 old boys from St. Augustine College, 537 from Ushaw, 800 from St. Francis Xavier's Liverpool, 604 from Mount Saint Mary's 400 from Preston Catholic College 341 from St. George's College, 375 from Ampleforth, and 506 from Downside. See *The Tablet*, 7 December 1918, p. 630; 14 December 1918, p. 673; 4 January 1919, p. 19; 11 January 1919, p. 18; and 15 March, 1919, p. 308.

In addition to these practical militaristic reasons for joining the forces, Catholics adopted several ideological reasons for participating in the war, some of which they shared with non-Catholics. These were of critical importance for Catholics not only on a personal level but particularly because of the Church's acceptance of just war and the accompanying criteria by which a war was judged to be just or unjust. Like others in Britain, Catholics recognised the need to support the cause of the invaded regions of Europe and particularly the nation of Belgium. J.M.N. Jeffries expressed this sentiment when he wrote in the *Daily Mail*: 'Kipling's famous words "Who dies if England lives?" have an answer, "Belgium". She has died that we may live.'²⁰ Many in Britain held that this Belgian sacrifice required British support.²¹

In a school talk which was later published in *Stonyhurst Magazine*, Bernard Vaughan asserted that the primary reasons for supporting the war hinged on a proper understanding of the treaty or 'scrap of paper' which Germany violated, and the obligations which existed for Britain in relationship to this.²² He asserted that although the Gospel was a 'scrap of paper', because it was signed by the name of Christ, it was to be valued above all else. By analogy, he explained that although the treaty which England had made with Belgium was but a scrap of paper, 'with England's name upon it, it [stood] for that which [was] more precious than wealth untold, the nation's honour!' By comparing the two, Vaughan argued that the justification for being at war encompassed both Christian and national duties: 'The

²⁰ This was used in a special appeal to aid Belgium. See *The Tablet* 16 January 1915, p. 100.

²¹ The 'Belgian Relief Fund' which was promoted jointly by *The Tablet* and *The Telegraph* recognised this British debt of gratitude and Cardinal Archbishop Bourne asserted in particular the Catholic debt to Belgian Catholicism in the pre-war years. See *The Tablet* from August 1914 through 1918.

²² W. Barry D.D. 'Four Centuries of Luther, 1517-1917', in *The Tablet* 27 October 1917, p. 520. *The Month* January 1917, p. 27.

Devil will tell you it is only a scrap of paper. Yes! But it has your name upon it. It carries your pledge to be ever a loyal follower of Christ!'²³

These sentiments regarding Belgium piety stretched to non-Catholics as well. However, the overwhelmingly Catholic population of Belgium made the country a special target for Catholic support and affection.²⁴ Especially given the historic, and even recent, debt owed by British Catholics to Belgian Catholics, the British Catholic Church was keen to support their co-religionists in this time of distress.²⁵ Cardinal Bourne asserted this when he offered his support to the King Albert Book, a Belgian relief fund which was promoted by *The Tablet*. In the official letter which he wrote in support of the appeal, Bourne reflected how, in 1561, when Oxford and Cambridge had banned Catholics from taking degrees, the Belgian nation and its Catholic university in Louvain provided a 'new home of learning' for British Catholics. He noted further that in more recent days, Belgium had provided British Catholics with a picture of the living Catholic Faith. Belgium had also set a good example in accepting 'spiritual things of the Apostolic See of Rome', and had sent to Britain 'successive generations of devoted priests who, in town and country [have] laboured with us in gathering in the harvest that [had] been so plentiful since the Second Spring.'²⁶ Bourne maintained that this historic and continuing devotion which Belgium offered to Britain demanded from British Catholics not only gratitude but, in the time of Belgium's need, a specific act of loyalty which took the form of military support.

Independently these reasons for Britain to enter the conflict had some merit, and when combined they were considered by the Catholic Church in Britain to be sufficient to support the idea that this war was 'just' as defined by traditional Catholic

²³ B. Vaughan, 'A Scrap of Paper', *Stonyhurst Magazine* January 1915, p. 64.

²⁴ See Hastings, pp. 132–133.

²⁵ See J.D. Mercier, *The Voice of Belgium* (1917), especially the preface by Bourne.

²⁶ W.A.A. AAW/bo.5/42 e.

just war theory.²⁷ This position, although never specifically endorsed by the Vatican, was at least tolerated in Rome. Pope Benedict XV charged Catholics to strive, and especially to pray for peace, but he did not condemn involvement in the war. Rather, as will be discussed further in chapter three, he addressed his official message about peace to the leaders of the belligerent countries and told Catholics that they as individuals needed to pray for peace.²⁸ In the meantime he encouraged them to support the state institutions under which they lived.²⁹ This recognition of national duty by the Vatican was of vital importance for Catholics, particularly given the historic distrust shown to Catholicism by the establishment.³⁰ Indeed, because of the Pope's position, British Catholics were given the opportunity to demonstrate to their compatriots that in fighting in the war they were compromising neither their British nor their Catholic identity but were instead combining the best qualities of both.³¹

The Irish Question

Although British Catholics certainly faced challenges in reconciling their Catholicism with their national loyalties, supporting the war and the British nation was not a matter of serious debate for Catholics in Great Britain. The situation was less straightforward in Ireland. This was not because the Irish were less sympathetic to the cause of Belgium or more accepting of the German position. Nor was it because of a different understanding of hierarchical and national authority. Rather, it was because of the tense political relationship between Ireland and Great Britain and the

²⁷ See J. Keating in *The Month* January 1915, p. 47; W. Barry D.D. 'Four Centuries of Luther, 1517-1917', in *The Tablet* 27 October 1917, p. 520; *The Month* January 1917, p. 27.

²⁸ See Benedict XV's Peace Note of 1917 and commentary in Pollard, pp. 123 –128.

²⁹ See *The Tablet* 18 September 1915, p. 364. See also chapter 3 of this thesis.

³⁰ The dogma of infallibility was defined in 1870 at the First Vatican Council. See *More Roman than Rome*, pp. 200 –239. See also P. Kent and J. Pollard, *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age* (1995), pp. 70 –78.

³¹ See Hastings, pp. 131 –134.

question of the appropriate location of governmental authority in Ireland. At the outbreak of the First World War, Ireland was in the process of moving towards Home Rule and, consequently, British authority in Ireland was already being called into question. However, Ireland was still British since Home Rule had not yet passed through parliament. Thus, for those men who wanted to serve during the First World War the matter involved not only the question of whether or not it was just for them to fight in this war but that of whether or not it was just, or even possible, for them to fight for Ireland while fighting in the British army.

Although British perception might be that Ireland was not doing its share, many Irish did support the war. This was evident in the Irish contribution to the British armed forces which eventually numbered an approximate 500,000 troops, a full seventy percent of men under the age of thirty.³² Even so, as Patrick Callan asserts in his thesis about Irish recruitment and wartime service, Irishmen were not as supportive of the British army as those in Britain; indeed this is understandable since after they decided to join Irish soldiers often had to defend their Irishness and to deny accusations that they were 'less Irish' for being in the British army.³³ Although this was a difficulty experienced by the Irish more generally, Catholics, who were for the most part nationalists, felt the effects of this more strongly than did Irish Protestants, many of whom considered themselves to be British loyalists. The responses given by Irishmen for not volunteering are telling in this respect. Reasons included not only practical matters or family duties. Just as often they were grounded in a moral opposition against fighting for the British monarch.³⁴

The reason for this mixed support was largely due to the Irish belief that Britain kept a double standard. On the one hand, Irish Catholics recognised that

³² H. Law, *Why is Ireland at War?* (Dublin, 1915), pp. iv –vi.

³³ Callan, p. 246.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Britain regarded it as their moral duty to fight for the freedom of the downtrodden countries such as Belgium, Poland and Serbia.³⁵ However, on the other, Britain was obviously unwilling to release its own hold on Ireland. An article in *The Dublin Review* on 'Free Nations and German Culture' argued the injustice of this and used this position to criticise Germany saying: 'What England has failed to do with Ireland – namely, make them English, Germany will also fail to do with Poland. It is haughty and misguided to suppose that your culture will prevail.'³⁶

Although some Irish Catholics were sceptical, others argued that if the Irish wanted to assert their independence, they ought to defend Belgium.³⁷ The common hope of these men, as well as that of the Irish nation was that Britain would not be so inconsistent as to deny to Ireland the same freedoms for which she had gone to war for Belgium.³⁸ Even at the beginning of the war, however, many Irish believed this hope to be ill-placed. The unwillingness of Kitchener to allow Ireland to have a separate armed corps was the first of many policies in which Britain undermined the independence which Ireland hoped to be progressing towards. This bred ill-feeling in Ireland, especially among Catholic nationalists.³⁹ Although Irish regiments were allowed to wear shamrocks to show their national identity, as Tom Johnstone discusses, the Irish were nevertheless well aware that they were fighting not in an Irish but a British army.⁴⁰

This distinction between Irish and British nationalism and the tension this created in Ireland was at times lost on people in Britain. In response to one

³⁵ See Redmond's address published in *The Tablet* 6 February, 1915, p. 210.

³⁶ W. B. Watson, 'Free Nations and German Culture', *The Dublin Review* December 1916, p. 295.

³⁷ See Callan, p. 377, In addition, see M. Dungan who notes that in 1915 there were 416,409 Irishmen of military age who were not in the military. He claims that a full 252,000 of these were engaged in agricultural work and he estimates that 100,000 were unfit to serve in the military. Dungan, p. 36. See also O. McDonagh, *Irish Culture and Nationalism 1750–1950* (Canberra, 1983), p. 162.

³⁸ Callan, p. 53.

³⁹ Johnstone, pp. 8–10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

particularly glaring instance of British generalisation, James Britten wrote a letter to the editor of *The Tablet* whom he corrected by reporting the complaints of Irishmen who were upset that *The Tablet* had printed a list of men who died ‘for England’.

Britten asserted: ‘It would startle some of them to know that they did: I suppose the men of the Irish Guards who sang “God save Ireland” before they charged also died for England,’ but ‘surely the susceptibilities of the other constituents of the UK deserve some consideration from Englishmen?’⁴¹ The point Britten made against *The Tablet*, and one which was commonly asserted among Irish nationals, was that even though they were in the British Army, Ireland was fighting for and as part of the Allied forces rather than for England.⁴² They generally accepted that the war was just and that Britain was on the correct side in fighting against the German aggressors. However, many in Ireland readily acknowledged that even though they were on the same side as Britain and fought in the British army, Britain was not without its own measure of guilt in the matter of national oppression.⁴³ John Redmond acknowledged this difficulty but nevertheless offered his support, expressing the need for Ireland to think about the higher cause of helping Belgium. In a speech given to parliament and circulated widely in Ireland, Redmond asserted:

Irishmen fighting in Flanders today were fighting Ireland’s own fight. Ireland was fighting on the side of the oppressed. Were they going to see a little Catholic nation, having in the past such glorious traditions and associations with Ireland, trampled under the heels of an oppressive Hun because England also saw that it was wrong and unjust?⁴⁴

In saying this, Redmond attempted to present a rationale by which Ireland could fight for the defence of Belgium rather than for the nation of Britain and as Irishmen more

⁴¹ *The Tablet* 8 January 1916, p. 57.

⁴² Johnstone, pp. 8–10.

⁴³ See *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 210.

⁴⁴ *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 210.

than as Britons. By doing so he hoped to express how they could support the war without compromising their own national objective of securing home rule.

Although Redmond supported Irish involvement in the war, Irish Catholics both in Ireland and in Great Britain, had mixed feelings about how Ireland ought to respond.⁴⁵ At the beginning of the war, the Irish clergy, and the Irish populace generally, did not officially oppose the war even though some, particularly those at the Irish College in Rome, actively opposed Irish support of Britain.⁴⁶ Police reports from 1914 indicated that the majority response to the war was one of ‘general support’, but as Pauric Travers notes, this support was ‘passive rather than active and markedly cautious’.⁴⁷ Significantly, Cardinal Archbishop Logue adopted this measured position, refusing to use the Church as a recruiting agency and asserting to Field Marshal John French that the Church should remain neutral and avoid interference in the affairs of the war.⁴⁸

Although cautious in their support, many Irish hoped that the war would help settle the internal troubles between Ireland and Great Britain. For instance, Sir Edward Grey confidently asserted in a speech which he gave at the beginning of the war: ‘The one bright spot in the whole of this terrible situation is Ireland.’⁴⁹ In response, the *Tablet* correspondent who reported this suggested: ‘Even the cost of this war of seven nations may be counted cheap if it results in such a good as the permanent reconciliation of England with Ireland.’⁵⁰ John Redmond also had high

⁴⁵ Travers and Callan both discuss this matter, demonstrating the difficult position in which Ireland was placed in their support of Belgium and their problems with Great Britain. See Travers pp. 161 –177 and Callan p. 53 ff.

⁴⁶ A. Rhodes, *The Power of Rome* (1983), p. 157.

⁴⁷ See Travers, pp. 161 –177, especially p. 162.

⁴⁸ Callan, however, found evidence that a Catholic priest aided in recruitment in Newry. Callan, p. 253.

⁴⁹ Reported in *The Tablet* 8 August 1914, p. 205.

⁵⁰ *The Tablet* 8 August 1914, p. 205.

hopes and in the first week of the war, he famously proclaimed that Britain could depend on Irish support, saying:

There are in Ireland two large bodies of volunteers. One of them sprang into existence in the South. I say to the government that they may tomorrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland. I say that the coast of Ireland will be defended from foreign invasion by her armed sons and for this purpose armed nationalist Catholics in the South will be only too glad to join armed Protestant Ulstermen in the North.⁵¹

It was hoped that Irish support of the Allied cause and their involvement in the British military would provide the necessary steps toward unity which would lead the British Isles to a peaceful resolution of their internal conflicts.

In the early years of the war, there existed in Britain a general sense of optimism about the Irish relationship with Britain. Although the political tensions in Ireland were fierce, many Irishmen agreed that the maintenance of these higher principles justified their involvement in the war. For those who did, the political problems at home became far less significant than the immediate task at hand. Thus a soldier reported from the front in a letter which was published in *The Tablet* that the tensions between North and South were resolved when Irish Protestants and Catholics joined forces on the field of battle, claiming that the soldiers in one particular division were from all parts of Ireland and were from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds. However, these stood ‘shoulder to shoulder, forgetting old feuds.’ This soldier went on to say that there were ‘no politics in the trenches’ but that, on the contrary, ‘the old fighting qualities of the Irish race and the fine spiritual fire in the Irish heart have been revealed on many days of great ordeal, so that the folly of a rebellion on rabble is made ridiculous and hateful to the men out here.’⁵²

⁵¹ Reported in *The Tablet* 8 August 1914, p. 205.

⁵² Printed in *The Tablet* 6 May 1916, p. 593.

This is not to say that divisions did not still exist. Even in the British military Chaplaincy clear distinctions existed between ‘Irish’ and ‘English’ patriotism and ‘Irish’ and ‘English’ nationalism. The English-born chaplain Francis Devas recognised this difference and, with regard to Father Power, he felt compelled to write to Rawlinson, saying that Father Power was: ‘...very Irish. Although the Dublins, with whom he was stationed, were traditionally Irish, most of the Irishmen were leaving which left Father Power in charge of a group of Catholic troops who were, in Devas’s estimation, ‘very English’.⁵³ Devas recognised this as a matter of concern saying that: ‘An English priest or an Irish priest who knew something of England would be more useful’ to the men than Power could be.⁵⁴

While such differences existed, in political matters Catholics had substantial room for hope. Optimism was fired by reports of North and South working together; unapologetic about their ‘side’ but still willing to make light of formerly divisive points. For instance *The Tablet* reported that one Dublin officer said:

When I was among the Irish with my Tanks we had Northerners and Southerners to work with. The former were Carsonites to a man, but they were always ready to welcome a brother Irishman without troubling about his feelings towards the Holy See or the Home Rule question. When I sent out my Tanks to work with the Ulster Division they called it the ‘Redmond’ and another one they named the ‘Joe Devlin’. Not to be outdone, the Dublin Connaught and Munster men named their Tank the ‘Carson’. One day when we were cooperating I had the pleasure of seeing the ‘Carson’ and the ‘Redmond’ going into action together, with the ‘Joe Devlin’ in support.⁵⁵

Such incidents were presented as the first steps in resolving the conflict which tore Ireland apart.

For British Catholic purposes, these were seen as evidence that Irish Catholics were good patriots, in spite of the injustice which was dealt to them and the claims of

⁵³ Devas’ underline.

⁵⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence A –L, F. Devas to Rawlinson, 3 October 1917.

⁵⁵ Reported to the Labour Press. In *The Tablet* 10 February 1917, p. 172.

disloyalty which were levied against them.⁵⁶ As William Redmond, John Redmond's brother, asserted in a 1917 article which he wrote for *The Dublin Review*:

The old system of government in Ireland is dead – no sane man believes it can ever be revived. Let it be the task of statesmen of all sections to devise a new system founded on freedom and possessing every reasonable safeguard for minorities. Let old prejudices be cast aside... let England trust fully and freely the people who have given so many brave soldiers to the common cause.⁵⁷

Such optimism was found not least among British Catholics. Many hoped to resolve the differences between the British Isles and, in so doing, to emphasise Catholic unity and to demonstrate the noble aspects of the Catholic faith which could be found in both the Irish and British churches.⁵⁸

Although some in Ireland were hopeful that relations with Britain would improve, others were sceptical. In 1916, the Easter Rising offered striking evidence that there was still a high level of Irish dissatisfaction. Still, while this caused some disruption, there was comfort to be found in the fact that the uprising was not a demonstration against the war itself but against the British government. Moreover, the situation was partially redeemed by the fact that the Irish clergy did not endorse the Easter Rising.⁵⁹ Because of this Catholics could hold that while there were some rebels in Ireland, the 'Irish' and 'British' Catholic positions were still officially in line. Thus in this sense they could be seen as compatible in matters pertaining to authority and loyalty.

By 1918, however, the political situation had become quite volatile and this position became more difficult to uphold. When Lloyd George attempted to pass a conscription bill which extended to Ireland, the clergy as well as most Irish citizens

⁵⁶ *The Dublin Review* October 1916, p. 234.

⁵⁷ W. Redmond, 'From the Trenches: a Plea and a Claim', *The Dublin Review* January 1917, p. 213.

⁵⁸ See for instance *The Tablet* 15 May 1915, p. 631.

⁵⁹ Logue was firmly opposed to the Easter Uprising and made a formal statement which was printed in the Catholic newspapers after Easter of 1916.

reacted against the British government.⁶⁰ Whereas the Easter Rising was only supported by a minority of rebels and was frowned upon by the Church, the clergy stood up against the British parliament's attempt to impose conscription.

As Pauric Travers has demonstrated, the bill, which was passed on 18 April 1918, was of consequence on two counts since it imposed conscription and, at the same time, promised Home Rule.⁶¹ Although the British parliament recognised that conscription would not be welcomed, they hoped that the benefits of Home Rule would outweigh the undesirable imposition of conscription. However, this logic backfired. Rather than seeing it as a justifiable burden to bear, Irish Catholics, and many Irish Protestants as well, saw conscription as a contradiction to the rights of Home Rule.⁶² The Irish hierarchy recognised the volatile situation and as pastors and influential members of the Irish nation, they were faced with the need to address it.

In practical terms this meant that they had first to join together the diverse wings of Sinn Féin, the Irish Labour movement and the Irish Parliamentary Party since a united front was the only possible way to achieve success.⁶³ A strong line was taken in which the bishops signed a joint statement against 'an oppressive and inhuman law'. They encouraged parishioners to take a collection which would be used to supply the means to oppose conscription and they agreed that all Catholic churches in Ireland should hold a Mass of intercession 'to avert the scourge of conscription'. In addition, families were encouraged to recite the rosary daily so as to protect the 'spiritual and temporal welfare' of Ireland and to bring the nation safely 'through this crisis of unparalleled gravity'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ See Travers, pp. 164–166.

⁶¹ See Travers, pp. 161–164,

⁶² Joseph Devlin MP noted this in 1916. See *The Tablet* 7 October, 1916, p. 472.

⁶³ See Travers, pp. 161–162.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

While the bishops suggested these strong lines, Cardinal Logue also asserted the need for reserve. After the announcement of the conscription bill, Logue told the young people of Ireland not to over-react but to wait for instructions from the Bishops, explaining that: 'They were bound by civil law and the law of God to oppose conscription but they should not take the matter into their own hands or get into any foolish movement.'⁶⁵ This was obviously edged with a sense that action might be necessary. Although they were cautious, Irish Catholics were determined in their positions against conscription. Thus the bishops asserted in a joint statement:

Taking our stand on Ireland as a separate and distinct nationhood, and affirming the principle of liberty that Governments of nations derive their powers from the consent of the governed, we deny the right of the British Government or any external authority to impose compulsory military service on Ireland against the clearly expressed wish of the people. The passing of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war on Ireland.⁶⁶

In explaining the strong position maintained by the Irish Bishops, the British Catholic press stressed that attitudes towards conscription were not divided on religious lines but that even characters as diverse in opinion as John Dillon and Cardinal Logue held that the anti-conscription campaign was a national rather than a Catholic one.⁶⁷ In its regular column, 'News from Ireland', *The Tablet* offered the reminder that Joseph Devlin MP had noted even before the crisis: 'In resisting conscription, Ireland, I believe, will be one united nation, because, whatever representations may be made to the contrary, every Ulsterman knows that Ulster Unionists are no more in favour of it than the rest of their fellow countrymen.'⁶⁸

Nevertheless, many in Britain still placed the blame for the conflict on the Irish Catholic clergy, reverting to the time-honoured suspicion of Catholic loyalty.

⁶⁵ Printed in *The Tablet* 4 May 1918, p. 586.

⁶⁶ Printed in *The Tablet* 27 April 1918, p. 535.

⁶⁷ From a letter in *The Tablet* 18 May 1918, p. 650.

⁶⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 7 October 1916, p. 471.

Reports of priest-led Irish rebellion were widespread. For instance, Lord Curzon reported in the House of Lords on 20 June 1918: ‘The Catholic clergy in Ireland... advised their flocks, under pain of eternal damnation to resist conscription.’⁶⁹ Specific instances of this sort of rebellion were also reported. One priest, Father Callighan, was reported, saying: ‘If any conscription is enforced, any policeman who assists in any way in enforcing it is guilty of murder and can never get absolution.’⁷⁰ Likewise, Reverend Gerald Dennehy of county Cork was reported as having issued the warning that any Catholic policeman or agent of the government who ‘assisted in putting conscription in force would be excommunicated and cursed by the Roman Catholic Church; that the curse of God would follow them in every land; and he asked his hearers to kill them at sight; they would be blessed by God, and this would be the most acceptable sacrifice that could be offered.’⁷¹ Although these priests were presented as fiercely opposed to conscription, what was not considered by the secular press, and what *The Tablet* made a point of conveying, was that there was little need for the clergy to bully the laity into resisting the bill. After all, as Devlin claimed, it was not merely the clergy but the country at large which opposed conscription.⁷²

Likewise, the Irish Catholic hierarchy responded to this anti-Catholicism with a swift defence and an appeal to reason as much as to religious piety.⁷³ In particular, Cardinal Logue defended the position of the Irish clergy, explaining that the fault did not lie with the Irish clergy or with Irish politicians for that matter. It rested instead with the British government for not keeping its word regarding Home Rule. In response to a pamphlet entitled *Home Rule and Conscription*, by Horace Plunkett, Logue said:

⁶⁹ *The Morning Post* 22 June 1918, p. 58.

⁷⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* June 1918, p. 815.

⁷¹ Printed in *The Tablet* June 1918, p. 815.

⁷² See Travers, especially p. 163.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 166–167.

I cannot...agree with your statement in your letter that 'a chief obstacle to the immediate establishment of self-government is the alleged political attitude and action of your church.' I think I can point to a more insurmountable obstacle, the insincerity, bad faith, and what someone has called, the political strategy of the present British Ministry.⁷⁴

The difference between this situation and the earlier crisis of the Easter Rising can be seen by the ways in which British Catholics responded to these different events.

Whereas British Catholics defended the Irish clergy in their position against the Easter Rising, support was less forthcoming when it came to the Conscription crisis. On the one hand, British Catholics recognised the difficulty of the Irish clergy's position. In a report which he gave to *The Daily Chronicle*, Bernard Vaughan asserted that the conflict in Ireland was 'not an organised Catholic opposition to conscription but a national one, including men of all colours of politics and all shades of belief.' In response to this statement, the politically conservative *Tablet* printed an anonymous letter which had been written to Bernard Vaughan, 'thanking him for the expression of his views' and affirming the correct posture of his stance:

The Irish Bishops are shepherds, not hirelings. They could not sit silent to see their flocks destroyed. From each diocese they came and unanimously joined in one simple protest. They put the poor people under religious authority for the moment. They told them with their national conscience the English could not conscript without consent morally, and they asked them to change their rifles and bullets and other violent remedies into spiritual weapons, and to put confidence in God, using the weapons of Masses, Novenas, Rosaries, the confession of sins, and prayers for light and truth.⁷⁵

The Catholic Times also responded by saying that it deplored the action of the 'Romanist hierarchy in Ireland' in the matter of conscription. However it asserted that 'Equally deplorable are the comments of the English press on the situation... We think the Irish bishops are deplorably and tragically mistaken, but we uphold their

⁷⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Miscellaneous, 9 August 1918.

⁷⁵ Printed in *The Tablet* 18 May 1918, p. 655.

liberty so to err.’⁷⁶ More defiantly the Catholic Union openly criticised the Irish clergy and even passed a resolution which condemned the stance of the Irish hierarchy.⁷⁷ However, several bishops, led by Casartelli, dismissed these statements. Although Bourne did not join his fellow bishops, this broader ecclesiastical opposition demonstrated a high degree of sympathy toward the Irish Catholic position.⁷⁸

Whichever side they supported, the lack of consensus is telling with regard to the nature of the challenges with which British Catholics were faced. The differences of opinion which existed were ones of national and political loyalty rather than Catholic patriotism and religious devotion. Although they were distinct from one another, these different loyalties were difficult to untangle. For Irish Catholics, conscription was considered unjust and as such it had to be fought.⁷⁹ Thus, even while most Irish Catholics supported the British cause in the First World War, they felt that they had also to fight the injustice which was dealt to them by Britain in this internal matter of conscription. The principles regarding conscientious objection and national rather than personal authority remained the same for all Catholics, but whether or not the circumstances for fighting could be recognised as just, differed for Irish and British Catholics because their understanding of the British government’s authority and their direct relationship to it differed. Thus, while their principles had the same grounding, their reactions to the war necessarily differed according to their national allegiance.

For British Catholics who were committed to an English concept of Britain to accept Irish independence on Irish terms was nearly impossible given their specific

⁷⁶ *The Catholic Times* 3 May 1918, p. 327.

⁷⁷ Aspden, pp. 81 –88.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷⁹ See Travers p. 163 –164,

national loyalties and their different political position. For them to justify the Irish Catholic position was thus a challenge of its own given the close relations to, and yet limited understanding of, both Irish and British politics and the conflicts between Catholic and Protestant Irish. This tension between politics and religion and the way in which the two were intertwined was a crucial dynamic in the understanding of Catholicism and its location of religious unity. For Catholics in Britain adequately to express the nature of their Catholic agreement, they had also to express the nature of their political disunity in such a way that it did not conflict with their higher spiritual bond.

Catholic Universality: Challenges for British Catholics at War

Although the Irish question remained a major concern throughout the 1910s, after 4 August 1914, it was not the only, or even the primary one. Rather, when the Allied forces went to war against the German powers, there developed the more urgent, even if not more important challenge of justifying Catholicism in the light of a European and ultimately a world-wide war. On the one hand British Catholics clearly recognised that they had a duty to fight and that the Germans were the enemy.⁸⁰

Arguing from this basis, Bishop Casartelli of Salford expressed his belief in the justice of the war in a pastoral which he wrote shortly following the outbreak of war.

We, indeed, can feel the conscientious satisfaction that we have been drawn into the great struggle through no desire of our own, through no lust for conquest or dominion, but by a strict sense of duty, in the sacred cause of truth, justice and loyalty to our sworn obligations and the defence of the weak and oppressed. To us, therefore, the war presents itself as a real crusade for the right.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* 5 September 1914, p. 312.

⁸¹ S.D.A. *Acta*, 22 November 1914, p. 31.

On the other hand, as the French writer, Henri Barbusse depicted in his war novel, *Under Fire*,⁸² the similarities between the two sides at times made even ‘just’ war seem unjustifiable. He expressed this most poignantly when he wrote about the experience of a pilot flying over the trenches.

Then I understood. It was Sunday, and there were two religious services being held under my eyes – the altar, the padre, and all the crowds of chaps. The more I went down the more I could see that the two things were exactly alike – so exactly alike that it looked silly. One of the services – whichever you like – was a reflection of the other... I went down lower... I heard one murmur, one only. I could only gather a single prayer... that passed by me on its way to heaven... I got some shrapnel just at the moment when, very low down, I made out the two voices from the earth that made up the one – ‘Gott mit uns!’ and ‘God is with us!’ – and I flew away... What must the good God think about it all?⁸³

Both British Catholics and Protestants had to come to terms with their attitudes to the Germans with whom they had so many religious and cultural ties. Protestants owed much to German theological trends and many British citizens, including the royal family, had close personal ties with Germany.⁸⁴ Likewise, before the war, Catholics, and particularly the Catholic clergy had substantial opportunities to interact with their co-religionists from other countries in Catholic institutions of learning.⁸⁵ Adrian Hastings noted that many British Catholic priests ‘had been trained abroad and that they shared with some of the laity an almost over-self conscious sense of belonging to an international world.’ Nearly all the monastic foundations had spent some time in exile on the continent and therefore had a sense of being part of a larger international institution.⁸⁶ Moreover Cardinal Archbishop Bourne had studied in Paris and

⁸² The first English translation appeared in 1917.

⁸³ H. Barbusse, *Under Fire* (First English publication in 1926, see 1969 edn.), pp. 281 –2.

⁸⁴ For instance, the Kaiser was a favourite nephew of Queen Victoria and Germans had been participating in the Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford. Generally, there was a high degree of interaction between Germany and Britain on not only political and theological levels but on personal and social levels as well. *Church of England*, pp. 21 –22.

⁸⁵ Davis demonstrates this by showing both the international and national dimensions of the Catholic Church, particularly in the context of Irish Catholicism. Davis, pp. 124 and 143 –146.

⁸⁶ See for instance *Downside Review War Supplement* (July, 1915), p. 45.

Louvain, McIntyre of Birmingham had studied at the English College in Rome, Bishop Casartelli had studied at Louvain, and many others of the British clergy and laity attended these and other institutions on the continent.⁸⁷ These centres provided a practical foundation for Catholics to understand and embrace their spiritual unity even when it was at times made difficult by cultural and political diversity. Even so, because their cultural connection was so strong this connection made the event of the war even harder than it would otherwise have been.

Regarding this, the Nonconformist minister A.S. Peake recognised in a homily that the war was not a conflict: 'simply between Christians and Mohammedans, or between Catholics and Protestants but between Catholics and Catholics, Protestants and Protestants, Orthodox and Orthodox.' Although regrettable, 'unity of belief has not availed to withhold the nations from deadly strife.'⁸⁸ Cuthbert Butler, the Benedictine abbot at Downside Abbey, also recognised this difficulty in a *Dublin Review* article, entitled 'War and the Conscience of Nations':

One has frequently heard it said that this is not a war of peoples but of ideals. The ideals have been variously formulated...But when the prophets attempted to express definitely the ideals for which the nations are fighting, they were met by certain difficulties. If it is a war for the rights of the smaller nations, how comes it that Russia, with her records in Poland and Finland, is opposed to Germany, the destroyer of Belgium? If it is a war for democratic freedom, Austria, with her mild and liberal systems of government would be more fittingly in alliance with England than against us. Again, if *The Times* is correct in attributing the war to the conflict of the Catholic and Protestant ideals, how is it that Catholic Austria is opposed to Catholic Belgium and Protestant England to Protestant Prussia?⁸⁹

While British citizens from all walks of life maintained this type of sympathy, the situation for Catholics was somewhat different. In particular, the persecution under which both German and British Catholics suffered at various stages in their national

⁸⁷ Hastings demonstrates that Catholics were generally aware of their British identity but that they also had more contact with the wider European world than most other denominations. Hastings, p. 138.

⁸⁸ *Dissent or Conform*, p. 36.

⁸⁹ F. Cuthbert O.S.F.C., 'War and the Conscience of Nations', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, p. 37.

histories afforded them a common link.⁹⁰ In an article on German Catholics and the war, a writer for *The Dublin Review* asserted:

From the struggles of the *Kulturkampf* they appeared to us to emerge wearing the halo of martyrdom... Moreover, they had compelled recognition of the rights of Catholics to be counted as true citizens of their country... They had become loyalists to the core, whole hearted supporters of the new Empire and they took pleasure in declaring their position in this regard.⁹¹

This German Catholic struggle resonated with the difficulties which British Catholics had endured in the years of suppression and this connection heightened British Catholic sympathies for their co-religionists in Germany and Austria.

This was not, however, the only or even the most important link which existed. While important in terms of personal and cultural ties, this bond between German and British Catholics was not based just on common difficulties but was grounded even more firmly on religious bonds and obligations. These could not be compromised without serious repercussions.⁹² Whereas individual Protestants could choose to accept the Christianity of their German opponents based on their personal experiences and the more general principles of the Bible, the common ground which Catholics shared in their subscription to the Catholic Church and the pontiff of Rome meant that relations between British and German Catholics were indispensable. To be a part of the Catholic Church did not only demand acceptance of the authority of the Church but acceptance of a position within the worldwide body of believers. Whether or not they wanted to reject this unity with their co-religionists on the opposing side, Catholics could not do so without also separating themselves from the position of

⁹⁰ Catholics during the First World War recognised the similarities which existed between German Catholics and their own situation. See H. Johnson, *Kulturkampf* (1916).

⁹¹ 'German Catholics and the War', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, pp. 13–14.

⁹² Benedict XV's 1915 Prayer for peace and his wartime and post-war efforts at reconciliation demonstrated this Catholic recognition of their global responsibility. Although Catholics did not always adopt this for themselves in extreme ways, they were bound to it on a basic level.

their Church.⁹³ This made it necessary for Catholics to demonstrate how their sympathy for German Catholics and their desire to win the war were not incompatible, that their fight was ultimately against sin rather than Germany, and that their deepest loyalty was founded not on national but religious unity.⁹⁴

The Christian Churches: Man's Failure or the World's only Hope?

Given their acceptance of the war as just, the British Catholic clergy as well as most of the Catholic laity accepted that it was the duty of young Catholic men to fight in the war against Germany. Thus in broad terms the Catholic Church in Britain firmly rejected pacifism and even conscientious objection.⁹⁵ This position separated them from some Protestants, and particularly from staunch Quakers who refused to participate in the war, especially in combatant capacities, because they saw the war to be not a result of but an embodiment of human sin.⁹⁶ In a C.T.S. pamphlet Adrian Fortescue attempted to explain the difference in the Catholic position.

The Pacifist is the man who does not think the matter out reasonably. He sees, he is very conscious of, the horror of war. Unaccustomed to argue a question out calmly, he sees these horrors much more vividly than the abstract general principles for which a nation may have to fight. He lets his imagination and instinct guide him instead of reason. So the idea of our civilisation at stake moves him much less than the picture of a dying soldier.⁹⁷

Although on some levels, fighting against Germany clearly contradicted Rome's plea for Catholics to strive for peace, British Catholics attempted to demonstrate that the

⁹³ See B. Holland, 'Patriotism', *The Dublin Review* April 1918, p. 215 ff.

⁹⁴ See Bishop Amigo's address. *The Tablet* 27 February 1915, p. 275.

⁹⁵ S. Smith wrote about this in *The Month* in an article 'Can a Catholic be a Conscientious Objector?', *The Month*, July 1916, p. 68.

⁹⁶ Wilkinson looks at this in depth throughout *Dissent or Conform?*, see especially p. 51. The most famous instance of this was when Dick Sheppard adopted pacifism after supporting war generally, and the First World War specifically, in the autumn of 1914. *Church of England*, p. 255.

⁹⁷ A. Fortescue, *Pacifism* (1916), p. 12.

Catholic rejection of pacifism was not a rejection of the Pope's peace initiative but rather an affirmation of legitimate institutional authority over individual opinion. Picking up from an article which had been printed in *The Month*, a *Tablet* correspondent maintained that pacifism was not acceptable because: 'A Catholic, in the formation of his conscience, has no right to guide himself by all the freaks and vagaries of mere individual opinions but should conform himself to the settled principles of Catholic ethics.'⁹⁸ Some British Catholics even wondered whether or not Catholics who objected to the war ought to be permitted to take communion. In one of the few cases of Catholic conscientious objection which existed, the man, A.W. Evans, was initially willing to serve with the R.A.M.C.⁹⁹ However, when he was not offered a place with them, he made his objection to combatant and eventually to all forms of military service. He explained his position to be a result of religious beliefs which, in the end, led him to become a Quaker.¹⁰⁰ One article which was published in *The Month* in 1917, considered that it was as impossible for a Catholic who was properly trained in the Church to be a conscientious objector as it was for him to be a Catholic socialist. Even so, the fact of both Catholic socialists and, during the war, Catholic conscientious objectors did exist. Such situations required explanation by the Church.

The Catholic basis for rejecting pacifism was a firm belief in the validity of the Church and the superiority of the Church's teachings and practices over those of individuals. This teaching was part of the broader Catholic understanding of Catholic authority. It was also the basis which led Catholics not to call into question the legitimacy of their Church either in terms of its teaching or practice but instead to see the war as an even greater reason for people to turn to the Church and its comforts.

⁹⁸ *The Tablet* 8 July 1916, p. 38.

⁹⁹ Royal Army Medical Corps.

¹⁰⁰ Leeds University, Liddle Collection, A.W. Evans file.

Although its effects on patriotism were not different from those of most other churches and Catholics supported the war as other British citizens did, this underlying rationale which was offered by the Catholic Church in Britain contrasted with the positions held by many Anglicans and Nonconformists many of whom, as Alan Wilkinson has demonstrated, asserted that the war was a result of the failure of the churches.¹⁰¹

This Protestant view was demonstrated by the Anglican clergyman Joseph McCabe who noted of the clergy: 'One constantly finds them repeating that in this year of tragedy 'Christianity has failed' and 'the gospel has broken in our hands'.¹⁰² In this vein, the Nonconformist Reverend J.H. Rushbrooke said that the war bore witness to: 'the failure of organised or disorganised Christianity'.¹⁰³ The Anglican priest, Edwyn Bevan, was more optimistic. He held that this was not an actual but a perceived failure. Thus: 'The sooner the non-Christian world realises that Christendom is not yet Christian, the better for the prospects of Christianity.'¹⁰⁴ *The Hibbert Journal* was less hopeful when it asserted: 'Unless the moral forces of Europe can show themselves able to meet the challenge, not only will Christianity lose the respect of the non-Christian races, but it will cease to believe in itself.'¹⁰⁵

The reasons given for the churches' failure were not always agreed upon but there was a general consensus that either a lack of organisation or an over-dependence on establishment had driven many potential Christians away from the Church. In a letter which he wrote to his family, Burgon Bickersteth, the brother of the Anglo-Catholic Julian Bickersteth and a man with a strong Anglo-Catholic bias, assessed the situation by saying that there was much that needed to be altered in the Anglican

¹⁰¹ *Church of England*, pp. 230 –261.

¹⁰² J. McCabe, *The War and the Churches* (1915), p. 48.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p57.

¹⁰⁴ Hoover, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

system. However, he then asserted that he was convinced that ‘the man’ was ‘everything’ and that ‘the system, or rather the Church as a system’ was nothing. He explained further that ‘A narrow, a stupid or a lazy padre will ruin people’s opinion of the Church, however many self denying ordinances it may pass about bishop’s palaces, wives and other luxuries.’ Based on this premise he continued by saying:

The man is all that the average layman sees of the Church, the average private soldier at any rate – a wide minded, efficient hard working padre will get a sympathetic hearing for any doctrine he wishes to preach, and the system (with all its shortcomings) will live again in its very best light in his life.¹⁰⁶

This idea that individual priests could affect the reputation and call into question the legitimacy of the Church deeply impressed the Anglican understanding of the Christian faith; a point of notable contrast with Catholics. Although they expressed their reasons for being at war in a variety of ways, Catholics did not call into question the right positioning of the Catholic Church nor did they presume that the way in which they practised their religion, the traditions upon which it was built or the clergy who were in authority were responsible for the war.¹⁰⁷ This confidence in the Catholic Church was evident in a letter which Bernard Vaughan wrote in response to an American query about the perceived ‘failure of Christianity’:

Dear Comrade, The Catholic Church can never be ‘down and out’. For 2000 years she has driven through stress and storm and has delivered the goods all the time. With Peter at the helm she defies torpedoes, minefields and bombs. If you want to make good, come right in while you have the chance. Once aboard you will find she is the lifeboat worth writing home about. When the war is done and the Allies have won, she is going to carry more passengers than ever to the right landing stage. Shall I book your passage?¹⁰⁸

Alfred Boyer Sharpe, a priest at Westminster Cathedral assessed this position with rather more reserve in a homily which he gave in 1916, saying that that the Catholic

¹⁰⁶ Bickersteth, p. 239.

¹⁰⁷ This optimism is particularly evident in Plater’s *Catholic Soldiers*.

¹⁰⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 9 October 1915, p. 458.

Church was not ‘merely an assembly of fallible, imperfect, and sinful men.’ Although it was that, it was also ‘much more’ and could not ‘fail to be so’ since it was undeniable that the Catholic Church was an organisation. However, he asserted that an organisation was not limited to the materials of which it is composed. Rather, it was ‘a collection of fallible and sinful men and women – that is the material.’ They were ‘the embodiment of an idea’ which was founded in Jesus Christ and which could not, therefore, be destroyed or perverted. This, he maintained was ‘impossible, unthinkable. So long as that organisation persists, so long God’s idea is in it.’¹⁰⁹

While recognising man’s propensity to sin, the Catholic Church held firmly to the belief that the Church was God’s instrument and, as such, it could not be destroyed by the evil of the world and that it was, instead, the only means by which a warring world could be saved.¹¹⁰

Keeping Balance, Keeping the Faith

While some Catholics struggled to reconcile war with the basis of their Catholic faith, a large number of British Catholics and even the Catholic clergy ran the risk of becoming excessive in their patriotism. Like Catholics, some non-Catholics, and particularly Anglicans, argued that because they were fighting for their country were also, on some levels fighting for their faith. However, the distinction between their religious and national duties was not set out as sharply as it was for Catholics. Thus, as the Anglican chaplain Basil Bouchier, who was Vicar of Saint Jude’s Hampstead and later the rector of Saint Anne’s Soho, asserted, many in Britain felt at this time that: ‘To die for England is to taste the sweetest vintage of death that

¹⁰⁹ Reported in *The Tablet* 19 August 1916, p. 250.

¹¹⁰ *The Tablet* 28 February, 1915, p. 275

can be offered to English lips – yes, to drink the sweetest draught ever held in death’s iron cup, and to pass to that which is to come in a veritable ecstasy. To die for England... for the young Englishman must be the glittering topmost peak of beatitude.’¹¹¹ The extreme nationalist and Bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram blurred national and Christian duty even further when he asserted in a homily: ‘I believe that not only will Christ welcome them as comrades in arms but over every one who dies in this war with his face towards the foe, if he dies in Christ, will be said those words: “This is My beloved son, this is My beloved son. This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”’¹¹²

Although Catholics were also susceptible to this extremism at times, they were nevertheless obliged to set their patriotism within the accepted Catholic framework. Because of this, they were challenged, and indeed required, to keep a balanced perspective on, and a clear delineation between, their national and spiritual duties. Thus, when speaking on the ethics of peace and war to the Catholic Social Guild, Joseph Keating SJ asserted: ‘The first error of the militarist is to turn what is merely a means into an end, to glorify war as something good in itself, the highest effort at national self expression, instead of being a last desperate attempt to restore outraged justice and re-establish peace.’¹¹³

Although Catholics aimed towards this position, they like Christians of other denominations developed a rhetoric with regard to the salvific qualities of the soldiers which at times compromised the Church’s actual position. For instance, an article written in *The Ampleforth Journal* recorded: ‘It is our deep conviction that those who die in this war against Germany are most certainly not to be pitied, for they die

¹¹¹ B. Bouchier, *For All We Have and Are* (1915), pp. 48–49.

¹¹² See *Church of England*, p. 181 for this and further examples. Mews ‘Religion and English Society’, p. 93.

¹¹³ A summary of this is given in *The Tablet* 14 November 1914, p. 678.

witnesses to the Great Commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'¹¹⁴

While such statements were made, Catholics were also reminded, as in a 1915 sermon which was given by the Bishop of Northampton, that even though a 'double glory' fell to the 'lot of true Christian soldiers... in the true Christian sense of the word they are not martyrs. The cause for which martyrs died is the Christian faith.'¹¹⁵

Although they were not supposed to look at the fallen soldiers as martyrs simply because of their patriotic heroism, Catholics were nevertheless able to get around this obstacle by asserting not only the British but the Catholic valour of the Old Boys. For instance, *Stonyhurst Magazine* noted of Henry de Trafford, an 'old boy' who was killed in the war: 'True heroism consists in the perfect performance of one's duty, and surely Henry de Trafford was a hero. Nobly has he sustained the reputation of an Old Catholic family, and has left to Stonyhurst boys for all time the example of the life of a perfect Catholic gentleman.'¹¹⁶ Captain H.A.J. Roche was also commended and his heroics were noted with especial approval: 'His three great affections and objects in life were: first his Religion, second his Mother, and third his duty as a Soldier. That these words were no idle boast but a true expression of his principles he acted consistently through his life many a relative, friend and acquaintance can bear ample testimony.'¹¹⁷

This link between Catholic devotion and military heroism was critical in such commendations as evidenced in the posthumous report on Joseph 'Casey' Callighan MC. *The Stonyhurst Magazine* recorded:

He was a man of not only extreme physical courage but also great moral courage. Here is an illustrative episode related to his mother by his greatest chum, a Protestant: The first night when the squadron flew out to France there was no accommodation for its members, and all the officers of the squadron

¹¹⁴ *Ampleforth Journal* January 1915, p. 210.

¹¹⁵ *The Tablet* 18 December 1915, p. 800.

¹¹⁶ *Stonyhurst Magazine* December 1915, p. 1347.

¹¹⁷ *Stonyhurst Magazine* February 1915, p. 1090.

slept in one large hall. 'It was the bravest thing I ever knew Casey to do. He knelt down and said his prayers and not one dared to jeer or sneer. It was a thing unheard of.'¹¹⁸

For the Catholic Church then, and particularly for the Catholic schools which trained these young men, this sense of duty, both in the nationalistic sense and, more important, in the religious sense was recognised as the driving force behind Catholic patriotism. If their cause could be counted as just, Catholic devotion had to be recognised not only as explicitly Catholic devotion but as bravery and duty to the country.

While this was the case, anti-German sentiments could at times unbalance the place of Catholic unity. One instance of this was an advertisement placed in *The Tablet* in 1915 by the Anti-German League. This asked readers to abstain from purchasing German goods:

When offered goods bearing the mark of the beast, we ask you to think of the vast army of phantom dead, of the poor breastless women, of the outraged girls, of the little children torn to pieces, of our brave soldiers with their faces beaten to a pulp as they lay wounded and of the sinking of the *Falaba* with over a hundred innocent passengers amid the jeers of the fiends on the pirate submarine, and the *Lusitania* with hundreds of helpless victims sacrificed to the blood-lust of the Butcher of Berlin.¹¹⁹

Although such exceptions existed, most Catholics reproached such statements.¹²⁰

Regarding this organisation in particular, *The Month* asserted that the mission of the Anti-German League was 'foolish and futile as well as anti-Christian and the racial hatred...is no small obstacle both to victory and peace.'¹²¹ While the Catholic Church obviously did not stop Catholics from making all such statements, these more authoritative statements regarding the nature and practice of Catholicism nevertheless

¹¹⁸ Irwin, p. 34.

¹¹⁹ *The Tablet* 21 August 1915, p. 252.

¹²⁰ Marrin, pp. 135–140.

¹²¹ *The Month* January, 1916, p. 83.

provided useful scope for limiting unorthodox teachings from within the Church itself.

The importance of this higher authority was obvious in the case of Bernard Vaughan whose enthusiasm caused offence to some members of the Protestant churches. In one homily which he gave in 1916, Vaughan asserted the necessity of killing Germans, saying: 'Somebody has to be killed, and do you think we ought to be killed, in view of the motive we have gone forth to fight for? Therefore we have to kill a sufficient number of that tremendous army to entitle us to dictate terms of peace.'¹²² Vaughan was criticised for his clearly militaristic tone and his advocacy of killing Germans.¹²³ However, he retorted to a Protestant complaint by saying:

If our artillery is not out primarily to find the range for killing our foe, but only to shoot or frighten black beetles, rabbits, and mosquitoes, my advice to kill Germans is altogether out of place. If our guns do happen to riddle and kill the enemy then we can always say with Dr. Meyer; it was a misfortune and we no more meant it than the Germans mean killing us! ... The eloquent rector will probably charge me with belonging to an old fashioned Church which refuses to compromise where principle is involved. But I cannot help it. I am built and trained on those lines; and to be candid, I much prefer to be set down as a publican and sinner than as a Pharisee and hypocrite.¹²⁴

Vaughan's personal willingness to accept the necessity of killing did not, however, indicate that the Church advocated war or that those fighting for the British side were to be seen as saints or martyrs. Indeed, although his patriotic self might well have tended towards this, Vaughan could not do so and at the same time maintain the Catholic line. Because of this factor, Vaughan's support of the war was, and had

¹²² This statement and the debate surrounding it were printed in *The Tablet* throughout February 1916. Starts in *The Tablet* 5 February 1916, p. 172.

¹²³ The Nonconformist, Newsham Taylor responded by saying: 'I have a sort of distaste for the remark of Father Bernard Vaughan. To say that our business is to keep on killing Germans seems rather like preaching a vendetta. I do not think it comes well from ecclesiastical lips.' *The Tablet* 5 February 1916, p. 182.

¹²⁴ *The Tablet* 12 February 1916, p. 220.

necessarily to be, an acceptance of duty and a belief that in fulfilling duty, there was honour.¹²⁵

Although this was still difficult, Catholics had the assistance of the prayers and liturgy of the Church to help them maintain this line. Notably, during the war Catholic services were not doctrinally or practically innovative even when they did take on a new emphasis. Rather, through the rosary, benediction and Mass, they stressed in a more specific way the message which the Catholic Church had already taught more generally.¹²⁶ Even in the parts of the Mass which could be changed to meet the specific needs of the occasion or season, there existed substantial restrictions on nationalistic or anti-German rhetoric. For instance, while hymns could be patriotic, they were, if anything pro-British rather than anti-German. As for petitions, the formula was such that Catholics did not generally pray for God's help without praying also for their enemies or admitting their own sin. In homilies, Catholics could emphasise victory or voice anti-German sentiments as easily as Protestants. However, Catholic homilies did not play the central part in Catholic services which they did in Protestant services. Indeed, homilies, like hymns and petitions were not requirements but rather optional parts of the Mass. Moreover, they were restrained not only by the liturgy itself but by the supra-national hierarchy and particularly by the authority of Rome.

Such restrictions helped Catholics better to maintain their sense of universality even at a time when national patriotism was so strongly felt. They were aided further by the liturgical calendar. This firmly shaped and limited the scope of wartime homilies and pastorals and provided focus for Catholic worship. During advent,

¹²⁵ The Vatican maintained this position throughout the war and said so explicitly in 1915. Printed in *The Tablet* 18 September 1915, p. 364.

¹²⁶ This follows along with Heimann's findings in her study of the Victorian Catholic Church. See Heimann p. 42ff.

Catholics laid stress on the quality of Christ as the author of peace and they emphasised the hope that Christ would once again restore that peace. During Lent, the emphasis was on repentance, self-examination and the punishments received for sins committed. In the month of May, on Rosary Sunday and the feast days dedicated to Our Lady, stress was placed on the need for humble intercessory prayer through Mary. During Advent 1915, this Catholic coherence was emphasised in an article written in *The Month*:

It is to Catholicism that we must turn to learn the true functions of a teaching body, divinely accredited as the guardian and exponent of truth and in the Advent pastorals of our Hierarchy we find an admirable object lesson of its powers in exercise. All deal more or less directly with the war and its lessons, yet all, whatever the angle in which they approach the subject, lay down with absolute clearness and unanimity the same consistent Catholic doctrine.¹²⁷

The point which was regularly stressed was that for Catholics, defending the country was part of one's obligation but was not in itself the ultimate duty. It was a product of practical Catholicism rather than the embodiment of it. While heroics were to be honoured, the Catholic Church maintained that war itself was lamentable even if it afforded brave men the opportunity to show their good qualities. Although it did provide opportunities for heroism and glory, and Catholics readily strove after these, if sermons and religious writings were to express the position of the Catholic Church, it was not heroism but duty and 'Catholic' patriotism which were necessarily emphasised.

¹²⁷ *The Month* January 1915, p .79.

Why we are at War: Catholic Justifications of Military Action

Although Catholics accepted the value of their religious unity, recognising what part national duty played in their broader Christian obligations was still a challenge which the Church had to address. The Church explained that rather than thinking about the wrongs of Germany or trying to justify the war which had already been confirmed as just, British Catholics should accept their duty of fighting in the war and, in the meantime, focus their attention on purifying their own moral state. In a homily which he gave in 1915, Bishop Frederick Keating of Northampton asserted that the evidence against the Germans was strong and that the justice of the Allied cause could be defended. However, he also reminded Catholics that there was a far higher cause which they needed to recognise. He explained that although they could be compared to other British heroes in their devotion and willingness ‘to pour out blood and treasure in defence of our country’, Catholics nevertheless needed to remember that they had ‘not a rival but a still higher allegiance to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.’ Speaking further on this matter he claimed that in God’s kingdom, Catholics recognised the allegiance which they owed not only to the nations in which they were citizens but also to the Catholic people with whom they were at war. Because of this he maintained that although the calamity which they faced was terrible and had caused great political disruption, Catholics were to be reprimanded if they allowed ‘any intemperate speech or act to bring down upon [them] the greatest of all calamities, the disruption of the unity of the Church!’ He warned further that ‘the

enemy of mankind will deem his evil work only half done unless he succeeds in dividing the Catholic Church as well as Christian civilisation.’¹²⁸

In a homily which he gave in 1915, Bishop Cowgill of Leeds recognised the double allegiance which Catholics were required to maintain and he reminded Catholics of the necessary balance which had to be struck because they were members of ‘two great empires’:

One is the Catholic Church with its marvellous civilising power and accumulated wisdom of 2000 years, the empire which can never lose sight of God and His glory. The other is the great British Empire, in which it behoves us to do our part in preserving the spirit of justice, freedom and religion by educating ourselves as good and intelligent citizens... the fate of Germany... has come as a warning to England.¹²⁹

The thrust of his statement was that Catholics in Britain did not need to abandon their national obligations. Rather, they needed to uphold a Christian perspective with regard to their national duties, particularly with regard to the war.¹³⁰

The Jesuit Herbert Lucas also emphasised this when he told Catholics in his booklet, *God's Truth* (1916), that the truth of the Catholic's duty to God, including his ‘duty of belief’ ought to concern him ‘far more intimately than it concerns him to know his duty to the civil government of his country.’ It was of ‘vastly more vital importance to render to God the things that are God's than to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.’ However, he emphasised that it was unacceptable to neglect either of these duties to which they were bound.¹³¹

In an article on British Catholic patriotism which was printed in *The Tablet* in 1916, Frederick Keating also claimed that Catholic patriotism was of a higher and more perfect nature which did not, however, stand in the way of their national duty.

¹²⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 27 February 1915, p. 275.

¹²⁹ ‘Benedictines’, p. 39.

¹³⁰ See ‘Triumphalism’, in *More Roman than Rome* p. 200 ff.

¹³¹ H. Lucas, *God's Truth* (1916), p. 8.

He went so far as to assert that British Catholic patriotism was ‘unquestioned and unquestionable.’ He maintained that it went beyond ‘the common motives of loyalty’ which was ‘based upon attachment to our ancient institutions and the greatness of our Empire,’ and which they shared with their compatriots. He accounted for this higher level of patriotism by claiming that Catholics recognised, in a way which non-Catholics did not, that they owed ‘a strict obligation of conscience,’ to their Church and their country and that because of this: ‘at the outbreak of hostilities, our young men of every class flocked to the Colours without compulsion or hesitating.’¹³²

This theme had been taken up immediately in 1914 by *The Month* which explained that true patriotism had necessarily to be checked by a higher devotion to God and a loyalty to the things of God rather than the things of earth, no matter how noble earthly principles might be. Patriotism was recognised as a ‘natural virtue’ but one which was capable of proving dangerous if it was not ‘conditioned by Christianity’. This, it explained, was because Christianity revealed that the true motive of patriotism was, or at least should be, the love of fellow citizens as people. Thus it most naturally took its form in love of fatherland which was, broadly speaking, a form of love for fellow citizens and friends. While this natural virtue was important, Catholics were warned that Christianity not only perfected patriotism but that it also marked its ‘proper bounds’. Therefore national patriotism had its limitations. These were set out in *The Month*:

Earthly patriotism, therefore, must take account of the fact that the whole human race are, in God’s design, potential citizens of the same abiding city: their present divisions are but temporary and superficial...In regard to the Christian, the fact that Christ so loved and loves each individual soul that He gave His life for its salvation makes it impossible for him to regard members of alien nations with dislike or contempt simply because they are foreigners. There is a bond between him and them far stronger and more permanent than

¹³² Bishop of Northampton, ‘Catholicism under the British Flag’, printed in *The Tablet* 16 December 1916, p. 904.

anything that separated them. He loves his own nation best, as in bound duty, but he can sympathise too with other nationalities, God's children like himself. The agnostic knows nothing of this motive or its basis.¹³³

So long as Catholics recognised the limitations of national patriotism and the higher calling of Christian duty, the Catholic Church in Britain claimed that they could and indeed ought to support the war either by fighting for it or by encouraging those who did. This could be done for nationalistic reasons but for it to be truly Catholic, Catholics were reminded that it had also to be based on higher spiritual principles.

Thus Cardinal Bourne told the troops on his visit to the Western Front, that the most important duty for Catholics was not to condemn the other side or to justify the righteousness of their own army but to ensure that their consciences were clear.¹³⁴

Likewise, the Jesuit priest Charles Plater asserted in his pamphlet 'Preparation for War' that their highest priority should be to spend time in prayer and to be truly penitent.¹³⁵ His warning to Catholics both in this pamphlet and in other letters which he wrote on this same theme went some distance towards expressing the more widespread position of British Catholics. In one letter which he wrote to the editor of *The Tablet* at the start of the war, Plater asserted: 'This war is a big thing. The danger is that it may lead us to forget yet bigger things.'¹³⁶ Although many Catholics lost sight of these 'bigger things', the Church, in its national as well as its supra-national form and especially in its devotional, sacramental and doctrinal aspects, was there to remind Catholics of their religious priorities.

¹³³ *The Month* December 1914, p. 611.

¹³⁴ *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 208.

¹³⁵ See *The Tablet* 22 August 1914, p. 254.

¹³⁶ *The Tablet* 15 August 1914, p. 254.

The Scourge of War

While the Church could set out the necessity of fighting and the ways in which Catholics could fight justly, it had still to validate the reasons why they were at war and the basic Christian principles which they were fighting to protect. The clergy did this by asserting that although Germany was at fault, it was not only German sinfulness but also their own sin, and the overall sinful nature of humanity, which were the root cause of the conflict. They recognised that this fact of sin was lamentable and the diocese of Salford expressed this position by refraining from saying the *Te Deum*, and by adding the *Memorare* to the Benediction during the period of the war.¹³⁷ Father Bede Jarrett also accepted the inadequacy of war as a means by which Christians ought to resolve problems in a CTS pamphlet in which he asserted that for anyone who followed Christ, the ‘slaying of a fellow man was a terrible thing’ and that the Sermon on the Mount did not fit with the military practice of most Christian nations: ‘The figure of Christ in its austere gentleness rebukes the swaggering truculence of actual Christians.’ However, even when Catholics recognised the horrific elements of war, they also recognised the sinful state of the world and, therefore, asserted the necessity of fighting just wars. As Jarrett maintained:

But just as we have had to realise that it is possible to be angry and yet not to sin, so it is also possible to make war and yet not to sin...Force and law are necessary for righteousness. Hence when the Church blessed the Crusades she

¹³⁷ S.D.A., *Acta*, Ad Venum Clerum, 18 December, 1914, p. 88. In 1914 in the diocese of Salford, priests were permitted to expose and process with the sacrament and were asked to pray the *Miserere* psalm, ‘to implore God’s mercy in this awful scourge of war and the speedy and happy termination of the same as well as for his protection. They were also told to say the *de profundis* for those who had fallen in the war and to explain the object of humble intercessions.

simply turned war from its evil course; she did not destroy but tried to sanctify it.¹³⁸

Archbishop Ilsley also stressed this position in a homily at the start of the war, saying that the war was of ‘unparalleled magnitude’ and that it would require great loss of life and ‘untold suffering’. He then asked if anyone could question the fact that such an event was ‘a scourge in the hand of the Almighty for the chastisement of our sins?’ He asserted that because it so obviously was a scourge, the war required Catholics to humble themselves before God and to ‘accept the patient and willing submission [to] the ordinances of His justice.’ Notably he added the reminder: ‘At the same time we may and ought to pray that God would mercifully deign to mitigate the severity of His just decrees and that peace may again prevail.’¹³⁹

Because British Catholics maintained that God would only come to the aid of the contrite, even talk of victory was laced with terms of penitence and admission of personal failures. In a prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which Ilsley commissioned in 1917, the petition for victory was shrouded in humility:

We beg thy forgiveness for every sin by which we have offended Thy Sacred Heart. To this Heart which has so loved mankind, we consecrate ourselves, our families, our armies, our country... We consecrate to Thee our armies: give wisdom to our leaders, make every soldier brave in battle and generous in self-sacrifice. Keep each one of us under Thy protection and lead us on to victory.¹⁴⁰

In this manner, Catholics emphasised that while their hope and aim was a British victory, the more important victory, that of peace and Christian justice, required not only military dominance but sincere contrition.¹⁴¹ Bishop Cassartelli preached of this in Salford when in 1915 he asked: ‘Have we, too, as a nation to reproach ourselves

¹³⁸ B. Jarrett, *War, Loyalty and Defence* (1916), p. 4.

¹³⁹ Reported in *The Tablet* 7 September 1914, p. 249.

¹⁴⁰ *The Tablet* 2 June 1917, p. 689.

¹⁴¹ See Bernard Vaughan’s address to the Cameron Highlanders. *The Tablet* 5 February 1914, p. 312.

with any share in the moral decadence of the civilised world? It is easy to make acts of contrition for other persons; it is easy to strike one's neighbour's breast. But shall we say that we ourselves have no need to utter our *mea culpa*?¹⁴²

British Catholics were also reminded of the specific sins which the British nation and her allies had committed. In Southwark, Bishop Amigo explained in a 1915 homily that the nations had fallen away from the truth of the Catholic Church and that the time had come for the world to return in humble submission to God. He saw the Protestantism of England as a main cause of this trial and he asserted that the war ought to stir up the nation to beg God's pardon for sin and to atone for that sin by penance. He continued by saying that the English nation could not expect to be brought back into the Catholic faith without having done 'much more penance for the sins committed at the time of the Reformation' or without having humbled themselves 'for the nation's apostasy.' He then asked: 'What penance have we Catholics done? Though we all consider that our cause is just, the war must mean to all of us many privations, many trials, much suffering.'¹⁴³

British Catholics were also warned that they were capable of fighting for the correct side but doing so in an inappropriate and even sinful way.¹⁴⁴ In recognition of this point and specifically in the light of the Pope's 1917 peace initiative, a *Dublin Review* commentary on the reprinted *The Pope's Note on Peace and War* used the opportunity to assert:

Let us face facts. Once at war, combatants themselves may lose the sense of right and wrong; even otherwise calm and pious combatants. War is an occasion of sin – the greatest. The brutalities of Prussia, to which Bavarian Catholics – the matches, even the models of us all in days of Peace – are now accessory, bring home that appalling fact. War, like drunkenness, deletes reason.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²Printed in *The Tablet* 27 February 1915, p. 276.

¹⁴³Printed in *The Tablet* 27 February 1915, p. 275.

¹⁴⁴Printed in *The Tablet* 17 July 1915, p. 126.

¹⁴⁵*The Dublin Review* October 1917, p. 319.

In addition to the warnings they received about their own propensity to sin, British Catholics were reminded that although they did not always do so, German Catholics could fight with right motives even if they fought for the wrong cause.¹⁴⁶ One way in which Catholics justified this position was by separating the views of German Catholics from those of the influential German philosophers Nietzsche, Treitschke and Bernhardi.¹⁴⁷ For instance, a *Dublin Review* article entitled ‘German Catholics and the War’ attempted to separate Catholic from German opinion by claiming that the German Catholic Professor Forester opposed the views of Bernhardi,¹⁴⁸ and that he ‘explicitly condemns the German militarism.’ This article explained further that: ‘While he is misinformed about what is going on at present, his principles, as well as those of the German Archbishops are thoroughly Catholic.’¹⁴⁹ In this way Francis Urquhart was able to come to the German Catholic defence in another *Dublin Review* article, saying:

The Pope and the bishops, and not least eloquently the German bishops, have seen in the war a punishment for the growth of material ideas and pleasures, for the neglect of God; and every Christian must agree. Yet the war is perhaps more directly the outcome of indifference to the whole idea of national sin. This is a responsibility which affects a whole nation. In matters of interest a people may leave matters to the Government; they cannot hand over their consciences.¹⁵⁰

Building a case for German Catholic innocence was not merely of practical importance during the war. Indeed, if they could do this then Catholics would be

¹⁴⁶ See Amigo’s article ‘The War and National Repentance’, in *The Tablet*, 14 August 1915, p. 218 and Bourne’s New Year address in *The Tablet*, 9 January 1915, p. 62 See also *Church of England*, pp. 32–56, Marrin pp. 59–64, and Vaughan, ‘A Scrap of Paper’.

¹⁴⁷ See *The Dublin Review* October 1917, p. 319.

¹⁴⁸ Bernhardi was the German scholar whose work *Germany and the Next War*, published in 1914, was seen as indication of the militaristic mindset of Germany and a forewarning of the German aims for the war. He, along with Nietzsche and Treitschke were widely considered to be the philosophical force behind the German aggression. See *Church of England*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁹ ‘German Catholics and the War’, *The Dublin Review* January 1916, p. 31.

¹⁵⁰ F.F. Urquhart, ‘A Plea for International law’, *The Dublin Review* April 1915, p. 317.

assured of their unity of purpose even when they were not in agreement in their actions. An article published in *The Month* in September 1914 said of this:

Nothing is more facile and nothing more futile than the Voltairian jeer at Masses said in opposing camps for the success of one's own arms and the confusion of one's opponents. For, of course, all Christian prayer is offered first of all subject to the acknowledged limitations of human ignorance and ignorance need affect neither the good faith of the prayer nor the outpouring of mercy pledged in answer. And secondly, it is offered always with the proviso *fiat voluntas tua* explicit far more often than those think who do not pray, and never very far below the surface of consciousness.¹⁵¹

In the light of this argument, 'German Catholics and the War' told Catholics not to worry about the fate of their co-religionists, boldly asserting that it was not the good German Catholic soldiers who 'told their beads in the trenches' and whose piety so often edified the population, 'it is not these that have been bred on these perverse doctrines. But neither is it they who direct the military operations.'¹⁵²

Catholic Duty: Catholic Soldiers and the Responsibilities of War

Based on this understanding of just war and the specific justice of this particular war, British Catholics maintained that their duty was to fight in the war.¹⁵³ As Bernard Vaughan claimed in a talk which he gave to the boys at Stonyhurst in 1915: 'No Catholic could handle the crucifix without feeling that if sin let loose could do this to the body of my Saviour, what vengeance, but for his love, would it not wreak upon me.'¹⁵⁴ Such ideas affected not only the way in which Catholics thought about their faith and the war but also the way in which they approached their practical duties, both spiritual and civic.¹⁵⁵ As was the case for other denominational groups,

¹⁵¹ *The Month* September 1914, p. 304.

¹⁵² 'German Catholics and the War', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, p. 26.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁵⁴ *Stonyhurst Magazine* April 1915, p. 1157.

¹⁵⁵ See Pike, pp. 2–3.

this element of Christian duty was given special emphasis in groups such as the Catholic boys' brigade and the boy scouts which stressed the idea of both national and religious loyalty. However, for Catholics the distinction between national and Catholic duty was articulated in such a way that Catholic duty was shown not only to rank higher than but actually to purify national duty. A handbook for the Catholic Scouts explained explicitly that the duty of Catholics was of a dual nature but that duty to God was higher than that of duty to country. While the Scout promise vowed: 'On my honour I promise that I will do my best to do my duty to God, and the King' it further clarified this statement asking rhetorically: 'Why God first? For two reasons: 1) because our chief duty must be to God who made us and to whom we belong; and 2) because this chief duty really contains all others.' In case the distinction needed further elucidation, this same guide taught that the primary teachers to whom Catholics should turn were God, Mary, the saints and the angels.¹⁵⁶

Up to a point this sort of distinction was characteristic of all religious denominations. Yet Nonconformists did not have the same understanding of corporate loyalty and obligation; the idea of personal commitment proved more important to them. Anglicans felt a much more fundamental link between national patriotism and religious loyalty because of their position within the establishment. Consequently, Catholics made this distinction somewhat more pointedly than other Christian groups in Britain, saying that national loyalty was valuable but that those virtues which the nation possessed were a product of Christian devotion rather than national character.

Given this position it is not surprising that Catholics in the military were expected to be not only dutiful and courageous soldiers but well-versed and practical

¹⁵⁶ J.F. Scholfield, *Catholic and Roman* (1909), p. 9.

Catholics. Speaking on this in a homily at Westminster Cathedral, Joseph Bampton SJ made the point:

But first tell me this: what was it that nerved that soldier or sailor lad of yours, be he youth or veteran, to take his life in his hands and go forth to the fight with his head erect and spirit high, with the British soldier's laughter in his eye or the British sailor's jest upon his lips but with the grim determination of both stamped on every feature? It was...the sense of duty... Now a sense of duty may be a purely human thing, a purely natural ideal. Even so it is a noble thing. But it may be something nobler still. There is such a thing as Christian, as sacred duty. And ours is a sacred duty in a war such as this.¹⁵⁷

Monsignor Howlett expressed this in a sermon which he gave to the Queen's Westminster Rifles at the beginning of the war saying: 'The service of our country was a religious duty but not our only one. Our first duty was to be at peace with God. They would be all the better soldiers, and would defend more bravely the honour and integrity of their country by being good Catholics in the grace of God.'¹⁵⁸ Parish newsletters, school journals, talks to Catholic societies and the messages of Catholic homilies all encouraged such devotion and these shaped the Catholic understanding of patriotism and Christian devotion.

A notable source of these Catholic ideals was the *Catholic Truth Society* whose pamphlets were widely distributed during the war. The range of the C.T.S. publications varied from practical booklets, prayer books, devotionals and manuals for sodalities and societies; to lives of saints such as Gerard Majella, who was labelled, *A Saint for the Working-Man, 1726 – 1755*; and more apologetic works such as *International Catholic Defence*.¹⁵⁹ While the soldiers did not necessarily adopt all of the ideas which were presented to them in C.T.S. literature, these publications shaped the ways in which the men viewed themselves in relationship to the war as well as to their church. When combined with the ideas presented by the scouts and the

¹⁵⁷ Reported in *The Tablet* 19 September 1914, p. 519.

¹⁵⁸ *The Tablet* 21 November 1914, p. 809.

¹⁵⁹ These were both published in 1914.

boys' brigade, young Catholics had before them a clear picture of what was expected of them as dutiful British Catholic men.¹⁶⁰

Especially influential were the pamphlets which were written with the specific aim of assisting the soldiers to be more devoted Catholics. Bertrand Pike wrote one such prayer book for the CTS entitled *On Active Service* in which he asserted:

Perhaps if I look at my crucifix it will help me to understand a little. I see there no mere man, hanging with outstretched arms, but I know that He who is pinioned there is God, and moreover, what is perhaps strangest of all, that it is His wish that He should do all that – He has willed to suffer... Love explains all pain and suffering... And so when I turn to my own life and find there sorrow and suffering, I realise that love is really the explanation of it all.¹⁶¹

It was this love of the faith and the higher duty to the Church which Catholics were told to keep as their primary objective. However, this duty to God did not, they were reminded, negate the duty which they owed to their country. Rather, it strengthened it. As Bertrand Pike explained to the Catholic youth, he like many other boys had hoped to live up to the expectations of the country. However in ordinary life the attainment of such greatness had seemed impossible. With the outbreak of the war came a new possibility for him to demonstrate his love for his country because: 'war meant fighting – and to fight for one's country was surely a duty'.¹⁶²

Although most Christians recognised this as an important quality, Pike asserted that Catholics were distinctive because they were obliged not only by this national and Christian duty but also by their duties to the Catholic Church. He explained that the Catholic was the 'proud possessor of a faith for which [his] forefathers were willing to suffer and if needs be to die!' This was their 'simple duty'. Although they might have given in to the pressures of the government, they did not do

¹⁶⁰ D.A.A./R.C., Church Huts file, 1915. A Miss Cunningham also set up a scheme with the Chaplaincy in 1915 in which she made packets for the men with a Sacred Heart Badge, a prayer book and a wooden crucifix.

¹⁶¹ Pike, p. 7.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

this. He claimed that what prevented them from giving in was this same duty which he felt: ‘to fight for one’s country is a duty – and a duty which must appeal to every Catholic heart’.¹⁶³

Pike continued by explaining that it was not only a Catholic’s duty to fight but to show others how he as a Catholic was different because of his Catholic faith. To assist his readers in understanding this, Pike presented what he held to be a common scenario for Catholics, saying:

I find myself surrounded by men, the majority of whom are not Catholics... This being so, I must remember that for the present, at any rate, I stand in their eyes as a representative of the Catholic Church. They may or may not know what are my duties. At any rate I can show them that I know them and am ready to stand by them. I must remember that the honour of the Church is vested in me. It is just possible that they may judge of the whole Catholic Church by my individual behaviour.¹⁶⁴

He maintained, moreover, that more could be expected of Catholics because the dedication with which they practised their faith had prepared them for the sacrifices necessary during the time of war. He said further that the two necessities for a brave soldier were the justice of his cause and the friendship and peace of God. He claimed that the justice of the cause was theirs and that since it had equipped them to pray and to keep themselves from the temptations of sin, their Catholic faith provided them with the other necessity. Even when they failed, Pike asserted that Catholics could rise again since their faith had taught them how to act with true sorrow and contrition and since, through Confession and Holy Communion, Catholics had the means to ‘purify and strengthen [their] souls’, and the provisions by which they could ‘unite [themselves] more closely to Jesus Christ our Lord’.¹⁶⁵ For Catholics to be successful, then, Pike argued that it was essential for them not only to be brave but to foster deep

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5 –6.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

religious piety which would strengthen them in the work set before them.¹⁶⁶ The soldiers were reminded of this necessity in another *Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet which was written by the Bishop of Northampton. This said:

We Catholics, above all, are bound by our principles to give an example of patriotism that does not reckon the cost. None of the new restrictions are unfamiliar to us. From infancy we have been taught to mortify the appetite for food and drink; to regard wealth rather as a stewardship than an absolute ownership; to esteem the dignity of manual labour... Gladly shall we answer the country's call, by dedicating to its service all our energies and all our possessions; convinced, as we are, that the way of victory is the only way of peace.¹⁶⁷

Such devout Catholicism was not only recognised as edifying in terms of religious matters but was seen as the most appropriate means by which Catholics could understand their patriotism and answer to the call of both their Catholic and civic duties. During the First World War, then, Catholics were expected to remain devout, fight in the war and, in so doing, develop more perfectly as Catholics and British citizens.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–8.

¹⁶⁷ F. Keating, *The Peace of God* (1917), p. 2.

Chapter 3: Papal Authority and the British Catholic Defence of Rome

If general anticipation is realised, Benedict XV will be – to sum up – a Pope of supreme tact and of exquisite nobility...He will be a Pope who will work to win the world by his charity and good example, and he will endeavour to lead his people both in morals and in politics along the via media between excess and deficiency which is the true secret of life.¹

Such were the British Catholic hopes for Benedict XV, as expressed by *The Dublin Review* shortly after his election to the supreme pontificate in October 1914. Although in theory these qualities were regarded as exemplary, Catholics nevertheless struggled to accept this middle way which Pope Benedict XV followed and which he encouraged them to follow throughout the war years.² Indeed, during the war, Catholics had to recognise the points where they were obliged to adopt Benedict XV's position as papal mandates and where they were free to follow more nationalistic inclinations.³ Moreover, they were obliged to demonstrate how these religious and national loyalties could co-exist and even reinforce one another.⁴

To do this Catholics had to understand rightly the limitations of their national patriotism and the location and basis of papal authority. They had in particular to recognise how the Pope's impartial position as supreme pontiff and their own

¹ *The Dublin Review* October 1914, p. 377.

² See J. P. von Arx, p. 233.

³ Mercier, p. 53.

⁴ See Pollard's discussion about the conclave as an example of this. Pollard, pp. 59 –71.

distinctive location as Britons and as Catholics, did not conflict with but actually strengthened and purified one another. This proved challenging but was made more feasible by the definition of papal infallibility.⁵ On the one hand, this dogma asserted papal authority by recognising both the Church's flawless position and the Pope's role as the Church's supreme leader. On the other, it stressed that the Pope's infallibility was limited to *ex cathedra* statements, those regarding matters of faith and morals.⁶ Thus, at the same time as it affirmed the headship of the Pope, papal infallibility, as it was formally defined, could also be used to demonstrate that the realm in which the supreme pontiff was entitled to speak most authoritatively concerned not particular aspects of the secular and political world, but the higher plane of morals and values.⁷ Consequently, when appealing to the dogma of infallibility the Church was made to distinguish between the Pope's roles as a leading world figure, a pastor of the Catholic Church, and a doctor of scripture who had the authority to speak definitively on Catholic teaching.

This was of critical importance during the war years, most notably because, when speaking in capacities outside the scope of his moral and doctrinal infallibility, the Pope could voice his opinion as a statesman and a Christian leader without the danger of Catholics or others thinking that his word on that matter was or was meant to be binding on the Catholic body.⁸ During the First World War, therefore, Benedict XV asserted the need for the cessation of the armed conflict and promoted policies of peace.⁹ However, he made no definitive statements and in recognition of their national obligations, he left Catholics free to support their own countries. This left

⁵ Papal infallibility was defined during a time of general upheaval in Europe, most notable were the loss of the Papal States and the outbreak of the Franco-German war. Kent and Pollard, p. 16.

⁶ See *More Roman than Rome*, pp. 120 –121.

⁷ See Rhodes, p. 17.

⁸ Von Arx, p. 237.

⁹ See *Ad Beattissimi*.

British Catholics with the possibility of being faithful to both their 'British-ness' and their Catholicity and with the opportunity to demonstrate the compatibility of British patriotism and the Catholic faith.

Although his infallible role was a feature of the office, this emphasis on the Pope's supra-national as much as his super-natural role was particular to Benedict XV; it could not have been expected of his predecessor, Pope Pius X, whose papacy was defined by dramatic spiritual reforms.¹⁰ Thus it was of great consequence that on 20 August 1914, less than three weeks into the conflict Pius X died, leaving the Catholic Church without a leader. This necessitated a conclave whose job was not only to select a new Pope but a wartime leader of the Catholic body.

While Catholics recognised the strategic advantages of this situation, it had to be handled with care. The different cardinals held widely contrasting positions regarding the war and could not therefore come easily to an agreement on which person could fairly represent and lead the Church at this time.¹¹ Indeed, even though they were leaders of the international body of the Catholic Church and were part of the cosmopolitan College of Cardinals, the cardinals did not have diminished interests in national matters. Rather, these were often increased since the cardinals were not only shepherds of the Catholic Church but, specifically, of Catholics in the region over which they were appointed. Thus many of the cardinals were expected by their countries to endorse a papal candidate who might be friendly to their cause. The reality of this can be seen in one extreme instance when the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold tried to persuade the Austrian cardinals to choose a Pope who would not hurt the Austrian position in the war. After mentioning the possible

¹⁰ See Kent and Pollard, pp. 15–16.

¹¹ *The Month* October 1914, p. 337.

candidates in a letter which he wrote to the Austrian cardinals, Bechtold concluded that while he did not want to influence the papal election:

...At the same time we are bound to take into consideration the fact that it would be in the common interest both of the Church and of the Hapsburg monarchy that the coming conclave should not produce a Pope of marked political or nationalistic leanings.¹²

The simple fact that this note was written is evidence that the Count did have some hope of influencing the Cardinal to vote for a candidate who, if he had 'leanings' of any kind, had pro-Austrian, rather than pro-French or Belgian ones.¹³

Even personal differences proved challenging to keep under control, as seen in one instance when Aidan Gasquet, England's only curial cardinal, confronted the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne. In a much publicised response to the Cardinal's comment that he hoped they would 'not speak of the war' Gasquet abruptly quipped that he hoped they would 'not speak of peace'.¹⁴ Although this was a matter of personal rather than institutional disagreement, such an exchange was of some importance given the collegiality of the group assembled. What is more, these personal differences pointed to the greater international and ideological chasm which had been opened up between Catholics even on this highest level. Even so, in selecting a Pope, the cardinals had to keep in mind that they were choosing the leader of the Catholic Church. Therefore they were required to select the person who could best serve and lead Catholics of all countries. Given the contradictory nature of these two expectations, the cardinals and with them the Catholic body more generally, were at times torn.

¹² C. Falconi, *The Popes in The Twentieth Century* (1967), p. 91.

¹³ See Pollard pp. 59 –65.

¹⁴ S. Leslie, *Gasquet* p. 245. John Pollard has cited this encounter as having involved Mercier rather than Gasquet. See Pollard p. 59.

The Election of Della Chiesa

Even with the challenges which came as a result of their national allegiances and supra-national responsibilities to the Church, the conclave ran relatively smoothly and on 3 September 1914 Giacomo Della Chiesa, the Archbishop of Bologna, was elected Pope. Although most were not familiar with Della Chiesa as a public figure, British Catholics welcomed their new leader with great hope.¹⁵ *The Edmundian* printed a typical response to the election which asserted: 'To Pius X our deepest reverence/To Benedict XV our loyalty and homage/ With the earnest prayer that the Peace of Christ desired by both/ May ere long gladden the world once more.'¹⁶ Cardinal Archbishop Bourne also offered his support, asserting that a great consolation could be found in what he recognised to be the underlying reasons for Della Chiesa's election. As Bourne recorded in his diary:

Strangely enough, he owed his election to the Supreme Pontificate under providence, to his strict notions of neutrality. When the great struggle began in August 1914, Giacomo della Chiesa could have had little thought of becoming Benedict XV. He had been a Cardinal only three months when Pius X died. But in his archiepiscopal city of Bologna he had preached a remarkable sermon, insisting that the conflict was one in which the Holy See while working for peace and striving to mitigate suffering, must preserve neutrality. When the Conclave assembled, the echoes of this discourse had not died away.¹⁷

¹⁵ Each of the School Magazines congratulated the conclave on the election and offered support to Benedict XV as he took upon himself the leadership of the Catholic Church. See for instance, the 1914 editions of *Beaumont Magazine*, *Stonyhurst Magazine*, *Saint Aidan's Magazine*, *Downside Review* and *Ampleforth Journal*.

¹⁶ *The Edmundian* December 1914, p. 111.

¹⁷ See Oldmeadow, p. 104 for commentary on Bourne's diary.

In keeping with this emphasis, Bourne reported to the Catholic press that during the conclave he had been struck by the power of the Church's unity, especially when it confronted such difficult circumstances. His impressions were conveyed in *The Tablet* which, in a special report on 'The English Cardinals and the Conclave' in the 'News from Rome' column, made a specific point to demonstrate the united front of the Catholic Church.

One strong, overpowering impression His Eminence had brought from the Sistine Chapel, that of its being a wonderful indication of the divinity of the Church: Cardinals of every country, in the middle of this crisis of war and hate in all Europe, were meeting, not only in the solemn ceremonies in the Sistine Chapel, but in the ordinary things of daily life, in perfect harmony, in Christian charity. Nowhere else but in Rome, at the Throne of Peter could it be possible.¹⁸

Given the conflicts which existed between the cardinals of the warring nations, it is unlikely that this was achieved without some difficulties. Indeed, as John Pollard notes, it was recognised more widely in Europe that Della Chiesa was more than anything a 'last-minute compromise'.¹⁹ This, however, went unmentioned by Bourne. Thus it is all the more significant that this Catholic unity was stressed by Bourne since it indicates clearly the trend which British Catholics hoped to emphasise.²⁰

Regardless of the reasons for his election, how he utilised this position was of immense importance in shaping how Benedict XV was received by Catholics and the Christian world at large. Most notably, Benedict XV proved that he was a 'professional Pope' who was not only an expert in both secular and canon law but an extremely efficient bureaucrat. On his first day as Pope, Benedict XV wrote directly to Poincaré, the president of the French Republic, ending ten years of silence between

¹⁸ *The Tablet* 19 September 1914, p. 415.

¹⁹ Pollard, p. 62.

²⁰ See 'Pretending', in *The Tablet*, 4 March, 1916, p. 298.

France and the Vatican.²¹ He also chose Baron Carlo Monti as the unofficial channel between Italy and the Vatican²² and he investigated the financial status of the Vatican, setting aside a large sum for charitable causes.²³ Although such steps demonstrated his involvement and concern for the wartime situation, on a personal level Benedict XV was physically weak and in personal interactions he was reserved. When these characteristics were combined with his bureaucratic rather than pastoral nature, Benedict XV was generally perceived to be cold and uncaring and thus a disappointment to many Catholics throughout the world and especially in the belligerent nations.²⁴

Despite his lack of popular appeal, Benedict XV's judicious reserve and his firm pacific aims contributed to his innovations as pope during his pontifical reign. To begin with, his diffidence led him to opt for a position of strict neutrality or as he preferred to call it, 'impartiality'. When asked about his motives in taking this stance, Benedict XV said:

It is, for every thinking man, abundantly clear that in this frightful conflict, the Holy See, whilst unceasingly watching it with the closest attention, must preserve the most absolute neutrality...He has on both the belligerent sides a great number of sons for whose salvation he must have an equal solicitude. He must accordingly consider, not the special interests which divide them, but the common bond of faith that makes them brothers. Any other attitude on his part not only would not assist the cause of peace, but would, what is worse, create a lack of sympathy with and hatred against religion and expose the tranquillity and internal concord of the Church to grave disturbances.²⁵

Although this was at times interpreted as a failure to act, his position affirmed the pastoral rather than political authority of the papacy.

²¹ Pollard, p. 68.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

²⁵ Printed in *The Tablet* 22 January 1915, p. 157.

Benedict XV's response to the war not only affected the ways in which Catholics in the belligerent nations understood the leadership of their spiritual head. It also shaped the way in which they understood the unity of their faith. By claiming impartiality for the papacy Benedict XV made a statement about the primacy of the pastoral authority of the Bishop of Rome. He did not suggest that all Catholics had to take this stance. He rather allowed and even encouraged Catholics in the belligerent countries to support their countries as dutiful citizens. He showed to what extent he was willing to acknowledge this national duty when he readily granted a dispensation for French religious who were conscripted into the army.²⁶ He did this again through the voice of Cardinal Secretary Gasparri who expressed the position of the Vatican in September 1915:

The Catholic or universal character of the Roman Church naturally places its supreme head on a super-national plane... the principle of universality, while it affects the situation of the Roman Pontiff does not interfere with the principle of nationality among the faithful. Clergy and people of any nation have not only the duty of patriotism, but it is encouraged by the Holy See.²⁷

In asserting this position, Benedict XV gave Catholics the liberty necessary to support their countries without leaving the good graces of the Church. At the same time, he asserted the pastoral and spiritual nature of papal authority.

This point was made even clearer when Benedict XV explained his own position in the matter. In his first statement, *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum*, 'Appealing for Peace', which he gave in November 1914, Benedict XV spoke of his sorrow about the war, presenting himself as a grieving father. By making peace his primary goal, Benedict XV was able to address not only the war but the internal difficulties of the Church as well. He did this most obviously by calling for an end to the integralist/

²⁶ Becker explains the difficult situation of the Catholic priests in France, detailing the types of services in which they were employed. Becker p. 33. See also *The Tablet* 3 July 1915, p. 5.

²⁷ Printed in *The Tablet* 18 September 1915, p. 364.

Modernist controversy which had developed during Pius X's pontificate, saying in *Ad Beattissimi*: 'As regards matters in which without harm to faith or discipline – in the absence of any authoritative intervention of the Apostolic See – there is room for divergent opinions, it is clearly the right of everyone to express and defend his own opinion.' This statement effectively ended the reign of the integralists. This meant that the accusations of modernism made against individuals of questionable orthodoxy were no longer acceptable unless substantial proof of flagrant violation was offered. This not only affected the Church's positions on orthodoxy but, in this time of international mudslinging, it reduced the number and types of accusations which could be made about Catholics on one side of the war by Catholics on the other. Thus in this 'Appeal' Benedict XV set out his strategy for attaining both military peace and also peace within the Catholic Church by recognising his role in the international conflict as one primarily concerned with spiritual and pastoral matters.²⁸

Regarding the war specifically, Benedict XV asked: 'For what could prevent the souls of the common Father of all being most deeply distressed by the spectacle presented by Europe, nay, by the whole world, perhaps the saddest and most mournful spectacle of which there is any record.' He continued by pleading for peace:

You see, Venerable Brethren, how necessary it is to strive in every possible way that the charity of Jesus Christ should once more rule supreme among men. That will ever be our own aim; that will be the keynote of Our Pontificate. And We exhort you also to make that also the end of your endeavours.²⁹

Throughout the war, Benedict XV did not stray from this position. In December 1914 he requested a Christmas ceasefire, an idea which was rejected because the Russians did not celebrate Christmas on the twenty-fifth of December.³⁰ This did not hinder

²⁸ See *Ad Beattissimi*. See also Pollard, pp. 85–111.

²⁹ *Ad Beattissimi*, 3–7.

³⁰ *The Tablet* 19 December 1914, p. 836.

him from voicing his views in the future, however.³¹ Rather, the speech he offered on the first anniversary of the war supported his initial stance. In this he said that he shared in the concerns of the many families who were involved in the war and that because of this, his primary goal as Pope would be the reconciliation of the people who were at war.³² Although often unnoticed, he continued in this aim throughout the war. In a letter to the Cardinal Vicar of Rome on 4 March 1916, the Pope noted that he would throw himself, ‘in the midst of the fighting peoples, as a father in the middle of his fighting children’ claiming:

We have conjured them in the name of that God who is justice and infinite love to put aside the purpose of mutual destruction, to put forward once for all and clearly, either by direct or indirect means, the desires of each side, and to take into account as far as is possible the aspirations of the people accepting where occasion arises, the due and necessary sacrifices of *amour propre* and private interests in favour of equity and the common good of the great community of the nations.³³

Such a statement clearly demonstrated the overt pacific aims of the Vatican, or at least its pontifical head, during the First World War.

In addition to this firm moral and pastoral stance against the conflict, Benedict XV made a number of significant practical contributions which supported his pacific position, particularly in his aid to civilians and prisoners of war.³⁴ To begin with, Benedict XV enlisted priests to help the men in need. In December of 1915, Benedict XV directed the bishops of dioceses in which prisoners were interned to appoint priests with a sufficient knowledge of the prisoners’ languages to assist them spiritually and materially. These priests were to ascertain if news had been sent to

³¹ See V. McNabb O.P., ‘The Pope and Peace’, *The Tablet* 22 July 1916, p. 102.

³² A. H. Atteridge, *The Pope on Peace and War* (1917), p. 28.

³³ See letter from the Pope to the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, 4 March 1916, in *Pope on Peace and War*, p. 32.

³⁴ Pollard, p. 115.

their families, and they were to assist prisoners by writing letters if, through illiteracy or sickness, the men were themselves unable to write home.³⁵

Benedict XV also frequently intervened on behalf of individual prisoners with a view to their release or confinement in improved conditions.³⁶ Moreover, he aided in communication between families with loved ones in hostile countries. By the end of the war, the Vatican had dealt with 600,000 items of correspondence; 170,000 enquiries about missing persons; and 40,000 appeals for help in repatriation of prisoners of war.³⁷ In retrospect it can be seen that although he was without charismatic appeal, Benedict XV was active in charitable relief and in this way he was instrumental in redefining the position of the Pope in this new political situation. However in a time of war, the message of peace was hardly acknowledged by the belligerent powers and it was qualified even by the Catholic bodies within the warring nations.

Responses to Benedict XV

Although Benedict XV went to some lengths to accommodate or at least tolerate the civic duties of Catholics in all nations, his pastoral letters and wartime initiatives made clear that he did not support the present war. This stance was not popular among the belligerent nations who wanted him to choose a side, preferably their own.³⁸ This position was not confined to the laity of combatant nations. Within the Vatican itself some attempts were made by the different cardinals to gain papal support for their national interests. Gasquet noted in his private correspondence:

³⁵ *Pope on Peace and War*, p. 15. From a letter written on 22 July, 1916.

³⁶ Pollard, pp. 112–116.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³⁸ See Bourne, pp. 12–16.

The intense feelings in Rome tended to bring out Nationalism and under their Catholicism the Irish were more Irish than their leader John Redmond, who had privately aided the sending of the British Mission. By all accounts the French and German ecclesiastics were even more French and German than their representatives. And the old type of English Catholic like Sir Henry Howard was always more royal than the King.³⁹

Abbot Cuthbert Butler of Downside also recognised this in a letter which he wrote to Gasquet, in which he asserted: 'The Vatican has not yet settled down into the attitude of firm neutrality maintained by the Pope.'⁴⁰

While this was the case even among the higher officials in the Church, Benedict XV's position as universal benefactor was in many cases more convincingly affirmed by non-Catholics. For instance, Benedict XV's pacific work was recognised when in 1915 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His role as a mediator was also recognised by non-Christians, *The Tablet* was pleased to report in its 'News from Rome' column that in 1916 three million American Jews had written to Benedict XV asking him to speak for their abused co-religionists and to: 'Intervene with the weight of his supreme moral and spiritual power, for the purpose of putting an end at last to these sufferings by an act of that humanity to which the Holy Father is so passionately devoted.'⁴¹

In 'Catholic' Europe, however, criticism of Benedict XV's stance was widespread. This was in large part because the increasingly secular 'Catholic' nations did not trust in his impartiality. In France, Benedict XV's supposed German sympathies won him the derogatory title *Pape boche*.⁴² The French Dominican priest and professor, Pere Sertillanges even said to Benedict XV in the presence, and with

³⁹ Leslie, p. 238.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴¹ A *Tablet* headline claimed: Three million Jews petition the Pope', *The Tablet* 22 April 1916, p. 565.

⁴² Even Cardinal Gasquet noted his distaste for the pro-German atmosphere at the Roman Curia. Pollard, p. 87.

the approval of Amette, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris: 'Holy Father for the time we are unable to listen to your words of peace. Like the apparent rebel in the gospel, we are sons who reply 'no, no'.⁴³ Even in Austria and Germany, which were recognised as having closer relationships with the Vatican, complaints were made about Benedict XV's unwillingness to side with them. Just as the French and British accused Benedict XV of siding with the Austrians and Germans, Germans and Austrians often labelled him the 'French Pope'.⁴⁴

Significantly the Vatican's relationship with Italy was the most precarious of all. This was not only because of the location of the Vatican within the nation of Italy, but because the Roman Question, the decision over the fate of the papal lands, still had not been properly resolved in 1914.⁴⁵ In large part because of this Sidney Sonnino, the Italian foreign minister, included a clause in the secret 1915 Treaty of London which stipulated that before Italy consented to side with the allied powers, the Italian government required a guarantee that the Pope would be left out of the post-war negotiations.⁴⁶

Like most of the other belligerents, the British response to the Pope's position was one of general dissatisfaction. On the one hand, Britain did make some attempts to establish relations with the Vatican by sending the British Catholic statesman, Henry Howard, as the head of the British Mission to the Vatican.⁴⁷ In this way they created a means of communication, even if unofficial, between the British State and the Roman Catholic Church. However, while it was of some significance in terms of

⁴³ J. D. Holmes, *The Papacy in the Modern World* (1981), p. 12. Hereafter referred to as *Papacy in the Modern World*.

⁴⁴ Although Britain formally re-established relations with the Vatican and France did so informally, the Vatican's position was not politically or temporally strong. See Pollard especially pp. 87–90.

⁴⁵ *Ad Beatissimi* part 15.

⁴⁶ Pollard, p. 114.

⁴⁷ Pollard, p. 90.

international relations, this arrangement was of little consequence to most British citizens. Indeed, most Britons did not give much consideration to the role of the Pope and those few who did, generally feared that the Catholic Church would align itself against the British state.⁴⁸

Cardinal Bourne recognised this concern and in the preface to a collection of statements made by the Pope, he said: ‘We know what has been the ordinary attitude of the English mind towards the Catholic Church of which I am speaking. For the most part it has been an attitude of contempt.’⁴⁹ He then went on to defend Benedict XV and his actions. Although considered regrettable by British Catholics, this attitude was in many ways to be expected since it corresponded with the views held by most of Europe. Moreover, this was a defensive position which Britain understandably assumed given the unfavourable or at least undistinguished position Protestant Britain traditionally had in relation to the Pontiff of Rome. Indeed, such concerns were so widespread that Cardinal Gasquet found it necessary to address the matter in Britain. In an attempt to discount the notion he optimistically asserted in a letter which he wrote to *The Tablet*:

Probably there will always remain in the minds of some people at ‘the Vatican’ whether they sweep the courtyards or carry messages or do other things – some of the old prejudice against ‘Protestant England’, because prejudice is a thing that can never be entirely swept away. Nor will a certain portion of the Catholic Press of Italy ever be quite fair to the British Empire. But neither of these two are ‘the Vatican’ that counts.⁵⁰

Although such arguments were put forward, many in Britain remained unconvinced of the Pope’s benevolence. Because of this, and because of the general aim of British Catholics to demonstrate both Catholic unity and the compatibility of Britishness and

⁴⁸ See Hickey, p. 28.

⁴⁹ F. Bourne, *The Pope and The War* (1915), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* 8 September 1917, p. 306.

Catholicity, some British Catholics felt it necessary to express the Pope's position in such a way that their Catholic faith did not conflict with the position of the British nation but instead to demonstrate how the two positions were compatible with one another.⁵¹

Thus while scepticism in Britain was generally widespread, among British Catholics the attitude expressed toward Benedict XV was somewhat less severe. In Great Britain this more congenial attitude was not based on scepticism about their country's stance in the war but to internal conflicts and to their understanding of the difficulties which existed for Benedict XV. Given their own precarious position in Protestant Britain, British Catholics recognised somewhat better than other Catholics that the Pope needed to balance his loyalties between the various powers, keeping in mind his primary duty to the Catholic Church as a universal body. Based on this they recognised, even if grudgingly, that due to his role the Pope had to take great care before criticising the belligerent countries and, more importantly, loyal Catholics in those countries who through no fault of their own were bound to live in and support their nations.

Even some non-Catholics recognised this, as can be seen in the pamphlet *No Small Stir* which was written anonymously in 1917 by an Anglican layman. In this, the author set out various Protestant arguments with which he disagreed. One such argument ran as follows:

What's that you say? The Papacy is neutral in this war? It is: that's the shame of it. The greatest moral crisis in history, and the Pope daren't take sides! He never even stopped the German Army from marching into Belgium. Don't you know that the Vatican Council made him infallible in all things?... well he certainly hasn't shown himself infallible this time, has he? He stands apart and does nothing, and I hope that it'll teach everyone not to put up with any more of his interference in politics.⁵²

⁵¹ See Arx, pp. 229–249.

⁵² 'Diplomaticus', *No Small Stir* (1917), p. 7.

Refuting this, the author made the point that as the father of all, Benedict XV had no choice but to remain neutral. He went further by saying that neutrality was actually the best position the Pope could take when Catholics fought against Catholics. In particular he noted:

The Roman Pontiff is the supreme head of a great religious communion, the members of which live dispersed among all the nations of the earth. There is no State of any importance today which does not count numerous Roman Catholics among its subjects. It follows that if the Pope supported a person or group of Powers against their opponents he would be favouring one section of the Church at the expense of another...Because this is not a religious war, the Pope cannot take sides. The Central Empires did not go to war for or against the Catholic Church or for any purpose other than the acquisition of territory.⁵³

Catholics expressed their agreement with this. One 1917 *Tablet* article which dealt with the relationship between the Pope and the countries in central Europe claimed that no Englishman would want the Pope to take a partisan stance whether it was on his side or that of the enemy's. After all, the Holy See stood above the European conflict. Because of this, neutrality rather than partisanship was seen as the duty, right and privilege of the Holy See. Catholics claimed that it was only in holding this position that religion could be protected in this distressing period in Europe.⁵⁴

Although Catholics were supposed to maintain this position, British Protestants at times complained about the Pope. Such complaints created in some Catholics a need to counteract this negativism. Thus British Catholics often came more readily to the Pope's defence than they might otherwise have done. A *Tablet* article captured this sentiment saying that while they had no intention of defending the Pope's neutrality, Catholics wanted to deprecate the lack of Christian charity of

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ 'The Pope and the Central Powers', *The Tablet* 10 March 1917, p. 301.

those who attacked the Pope in order to propagate sectarian views and score ‘points against another Church’. Although he was a figure of both Christian and national importance, they had not heard of Catholics who, as a body, attacked the Archbishop of Canterbury for his ‘inability to stop the war’.⁵⁵

Such articles laid out the two sides of the British Catholic stance regarding the Pope’s position during the war. On the one hand, they demonstrated that Catholics did not wholeheartedly approve of the Pope’s position. However, they also showed how in Britain, Protestant complaints about the Pope often brought Catholics more readily to the Pope’s defence. This was seen in *The Tablet*’s response to the Anglican Bishop of Kensington who, in 1918, had asserted that he could think of ‘nothing more unchristian than the Pope’s utterances’ and his unwillingness to act on behalf of Belgium. *The Tablet* retorted:

It would be hard to imagine anything more discreditable than the tone adopted at the present time by certain prominent Anglicans when speaking of the Pope and the War. In the face of the admitted failure of the established church to rise to the level of the spiritual opportunities which the war has created, they seem to find their compensation in assailing the Holy See with a vehemence of abuse which passes all the bounds of sane, not to say sober, criticism.⁵⁶

In many ways this was a carry-over from the arguments maintained in the later nineteenth century by Newman and Manning. Jeffrey von Arx has demonstrated that Manning attempted to show that the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility was not an innovation newly adopted but a dogma definitely articulated. Manning went further to explain that papal infallibility did not conflict with national patriotism, arguing that Catholics were not only loyal to their country but that the structures of the Catholic Church made it more plausible for Catholics to remain faithful to their

⁵⁵ P. Guilday, ‘Innocent XI and the English Catholic Exiles in Belgium 1676 –1689’, *The Tablet* 9 October 1915, p. 459.

⁵⁶ *The Tablet* 19 October 1918, p. 422.

state than was the case for Protestants. Given their efforts to demonstrate the superiority of Catholicism over Anglicanism, British Catholics spent a great deal of effort explaining how and why the Pope acted as he did and why this did not conflict with true patriotism.⁵⁷

In most cases which developed during the war, this was done easily since most accusations of the Pope were based on misunderstandings of papal authority. For instance W.R. Inge, the Dean of Saint Paul's, accused Benedict XV of being not just neutral but pro-Austrian and pro-German: 'The Latin Church is one-half of that Imperial Tyranny of which Germany aspires to reconstruct the other half.'⁵⁸ Non-Catholics offered a variety of reasons why Benedict XV would be tempted to support Austria and Germany. One argument which was used to demonstrate the Pope's pro-German sentiments was his alleged support of the Irish clergy in their stance against conscription. This was refuted by an article in *The Tablet* on 'no popery' which argued:

If a political action by Cardinal Logue in Ireland is enough to show that the Pope is pro-German does the political action by Cardinal Mercier in Belgium show that the Holy Father is Pro-Ally and if not why not? Incidentally, we may point out that Cardinal Logue has already described as 'nonsense' the suggestion that the agitation against conscription is due either to pro-German feelings or due to instructions from the Vatican. The word 'nonsense' seems just to fit the situation.⁵⁹

It was also alleged that the Vatican wanted Germany to win so that it could regain the Papal States. Pamphlets such as one written by two German Professors, Shroers and Rosenberg, explained how Germany could prove a beneficial ally to the Pope since a German victory would serve the interests of Catholicism.⁶⁰ Moreover, as

⁵⁷ Arx, p. 233.

⁵⁸ 'Diplomaticus', p. 24.

⁵⁹ 'The "No Popery" Campaign', *The Tablet* 4 May 1918, p. 573.

⁶⁰ 'The War and Catholicism', *The Tablet* 1 January 1916, p. 5.

he said in *Ad Beatissimi*, Benedict XV himself maintained a hope that ‘there should be an end to the abnormal position of the Head of the Church, a position in many ways very harmful to the very peace of nations.’⁶¹ The consideration that he might attempt to rectify this ‘abnormal position’ could be and was misconstrued to demonstrate that he would potentially ally the Vatican with the triple alliance. Given its obvious advantages for the Vatican, it was held that a German-Vatican alliance might be forged. Some Protestants, therefore, considered this a valid reason for concern. To counter this Catholics pointed out that the Vatican had already rejected this possibility outright when, after Germany offered to help the Vatican regain its lands, Cardinal Secretary Gasparri said: ‘The Holy See awaits the convenient systematisation of its situation, not from foreign armies, but by the triumph of those sentiments of justice which it hopes will spread more and more among the Italian people in conformity with their true interests.’⁶²

Still, accusations were widespread. Not only did rumours of a Vatican-Austrian alliance persist but suggestions were made by some of the more anti-Catholic pamphlets that the Vatican might side with Prussia. One 1917 pamphlet tellingly entitled *Anti-Christ and Armageddon*, asked:

But what has the Papacy to do with all this? Would Popery ally itself with an infidel state? Would a Catholic power find any link of connexion with a Lutheran potentate? Yes, for it is the first law in Jesuit morality that the end justifies the means. And it is a law of nature also that, just as the Prussian State aims at absolute and unhindered supremacy in the civil sphere, so the Pope aims at absolute and unquestioning despotism in the religious sphere.⁶³

Accusations of this sort reached such a height that Cardinal Bourne was obliged to respond to a statement made in *The Daily Mail* which asserted that there was a stir in

⁶¹ See *Ad Beattissimi*.

⁶² Pollard, p. 101.

⁶³ A. H.T. Clarke, *Anti-Christ and Armageddon* (1917), p. 3.

Italy to have a 'Pope-King' rather than their current government and that the Vatican had taken a £6000 bribe from Germany. In an article which he wrote in address to this matter, Bourne labelled it as 'utter nonsense' and asked *The Daily Mail* to refrain from bearing false witness.⁶⁴ Such criticism kept British Catholics aware of their precarious position and, in most instances, resulted in their continued support of their leader.

This also shaped British Catholic understanding of papal authority and the role of the Papal See. In expressing why the Pope's position was the correct one for him to maintain, British Catholics were challenged more clearly to express their own positions about the morality of the war and the cause for which they were fighting. Although the Pope's stance went against the strongest patriotic sentiments, when they worked through the implications of his positions and argued against accusations regarding his loyalties or biases, they found that it was feasible to support him even when they also supported the cause of the British government in fighting the war. In doing this the spiritual unity on which their Catholic faith was grounded and became more readily apparent.

British Catholics and the Silence of Benedict XV

Given the volatile situation it is understandable that wild accusations would be made by non-Catholics about the Vatican. However British Catholics not only had to defend the Pope's position against false accusations of German-Vatican conspiracies. They had also to demonstrate the theological justification for Benedict XV's actual position. This most obviously was required in the questions which arose over the

⁶⁴ F. Bourne, 'The Vatican and the Allies', *The Tablet* 15 December 1917, p. 788.

Pope's unwillingness to employ his infallible authority during the war.⁶⁵ Protestants wrote numerous pamphlets and sermons in response to what they perceived as his unwarranted silence. For instance the Protestant pastor H.R. Birmingham declared:

To see a good man compelled to silence as to a horrible crime committed in the full daylight, and against which the human conscience has risen in its might, is pitiable. Of what use to be infallible if one dare not speak? It will not be long before we have a revised meaning given to the decree of 1870. Let it not be forgotten that for Rome to condemn the allied Empires means the loss to the Papacy of Austria, the last of Great Powers to submit to the orders of the Vatican.⁶⁶

Catholics responded by explaining the limitations of the dogma of infallibility. In November 1917, the 'Notes' column in *The Tablet* was dedicated to setting out the parameters of the dogma, saying that the Pope's statements about the war could not be viewed as having been put forward with infallible authority because: 'Papal Infallibility means only that when the Vicar of Christ is teaching the whole church upon some subject of faith or morals, he will not be allowed to lead it into error.'⁶⁷ British Catholics argued that such a statement by the Pope was undesirable and unnecessary if it was intended to speak of something specific such as the German atrocities in the First World War. Moreover Catholics maintained that people did not want or need a decision *ex Cathedra* to be told what they already knew. As another *Tablet* article had already expressed in 1915, such a statement would only be a reiteration of the church's beliefs. It would not then be helpful if the Pope asserted 'that breaches of trust are sinful, that cruelty is hellish, that oppression is detestable, and that murder and rape are abominable'.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ See Snape, p. 318.

⁶⁶ H.R. Birmingham to Pritchard in preface to Arnold Pritchard, *The Pope and the Conscience of Christendom* (1915), 5 August 1915, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *The Tablet* 3 November 1917, p. 555.

⁶⁸ 'Infallibility and German Atrocities', *The Tablet* 1 May 1915, p. 553.

Merry Del Val also argued against this Protestant complaint by explaining that the Catholic Church did not contend that the Pope's authority was superior to that of other men in political, scientific or historical matters. Because of this, in dealing with contemporary events, men and affairs, the Pope could make errors of judgement just as others could.⁶⁹ Thus while Catholics ought to listen to him as a voice of reason and as a statesman, Del Val argued that the Pope's authority on political matters could be questioned and even rejected if necessary.⁷⁰ Because this was the case, an infallible declaration against German atrocities was not only undesirable but actually impossible.

By asserting the limitation of this dogma, British Catholics attempted to defend the legitimate position maintained by their leader. However, they had also to defend the Catholic position against complaints about the Pope's silence in matters which were not strictly related to his use of his infallible authority. Some argued that as a moral leader, Benedict XV should make a strong, even if not infallible, statement against German evil. In a volume which discussed the question of Christian guilt in the war, the Anglican priest Joseph McCabe said that the supreme head of the Catholic Church which was 'the most powerfully organised and most cosmopolitan religious body in the world', paid attention to small questions of doctrine and administration and moaned about the evil spirit of the modern age. However, he had not issued a syllable of what the author judged to be 'precise and useful direction' to those priests connected with the war.⁷¹

As part of these general accusations regarding Benedict XV's 'indifference' or 'silence' he was accused of not condemning, in explicit terms, the particular atrocities

⁶⁹ A. Rhodes, p. 17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷¹ McCabe, p. 7.

committed against Belgium. As Britain was the major refuge for Belgians escaping their invaded country, the British were keenly aware of the terrors employed against the Belgian people. As a consequence, most had a deep sympathy for them.⁷²

Benedict XV's refusal to make explicit judgements against many of the supposed atrocities committed by the Germans was judged by some as a lack of concern for these downtrodden refugees. In this vein the claim was made that: 'The causes of right and wrong are made subservient to an ambition; and Belgium, wounded and bleeding, may cry through the mouth of a Mercier to the head of their Communion for countenance and sympathetic support against the common enemy of truth and civilisation, and may cry in vain.'⁷³ *The Church Times* also maintained this line in one article which suggested: 'The Pope could appoint a Commission such as that which Cardinal Mercier proposes, and in its findings he would have exactly the proof for which he says that he longs. If he is sincerely desirous of being able to form a right judgment for himself, here is his opportunity. Will he seize it? We wonder.'⁷⁴

To some extent Catholics saw the validity of these complaints. However, they pointed out that even Cardinal Mercier appreciated the level of support offered by Benedict XV. Anthony Brennan compiled a number of statements which demonstrated this. In one, Mercier asserted that when he saw the Pope:

The Holy Father received me with touching kindness. Immediately I reached his presence he embraced me and allowed me to confide in him – to tell him everything. For long hours he consoled me paternally, enlightening and encouraging me, and he summed up his intimate feelings in the dedication on the photograph of himself presented to me: 'To our venerable brother we heartily grant the apostolic benediction, assuring him that we are always with him, that we share his sorrows and anxieties, because his cause is Our own.'⁷⁵

⁷² This was evident in the numerous Belgian Relief funds such as that established by *The Tablet* and *The Telegraph*.

⁷³ Pritchard, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Quoted in and defended against by *The Tablet* 14 January 1915, p. 27.

⁷⁵ A. Brennan, *Pope Benedict XV and the War* (1917), p. 31.

In other cases Benedict XV was shown to have responded with practical aid and sympathy by Mercier who said: ‘As for our Holy Father Benedict XV, what could he do for Belgium that he has not done?’⁷⁶ Such statements from the mouth of Mercier helped to demonstrate that, although his charity might not be evident to all observers, the Pope was acting as the father of all and was especially considerate to those most in need of his help.⁷⁷

British Catholics also pointed to specific instances when Benedict XV responded to these accusations with bold assertions of support for Belgium and the Allied cause. For instance, Anthony Brennan noted that Benedict XV said in 1915:

You ask me if I condemn in principle the atrocities that have been committed. In principle is not sufficient. I condemn them in concrete. Everybody knows that Germany has committed them. But I cannot define the reprobation as some would wish, because I have not the necessary details... In any case I loudly condemned the martyrdom of the poor Belgian priests and many other horrors upon which enlightenment is coming.⁷⁸

Catholics also reminded critics that, in such instances as the bombardment of Rheims, the Pope wrote to the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne in protest against the German actions: ‘I condemn strongly the martyrdom of the poor Belgian priests and so many other horrors on which light has been cast.’⁷⁹ Such statements were used to demonstrate that Benedict XV was neither silent nor on the German side in the conflict, but that he supported that which was right. Although he might not be blatant in expressing his ‘side’, in the British Catholic estimation, their shared goal placed Benedict XV firmly on the same side as the Allied powers.

While they responded by deferring to these papal statements, British Catholics also questioned the legitimacy of non-Catholic criticism of the Pope. Some Catholics

⁷⁶ Brennan, p. 31.

⁷⁷ This was shown to be the case by Pollard. See Pollard, pp. 112–116.

⁷⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 10 July 1915, p. 50.

⁷⁹ ‘Diplomaticus’, p. 15.

made the point that whether or not the Pope was at fault, Anglicans had no right to accuse or demand anything of him. *The Tablet* addressed this in a 1915 article entitled ‘Why Does not the Church Speak?’ which said: ‘Some people are distressed that the Pope will not make a statement on who is right and who is wrong in the War. The *Church Times* wrote on this; funny that a paper which so regularly opposes definitions and declarations of any kind by the Pope would so thoroughly desire a statement on this issue.’⁸⁰

British Catholics also maintained that in the years leading up to the war, the power of the Pope had not been acknowledged by many of the European nations.⁸¹ As a consequence, they argued that the Pope had no obligation to satisfy the ‘whims’ of those people who had rejected papal leadership. One Protestant even wrote that before the war only Catholics acknowledged the Pope’s moral authority. However since the outbreak of the war, many non-Catholics turned to ‘the Supreme arbiter of Faith and morals’, urging him to make judgements regarding the rights of nations and the morality of the methods used in the war. Whether or not this was recognition of his rightful position, this writer challenged those who were turning to the Pope by saying:

Which of those who blame the Pope for not arbitrating is prepared to accept him unreservedly in the role of arbitrator? We confess that very few of the Pope’s critics seem to us to be in the habit of obeying him as a general rule. He may be pardoned, surely, for not knowing how many Anti-Clericals, Protestants and Anglicans were secretly hanging on his words. They have dissembled their love so well for so many years.⁸²

The Catholic body in Britain regarded such statements as sensible and enlightened.

⁸⁰ ‘Why Does not the Church Speak?’, *The Tablet* 16 January 1915, pp. 72–74.

⁸¹ See Kent and Pollard, pp. 1–20.

⁸² ‘Diplomaticus’, p. 9.

For instance, Cardinal Bourne asserted: ‘Not so very long ago English people would have scouted the intervention of the Holy See in such a conflict as this, now they would only too gladly welcome any word of the Holy Father, providing that word were uttered on their side.’⁸³

Given their obligations to do so, British Catholics would have responded on some level to any extensive complaints which might have been lobbied at the Vatican or the Catholic Church generally. However, they were especially anxious to respond to these sorts of accusations. This was in part because in refuting them, British Catholics were afforded the opportunity to demonstrate the Pope’s authority and power even in the non-Catholic world. With this in mind, *The Tablet* re-issued a statement which was made in *The Telegraph*, thus employing this secular organ to indicate the widespread recognition of papal authority:

Is the pope of any importance in the world? If he is not, then we need not trouble about him... But we have troubled with him ever since the war began; we have followed his words and actions with more interest than, perhaps, those of any other neutral in the world... Indeed, the story of the war shows that the Vatican does count for something in the world.⁸⁴

Indeed, this situation served the Catholic purpose of defending their position against Protestants not only with regard to the particular issues at hand, but in the light of the underlying principles of Papal authority.

Bourne did this in 1917 when he asserted that in the Catholic Church there was a level of ‘marvellous complexity’ but that, in spite of this, there existed ‘not a single organic element or vital function that does not depend immediately on the head – the sovereign and infallible Pope.’⁸⁵ This he held to be the Church’s advantage since it brought coherence and unity to the intricate system of the Catholic body. Of course,

⁸³ Bourne, p. 14.

⁸⁴ *The Tablet* 24 August 1918, p. 617.

⁸⁵ Mercier, p. 53.

few Protestants were willing to acknowledge this Catholic line. However, having a forum in which to express this position allowed Catholics more fully to assert their place and to voice claims of their superior position within the structure of British Christianity.

The Positions of Benedict XV

Although British Catholics generally proved willing to come to his defence, some of Benedict XV's positions proved difficult for Catholics to accept during the war. The occasion of Benedict XV's prayer for peace in 1915 was especially upsetting for some Catholics because of its deliberate exclusion of victory. In France, Cardinal Amette even tampered with the words of the prayer making the sentence 'O King of Peace, we humbly implore the peace for which we long', read 'O King of Peace, we humbly implore peace on conditions honourable for our fatherland.'⁸⁶ He was strongly rebuked for this by the Vatican.

Although they did not go so far as this, British Catholics were similarly dissatisfied. In recognition of this, a *Tablet* article asserted: 'Some have voiced frustrations at praying for peace rather than victory but it must be seen then that what is being asked of God is a holy peace.'⁸⁷ The wartime journalist Phillip Gibbs explained that the peace which the Pope asked for was a 'truce to the butchery' and he tried to demonstrate that peace could only come through an allied victory. However, he also attempted to make clear that regardless of the nationalistic temptations, the highest goal for Catholics had, necessarily, to be peace and unity.⁸⁸ In doing this

⁸⁶ W. Peters, *The Life of Benedict XV* (Milwaukee, 1959), p. 124.

⁸⁷ 'Impressions at the Front', *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 169.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Gibbs attempted to demonstrate how the Catholic line could be made compatible with the British position.

Even when Benedict XV's actual words and actions could not easily be shown as pro-ally, some of the more nationalistic members of the Catholic Church in Britain tried to demonstrate how the Pope might be shown as a supportive figure for the Allied cause. For instance, in 1915 Father Sydney Smith gave his analysis of the Pope's 'Appeal for Peace' saying that the Holy Father meant that war generally, and this war in particular, was too cruel a method for settling international disputes. Therefore, it would be preferable to follow more peaceful methods involving conferences and arbitration. However, Smith also maintained that while Benedict XV did not distinguish whether the German or allied powers were the aggressors in the war, this was not because he did not support the justice of the Allied side but because such an assertion would defeat the purpose of the Pope's appeal. Moreover, he assured Catholics in Britain that even if it went unsaid, the Pope supported their position since the reproach he offered were words meant for the aggressors rather than the defenders, who were: 'only seeking to repel an assault on its fundamental liberties'.⁸⁹ Such appeals were intended to vindicate both the Pope and British patriots.

Other aspects of the Pope's position had also to be defended and explained to more critical opponents. For instance, the Pope maintained that a cease-fire was the preferred way to bring about peace; that negotiation rather than fighting was the best means for conflict resolution.⁹⁰ Thus he encouraged the nations to end the war even if it meant that neither side came to a decisive victory.⁹¹ This obviously went against even the most moderate patriotic sentiments. However, Benedict XV also stressed the

⁸⁹ *The Tablet* 4 September 1915, p. 303.

need not for victory but for a 'just and lasting peace'. It was his use of this phrase which British Catholics used to justify papal support of their position. For example, a correspondent with the editor of *The Tablet* wrote in 1915 that: 'Anyone must be a complete outsider in the intellectual philosophico-politico-moral field who does not know that peace does not consist in the cessation of war, but in the fruition of public tranquillity through the rule of justice which means among other things that to each must be given his own.'⁹² Because they saw their side as fighting for the right, British Catholics supported the British position which stressed the need of British victory by claiming that only through this victory could a 'just and lasting' peace be attained.

In this way British Catholics argued that the only legitimate course for the British nation, including the Catholic Church in Britain, was to support the war until the Allies won. Bourne affirmed this position when he claimed that 'the crime' of war had been committed against humanity. Thus, the nations needed to come to a deeper hatred of sin and then from this purer state they would be equipped to more readily usher in peace. However, they needed also to fight for their country. This thrust the British war effort onto a higher moral plane of universal truths which surpassed the principles of national rights.⁹³ Thus, even in fighting, they claimed that the British aim was in keeping with the position of the Vatican since Britain, like the Vatican was concerned with 'the promotion of justice and the establishment of peace.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ See 'The Papal Peace Note', in *The Tablet*, 18 August 1917, p. 199.

⁹¹ Pollard, pp. 123–128.

⁹² *The Tablet* 9 October 1915, p. 634.

⁹³ *The Month* July 1917, p. 66.

⁹⁴ *The Month* February 1915, p. 204.

British Catholics and the Peace Note

The war created for British Catholics not only greater reason for, but also greater challenges to, rallying behind their leader. However, this proved especially difficult after August 1917 when Benedict XV made his boldest statement in the form of the Papal Peace Note.⁹⁵ In this, Benedict XV addressed not the Catholic populace or even the hierarchy but the heads of all the belligerent nations, asking for substitution of the ‘moral force of right for the law of material force...simultaneous and reciprocal decrease of armaments...international arbitration...true freedom and community of the seas...reciprocal renunciation of war indemnities’, evacuation and restoration of all occupied territories and an examination ‘in a conciliatory spirit’ of rival territorial claims.⁹⁶

The Peace Note differed from statements of earlier days, for it called attention to economic conditions and social unrest; it contained ideas later found in Woodrow Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’.⁹⁷ The suggestions found within it did not relate simply to the immediate problem of the war, but were also instructions regarding the post-war peace. In writing the Note, Benedict XV asserted that the Papacy could and should actively concern itself not only with the principles of Christianity as understood by the Catholic Church but with the application of these principles in concrete terms.

Most of the belligerent nations regarded the Papal Peace Note with guarded interest but they did not take its suggestions seriously while still in the midst of war. Only Belgium, Austria, Germany and the United States even gave official responses

⁹⁵ See Pollard, pp. 123 –128.

⁹⁶ Peters, p. 147.

⁹⁷ Pollard, pp. 127 –128.

to the Note and these were all unambiguous in their rejection of the Pope's proposed initiatives.⁹⁸ These responses were understandable since the aim of the belligerents was peace on terms that benefited them. As this position did not coincide with the request of the Bishop of Rome who called for peace even if it came without victory, the unresponsiveness of the belligerent nations silence spoke loudly enough to convey their message.

The public press, including the British press, also responded unfavourably to Benedict XV's proposals. *The Daily News* reported that the Pope appeared optimistic with regard to an early conclusion of the war but that this optimism was inspired by Germany who had, through Austria, tried to divide the Allies in a conflicting discussion of 'peace aims'.⁹⁹ Most other secular periodicals also responded negatively to these proposals. Hugh Edmond Ford noted this in his *Tablet* article 'Pope Benedict's Note to the Belligerents with Explanations':

There can be no doubt that the proposals put forward by Benedict XV have produced a widespread feeling of disappointment. Leading newspapers of such different political colour as *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Daily News* and *The Manchester Guardian* all go so far as to characterise the proposals as pro-German and declare them to be useless and unacceptable by the Allies; the document 'bears plain and large the marks of German inspiration.'¹⁰⁰

Anglican periodicals also made statements against the Pope's Note, using it as a means of criticising the dogma of infallibility. *The Guardian* pointed out that Cardinal Bourne had explained how the Pope's Peace Note was not infallible. Criticising this failure to rely on infallibility, the article went on to say:

How many recruits Rome may have won by proclaiming this magnificent attribute of the Papacy we cannot say, but suspect that it has had attraction for numerous weaklings who wanted to be told exactly what to do and what to think, and imagined that they would receive the straight and precise direction for which they longed as soon as they had submitted to the successor of St.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁹⁹ *The Daily News* 15 August 1917, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *The Tablet* 1 September 1917, p. 275.

Peter. By and by they realised that they must still be at the trouble of exercising their own minds on a variety of topics, and that the Pope was exceedingly cautious in the use of his great powers.¹⁰¹

In contrast, the Catholic position in Britain reinforced the position of Benedict XV. In this specific matter, as in their attitudes to the war more generally, Catholics approached the Papal position in the light of their ultimate goal of peace on their own terms and tried to demonstrate that the Pope also had this obligation. As a consequence, British Catholics maintained that Benedict XV did not oppose British victory but that he, like them, had a higher objective which was located not in national victory but in the institution of a just and lasting peace. Although they did not necessarily agree with Benedict XV in his assessment of how this peace could best be achieved, they nevertheless supported and indeed had to support this underlying objective.

Some more fervent supporters not only defended him generally but argued point by point in defence of the Papal Peace Note and Benedict XV's impartiality. An article in *The Harvest* provided concrete points which were intended to demonstrate the Pope's good intentions in writing the Peace Note. These were:

1. The Pope has condemned barbarity, cruelty, injustice, the destruction of monuments and inhuman means of warfare.
2. The Pope has obtained the liberation of numerous prisoners no longer fit for war.
3. The Pope has obtained the commutation of capital punishment into that of simple imprisonment.
4. The Pope has sent aid to those sorely tried by the vicissitudes of war – to the Belgians, Poles, Armenians, French and others.
5. The Pope has obtained the cessation of the Turkish persecution of the Armenians.
6. The Pope has obtained that civil prisoners be sent to neutral Switzerland where a more humane treatment can be given them.
7. The Pope has condemned the unjust violation of Belgium.

¹⁰¹ *The Guardian* 18 October 1917, p. 781.

8. The Pope has made his voice felt in Germany and Austria to the effect that during aerial and other bombardments, monuments of art, churches and non-combatants be spared.
9. The Pope is working for the victualling of countries occupied by Germans.
10. The Pope has left nothing undone to bring about the peace so much desired of all nations – lest ruin and destruction be the only fruits of this world war. Has any worldly potentate done half as much?
11. And if the Pope's peace proposals have not yet been complied with, His Holiness has in a large measure already accelerated its coming and softened many a hard heart. Let us hope and pray that the best – the thing mostly desired: peace – may soon come to relieve so many hearts of the pangs of suffering they find themselves so deeply plunged in.
12. The Holy Father has issued the well-known prayer for peace which we regularly recite after Benediction. If this prayer was being recited by all the peoples of the nations at war, regardless of difference in religious belief, we might expect a better state of mind, and a more respectful regard for the pope.¹⁰²

Such arguments required people to consider the Pope's position more objectively.

Catholics hoped that this would in turn provide adequate demonstration of the Pope's right motivation in writing the Peace Note.

For many Protestants in Britain, such arguments were not effective. In recognition of this, one correspondent with the editor of *The Tablet* noted that the Catholic body had been left 'in no doubt' regarding the attitude of the English press to the supposed 'pro-German' stance of Benedict XV's peace note. Its author argued that this criticism was uncalled for because there was reason to assume that the Pope was well-informed about the political condition of the Central Empires. Thus, when Benedict XV spoke about 'freedom of the seas' he was not speaking of a world in which Prussianism dominated or even existed. The key to understanding the Peace Note was, in his estimation, in understanding that the phrase was prefaced with, and thus qualified by, the term 'just'. This being the case, the common enjoyment of the seas could be an acceptable situation for Europe since justice could not but be

¹⁰² *The Harvest* (1918), p. 86.

regulated by international laws which would necessarily be dictated not by 'armed force' but by the 'moral force of right'.¹⁰³ Such qualifications were useful for, even when they recognised the stringent guidelines set forth in the Peace Note, they also assumed conditions which Britain would find acceptable.

Arguing from a different perspective, Francis Urquhart explained that although Benedict XV's goals had objectives which could rightly be seen as Christian and Catholic, the Pope's pleas for peace were not made from him as the 'admitted head of Catholic Christendom' and that in this instance the Pope could not speak as the head to the 'collective European conscience' since the 'codes of Prussianism and the allies' were not homogenous. Because this was the case, the Pope could only speak as a statesman. Although his Christianity certainly suffused the statement, his advice was, in Urquhart's estimation:

Immediately practical, and not here meaning to adjudicate or condemn, but to prepare peace by a document wholly satisfactory to neither side, yet serviceable as material for discussion by Powers who have stated their own terms only to see them reciprocally rejected. His statement is meant to be neither exhaustive nor conclusive but as a starting point from which it may be possible to develop something final.¹⁰⁴

Such assertions regarding Benedict XV's good intentions may not have persuaded the most sceptical critics of the Pope's good intentions but they certainly provided ammunition for Catholics who wanted to be convinced of their leader's right motivation.

Even if people were not willing to accept the idea that the Pope had pure motivations behind his stance, British Catholics had a further argument which they could deploy. Namely, the salutation of the Peace Note indicated that the Note was not meant for the Catholic Church as a whole or even for the Catholic hierarchy.

¹⁰³ Letter responding to 'The Pope and Peace', *The Tablet* 8 September 1917, p. 308.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Monsignor Moyes, *The Tablet* 1 September 1917, p. 282.

Rather, the Note was addressed to the heads of the belligerent nations. Consequently, the responsibility of responding to it fell to these governments rather than to the Church.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, regardless of their opinion about the Peace Note, it was not for Catholics to accept or reject the Pope's suggestions. This freed them from the obligation of choosing between Church and state.

Because of this, Cardinal Bourne asserted that Benedict XV was not trying to suggest firm and specific terms of peace but general guidelines. Moreover he argued that, because the Pope was not speaking infallibly, he was quite within his limits to assert, as he did in 1917, that the Catholic Church did not 'want a peace which will be no more than a truce or armistice between two wars'. Because of this, regardless of their views about the Peace Note, British Catholics could stand in full support of the British war aims if they believed that only victory could usher in 'just and lasting peace'.¹⁰⁶

While Catholics qualified their support of the Pope's initiatives, the Protestant reaction against the Peace Note tempered the Catholic dissatisfaction somewhat. As in their reaction to more general critiques, Protestant complaints about Catholicism inclined Catholics to support the Vatican more fully even if they did not entirely support the Pope's position themselves. Likewise, even when their positions differed, the British Catholic hierarchy saw the disadvantages of presenting an appearance of disunity. Consequently they worked intently to show how the Pope's position and that of the Church could be reconciled and his stance be shown to be preferable to other positions which could be adopted based on more nationalistic interests. As a consequence, even when the implications of Benedict XV's pontificate were not fully

¹⁰⁵ Pollard, pp. 123–128.

¹⁰⁶ Aspden, p. 81.

understood or accepted they were greeted with optimism and some measure of acceptance.

Moreover, even though Benedict XV was criticised for his position, this very criticism fuelled some elements of British Catholic support of the Pope's positions. Because they had a point to prove, Catholics had the opportunity and desire to demonstrate that Benedict XV's role required objectivity and that his impartiality gave him the freedom to operate in the interest of peace and in the realm of morals. Similarly, it provided grounds for the argument that a lack of temporal power did not take from the Pope his real authority. Rather, it helped to demonstrate that his lack of personal interest made the Pope the only possible individual who could make objective moral statements and offer advice to belligerents on proper methods of attaining peace.¹⁰⁷ With regard to this the Bishop of Northampton noted in a homily which he gave in 1915:

The answer is not difficult. The stronger we feel our national cause to be, the more vehemently we ought to deprecate a Papal decision, even in our favour. It is unnecessary and undesirable. Unnecessary because the almost limitless resources of our Empire and our control of all channels of communication afford us ample means of submitting our case to public opinion; undesirable, because in the hypothesis contemplated, an intolerable strain would be laid upon the loyalty of Germans and Austrian Catholics.¹⁰⁸

This position did not hinder Catholics from supporting their countries and at the same time offered the reminder that, at the heart of the matter, their duty was to attain peace and to maintain a spirit of love and unity. As British Catholics listened to the positions of the Vatican and articulated the reasons for these positions, they developed a new sense of how they could be both British and Catholic. As the war continued and, more importantly, once the war was over, the Pope's impartiality became

¹⁰⁷F. Urquhart, 'David Urquhart and the Vatican Council', *The Dublin Review* October 1917, p. 214.

¹⁰⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 275.

increasingly understandable and the implications this had for universality ever more important.

Chapter 4: The British Military Chaplaincy: Challenges to Catholic Practice

The Catholic soldier sees his chaplain, takes to him personally, or alack! runs away from him personally, but whichever he does, he sees the Catholic Church with her Sacrifice and Sacraments looming large before and behind and around her representative at the front and it is this spiritual vision, and not the material one, which makes the deeper impression.¹

Throughout the war, Catholics recognised the opportunities which existed for them to promote Catholicism more widely within the British populace and particularly amongst the Catholic soldiers who had lapsed in their faith. To do this, however, Catholics had not only to recognise magisterial and dogmatic authority and to discern the requirements of the Catholic faith. They had also to establish policies and set parameters on secular interactions with non-Catholics in Britain.² Establishing a clear and practical line by which Catholics could promote and practise their faith was critical during the war since Catholics had to work within the military framework and had, therefore, to interact more closely with non-Catholics than in previous days. On the one hand, Catholics recognised the benefits of their position especially by comparison with the more marginalised place which had previously been allotted to them.³ However even while embracing the new possibilities of social acceptance and political involvement, Catholics made a conscious effort to maintain their distinctiveness in matters of church practice, dogma, liturgy and authority.

¹ 'The War and the Conversion of England', *The Tablet* 20 February 1915, p. 233.

² See Bruce, *Religion in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 9–12 for overview.

³ *Religion and Society*, pp. 1–2, S. Bruce, pp. 19 ff.

The challenge of balancing Catholicism and secular policy was particularly difficult in the context of the military Chaplaincy. Not only specific sacramental obligations but the necessity of Catholic obedience to ecclesiastical authority and to the rubrics of the Catholic Church set Catholics apart from other Christians in Britain.

⁴ In the military Chaplaincy these differences came out more sharply than in civilian life and during the war the practical and theological challenges which existed in the military were magnified even further.⁵ Thus it was particularly important for the Catholic Chaplaincy to delineate clearly both their religious and military obligations and a practical way in which chaplains and soldiers could fulfil these duties.⁶

Before considering the matter of logistical or inter-denominational differences which the individual chaplains confronted in their military service, the Catholic Chaplaincy faced the difficulty of providing for and supplying an appropriate number of chaplains for the war effort. At the beginning of the war only 117 chaplains of any denomination served in the British army. Catholics accounted for only seventeen chaplains and, of these, only seven accompanied the British Expeditionary Force to France in August 1914. Although this number was adequate in peacetime, during the war it was insufficient. By the end of 1918, Britain had contributed over five million men to the war. Michael Snape estimates that of these, at least 400,000 were Catholic.⁷ Even when the army had not yet expanded to its fullest, it was clear that this small number of chaplains was wholly insufficient for the task demanded by the expanded military population.⁸

⁴ See P. Middleton Brumwell, *The Army Chaplain* (1943), pp. 12–27 and Langston, p. 127.

⁵ See Loudon, pp. 5–8.

⁶ See *Cross on the Sword* pp. 35–36, for a list of perceived difficulties in the chaplaincy. This was written not by Canon Connelly of Southwark but certainly by one of his colleagues circa 1900.

⁷ Snape looks at the population and the percentage of Catholics in Britain to estimate this number. See Snape, p. 325.

⁸ 'Benedictines', p. 134.

This, of course, required the dioceses to stretch their supply of priests, a task which they were never able to accomplish as fully as the Chaplaincy hoped. Given the difficulties in finding suitable chaplains, it is not surprising that a large number of chaplains, about forty percent of the total number, were drawn from the regular orders. The Benedictines alone provided fifty and the Jesuits provided eighty of Britain's wartime Catholic military chaplains. As for the remaining chaplains, another forty percent came from the English and Welsh dioceses and the remaining twenty percent were from the Scottish and Irish diocese.⁹ While the army was reasonably well-supplied with Catholic chaplains, the navy did not fare as well. Although the Royal Navy had expanded to meet the needs of the war, at the end of the war there were still only forty Catholic naval chaplains. The resistance by Naval authorities to allow more chaplains to serve on ships along with the practical difficulties of having Catholics interspersed with Anglicans made the supply of Catholic chaplains impractical on all but the largest ships. Although this issue was presented to the Chaplaincy and the hierarchy, no adequate solution was found during the period of the First World War.¹⁰

Even with this deficiency in the Navy, however, the Catholic Chaplaincy increased impressively during the First World War. By the end of the war, the number serving had stretched to 651, a substantial figure especially considering the relatively small size of the British Catholic Church. Statistically, this increase was even more impressive as it was disproportionate to the number of Catholics in the army.¹¹ Whereas Anglicans accounted for 75 percent, Nonconformists for 14 percent and

⁹ Many of the chaplains from English dioceses were not of English background. The *Irish Catholic Directory* claimed that over 500 of the British chaplains were Irish Catholic priests, which suggests that many of the priests from English dioceses were of Irish descent. In *The Irish Catholic Directory*, 'Irish' refers to people of both Irish descent rather than of Irish citizenship. 'Benedictines', p. 135.

¹⁰ See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 71 –83. See also Dungan, p. 62.

¹¹ *Cross on the Sword*, p. 174.

Catholics for something between 6 and 11 percent of the army,¹² at the end of the War, of 3475 chaplains, a full 19 percent were Catholic.¹³

Once the Chaplaincy succeeded in finding qualified priests to serve as chaplains, it still faced difficulties in discerning and insisting upon the appropriate balance of ecclesiastical and military authority for these chaplains.¹⁴ Disputes could be divided into ‘military’ and ‘ecclesiastical’ and dealt with by the leaders of each of these realms, but what was ‘military’ rather than ‘ecclesiastical’ was not always easy to assess and whose authority was higher in a given situation was at times ambiguous.¹⁵ Matters of ecclesiastical and military authority were compounded, particularly for the chaplains themselves, with questions regarding their loyalties and obligations to the military and the Church. During the war, the priests were torn between the military life to which they were obliged at present and their religious life to which they were obliged in a more over-arching sense. Charles P. Wright, a Redemptorist chaplain corresponded with Stephen Rawlinson, the senior Catholic chaplain on the Western Front and Assistant Principal Chaplain, about his struggles with this matter. In response to a letter to Rawlinson about continuing in the Chaplaincy he regretfully explained that he might not be able to carry on in his military duties due to the demands which existed for him at home. Rawlinson responded by saying that although they did not want to lose him, if Wright’s provincial was in dire need of his help, the Chaplaincy ‘would be sorry to stand in his way’. This being the case, the matter was handed back to the chaplain to settle with his provincial.¹⁶

¹² Mews suggests this number in ‘Religion and English Society’ p. 180, but Mike Snape gives a far more conservative estimate of 6 or 7%. Snape, p. 325.

¹³ Dungan, p. 62.

¹⁴ Loudon, pp. 8 and 15.

¹⁵ Brumwell, p. 16 and *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 8–19.

¹⁶ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, M–W Rawlinson to Wright, 20 July 1917.

This difficulty arose even on the highest level of the military structure as seen when Abbot Butler of Downside wanted to and, in the end did recall Father Dominic Young, the priest who assisted Stephen Rawlinson. Although Rawlinson argued that Young was his most valuable assistant and the only person beside himself who could administer the 800 chaplains under his jurisdiction, the demands of the monastery took priority even over Young's substantial military duties.¹⁷ While this was the decision in this instance, discerning what was appropriate and indeed, what was beneficial to both the Church and the army, was challenging.¹⁸ This difficulty increased as the war continued.

Concerning his own relationship to the army and the Chaplaincy, Bourne asserted that the Archbishop of Westminster was not the subordinate of the state since he had neither rank nor title and he did not receive a salary from the War Office or the Admiralty. Because of this, his independence was 'complete'. As he explained:

In his quality as Delegate of the Holy See, he treats with the Government as representing the Church a power coordinate with the State... It is he who is the sole judge on all points belonging to the ecclesiastical order, while the Government is the sole authority in questions purely military and naval. Where there is overlapping, the two authorities consult together and arrange the matter.¹⁹

In addition to this, during the war, Bourne made it clear that the War Office had only limited power over Catholics and that the military was not the highest authority.

¹⁷ D.A.A./R.C., correspondence, 1918–1919, Rawlinson to Butler, 21 February 1918. At the end of this correspondence Butler said: 'I have no doubt at all that Father Dominic would be a great loss to you but at the same time I think Downside should be the first thought and interest of us all.'

¹⁸ See Cardinal Thomas O' Fiaich Library and Archive, Cardinal Logue papers, Army Chaplains, 'Hierarchy' box 2, W. Murphy to Logue, 31 January 1916. As Butler was retrieving his monks from chaplaincy service, Cardinal Logue was receiving petitions to send more priests into chaplaincy service. (Thanks to Youssef Taouk for drawing my attention to this archive.)

¹⁹ Oldmeadow, p. 199.

Rather as Rawlinson recognised, Bourne wanted to have some say and, 'If necessary, to have the power to remove a priest from the army.'²⁰

This power struggle at times appeared not only between the military and Catholic bodies but between Westminster and the Catholic military Chaplaincy.²¹ For instance, in 1915, Bourne and Father Harold Burton of Westminster were at odds over the appointment of priests in prisoner-of-war camps in Britain. At this time, the war office had asked Burton to 'coordinate and superintend all religious ministrations in the different prisoner of war camps.' Although this was a straightforward request, Burton's response to Bourne indicated that the Cardinal Archbishop was not pleased with the arrangement. Thus Burton responded to Bourne by indicating that the arrangement was merely for the sake of 'coordination and simplicity' and specifically because the German Foreign Officer in Britain had confidence in Burton and his decisions. In a letter of explanation about this matter he asserted further: 'I do not of course – I am sure your Eminence will understand – even dream of superintending Catholic ministrations or the appointment of Catholic priests for the camps.'²² Such a response suggests something of the struggle which existed between the military and ecclesiastical authorities and which stretched even to internal tension between the various Catholic authorities involved.²³

As indicated in this exchange between Bourne and Burton, substantial differences existed about the appropriate divisions of ecclesiastical and military authority even among Catholic authorities. For the most part, those priests within the Chaplaincy recognised the need for both types of authority. However, they wanted an

²⁰ D.A.A./R.C., 'Intelligence', 9 February 1916.

²¹ See Loudon, p. 41.

²² W.A.A., AAW/bo.5/42d.

²³ Oldmeadow, p. 201.

ecclesiastical head who was within the military Chaplaincy itself.²⁴ While recognising the highest authority of their primate, most of the chaplains also maintained that, because he was not himself a military man, Bourne was not equipped to deal with the Chaplaincy. They held that to rectify this situation, some more permanent Catholic authority within the military was needed. The further difficulties which came to light after the Chaplaincy expanded during the war years showed this argument to be all the more convincing. Because of this and because of discontent within the Irish hierarchy over the British control of Irish chaplains,²⁵ talk turned to the idea of an Army Bishop, or *Episcopus Castrensis*.²⁶ Bourne did not support this change, not least because having an *Episcopus Castrensis* took from Westminster the primary control of the military Chaplaincy. Even so, the advantages were considered to be sufficient by Rome and in 1917, this new position was eventually created.²⁷ Keatinge was promoted from his position as head of the Chaplaincy in Macedonia and between his leadership and the practical assistance of Stephen Rawlinson, the Catholic Chaplaincy had a higher level of autonomy from both the military and the diocesan structure within Britain.

Conscription, Catholic Duty and Catholic Priests

Concerns over the structure of the military Chaplaincy were important in themselves but were also compounded by the practical matters of army life and procedure which were theologically ambiguous or undefined. Conscription was one of

²⁴ See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 36–44 and Oldmeadow, pp.199–201.

²⁵ J. Hagerty, 'The Diocese of Leeds during the First World War' *Northern Catholic Weekly* no 37, (1996), p. 40. Hereafter referred to as 'Leeds'. (Thanks to James Hagerty for directing me to this article.)

²⁶ 'Benedictines', pp. 135–137.

²⁷ See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 35–39.

the most challenging of these concerns.²⁸ The situation in France and Italy was substantially different from that in Britain and, not surprisingly, the approach and response to this question differed in these countries as well. To begin with, the number of priests in these continental countries was very large, as evidenced by the fact that during the war 32,699 French priests were conscripted into the military.²⁹ Moreover, the separation provided by the English Channel meant that Britain was not under the same immediate distress as those continental countries were. Furthermore, those countries had secular governments which, unlike Britain, did not grant exemption to the clergy from military duties. Given these factors many priests, especially in France, were conscripted into the army not only as chaplains and non-combatants but as combatant soldiers.³⁰ Because of this government imposition, the priests in these countries were given a special dispensation from the Pope to retain their position as sacramental administrators.³¹ For Catholics in Britain the number of priests was small enough: even in 1920 there were no more than 4000 Catholic priests in the whole of England and Wales; there was little question that their conscription into the army was necessary or even useful.³² Moreover, the British government was not as secularist and it recognised clerical exemption from military service for all priests and clergy, whether Catholic or Protestant.³³ In large part because of these practical matters and particularly in the light of the exceptions made for French priests, it is clear that the Catholic Church's stance against clerical military service was not the only factor in the British ruling against clerical combatants.

²⁸ See chapter Three of this thesis.

²⁹ Becker, p. 33. Given the precarious nature of their situation, Benedict XV allowed them a dispensation to fight in the military which did not affect their status as active priests. See also 'Priests and Military Service' *The Tablet* 3 July 1915, p. 5.

³⁰ See Becker, p. 33.

³¹ See Chapter 5 of this thesis.

³² Hastings, p. 134.

³³ In 1918 a bill was presented which sought to impose clerical conscription, but this bill was not passed.

Even so, British Catholics argued that the theological position of the Church was the primary reason for this position. Regarding this, a *Tablet* article on 'The Priesthood and the War' asserted:

Allusion has been made in the press to the clergy undertaking even combatant services. It must not be forgotten that it is directly contrary to Christian sentiment and to ancient Catholic tradition that those who are consecrated to the service of the altar for the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the administration of the Sacraments should be called upon to take part in the shedding of blood. France, alone, among the belligerent nations impelled by anti-Christian principles and the hatred of religion, has violated the tradition of centuries.³⁴

Such statements demonstrated, or were meant to demonstrate not only the validity of the Catholic position but the coherence of the Catholic Church in its theological practice. This attempt at a unified position distinguished Catholics from Christians of other denominational backgrounds. Some Anglicans, for instance, maintained that it was right for priests to serve in the armed forces in whatever capacity was required. *The Church Times* weighed the options saying: 'The military needs men – that is one side – the Church needs pastors – that's the other.' The suggestion was then made that everyone who was fit to enlist should do so because there would be plenty of clergy to help out at home.³⁵

This was not, however, the only position maintained within the Anglican body. Notably Archbishop Randall Davidson disagreed when he asserted:

I do not believe that an ordained man ought to be a combatant in the Army. For the Minister of Christ to serve as a *fighting soldier* is to my mind to disregard unduly the special Commission which is his. I do not of course say that this should be applicable in the moment of supremest urgency in the Nation's life, or if the country were invaded, or the man's parish being attacked.³⁶

³⁴ Cardinal F. Bourne, 'The Priesthood and the War' *The Tablet* 27 April 1918, p. 539.

³⁵ *Church Times* 4 September 1914, p. 241.

³⁶ Marrin uses Davidson's comment to demonstrate that the Anglican Church was deeply concerned with not only the survival of the nation but the survival of the Church of England as part and parcel of the nation. Marrin, p. 190.

However, based on their responses to this direct statement, it is clear that Davidson's statement was viewed by Anglican priests as more of a guideline than a directive. Even in 1914, *The Church Times* pointed out that there was a tendency among the clergy to enlist as combatants. This, it claimed, was in large part because so many young French priests were fighting in the French army.³⁷ The Anglo-Catholic priest Julian Bickersteth who was in Australia at the start of the war even wrote to his family that if he had been in England at the beginning of the war he would have been tempted to join the ranks. He maintained that this was because this would have afforded him the opportunity of being in closer contact with the ordinary men.³⁸ In April 1917, this line of thinking was encouraged when seventeen diocesan bishops agreed to give their clergy the opportunity to enlist. More than anyone else, Winnington-Ingram, the bishop of London, used this as an opportunity to recruit. Although he asked his priests to enlist for non-combatant work, he also offered special dispensations for those who wished to bear arms.³⁹

As the Anglicans did, Catholics also relaxed their position as the war continued. However, this was for only some of the same reasons. Although Catholics rejected the notion of combatant service for the clergy, by 1918 the need for manpower had become such that conscription of the clergy as non-combatants was seen as justifiable even by some Catholics. The rejection of the conscription bill was thus received with mixed reviews. As a *Tablet* correspondent for the 'News from Rome' column asserted:

On the one hand, heads of colleges and other authorities who had got the status of their people settled and were threatened with an upheaval, these were

³⁷ The *Church Times* made the point, however, the French priests were not exempt like the British clergy and it was because of this, rather than because they volunteered individually, that they served in this capacity. Printed in *Church Times* 11 September 1914, p. 259.

³⁸ Bickersteth, p. 75.

³⁹ After 22 April 1917, Each bishop was 'free to follow the dictates of his conscience' rather than accept parameters established by Canterbury. See Marrin, p. 194.

relieved, as it would seem that the question as regards young priests and students will remain practically as it was before. On the other hand, among those most intimately concerned, there was a widely diffused feeling, subdued by circumstances until the appearance of the Bill, but then arising, of pleasure at the opportunity of 'doing one's bit'. There will be some disappointment, then resignation to the doing of the 'bit' here and in all the opportunities to come in future.⁴⁰

However, among Catholics, acceptance of conscription was clearly limited to the consideration that, if required by law, they, like their co-religionists in France, would be willing to serve in military capacities other than the Chaplaincy. At no time was it widely considered that Catholic priests might volunteer for non-chaplaincy duty; primarily because this opposed the directives of the Catholic Church. Unlike in the Anglican Church where bishops had the authority in such matters, in the Catholic Church, only the Pope himself could offer dispensations for such services.⁴¹

This gave Catholics the ammunition not only to support their own position but to criticise the Anglican stance. Indeed, while some regretted the exclusion of the priests from conscripted service, Catholics used the issue of conscription as a tool to show that the Catholic position was more coherent and thus preferable to that of the Anglican Church. In its 'Notes' column, *The Tablet* recorded: 'Removal of the clause which would allow for conscription of clerics in the Military Service Act has quite chaffed some Anglicans who were keen on doing their bit.' This, Catholics claimed, showed how 'all along the clergy had been resenting their exclusion from the provisions of the Act.'⁴² In saying this, *The Tablet* not only pointed to the shortcomings of Anglicanism but asserted Catholic superiority.

Nevertheless, the situation was not entirely straightforward even for Catholics, particularly with regard to the enlistment and, later on, the conscription of

⁴⁰ *The Tablet* 4 May 1918, p. 586.

⁴¹ See Marrin, p. 194.

⁴² *The Tablet* 11 May 1918, p. 608.

seminarians.⁴³ Among Anglicans, of 1274 seminarians, nearly 400 withdrew immediately and ordinations fell steadily throughout the war.⁴⁴ Winnington-Ingram went so far as to refuse ordination to anyone of military age who was not certified as unfit.⁴⁵ Catholics, on the other hand, had mixed reactions with regard to seminarians. At Ushaw the immediate response was for seminarians to join in the war effort. At the start of the war twelve seminarians left and by 1918 a total of ninety-three students had entered the forces.⁴⁶ At Oscott, however, Monsignor Parkinson, the head of the college, went to great lengths to ensure that church students did not have to go to the front if they preferred to remain in seminary. In 1917, he set up an allowance at Oscott which provided for seminarians who were called to serve in the military. This created the option of replacing a conscripted seminarian with a priest from his diocese who would then serve as a chaplain.⁴⁷

This support for the seminaries was not only found within the seminaries themselves but stretched to the dioceses as well. For instance, the diocese of Leeds prioritised the continuation of its ecclesiastical education fund throughout the war years. Even in 1916 the diocese reported that their goal was to maintain thirty to forty students in the various stages of ecclesiastical training. The bishop stressed that unless the diocese assisted generously the financial obligations for this 'necessary work' could not possibly be met. Although by 1917, twelve of the seminarians from his diocese had been compelled to join the forces, the motivations were personal rather than institutional. Moreover, even when some seminarians left because of the duty they felt they owed to their country, Catholics maintained that their vocations had not

⁴³ The correspondence between Monsignor Parkinson and the War Office indicates that at Oscott, this was a major concern throughout the war. See Oscott Archives.

⁴⁴ Statistics found in Marrin, p.188.

⁴⁵ Marrin records this in his chapter 'The Church and the War', p. 189.

⁴⁶ D. Milburn, *A History of Ushaw College* (Durham, 1964), p. 314.

⁴⁷ St. Mary's College, Oscott College, 'Church students', 23 March 1917.

been compromised since they had not at that point taken vows. Thus, in the opportunities which they provided for the seminarians, the dioceses and the seminaries themselves demonstrated the vital role of the priesthood and their support of clerical training.⁴⁸

The Demands for Priests and the Necessities of War

In addition to the difficulties relating to the conscription of priests and church students was the challenge of not having enough priests to serve the many needs of the Chaplaincy. Although Catholics had substantially more chaplains per men than the Anglican Church and they were given more liberties than other chaplains due to their need to administer the sacraments, Bishop Keatinge still asserted his desperate need for more chaplains. Indeed, at no time during the war could the Catholic Chaplaincy actually supply the number of chaplains that they were allowed.

One reason for needing so many chaplains was that the Catholic men were scattered widely and, as a consequence, the chaplains had difficulties in reaching the men. In 1916, one chaplain pleaded to Cardinal Logue, the Archbishop of Armagh and primate of Ireland, that the men were receptive to the sacraments but that the chaplains could not get to the men. He claimed that on one occasion he ministered to some men who were preparing to go to the front. Although it was a hurried visit and arranged quickly, he reported that the men came to confession in crowds saying: 'In an experience of the Army of over fourteen years I have never met men more anxious for the ministrations of their church.' It was painful to see the desires of the men and to be unable to give them either the help that they needed or 'even a promise of help'. It was particularly upsetting since many of the men had not practised their religion for

⁴⁸ See M. Williams, *Oscott College in the Twentieth Century* (Leominster, 2001), pp. 48–50.

years and had only just become 'willing and even anxious to resume it'. Pleading for these men who were 'Ten, twenty, thirty years from the Sacraments', he lamented that unless the sacraments were provided for them at the front 'many of them... are going to certain death without the ministrations of their Church'.⁴⁹

Even when the men were able to come together chaplains claimed that the work was at times too much for them. In 1916, Father Moth expressed his need for help, saying in a letter to Rawlinson that he did not mind how old the priest was 'so long as he can hear Confessions and [was] able to say Mass on Sundays'. He explained that the situation was such that he had Sunday parades in the open given the great number of men who attended. In addition, he heard confession every evening from 5 o'clock and even then he often had to end up by giving General Absolution.⁵⁰ In 1916, Reverend Bogler also asserted his need for more assistance, saying that although there was a great deal of work that ought to be done there were not nearly enough priests to do the work. He even wrote to Rawlinson:

We cannot do more than half what might be done for the fine fellows who look to us for spiritual help and whose need is greater and more urgent than that of any other whom I know. What a pity! What a sorrow! Yet I feel certain that no priest who has once taken up this war work will ever willingly abandon it while that work is still to be done. For, if for a moment, I put aside the stern duty that faces every priest – who – happily, has put his hand to the plough – to continue the great work, there is in the life itself an irresistible fascination.⁵¹

Although Bogler felt this way, not all priests or even chaplains did. In response to Father J. McHardy who considered resigning his contract based on his belief that there were enough chaplains to do the required work, Keatinge maintained that McHardy's help was much needed and desired. He said further:

⁴⁹ Cardinal Thomas O' Fiaich Library and Archive, Cardinal Logue papers, Army Chaplains, 'Hierarchy' box 2, W. Murphy to Logue, 31 January 1916.

⁵⁰ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, M – W, Moth to Rawlinson, 1916.

⁵¹ D.A.A./R.C., miscellaneous number 2, Reverend M.H. Bogler to Rawlinson, 3 October 1916.

I really cannot understand how anyone who knows anything of the needs and nature of the work can share the feeling that you think seems to be current that we have now 'quite a sufficient number of priests'. The only explanation I can give is that chaplains at present serving, especially those with Divisions (please include yourself in this indictment), are responsible for creating this impression. They have done their work so well, and covered their large areas, despite all their handicaps, that, each doing the work of two, the real deficiency is not apparent.⁵²

As Keatinge did, so many Catholics recognised the need to be substantial. In 1916, after researching the state of affairs in the camps in his district, Father Murphy came to this same conclusion. He then wrote to Bourne giving the unacceptable number of chaplains which were at the time administering to the men. He also pleaded with Bourne both for his help and that of Cardinal Logue, saying:

But why do I trouble your Eminence with this harrowing story? You know it all too well. The War Office has been importuning you to send even one Priest to an entire division at Camp 2 and there is no chaplain to send... If I may make bold to offer a suggestion, I would say, make our extreme spiritual destitution known to Cardinal Logue, and I have no doubt that His Eminence will ensure a generous response from the Irish clergy. I believe that to make known the state of things is to remedy it.⁵³

The hierarchy made some efforts to remedy the problem in response to such pleas.⁵⁴ In 1916, for example, Logue said at the consecration of the new Bishop of Port Louis that there was still 'an earnest appeal for more chaplains'. He said further that the War Office wanted thirty-four chaplains for the front in France and even more, if possible, for the home front because the active offensive created a need which was even greater than previously. This was compounded by the urgency which Catholics felt when considering the real possibility that the young Catholic men who were defending the country might be called to face death unprepared and deprived of the sacraments, 'those aids which rob death of its terrors'. Given this possibility Logue asserted that

⁵² D.A.A./R.C., correspondence, 1915–1917, Keatinge to Father McHardy, 17 December 1916.

⁵³ Cardinal Tomas O' Fiaich Library and Archive Cardinal Logue Papers, Box 2, Army Chaplains, 'hierarchy', 31 January 1916,. See also *Hints and Tips*.

⁵⁴ See 'News from Ireland' *The Tablet* 13 November 1915, p. 633.

there could be no 'higher or holier call' that 'could appeal to the zeal of a priest than the call to bring the consolations of our holy religion to those brave men who are hourly exposed to imminent peril of their lives.'⁵⁵

Although the shortages were substantial, the situation could certainly have been worse. As already noted, the ratio of Catholic chaplains to Catholic men was still better than that of the Nonconformist or Anglican Churches. Moreover, because they were in largely Catholic regions British Catholics could sometimes rely on the local clergy to minister to some of the Catholic men. For instance, when Father Chapman was in need of leave but had too many soldiers to look after, his leave was made possible because of the assistance of the local *curés*. He explained: 'If I leave, I shall be willing to continue any payments to Belgian chaplains for saying Mass for the English troops. I have had no other way of providing for them.'⁵⁶ Other chaplains relied on local priests as indicated by the report on Reverend G. Jouaux whose good work with, and devotion to, the British soldiers was noted in Rawlinson's papers.⁵⁷ Several other local priests and religious were mentioned in dispatches for rendering 'invaluable assistance to the British troops in the field', by offering both spiritual and physical aid.⁵⁸

Without the help of the local churches, the British chaplains would have been under much greater strain, as they tried to provide for the religious needs of their men. In acknowledgement of this a Jesuit chaplain with the Field Ambulance of the BEF remarked in a letter which was printed in *The Tablet* in 1915:

We Catholics are remarkably well off in this country, since every village, no matter how tiny, has a fine church, which is invariably placed at the disposal of the Catholic soldiers for Mass and confessions. I have found the priests

⁵⁵ Printed in *The Tablet* 19 August 1916, p. 240.

⁵⁶ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, A –L'Chapman to Rawlinson, 28 February 1917.

⁵⁷ D.A.A./R.C., French Correspondence'His offer to serve was accepted and he was paid two guineas a week for his work. 28 January 1915, '.

⁵⁸ D.A.A./R.C., French Correspondence.

both in France and Belgium, exceeding courteous and anxious to help us. I am afraid we at home should have become by this time excessively bored, even we priests, by the everlasting presence of Tommy, even Catholic Tommy. Also in nearly every church there is a least one priest who can speak English more or less and our boys can thus go to confession even in the absence of a chaplain.⁵⁹

Difficulties still existed and the challenges of reaching the men were at times insurmountable but such advantages were not to be taken lightly.

Of course, this help was not given in only one direction. Some British chaplains also administered to the French and Belgian civilians in the villages. After the conclusion of the war, a letter was published in *The Tablet* which said of this:

There is a beautiful picture in my mind of a Franciscan chaplain preaching in a semi-ruined church to a battalion of Munsters, and then addressing a part of his sermon in French to a handful of forlorn and mourning peasants. What supreme chivalry, what courtesy, and what Catholicity! Are these deeds to remain unsung and unknown to those at home?⁶⁰

Likewise, during the war, Father A. O'Connor of Salford diocese wrote of 'twin villages' in which he and a young Breton priest were able to offer services for the villagers who would have otherwise gone without. Of this experience he said: 'After the Mass the little congregation formed itself into a deputation to thank me. They did so with the utmost grace and simplicity and incidentally complimented me on the nice way in which I "did the offices", on my French and on my horse.'⁶¹ There were even instances when care of the local Catholics became a conflicting interest for army chaplains. In 1917, in response to his concerns for the locals, Rawlinson told the chaplain Joseph Wrafter MC in the most certain terms:

There is no doubt whatever of the attitude you have to take. You are here solely for the British troops, and have nothing whatever to say to the French civilians, whether their priests are taken away to join up or not. Therefore,

⁵⁹ Printed in *The Tablet* 27 February 1915, p. 274.

⁶⁰ Goldie, *The Tablet* 8 February 1919, p. 162.

⁶¹ *Baeda* Vol. 2 no. 17, March 1916, p. 537.

with regards to where you say Mass, this will depend entirely on where you can get the greatest number of men together, leaving civilians out of your mind altogether.⁶²

This contrasted sharply with the arrangement made between Anglicans and French and Belgian Catholics. Julian Bickersteth wrote of the congenial relations he had with one of the village priests, noting that because the villagers liked to have the priest say Mass in their village and at their church: ‘My friend the *curé* and I often pass each other on the road between the villages each having taken one Mass and proceeding to take the second.’⁶³ However, there could be no official religious exchange between the two and this severely limited the interchange between French Catholics and Anglicans; and, as British Catholics were quick to point out, even Anglo-Catholics.⁶⁴ Although at times the situation was certainly difficult for the Catholic chaplains, when compared to other churches, their situation was decidedly more manageable.⁶⁵

Practical Difficulties: Hints and Tips for Catholic Chaplains

As demonstrated by the Catholic approach to conscription, the Catholic understanding of the priesthood substantially differed from that of other Christians not only because of their place within the national religious context or their understanding of sacramental ministry, but because of the distinctiveness of Catholic ecclesiastical authority. Catholic acceptance of rubrics and canon law required not only that provisions be made for the men to go to mass but that Catholics uphold the Catholic Church’s understanding of the sacraments and that the priest recognise the unique but limited gift of the priesthood. Notably, Catholic priests had to maintain the rules of

⁶² D.A.A./R.C., correspondence, M – W, Rawlinson to Wrafter, 27 August 1917.

⁶³ Bickersteth, p. 254.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁶⁵ *Church of England*, p. 124.

fasting and they had also to have the appropriate vestments and the required types of wine and bread for the sacraments.⁶⁶ Even when going to the front, they were required to have and use portable altars for Mass. These included heavy altar stones which had to be carried to the location of the Mass.⁶⁷ By following this protocol, Catholic chaplains could operate in the person of Christ and could consecrate the host into Christ's actual person as in an ordinary mass. However, they could do so only through these means and they could do so only because of their position as ordained Catholic priests; they could not do this in any way which did not strictly follow the teachings of the Catholic Church.⁶⁸ Even though these requirements were cumbersome, Catholics had, nevertheless, to accept them. Moreover, although from a cultural and linguistic standpoint, British Protestants could assist the Catholic soldiers, the Catholic Church made the point that Protestants, and even Anglo-Catholics could not perform the priestly functions for Catholics given their place outside the Roman communion.⁶⁹

Such requirements and restrictions had practical consequences for Catholic worship. Unlike other ministers whose primary services could be held in any place and with few if any obligatory aids, the Catholic separation between the lay person and the priest necessitated the priestly accessories and liturgical form to legitimise the intentions of the priest and to ensure that the sacred was not profaned in any way. Catholic priests understood that although it made their jobs more difficult, if they strayed from the requirements of the mass, they could not be certain that they had actually performed the sacrament or that the benefits of the sacraments could be

⁶⁶ See *Hints and Tips*. If a priest was to say Mass, he needed to keep to the strictures of the regular Mass except in the matter of confession and fasting; absolution could be offered generally rather than personally and fasting was not required by men at the front during the period of the war.

⁶⁷ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence 1915–1917, P. Brookfield to Rawlinson, 25 October 1917.

⁶⁸ See Loudon, p. 52.

⁶⁹ See R.V. Staudacher, *Chaplains in Action* (1962), p. 12.

obtained. As this was the objective of the mass, it was necessary for them to put up with these inconveniences.⁷⁰

These restrictions created or compounded a number of challenges for Catholic chaplains as they attempted to work within the framework of the military. To begin with, even when they understood their priestly duties, chaplains could not be expected to know how to work within the military structure or how to accommodate the needs of the troops who were, very often, scattered around the countryside.⁷¹ For Catholic chaplains to be able to perform their duties as priests, these problems needed to be adequately addressed. Stephen Rawlinson, whose primary responsibility it was to supply and assist the Catholic chaplains on the Western Front went some way in providing for this need. Rawlinson made it his personal goal to organise the Catholic military Chaplaincy, and to bring coherence to its structure. The wide range of inquiries which were made to him offers evidence of the difficulty which Rawlinson faced in creating such a system.

Perhaps Rawlinson's most successful attempt at creating some coherence in the Catholic Chaplaincy was the compilation of a handbook for Catholic chaplains who served in the First World War. This supplemented the scanty information with which the chaplains were already supplied and which recognised the chaplain's duties to be as such:

... to seek the spiritual and moral welfare of the men of his denomination at the station or in the formation to which he is attached. The methods which may be adopted to this end will naturally vary largely according to local circumstances and the individuality of the chaplain concerned, but it is essential that in all his work the chaplain should keep touch with, and conform to the requirements of the military authorities.⁷²

⁷⁰ See *Catholic Chaplain*, pp. 5–6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 40–47.

⁷² 'Benedictines', p. 136.

Such ambiguity, while allowing freedom, did not present the chaplains with much sense of their actual responsibilities or the best ways of accomplishing their duties as chaplains. Thus Rawlinson set out to express more explicitly the duties and goals of the Catholic Chaplaincy.

From his handbook and his correspondence with the chaplains it is evident that Rawlinson recognised his biggest challenge: namely that most Catholic chaplains, while they were competent priests, did not know the requirements for succeeding in the military or in an inter-denominational context.⁷³ *Hints and Tips* thus provided detailed information about the division, brigade, regiment, artillery, base, casualty clearing stations and field ambulance as well as broader hints about such matters as burial procedures and the use of French churches.⁷⁴ Moreover, it explained terms regarding military assignments.

A chaplain may be posted or attached to a regiment. These terms are not synonymous – posting implies a closer alliance than attaching and being more difficult to change. A chaplain posted to a Regiment cannot be changed without the consent of the Principal Chaplain whereas the Chaplain posted to a Brigade may be attached to one regiment or another as the AA and QMG and Senior Chaplain may think fit.⁷⁵

Although such matters were not confusing once they were explained, Rawlinson recognised that if such technicalities were not plainly presented, they could become obstacles to the already challenging duties of the chaplains.

Hints and Tips tackled more complex problems as well; namely, how to get the Catholic men to fulfil their religious obligations, or in any case, how to provide the men with the opportunity of fulfilling them even with the limitations inherent in their military obligations. This was not always easily done as seen in the examples of

⁷³ Brumwell, p. 38.

⁷⁴ D.A.A./R.C., 'Miscellaneous'. This was not for general distribution but was intended only for the use of the chaplains.

⁷⁵ *Hints and Tips*, p. 7.

Father Michael Ryan and Father William Bartley. Father Michael Ryan found it necessary to provide extensive possibilities for Mass and Confession given the military demands made on the men. This was evident from a notice which he wrote regarding Mass times. He said that there was a short military Mass each Sunday at 9am which was said by the military chaplain and was for the soldiers only; all soldiers were expected to attend that Mass unless their 'duties prevented them'. Given that duties quite often prevented a large number of the men from attending, he notified them of the available alternatives. They could attend one of the civilian Masses instead in the two town churches. The local clergy said these every half hour from 6am until 10:30am. The same flexibility proved necessary with regard to Confessions. For those who could make it, confessions were heard daily by a British chaplain in both churches from 5pm and at the military chapel from 6pm on Saturday. If Catholics still could not get to confession at these times they could go to the Catholic chaplain who lived in the village. He would 'willingly hear confessions...if called upon'. After giving all these possibilities he concluded: 'It is up to every Catholic soldier to make the above notice [known] to his comrades or fellow officers.'⁷⁶

Preparations for Easter were even more elaborate and Catholic chaplains had to plan carefully how they would reach all the men for whom they were responsible. William Bartley SJ wrote of this difficulty to Rawlinson.⁷⁷ In terms of British soldiers he calculated that he had 120 men to provide for. However, he also had a Prison camp with 80 Catholics for whom he had to provide on this 'most important feast of the year'. In order to accommodate the needs of the men, Bartley posted a sign which included both their obligations and the way the men might best fulfil these:

⁷⁶ D.A.A./R.C., correspondence, M – W, Ryan letters, undated.

⁷⁷ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, A – L Bartley to Rawlinson, 13 April 1917.

1. By order of the Pope we are exempt during the war from the laws of fasting and abstinence.
2. The Easter Duties (confession and communion) bind under pain of mortal sin.
3. Being in a foreign diocese we must conform to the laws of the diocese as regards the time for fulfilling the Easter Duties. By special arrangement with the Bishop of Arras the period has been extended for the British soldiers in this diocese. It begins on Sunday, March 4 and ends on Ascension day, May 17.
4. Unless notice is given to the contrary, Confessions will be heard on Saturday evening from 6 –7 in the Catholic Church, Audruioq.
5. It is the business of each to make his own arrangements about his Easter duties and endeavour to secure a Pass in case one is necessary. Those who go home on leave may go to their duties at home, and it will probably be more convenient to do so. You are reminded that the period at home extends from Ash Wednesday till Low Sunday.⁷⁸

While recognising the challenges which the chaplains faced, *Hints and Tips* suggested two ways in which a chaplain might minimise these difficulties, taking into account not only the logistical problems but the relational challenges which at times existed for the chaplains. To begin with, the handbook explained that in the military context, a chaplain had to be aware that certain works could not be interfered with even for something so worthy as the mass. This did not mean that a chaplain should not say mass but that in making his arrangements for services, he should endeavour to find out what work the men were doing and when they might be available. If they were working all night, it would ‘be useless to arrange a Mass for 9am. In that case 11 or 11:30 will be the earliest possible time.’⁷⁹

Given the difficulty in securing times for mass, the handbook also explained the benefits of holding official parade services rather than voluntary services.⁸⁰ There were several reasons for this. First, if the mass was a Parade Service it would have ‘all the attention of a parade’. By this was meant that the men would gather together officially so as to go to the place of service. Second, other duties would not be

⁷⁸D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, A –L’ (The first Sunday after Easter.) Cullen letters.

⁷⁹*Hints and Tips*, p. 7.

⁸⁰*Church of England*, p. 155.

allowed to take precedence over a parade except a few fatigues, whereas for a voluntary service, special permission was required for men to attend. Third, when a Parade Service was announced in Divisional Orders and for 'no adequate reason' the CO did not send the men, the Division could take up the matter officially and conceivably alter the situation. Finally, if the service was voluntary, there was no incentive for commanding officers and NCOs to ensure that the men were at Mass. The result of this was that many might miss Mass simply because they did not know about the service 'or were washing or shaving' when the time came.⁸¹

Although voluntary services might seem preferable to parish priests, chaplains were reminded that in the military context, very often only the official and obligatory services were recognised. This official nature of the parade services could, therefore, more effectively achieve the goal of getting soldiers to attend and, indeed, would better allow the soldiers to attend. Although this meant that the nominally Catholic men might at times begrudge the mandatory nature of these services, it also meant that those who wanted to come would be assured the possibility of attendance.⁸² Thus making the service formal did not merely serve the purpose of 'filling seats' but more importantly, it assisted the well-intentioned men.

Supplementing this advice offered to the chaplains was the advice offered to the Catholic soldiers that they should join Catholic brigades. In recognition of the difficulties which they faced as a minority denomination in the military, Catholics were offered warnings against joining more secular or less Catholic-friendly selections of the military. For instance, the Catholic Church maintained that the Navy was finely equipped in men and materials, but that it was lacking in spiritual provisions for Catholic sailors and marines. Because of this, Catholic pastors could

⁸¹ *Hints and Tips*, p. 7.

⁸² See also Brumwell, p. 40.

not encourage recruitment to the Navy among Catholics, even Irish fishermen who were the 'finest seamen' to be found. Instead they were bound to explain to their flocks that entering such a dangerous branch of the service which provided so few spiritual aids was a risk to their souls which they ought not to take.⁸³

Instead, Catholics were encouraged to join particular brigades in the army which were known for being 'Catholic' and which provided readier access to Catholic ministrations.⁸⁴ Although these were not exclusively Catholic, the proportion of Catholics to non-Catholics was dramatically higher in these than in non-Catholic divisions, as evidenced in a census taken by Rawlinson in March 1916. This showed that whereas most brigades had only a handful of Catholics, the 14th, 16th, 74th, 86th, 97th and 103rd brigades, among others, had high numbers. In the 14th infantry, for instance, the Inniskilling Fusiliers alone had 427 Catholics. In the 103rd brigade, there was a total of 2169 Catholics. In the 16th infantry there were four officers and 705 men. Within the 86th brigade, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers alone had 822 men and two officers. Likewise, in the 97th and 74th there were divisions with 300 to 400 Catholics in their numbers.⁸⁵ British Catholics hoped that such an environment would not only foster a Catholic sense of devotion, both religious and national, and encourage the men to be more practical in their sacramental and devotional observances but that they would also make Catholic ministrations more feasible for the chaplains.⁸⁶

Advice regarding relations with doctors and tips about effectively ministering in hospitals were also provided to the chaplains. For instance *Hints and Tips* explained that doctors would generally notify the chaplain if any patients were seriously or dangerously ill and that each hospital would compile a list of patients

⁸³ *The Month* March 1915, p. 314.

⁸⁴ The benefits of this system were acknowledged in *Hints and Tips*, p. 19.

⁸⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Census and converts, March 1916 Census.

⁸⁶ This was particularly true of the Irish regiments. See Dungan, pp. 62 –65.

who were in a critical condition and that this list would generally be kept in the hall. It was important for the chaplain to make use of this list so as to know what was required in terms of services and sacraments.⁸⁷ Regarding the medical officers, *Hints and Tips* asserted the importance of cultivating these relationships since these officers could be strong allies. Although chaplains often interacted with doctors at stressful periods and this could at times create strain in their relationships, working in these intense conditions could, Rawlinson maintained, be managed successfully so long as the chaplain had tact. *Hints and Tips* gave the specific incentive for ensuring these good relationships by reminding chaplains that: ‘As a general rule [the chaplain] will have time to give the last Sacraments wherever necessary, and a friendly understanding with the doctors will result in his being warned at once of the necessity.’⁸⁸

Chaplains were also reminded that although they might be accustomed to having privacy when administering Extreme Unction, during a rush, they generally could not have screens put up around a bed. *Hints and Tips* recognised that although some priests might be shy about giving Holy Viaticum so publicly, it was nevertheless of the highest necessity that they do so. Chaplains were assured that once they became accustomed to this lack of privacy they could easily give the Sacraments in this way and that, for the most part, they would be able to do so without anyone noticing them. Supplementing this, chaplains were reminded of their duties as priests: ‘After all, what does it matter if other people see? The chaplains should not mind and the soldiers have by now lost all sense of shyness about their religion.’⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

In addition to these specific strategies on how to successfully operate as a priest within the military capacity, chaplains were told to remember their rank: ‘You are probably a Captain in rank, and as such you are only “small fry” in the Army. Make a point of saluting Officers of Field Rank (major upwards) and be punctilious in returning salutes of other officers and men.’⁹⁰ Likewise, they were advised: ‘Be on friendly terms with the Chaplains of other denominations. Do not discuss religion with them. Be friends with your Quartermaster and transport officer. Both will help you considerably.’⁹¹ Such advice could help the chaplains adjust to their environments and, in so doing, it could aid them in performing their sacramental ministrations in the military context more effectively.

Although Rawlinson offered the Catholic chaplains substantial help, some difficulties could not easily be resolved, particularly when the problem came from unavoidable shortages. Quite often, chaplains found it difficult to see all the men under their care. This was not surprising given the difficulties which they faced in transporting themselves and their equipment. Most cumbersome was the portable altar, mentioned earlier in this chapter.⁹² To make room for these altars, Catholic chaplains were told to limit their personal kit to a weight of thirty-five pounds.⁹³ However, this did not make transporting them any easier, especially when they were accompanied by sets of hymn books and altar serving kits and when their journey was made through mud and rain, by means of their own two feet or a bicycle.⁹⁴

Father Noblet made clear the difficulties of this situation. In his correspondence with Noblet, Rawlinson raised the concern that some of the men in

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹² www.newadvent.org/cathen/01348b.htm.

⁹³ *Hints and Tips*, p. 20.

⁹⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence A – L, Bellwood to Rawlinson, 30 August, 1917, Correspondence, M – W Rawlinson to Wright, 4 July 1917.

Noblet's area were not receiving the ministrations of the Church. He explained that, according to the figures available to him, there were 300 Catholics in Noblet's region, three of whom were officers, who had no Catholic chaplain.⁹⁵ In response to this, Noblet explained that he did not believe there was a drastic increase in numbers of Catholics but that it was difficult to get in touch with the men in any case because they were so scattered about on their different fatigues. Since they were in groups of twos and threes which were dotted about the countryside, it was impossible to get more than twenty of them together at any particular location.⁹⁶ This was clearly an impediment. Although it did not stop him from serving the men entirely, it limited him considerably.

This problem existed throughout the war and became all the more difficult after 1916 when most of the chaplains' horses were procured due to a shortage of mounts in the mounted infantry. Father Paul Brookfield wrote to Rawlinson on 25 October 1917 with a typical complaint about transportation:

I shall have to send more of the brigade to the local parish Mass, a proceeding I do not like because I catch many for confessions when they come to my Mass. With a horse I would say two masses and catch nearly the whole brigade. A grateful government allows me a bicycle. Look at the bike! Look at the roads!! Look at the mud!!! Notice that winter is drawing nigh. Picture to yourself the RC chaplain who commands the respect of his flock, plodding and slipping in the greasy mud on a government bike. Bespattered with mud from the passing horses ridden by NC's or possibly by a company commander riding into ---...Add to this vision the fact that he is RC (not C of E or UB) therefore he does not carry with him an alpaca cassock, cambril surplice and a breakfast. But, (mark you!) two too heavy haversacks including altar stone, missal, stands, candle sticks, flasks of wine, possibly 50 hymn books and (here's the point) an empty stomach...I fear the only solution is to make me an APC.⁹⁷

Chaplains also faced the challenge of having to provide funerals for a variety of men who were widely scattered. Although the Chaplaincy recognised that the

⁹⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Census and converts, 3 June 1916.

⁹⁶ D.A.A./R.C., Census and converts, 3 June 1916.

⁹⁷ D.A.A./R.C., correspondence, 1915–1917', Brookfield to Rawlinson, 25 October 1917.

chaplains could not always be with the men as they died and that they would not always be able even to reach the men in time to bury them, the department held that they should do everything they could to ensure that Catholics received Catholic burials. *Hints and Tips* said of this:

It has been brought to notice that on several occasions Catholic soldiers have not been buried by their own Chaplains. This is, of course, inevitable in some circumstances but not infrequently it is due to the fault of the Catholic Chaplain concerned in not making adequate arrangements with the authorities and so not being available for the burials of his men.⁹⁸

The importance of this was revealed when on one occasion the chaplain, Father Cecil, was reported as having neglected his duties of burying Lieutenant Daly, a Catholic officer who was under his charge. When asked whether he was performing at a high enough standard. Cecil responded:

I regret very much I did not see 2nd Lieut Daly when he was wounded and that he was buried by a Church of England chaplain. I did not happen to be at the dressing station to which he was taken. It is not true, however, that he or the men of the 3rd PB do not see a priest. I called on Lt. Daly two or three times. The hour and place of Mass is in Brigade order every week. The week before the Brigade went into action I heard confessions and gave Holy Communion every evening from 6 –8 pm in a church near camp. It is often very difficult for the men to get to Mass or confession but he should not have had any. I never remember seeing him in Church.⁹⁹

Because of this clear answer, the matter was not taken further. However, that an isolated case could give rise to such concern offers some indication of how conscientiously concerned Catholics were that their members received not merely a Christian but a Catholic burial.¹⁰⁰

The challenges which existed for the chaplains in fulfilling their duties were compounded by other difficulties which stemmed from local villagers or from the

⁹⁸ *Hints and Tips*, p. 20.

⁹⁹ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence 1915 –1917, Cecil to Rawlinson, August 1916.

¹⁰⁰ See *Hints and Tips*, p. 20.

shortcomings of the chaplains themselves. Father Pernes wrote to Rawlinson about a particularly flagrant example of anti-British feeling which he encountered. He explained that he went to the church with his servant to hear Confession and to give the Blessed Sacrament to ten of his men who were going to the front. On his return to the presbytery he found that someone, quite possibly the sister of the Doyen who was responsible for his accommodation and maintenance, had flung his chalice, palate, ciborium and other sacred things to the floor. When he asked the Doyen's sister about it she replied that: 'she wouldn't have dirty things on the bed'. The problem went further than this for, when the Doyen was called in to mediate, he endorsed the woman's remark about his 'dirty' altar case.¹⁰¹

These circumstantial problems were clearly a hindrance to the work of the chaplains. An even greater concern existed, however, when the chaplains, themselves, were the source of the problem. Although most of the chaplains were responsible, hard-working and ethically sound, Rawlinson had to write to a number of chaplains reprimanding them for their poor service.¹⁰² Although not surprising, it is notable that the Catholic press made no mention of cases such as one involving the chaplain, Father Stuart. In this instance, Stuart's brigade had sent in an adverse report to Rawlinson. There were various accusations as to Stuart's conduct and neglect of duty. Because the matter was not brought up officially, Rawlinson did not take formal action but even so, he warned Stuart of his responsibility to ensure that his new Brigade did not have an opportunity to make such accusations. He asserted that whether or not he wanted it: 'A chaplain and especially a Roman Catholic chaplain [was] constantly watched by everyone, and if he [did] not come up to the ideals of

¹⁰¹ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1918–1919, Wynch to Rawlinson, 23 April 1918.

¹⁰² The Rawlinson Collection contains several instances of chaplains who were reported as having been inefficient, irresponsible or even immoral in their chaplaincy duties.

those around him, he [was] very freely criticised, even by those whom he might look upon as his comrades.’¹⁰³

This was not an isolated case. Not only the men but other chaplains complained about some of the priests who served in the army. For instance, Father Edmund Cullen said of a chaplain who was sent to serve with him in 1917: ‘Father Greene is hopeless. He comes down here without a portable altar set: he left it at the Front (where he said he never used it!) When I returned from leave, I found that he had been saying no Mass for the soldiers on Sundays.’ He complained further saying that, in addition to neglecting his duties of saying the Mass, Greene left the confessional if the men did not come by 6pm. This was particularly distressing since it had long been the practice of the men to arrive later than that time.¹⁰⁴

Similar complaints were made about Father Lowery in 1916. In response to these, Rawlinson wrote to Lowery saying:

To say the least of it, it is most unfortunate that a man in (Brig. General Carroll’s) position should have to complain that on several occasions you had ‘failed to turn up for Mass either because you overslept or your servant failed to call you.’ He also thinks you are not sufficiently energetic in looking after the Catholics of your Brigade. It is certainly very regrettable.¹⁰⁵

This behaviour was considered unacceptable and the chaplains were warned that such irresponsibility was the surest way to lose their position in the Chaplaincy. However, the shortages which existed made it difficult for the Chaplaincy to be selective with the chaplains.¹⁰⁶ This made it all the more important for the Chaplaincy to lay out clearly what was acceptable and what was unacceptable and, as far as possible, to outline and insist upon the responsibilities and obligations of Catholic chaplains.

¹⁰³ D.A.A./R.C., Rawlinson Correspondence, M –W, Rawlinson to Stuart, 1 February 1917.

¹⁰⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, A –L, Cullen to Rawlinson, 14 August 1917.

¹⁰⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, A –L, Rawlinson to Lowery, 23 June 1916.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Leeds’, p. 37.

Catholic Distinctiveness and Ecumenical Challenges at the Front

Because of their centralised structure, the Catholic Chaplaincy recognised the need to demonstrate not only Catholic unity but also Catholic exclusivity, particularly in the light of ecumenism and Anglo-Catholicism and in the face of an inter-denominational Chaplaincy.¹⁰⁷ To some extent this need was appreciated by the Chaplaincy and, generally speaking, the authority and autonomy of the Catholic Chaplaincy was not called into question, chaplains were not hindered from doing their work and relations between Catholics and non-Catholics were amicable. This was largely because the Catholic chaplains were not under the leadership of the Anglican Chaplaincy but were instead directly under the authority of the War Office.¹⁰⁸ Even so, the challenges of working closely with other chaplains and within the military structure posed some challenges for the Catholic chaplains.

While the structure of the Catholic Chaplaincy was firmly in place under the War Office, and Catholics, therefore, maintained their ecclesiastical distinctiveness, they were nevertheless affected by the workings of the Chaplaincy more generally.¹⁰⁹ The consequences of this were most obvious after July 1915 when difficulties arose in the Anglican Chaplaincy and the Chaplaincy split.¹¹⁰ From that point until the conclusion of the war, Anglicans were placed under Bishop Gwynne who was given the title of Deputy Chaplain-General.¹¹¹ All others, including Catholics, were under the authority of Major General John Simms, the Irish Presbyterian Principal Chaplain. Administratively, this was certainly preferable to the former arrangement. In uniting with other non-Anglican denominations in administrative matters, Catholic positions

¹⁰⁷ See Langston pp. 124 –132.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Benedictines’, pp. 134 –138.

¹⁰⁹ Loudon, pp. 52 –57 and *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 71 –83.

¹¹⁰ *Religion and English Society*, p.194.

¹¹¹ See *Church of England*, p. 127, for the circumstances of this change.

could be put forward to greater effect without compromising the integrity or authority of their Catholic positions. However, this arrangement contained its own difficulties; namely that the senior non-Church of England chaplain in a given brigade could be and, in many cases was, a Nonconformist rather than a Catholic. Thus, even though on the highest level Catholics were separate because they still answered to the War Office rather than to the Chaplaincy, both in the person of Simms and on a brigade level, the authority over Catholic chaplains did not always rest with Catholic superiors.¹¹²

Some Catholic chaplains did not respond well to this non-Catholic authority. For instance, when confronted by his Protestant superior about times and places of confessions, Philip Francis Oddie, a chaplain from Westminster archdiocese reacted by writing to Rawlinson that even the notion of having a Protestant parson who might interfere with the ‘manner, time or place in which Catholic priests [performed] their duties [was] too grotesque, blasphemous and indecent for words.’ He continued by threatening that the priests of the 9th division would disregard orders from ‘heretical ministers’ particularly if they affected the freedom of the Catholic priests in fulfilling the sacramental duties.¹¹³ Although Rawlinson provided a moderating influence, as Oddie’s response suggests, the question of whether or not non-Catholics should be in authority over Catholics was highly controversial.¹¹⁴

For some this negative response was more a matter of personal loss than ecclesiastical propriety. For instance, James Leeson, a chaplain from Liverpool diocese was severely upset because when the split took place in the Chaplaincy, he lost his position as a Senior Divisional Chaplain. When he complained of this,

¹¹² See *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 76–78.

¹¹³ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1918–19, Oddie to Rawlinson, 28 May 1918.

¹¹⁴ While some lower ranking officials complained, both Cardinal Bourne and Bishop Keatinge supported this system. See ‘Benedictines’, p. 40.

Rawlinson explained that although this was clearly a disadvantage for Leeson, the situation was generally advantageous. Rawlinson assured Leeson that regardless of his denomination, the Senior Divisional Chaplain would only be of assistance and would in no way interfere with denominational matters. He went further to say that rather than being an imposition, the whole scheme was actually an attempt to ensure Catholic equality with the Church of England and was, therefore, to be embraced rather than rejected.¹¹⁵ Leeson did not take the same view and replied that if he was not to keep his post as the Senior Chaplain, he wanted no other position in France, either. Instead he insisted that he would return to England. He threatened that if this proved impossible, he would simply resign his commission, explaining that this was because in volunteering for Chaplaincy work he had taken for granted that Nonconformists would not interfere. He noted further that Rawlinson's expectation about a beneficial arrangement might come to pass but that in any case he would prefer to go without aid since he had got along well enough without it in the past.¹¹⁶

Even though Leeson's concerns clearly had personal motivations attached to them, he was by no means the only chaplain to react against the new arrangement.¹¹⁷ William Moran of Salford diocese also found this change to be distasteful and he told Rawlinson of his difficulties with accepting a non-Catholic authority. Rawlinson diplomatically addressed Moran's comment that it was 'high time' that he had a Catholic rather than a Wesleyan superior to whom he could address himself in 'the first and every instance' and a 'superior who [appreciated] Catholic needs as no one from a different creed [could]' by pointing out that Moran did have such a person in

¹¹⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1917, Rawlinson to Leeson, December 1917.

¹¹⁶ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence 1917, Leeson to Rawlinson, 13 December 1917.

¹¹⁷ D.A.A./R.C. Correspondence, A –L, Ryan to Rawlinson, 28 February 1916, Smith to Rawlinson, 18 July 1916, Moran to Rawlinson, 28 May 1917, Raymund Devas to Rawlinson 30 July 1917, Rafter to Rawlinson, 27 August 1917. Rawlinson's correspondence in 1916 and 1917 contained several examples of chaplains who were displeased with this arrangement.

the chaplain Father McGrath. Therefore, there was no reason for him to turn elsewhere for advice and direction except in matters of practical concern such as taking leave.¹¹⁸ This, Rawlinson maintained, was a situation which the Catholic Church accepted and which Moran should, therefore, be able to find acceptable. Moran did not find this easy, however, and as he and other chaplains demonstrated, the military structure, especially when it attempted to assimilate the well-ordered system of the Catholic Church created some difficulty for Catholics in determining which authorities they had to obey.¹¹⁹

Not only matters of military authority but matters of practical difference had to be addressed. For instance, because Catholics and Anglo-Catholics disagreed on the relationship between Anglicanism and the Catholic Church and held different positions regarding ecumenism, they also disagreed on whether or not they should hold joint services. For Catholics, the position was, as was demonstrated in Kikuyu, that they should not hold ecumenical services. Rawlinson explained this in explicit terms in a document which he circulated among the chaplains in 1918 after the pressure to hold such services increased:

The Catholic Church believes there is one church and that any other branches are not on equal footing with that one church. Nor does this imply that we are bigoted or narrow-minded. It is only shallowness of mind that tries to be liberal or broad at the expense of truth. It is no more narrow to say that there is but one true Church, that to say that there is but one true Saviour, or one true Creator.¹²⁰

Not only did Catholics insist on this distinctive position, Anglicans also noted the lack of Catholic participation. In an official document on the Chaplaincy experience, a council of Anglican chaplains asserted that useful working arrangements and united

¹¹⁸ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence 1917–1919, Rawlinson to Moran, 28 May 1917.

¹¹⁹ Farm Street Archive, F. Devas Papers. MT/6-7. Hereafter, archive referred to as F.S. Some chaplains such as Francis Devas were known for disregarding these military rules altogether.

¹²⁰ D.A.A./R.C. Miscellaneous, Document responding to United Services in 1918.

services had been achieved with every Christian group from high churchmen to Wesleyans, low churchmen and Congregationalists. However: 'Only with our brethren of the Roman Communion do we invariably find ourselves up against a brick wall, despite mutual respect which so often obtains between us as men.'¹²¹

Given the unusual circumstances of the war there were some exceptions to this steadfast rule both in Britain and at the front. One such instance was a prayer service which was held in Harrogate in the diocese of Leeds at the start of 1916. During the service which was promoted by the Mayor and the Lord Mayor of London, the Anglican Bishop of Ripon presided and the different denominations were represented by the Anglican vicar of Leeds, the President of the Free Church Council and Father Joseph Bampton SJ. *The Tablet* reported that the hall in which the service was held had nearly three thousand people, many of whom were clergymen and ministers in Harrogate and the surrounding villages. The proceedings were 'most harmonious throughout' because the subject was prayer which, as *The Tablet* explained, was a matter about which all Christians could agree.¹²²

Even at the front some degree of ecumenism was evident. Although they did not share services Father Moran said of Father McKeon, the Anglican chaplain with whom he worked: 'He often walked three and four miles through mud and slush to find a priest to attend to men here and there in his area who hadn't had an opportunity of going to Confession for a long time. He was as good to us as if we had a fourth R.C. priest in the division.'¹²³ Even more dramatically, many Catholics joined in a demonstration of religious unity and ecumenism when they joined non-Catholics in the army as they marched to the Holy Land in 1917. This culminated in Bethlehem, in

¹²¹ H. Horne, *Chaplains in Council*, (1917), p. 33.

¹²² Reported in *The Tablet* 1 January 1916, p. 33.

¹²³ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1919, Moran to Rawlinson, 3 November 1919.

a procession which was described as ‘very moving’. One Catholic participant recorded in a letter which was published in *The Tablet*:

You never saw such a collection of people in the procession – English Catholics, ditto Protestants, Nonconformists, French, Greek, Armenian, Arabs and Bedouins from the desert, Arab Christians and Christians of all nations. English soldiers, Turks (loyal?) police, women, nuns, monks, Greek priests, Russian priests, Armenian priests, etc. Our Army was very much impressed. It was all very devotional.¹²⁴

Although such services were unusual and generally not supported by Catholics, given the non-sacerdotal nature of this gathering, Catholics held that attendance did not compromise the distinctively Catholic position in the same way that most united church services would.

While this position against ecumenical services was straightforward, it created some difficulties within the context of the military especially with regard to military parades. In Catholic regiments, church parades were uncontroversial since they were headed by Catholics rather than Anglicans and Catholics were, therefore, required and encouraged to attend.¹²⁵ However, in non-Catholic regiments, the situation was just the reverse since parades were led by Anglican chaplains and Catholics were not, therefore, allowed by their Church to attend. From a religious or theological perspective this line was straightforward. However, because parades were often used as assemblies which addressed matters concerning the whole of the regiment, some commanding officers saw it as perfectly acceptable to make them obligatory for all the men. Although being present at such services was not acceptable from the Catholic standpoint and Catholics could get exemptions from parades, chaplains did not always know when these services were taking place, especially if a chaplain was only loosely connected to that group of soldiers. Because of this the Catholic men,

¹²⁴ Printed in *The Tablet* 11 May 1918, p. 614.

¹²⁵ See *Hints and Tips*, p. 7.

especially the more nominal ones, did not necessarily take the initiative in excusing themselves from these services.¹²⁶

Compounding this problem was the fact that junior officers and non-commissioned officers at times neglected the religious needs of the Catholics under their charge.¹²⁷ Although the chaplains were largely responsible for informing the men of which services they were excused from and where and when they could fulfil their Catholic duties,¹²⁸ those officers in charge of the men were ultimately responsible for the soldiers' attendance at services, whether Catholic or non-Catholic.¹²⁹ When left in the hands of a non-Catholic officer, Catholics did not have the assurance nor did chaplains have much confidence that the situation would be handled in a way which the Catholic Church would find acceptable.¹³⁰

Even when the chaplains were informed enough to demand exemption for the Catholic men, doing so could prove difficult. One occasion when this was the case was in a Thanksgiving service which followed the allied victory in the war. Although some chaplains had no problems in excusing their men from participation in this ecumenical service or in being given permission to hold alternative Catholic services, this was not the case for the chaplain Father Power. After hearing about the service, Power first suggested that the service take place without the presence of Catholics. This was frowned upon by his superior. Power noted that '(the Senior Chaplain) rather downed at this', continuing: 'I reminded him that we could have no cooperation whatever with anyone who subscribed to the thirty-nine articles in which we are

¹²⁶ See Plater, especially pp. 42–44. See also Snape, p. 346.

¹²⁷ This was not unique to Catholics but was a problem for all minority denominations. See *Dissent or Conform?*, pp. 39–42.

¹²⁸ *Hints and Tips*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ The chaplains in *Catholic Soldiers* discussed the merits of these officers in charge. See pp. 128–134.

¹³⁰ Callan, p. 83.

called Idolatrous and the Mass a blasphemous table.’¹³¹ Unfortunately for Father Power, the matter did not end there. After being confronted about his unwillingness to compromise even after ‘The cessation of hostilities’, when ‘the time was ripe for a united Service of Thanksgiving’, Power wrote to the General in the hopes of finding an ally. Power reported that instead of being supported, the scene which followed proved ‘as revolting as it was absurd’ and that he left the meeting having lost what little bit of respect he had up until that point retained for the General. He explained that the General asked him if it was he who ‘dared to write such a note’ and, when Power said that it was, the General claimed that he was dissatisfied with Power’s work. He said that he had wanted to get rid of Power and that he had, in fact already attempted this although unsuccessfully.¹³² It was after this that Power turned to Rawlinson for help. In the end, Power was able to release the Catholic men from this military obligation but not without a great deal of effort on his part.

This difficulty remained for the Chaplaincy more generally, however, for if the military authorities were unwilling to release the men from their military obligations, the chaplains and men were placed in the impossible situation of having to choose to disregard either their religious teachings or the instructions of their military superiors; neither was an option which they could rightly choose. The chaplain, Father Smith, confronted this problem when he came across an Anglican who was holding services in hospital wards where there were not only Anglican but Catholic patients. This situation Father Smith found intolerable.¹³³ However, because there were so few Catholics and the Anglican men reportedly had a strong desire to have this service, neither the Anglican chaplain nor the Colonel who was in charge

¹³¹ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1918 –1919, Power to Rawlinson, 14 November 1918.

¹³² D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1918 –1919, Power to Rawlinson, 18 November 1918.

¹³³ The Catholic Church maintained that services should not be held in hospital wards. *Hints and Tips*, p. 11.

was willing to abandon it. Consequently, on 18 July 1916 Smith wrote to Rawlinson explaining the matter and asking for help. In his letter he told Rawlinson that he had explained his objection by saying to the Colonel that he did not want the Anglican chaplain to stop holding services for his own men. He only wanted to keep his own men from having to attend. The Colonel, however, did not see that there was a need to stop the services because the service was one to which many of the men were attached. Since most of the patients were Protestants, he held that it was sensible to continue with the service. He suggested however that to be equitable Smith could hold his own alternative services for the Catholics who were present.¹³⁴ Smith did not find this answer satisfactory. Rawlinson sympathised with him, and maintained that the only acceptable outcome was for the services to cease. However, with non-Catholic military authorities to consider, Rawlinson's advice could not easily be followed.

Raymond Devas also faced limitations because of uncooperative military authorities. Regarding the possibility of being attached to a Field Ambulance, he said that more than half of the men with whom he would have contact were in the same battalion and it was therefore 'the obvious unit to attach the Roman Catholic chaplain to'. While this was the case, he explained that there was an Anglican chaplain there already and that although he 'Could doubtless get attached to the same unit as well, it would hardly be worth trying as the C.O. and the officers, all devout Protestants, clearly let me know that I should not be welcome there.'¹³⁵ As Devas' situation demonstrated, the difficulties were significantly greater than those experienced by the Church in peace-time conditions, since their submission to military authority created

¹³⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, M – W, Smith to Rawlinson, 18 July 1916.

¹³⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1916 – 1917, R. Devas to Rawlinson, 30 July 1917.

situations in which Catholics were forced to assert themselves more firmly and to enter conflicts more frequently.

Front line Confrontations: Ecumenism and Catholicity

These difficulties faced by Catholics in the military were compounded by those which existed more generally as a result of British Catholic heritage. Cardinal Wiseman had noted in the years following Catholic Emancipation: ‘the shackles were removed but not the numbness and cramp which they had produced.’¹³⁶ By the time of the war, this numbness and cramp were gone, or minimised at any rate, but the memories and scars still left ill feelings.¹³⁷ This was seen when John Hagerty SJ opened a new hut. He refused to name it the ‘Roman’ Catholic hut, explaining that although some Anglicans claimed the name ‘Catholic’, this did not entitle them to it. Thus he maintained that it was unfair to make Catholics surrender their more general title which had been theirs for so long.¹³⁸ When approached by the military authorities about this Hagerty turned to Rawlinson explaining: ‘I need scarcely state that I am ready to carry out any order of the Base Commandant which appertains to matters purely military; but I respectfully submit that this matter of our right to use our official title –“Catholic Church” is purely a spiritual and domestic one, and moreover, involves a question of fact and principle which I cannot compromise.’¹³⁹

As this exchange indicated, although Catholics had been emancipated and the Catholic hierarchy had been restored, there was still a lingering sense among

¹³⁶ Quoted in *More Roman than Rome*, p. 56, in the context of the restoration of the hierarchy.

¹³⁷ D.G. Paz locates the reasons for this in the anti-Catholicism of Protestant and particularly Anglican Britain. See Paz, p. 20. See also E.R. Norman, ‘Industrialisation, Empire, Identity’ *A History of Religion in Britain* eds. S.Gilley and W.J. Sheils, (1994), p. 149. Hereafter referred to as ‘Industrialisation’.

¹³⁸ D.A.A./R.C., General Correspondence, Hagerty to Rawlinson, 30 June 1916.

¹³⁹ D.A.A./R.C., General Correspondence, Hagerty to Rawlinson, 28 June 1916.

Catholics as much as Anglicans that the other church was not legitimately the English church.¹⁴⁰ The case in which this came out most clearly, and certainly most publicly, involved the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, Russell Wakefield, and the French Catholic Bishop of Rouen. After a trip to Rouen, Wakefield wrote a pamphlet in which he said that relations between Catholics and Anglicans were improving. In this he claimed that the Bishop of Rouen had welcomed him as a Catholic.¹⁴¹ Upon hearing about this, Catholics in Britain retaliated by saying that this could not have happened in the way described by Wakefield because of the position that the Catholic Church had on such inter-denominational interactions. In defence of his encounter with the Bishop of Rouen, Wakefield claimed that the relationship between French Catholics and Anglo-Catholics was far friendlier than that of British Catholics and Anglo-Catholics. He maintained that Catholics in Britain were more territorial and exclusive than their French co-religionists since British Catholics were 'Guests of the nation' in Britain.¹⁴² The British Catholic responses to this comment were, not surprisingly, vehement in nature. *The Harvest* used this to argue that Protestant bishops were in the habit of attacking Catholics, the Catholic Church and the Pope. One article asserted that such assaults were all the more unjust because Catholics were not in the habit of attacking the Protestant bishops. The author went on to criticise Anglicanism, saying that the Anglican bishops did not need this external criticism since they 'get quite enough criticism in the columns of their own weekly newspapers'. The article asserted that the Anglican bishops would be 'well advised to

¹⁴⁰ Queen Victoria was well known for her antipathy toward Catholicism and although Edward VII was more receptive to Catholicism these feelings did not cease overnight and were certainly still present during the reign of George V. See D. Matthew pp. 190 and 236. See also Paz p. 20ff.

¹⁴¹ H. R. Wakefield, 'A Fortnight at the Front' (1915).

¹⁴² See *The Tablet* 21 September 1915, p 409 ff. for further reports of this incident.

answer them and to endeavour to soothe and smooth the doctrinal divisions in their own church before endeavouring to provoke attack from Catholics.’¹⁴³

In this vein, some other Catholics indicated that although Catholics were in a numerical minority, they maintained a moral superiority to Anglicans due to the historical place of Catholicism in Britain¹⁴⁴ and the contributions of Catholics to the war effort.¹⁴⁵ A letter published in *The Tablet* said of this:

The Anglican Bishop of Birmingham has allowed himself to indulge in an expression that will be widely resented. Forgetting that his so-called National Church, which has never been the Church of the entire nation, was conceived in Germany, though brought forth in England, was nursed by German and Germanising divines, and forced upon freeborn Englishmen with the aid of German mercenaries, he informs us, who, out of all proportion to our numbers, are engaged in a crusade against the ultimate product of German Lutheranism on the fields of France and Belgium, that we, as Catholics, are ‘the Guests of the nation’.¹⁴⁶

With regard to the Bishop of Rouen, a *Tablet* correspondent argued that even if the Archbishop of Rouen had committed himself to some illicit agreement with Wakefield, this move could not harm the Catholic Church. He first asserted that it was in any case improbable, indeed ‘a thing utterly and wildly impossible’ to consider that the Archbishop of Rouen might have compromised the Catholic principles. Moreover, he continued by saying that even if the Bishop had compromised his Catholic principles, his failings would not bring the two churches any closer. Rather, the Catholic prelate would have ‘been guilty of what his own religion teaches to be crass heresy’. Thus, such a move ‘would not bring the Church of England into better relations with the Pope; it would only bring that particular prelate into much worse ones.’¹⁴⁷ The point conveyed was that the Bishop of Rouen’s acts, while important to

¹⁴³ *The Harvest* February 1916, p. 22.

¹⁴⁴ See Hastings, pp. 131–133.

¹⁴⁵ Snape, p. 318.

¹⁴⁶ *The Tablet* 25 September 1915, p. 444.

¹⁴⁷ *The Tablet* 2 October 1915, p. 426.

him as bishop, had no effect on the position of the Catholic Church, since the authority of the Church was higher than that of one of its bishops. The implicit point was that any offence committed against the teachings of the Catholic Church, whether it was committed by a layperson, a Bishop or even a national body such as England, could not call into question the authority and legitimacy of the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁸

Enforcing this position was at times challenging, particularly at the front, for in addition to these power struggles between the churches in England, were questions of the rights of non-Catholics in the predominantly Catholic countries of France and Belgium. The greatest challenge was over if, and in what situations, non-Catholics could use Catholic churches in France and Belgium for religious services.¹⁴⁹ Before the war, non-Catholics had not been allowed to use Catholic churches and, as no dispensation was given, the official practice remained unaltered. Non-Catholics could use derelict Catholic churches in cases such as that which involved Russell Wakefield and the Bishop of Rouen, but they were not permitted the use of facilities which were currently functioning as Catholic churches.¹⁵⁰ In an explanation of the Catholic position on this matter Rawlinson circulated a statement which said that if it were simply a question of allowing non-Catholics to use churches for purposes of ‘relief’ or ‘refuge’, they would be welcome to do so. However, granting the use of Catholic churches for non-Catholic services was a different matter. It involved a ‘departure from a principle recognised and observed from the beginning of the Christian Church’, and was thus considered unacceptable. Therefore, even though Catholic chaplains and chaplains from other denominations could interact with one another on

¹⁴⁸ This reinforced the point made in *Higher Anglicanism* and ‘Pretending’.

¹⁴⁹ *Hints and Tips*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁰ *The Tablet* 29 September 1915, p. 458.

friendly terms, this 'reciprocity of services' could not stretch to religious ministrations or the use of sacred buildings.¹⁵¹

Although Catholics asserted this position, non-Catholics and by implication, French and Belgian priests, did not always follow it. Reverend C.C. O'Connor complained of this to Rawlinson, saying that the Catholic chapel attached to the Chateau at Auriour was being used for Protestant religious services. He reported that, in addition to this, the church had been used as billets for the soldiers and that the spire of another church in Vieux-Berquin was being used as a signalling post. O'Connor reported that the *curé* was upset, particularly because after having been used for this purpose the church at Nieppe had been destroyed.¹⁵² Rawlinson responded by saying that he was 'only too pleased to take up any case in which a matter of this sort is reported'. However, he held that, in the first instance, O'Connor should speak to the chaplain concerned and tell him that such uses of Catholic churches were 'strictly forbidden'. Rawlinson assured him that in most cases this could provide a satisfactory resolution. If it did not, the case should be returned to Rawlinson who would then deal with the matter. Regarding the use of the church as an observation post, there was nothing that he could do.

Although this stance was more or less straightforward, as with inter-denominational interaction, special cases regarding the use of churches were not uncommon. For example, the chaplain, Father Holiday, reported that the Anglican chaplain who worked closest to him at the front had asked if it was acceptable for him to use the parish church so long as he did not use the altar. Holiday said that it was not acceptable; to which the chaplain responded that two other Anglican chaplains had

¹⁵¹ See D.A.A./R.C., Rawlinson Miscellaneous'. The Use of Catholic Churches by non-Catholics and the objection of Catholics to taking part in 'United Services'.

¹⁵² D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, M-W, Rev. C.C. O'Connor to Rawlinson, 5 April 1917.

often used it, which was the reason he had asked. Thus, although Holiday refused, it can be inferred that another British Catholic chaplain or a French Catholic priest had viewed use of the nave as consistent with the Catholic position.¹⁵³

In addition to these unapproved uses of Catholic churches by Protestants were some exceptional cases in which the British Catholic Chaplaincy actually allowed Protestants to use Catholic churches. On the one hand, Rawlinson explained that unlike a derelict church such as that used by the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham: ‘Even in cases where a Catholic church is a ruin, no service other than Roman Catholics are to be held therein.’¹⁵⁴ However, in Ypres when an Anglican chaplain had been using a ruined church Rawlinson wrote to Raymond Devas saying: ‘A definite order has been given to the CC that no Catholic church is to be used by any other denomination of any kind, but I agree with you that in a ruined place such as Ypres there is no need to make a fuss about it, and I should not be afraid of its forming a precedent.’¹⁵⁵ As indicated by Rawlinson, such instances were the exception rather than the common practice. Discerning when it was appropriate and when it was not was a central challenge which Catholics faced as they asserted and defined their distinctive and unified position.

Catholics in the Army: Catholic Interactions with Non-Catholics

Although it was most important for Catholics to assert their distinctiveness in the formal setting of liturgical worship and as it related to church buildings, the chaplains had also to guard their interactions with non-Catholics in less formal

¹⁵³ *The Tablet* 25 September 1915, p. 399.

¹⁵⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, M – W Rawlinson to Bishop of Arras, 14 April, 1917.

¹⁵⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, A – L’Rawlinson to R. Devas, 8 September 1916.

settings such as the mess-hall and the trenches.¹⁵⁶ In *Hints and Tips* Catholic chaplains were instructed:

The word tact, with all that it means, should always be in the Chaplain's mind... In the mess he will, of course, avoid all religious discussions. He should be friendly with all the men and take part in their recreations but on no account should he proselytise. If a man should come to him and ask about the Catholic Religion, the straight thing to do is to tell him to go and see his own Chaplain first, and then, having told him what he intends to do, he may return to the Catholic Chaplain.¹⁵⁷

This advice to avoid religious discussions with non-Catholics was taken seriously by the Chaplaincy and enforced when challenged.¹⁵⁸ For instance, when Father Woodlock entered a discussion on Benedict XV's 1917 Peace Note while in the officers' mess, both the religious leaders and the army authorities reprimanded him. A full investigation ensued and it was decided that: 'There were mistakes on both sides. It was most unwise for the members of a Mess to raise the question 'of the Pope's encyclical, and discuss it with a Roman Catholic Padre.'¹⁵⁹ The inquiry maintained that it should have been obvious to both parties that absolutely 'divergent views must be expressed, and that heat must enter into the discussion.'¹⁶⁰ However, Woodlock was particularly at fault because the materials issued to Catholic chaplains gave clear instructions and, consequently, should have been plainly understood that such discussions were strictly forbidden.¹⁶¹

Even when Catholics did discuss religious matters with non-Catholics, they had to acknowledge the limitations of that discussion. *The Harvest* displayed this when it related a story of an Irish Catholic chaplain who had been working closely

¹⁵⁶ See *Hints and Tips*, pp. 9–11.

¹⁵⁷ D.A.A./R.C., Miscellaneous *Hints and Tips*, p. 10. See chapter 5 for further discussion on *Hints and Tips*.

¹⁵⁸ F.S., J Strickland papers, 26 November 1917, 61/1/4/3.

¹⁵⁹ F.S., J. Strickland papers, W.J. Adden to Strickland, Undated, 61/1/4/3.

¹⁶⁰ F.S., Woodlock papers, 26 November 1917, BH/4.

¹⁶¹ F.S., J. Strickland papers, 26 November, 1917, 61/1/4/3.

with an Anglican chaplain at the front. The article explained that they had been 'drawn together by the necessity for mutual arrangements and assistance' but that even after they parted ways they corresponded. Given the absence of practical matters to discuss, their talk turned to theological and spiritual matters. Although he believed that this was beneficial at first, the Catholic chaplain noted that there eventually arrived a day when he had to put an end to the correspondence since it could go no further in any 'profitable' way. In triumphant explanation of his decision to part ways, the Catholic priest asserted to the Anglican priest: 'It should be enough that we are both working for the same end and for the same Master, you in your way and we in His.'¹⁶²

Although this position of Catholic exclusivity was clearly set out, the military context at times necessitated inter-denominational cooperation. For instance, Catholics were compelled to respond when, in 1919, the Medical Authorities issued a pamphlet to the troops telling them how to avoid venereal diseases and employing a scheme which enabled the men to obtain prophylactics. A meeting to which Catholic chaplains were invited was held for the purpose of discussing the morality of this scheme. While Catholics saw the clear need to address the issue, a difficulty existed; namely, whether or not they should enter into the dialogue on this matter with non-Catholics. Father Aveling, a chaplain who was asked to participate, wrote to Rawlinson explaining that he had spoken with his senior officer, Colonel Miller and told him that he was of the 'strong opinion' that Catholic chaplains should not meet with other chaplains to discuss matters of purely moral concern because such matters were naturally of a religious character. While the Colonel had been accommodating, and had considered the matter one of religious rather than departmental concern,

¹⁶² *The Harvest* February 1916, p. 21.

Rawlinson replied, somewhat unexpectedly, that the Catholic chaplains should go to the meeting. He said that because the Catholic standpoint was so explicit, any points which the Catholic chaplains might contribute to the meeting could only help other chaplains to see the validity of the Catholic position. Consequently, the results could potentially be good and even if they were not, 'no harm could accrue'.¹⁶³

In other instances, Catholics were asked to participate in inter-denominational discussions in which they explained the varying ministries in their churches. One such event referred to by Father Wright in 1917 was arranged at Talbot House, the Anglican retreat house in Poperinghe.¹⁶⁴ Father Wright was approached by Tubby Clayton, the chaplain in charge at Talbot House, with the request that some Catholic chaplains who were missionaries in peacetime give a talk at Talbot House about their missionary work. The talk was to be part of a series given by Anglican, Nonconformist and Catholic chaplains and was not to be a formal religious service but merely an 'informational meeting'. To the other parties involved this seemed harmless and even helpful; certainly nothing that would compromise the position of their respective churches. However, the idea that Catholics should talk of their missions as though other non-Catholic missions were on par with them made giving such a talk highly questionable to Catholics. In approaching Rawlinson about this, Wright explained: 'I don't for a moment suppose you will sanction this, but to satisfy ---¹⁶⁵ I have written to you on the subject.' In this instance he was given the expected answer; that it would be unwise to participate in such a meeting.¹⁶⁶

Such unwillingness to participate in the activities of other religious denominations extended further still. When in 1917 D.S. Cairns and the committee for

¹⁶³ D.A.A./R.C., 'Rawlinson General Correspondence', Rawlinson to Aveling, 18 February 1919.

¹⁶⁴ See P.B. Clayton, *Tales of Talbot House and Poperinghe* (1928).

¹⁶⁵ Name deleted from text by censors.

¹⁶⁶ D.A.A./R.C., 'Rawlinson Correspondence, M - W', Wright to Rawlinson, 7 May 1917.

Army and Religion approached Rawlinson about participating in the survey, he was not completely unwilling.¹⁶⁷ However, Rawlinson was prepared to involve only an extremely limited number of chaplains, explaining that he would write to a few priests who 'might be likely interested in this matter.'¹⁶⁸ Rather than selecting a large or diverse group to give their responses to the questionnaire, he chose six chaplains, all of whom represented the conservative position of the Catholic Church.¹⁶⁹ The responses were so lacking in illumination that *Army and Religion* qualified them almost to the point of disregarding them.¹⁷⁰

Although the Catholic clergy were staunchly opposed to inter-denominational interaction, this was not always the case with the British soldiers for whom nationality was at times as potent a draw as their Catholic religion. H.M. Williams, an Anglican priest who was in Germany throughout the entirety of the war recorded in his journals that he was well received by the thirty-five Irish Catholic prisoners with whom he came into contact in a camp at Crossen. He recorded that these men always gave him 'a warm welcome and not one of them was absent from the service'. Although they were receptive to him, given their religious denomination, Williams decided to approach a German Catholic priest who could provide them with Catholic services and sacraments. This did not prove fruitful. Williams recorded that after he visited the men once, he met a parish priest who he hoped would help the Catholic men. After Williams explained that he was the 'British chaplain at Berlin' who had been visiting the camp, he asked the Catholic priest if he was the local parish priest. Upon finding that he was, Williams informed him about the Catholic men at the camp, and asked why the priest had not visited them in the year in which they had been encamped

¹⁶⁷ See chapter 5 of this thesis for further discussion of *Army and Religion*.

¹⁶⁸ D.A.A./R.C., 'Miscellaneous number 2'. Rawlinson to Cairns, 12 August 1917.

¹⁶⁹ D.A.A./R.C., 'Rawlinson Miscellaneous two', The chaplains asked to respond were: C.W. Smith, J. Hessenauer, F. Woodlock, J.B. Marshal, F.C. Devas and H.J. Chapman.

¹⁷⁰ D.S. Cairns, p. 190.

there. He suggested that the priest should arrange with the camp commander so that the men would be afforded the opportunity of going to Mass and making their confessions. The priest responded angrily and when Williams returned to the camp the men told him that they had wished he had not spoken to the priest because when the priest came he 'scolded' them for attending the Anglican services. He continued by telling them that they were 'no better than heretics'. Williams reported that the men asked him not to contact the priest again. They did not want to go to the German priest's church and said that they would, instead, 'be quite content if you'll keep on coming to us as often as you can.' Speaking more generally, Williams continued by saying:

I had many similar experiences with my Roman Catholic friends; and though in this respect the officers were different, the men whether Irish or not, frequently attended the services I held. I recall the last message I received from an R.C. Sergeant who had been brutally done to death by a German for refusing to get up and go to work when he was ill. 'Send for wandering Willie' the name they often gave me, 'to come and bury me' for I'd sooner be buried by an English parson than by a German priest.¹⁷¹

Such instances were rare and even in this case it is clear that Williams' nationality was a key factor in his good relations with the Irish prisoners. However, this situation also demonstrated the blurring of nationalism and religion which inevitably took place during this time of war. This, the Catholic Church hoped to minimise. Whenever possible the Catholic clergy and press attempted to do so by demonstrating the unified and distinctive position of their Church and, more important, by reminding Catholics of, and making available to them, the central element of Catholic unity, namely the sacraments and ministrations of the Church.

¹⁷¹ Leeds University, Liddell Collection H.M. Williams papers, pp. 24 –5, GE 37.

Chapter 5: Consequences of Catholic Unity and Exclusivity

To a vast multitude of our fellow countrymen, the war has given the first sight they have ever had of the Church in being. For the first time they have seen the wayside shrine, the village Church with its daily Mass; for the first time they have seen the village priest, serene and unruffled, in the midst of rapine and war, going about his daily work of charity and compassion. They have seen, and have been immeasurably impressed by, the standing miracle of the triumph of the Cross of Christ, erect and unscathed amidst ruin and desolation.¹

Although their pastoral work was recognised as important, the clearly articulated duty of the Catholic clergy was not only to equip the laity with the spiritual tools of prayer and the teachings of the Catholic Church but to aid them in more practical spiritual ways by offering the Sacrifice of the Mass and by giving absolution from sins. The ways in which the chaplains faced these challenges could shape British perceptions about Catholicism and the practice of the Catholic faith. This contributed to the wider understanding of Catholic unity and Catholic exclusivity and provided a practical way in which Catholics could practice and recognise the value of their faith.

The chaplains, however, faced a number of substantial challenges in their interactions at the front which not only made it more difficult for them to perform their roles as priests but which resulted from their own limitations as Catholic

¹ 'Notes', *The Tablet*, 30 September, 1916, p. 440.

representatives. While the priests had their duties clearly presented to them by the Church, they did not always embrace these as warmly as might be hoped. Personal antagonism towards Germany, dislike of non-British or non-European culture and individual personalities, all posed challenges for Catholic priests as they operated in their capacities as ministers of the universal Church. Nevertheless, when they worked as priests, they had still to keep within the parameters of the Catholic Church's teachings and in this way they demonstrated, even if reluctantly, the points of unity and cohesion within the Catholic Church.

On a practical level, the sacramental duties of the chaplains helped Catholics to recognise the universality of their position and this was most striking when they had to provide sacramental and pastoral ministrations to the German army.² Although they were in the British army and their primary responsibility was to their own men, Catholic chaplains also had duties to the whole Church which necessarily stretched to German Catholics. Regarding the position of the Catholic priest in this regard, the convert, Hilliard Atteridge claimed:

Because he is a Catholic priest, a priest of the Church that knows no national divisions, but for whom friend and foe are alike brethren, alike men for whom Christ died, he is ready when opportunity offers to minister to the wounded and dying of the opposing armies and the prisoners taken from them who are Catholics... Even difference of language is no barrier. Absolution, Extreme Unction, and even Viaticum, can be given to the wounded German who can show by a mere sign that he is a Catholic, and who understands, without one word of explanation in his own language, that a priest is beside him and what the priest is doing for him.³

In practice, this was not always easily accomplished. Although many chaplains were willing to minister to the Germans and Austrians, the chaplain Joseph Hickie suggested that there was still a quantifiable lack. He even asked Rawlinson if he could

² Loudon, p. 52.

³ *Catholic Chaplains* p. 7.

stay on to help the Bavarian prisoners since, in his estimation, 'trench priests hate them but (the Bavarians) are earnest Catholics'.⁴

Even within the British Catholic Chaplaincy there existed some nationally related tensions. Father Ferrigan, a Scots chaplain, made known his desire not to be with English but Scots troops. He said to Rawlinson that he had 'no intention of remaining with an English brigade and the sooner I am out of it the better for all concerned.' He said, further, that he had been promised a post with a Scottish brigade. He argued that placing a Scots priest with an English brigade on a permanent basis was 'sheer madness' given the handicap which inevitably existed because of their national differences. He said further that he had no sympathy with Englishmen and that he 'never had any'. In concluding his argument he asserted: 'Warfare is bad enough but it is simply Hell when waged under impossible conditions... I love the Australian, Scotch and Irish and know their character well; but the English, well, the less said the better.'⁵

While this was the case even within the British army, Catholic priests had, necessarily, to serve Catholic soldiers regardless of their national, political or personal preferences. In response to this need within Britain itself, Cardinal Bourne sent questionnaires to the English and Welsh bishops asking them to report the numbers of prisoner-of-war camps in their dioceses and the provisions available to each of these. This was in part due to the specific incentive provided by *La Mission Catholique Suisse* which notified the Allies that they could provide some relief by supplying prayer books, alms and articles of piety for the men. However, the inquiry went beyond these specific matters by asking the bishops to report the numbers of Catholics in each camp, the 'arrangements for spiritual care' in each of these and the

⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1915–1917, Hickie to Rawlinson, 10 January 1917.

⁵ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1915–1917, Ferrigan to Rawlinson, 27 September 1916.

specific needs of the men. This provided Westminster with a comprehensive list of non-British Catholics in Britain and the actions required for their spiritual care and in this way it allowed the Church to address better the situation they faced.⁶

This obligation of serving the German prisoners of war at times proved to be even more time-consuming for British chaplains than serving the British soldiers, particularly at the front. For instance, Father Stephen Rogers of Westminster diocese wrote: 'There will be shortly as many as 8000 men there (at Dieppe). I have already two Masses on the Sunday in Dieppe – the one for German prisoners being more numerously attended than that for [the] British.'⁷ This work was often quite strenuous, especially since it was only one part of the chaplains' duties. However, Catholic chaplains claimed that it was also rewarding. The Commandant who recognised the efforts of two chaplains, Fathers F.S. and J.H. De Moulin Browne, noted in particular, the 'extremely efficient manner' in which they performed their duties among the 20,000 prisoners of war in the district. Their impact was such that the Commandant asserted: 'If the attitude of the [German prisoners] toward Great Britain is a friendly one after their return to their own country, part of the credit is due to the two chaplains referred to. No more effective means of establishing such an attitude could have been furnished.'⁸

Many British Catholic chaplains did not feel themselves to be over-burdened but claimed that the good effects in this exchange went both ways. Some in prison camps, whether German or British, noted this unity and participated, by means of the sacraments, in asserting this unity amongst Catholics of all nations, despite the

⁶ W.A.A., A.A.W./bo. 5/42d.

⁷ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1918–19, Rogers to Rawlinson, 16 October 1918.

⁸ D.A.A./R.C., General Correspondence, Rogers to Rawlinson, 9 September 1919.

political hostility created by the war.⁹ For instance, the chaplain, Father Strickland, wrote of his 'good fortune' in meeting with some prisoners on a march to their holding camp, saying that the day before had been memorable because it was the first time in eight months that he had seen Germans. He was able to spend several hours with them, and since half of them were Catholics, he was able to minister to them by giving them 'scapulars, rosaries and a chance of going to confession'.¹⁰ The chaplain Father O' Hara reported the diversity of the Catholic community to whom he administered on one day toward the close of the war saying: 'It is truly Catholic. On the same day I gave Communion to an Armenian and a Syrian, a Lithuanian, a Pole, an Italian, a Spaniard, and a Frenchman; an Indian from Arizona, a Columbian from South America and, as it chanced, to a German prisoner from Saxony.'¹¹

Further evidence of this spiritual unity was claimed to exist in prison camps. In one instance which was reported by *The Tablet*, a Jesuit chaplain who was in a prison camp in Karlsruhe wrote of the reception into the Church of a Presbyterian officer by the German Archbishop of Freiburg on the Feast of the Sacred Heart.¹² In a less public way, Father Woodlock showed his support for having German prisoners attend the same Mass as their British guards. In a letter to Rawlinson he noted that the Mass at Henriville had to be abandoned due to the lack of chaplains, but that 'there is room for them at the back of the large "Princess Beatrice hut" [in] Henriville, at the 8am Mass for Roman Catholics.' Although the Base Commandant refused permission for the Germans to attend the British Mass, Woodlock pressed the issue since, as he noted, there was 'no ecclesiastical objection to British and German Roman Catholics

⁹ See for instance *The Tablet* 12 December 1914, p. 796. This was also mandated by Benedict XV who insisted that Catholic priests help all Catholics in the military effort on either side if they happened to be in their dioceses or parishes. See *The Pope on Peace and War* (1917), especially statements from 21 December 1914.

¹⁰ F.S., Strickland papers, 17 June 1915, 61/1/4/3.

¹¹ Printed in *The Tablet* 15 March 1919, p. 308.

¹² Letter from Fitzmaurice CF, printed in *The Tablet* 14 December 1918, p. 674.

being under the same roof for Divine Worship, and it could have been arranged that the Catholics in their guard should attend Mass with the Prisoners.’¹³

In an article published in *Stonyhurst Magazine* entitled ‘With the Prisoners’, a Jesuit chaplain from Stonyhurst commented at length about the sense of unity which he believed to exist between himself and the German Catholic prisoners whom he served. He noted that even after substantial work with the German soldiers he was still amazed at how well prepared they were for their confessions, how well they observed their duties in Mass and how deeply the Catholicity of the Catholic Church stretched. He reported that in one instance a German soldier requested to serve mass for him saying: ‘Let me serve your Mass. I cannot speak any English, but what does it matter. It will be the Mass I had at home?’ The chaplain assured him that it would be and he accepted the soldier’s help saying ‘The Mass is everywhere the same’. To this the soldier added quite touchingly that kind hearts were also the same. Reflecting on this, the chaplain asserted: ‘Certainly the war has proved one thing, that is, that no religion, save the Catholic, survives, which can stand upon its own feet.’¹⁴

The Chaplaincy, and particularly the Catholic press, also claimed that soldiers at the front took note of the solidarity felt between Catholics of the opposing side. In reflecting on his experiences during the war, George Goldie wrote of the experiences he had during the conflagration and expressed his belief that such experiences were widespread amongst the British Catholic soldiers.

And then what of the psychology of the Catholic soldier as he comes to grips, perhaps, with the Catholic Bavarian? What a state of mind, what abhorrence, what reluctance must there have been! And when the Bavarian was slain in battle the Catholic soldier found a rosary and a well-worn prayer book in the effects of his adversary, and a photograph of his daughter in a white veil and dress, such as his

¹³ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1917–19, Woodlock to Rawlinson, 27 January 1918.

¹⁴ *Stonyhurst Magazine* January 1917, p 42.

own sister had worn on a great occasion. This is not a myth, but the common experience of the Catholic soldier.¹⁵

The Tablet also reported that this unity was seen in the experiences of a Lieutenant in the Indian Army who came across a German Catholic chaplain who had come to a wounded Bavarian. The article reported that the soldier let the priest return to his lines, thus showing the good qualities in both ally and 'enemy'. However, the Lieutenant acknowledged the priest's bravery, explaining that he might have been found by a soldier who did not respect the priest's work.¹⁶

More vividly, *The Month* reported an incident in which French soldiers came across a group of devout German Catholics. When the French reached their position in a night march and were looking for shelter, they came across a large farmhouse out of which they saw a light and heard low murmurs. When they went into the building they found five Germans who were kneeling around a table, praying with a Rosary in sight. Finding them in this state the French soldiers shouldered their rifles and the officer called out for the Germans to surrender. One of the Germans responded to this by saying that they had lost their way in a storm and, having no provisions, they gave themselves 'up for lost and had knelt down to say a last prayer'.¹⁷ The article suggested that the Germans considered the French soldiers to be their deliverers rather than their captors; a sense which was claimed to be all the more real given the religious bond which they shared.

Such belief in the good intent of German Catholics was supported by instances when German Catholics were shown to be outstanding Christian leaders in their own

¹⁵ Although it is likely that Goldie wrote this during the war or just after its conclusion, it is notable that this was not published until 1919. *The Tablet* 8 February 1919, p. 162.

¹⁶ *The Tablet* 27 March, 1915, p. 402.

¹⁷ Quoted in *The Month* December 1914, pp. 628–629. See also 'German Catholics and the War', *The Dublin Review* January 1916, p. 34.

armies. For instance, in *The Tablet* column, 'War Items', it was reported that in one instance the Germans intended to set fire to the local Catholic church in Sengern and that when a German Catholic soldier refused to take part, he was shot. This was used to demonstrate not only the soldier's bravery but his highest devotion to the Catholic Church.¹⁸ Even when Bavarians took part in the destruction of churches and convents, their participation in 'atrocities' was reported in a different tone than that used for Prussians. One article said with some disbelief: 'After the German deeds in Belgium early in the war, there is little matter for surprise if sacrilege still continues. But it is astounding to learn that Bavarian troops are responsible for such horrors.'¹⁹ In this vein, the Jesuit Father Woodlock reported an instance when Germans not only burned down a Catholic Church but did so in an especially atrocious way by forcing a Catholic officer to light the fire.²⁰ This disregard of Catholic solidarity was seen as the worse offence of the two committed on this occasion.

Likewise, *The Downside Review* looked to Lieutenant Prince Alfred Maria Sapieha, a Polish Prince whose home was in Austria but who was an Old Boy of Downside, to demonstrate the unity which existed between Catholics in the warring nations. Although he fought for the opposing side, his contemporaries at Downside asserted that he fought as a 'worthy soldier' and a good Catholic. They maintained that he was a 'patriotic Pole' who was opposed to the oppressors of his race which, in this case was the Russian army and that he had 'the highest regard for England, and was devoted to his old school'. Because of this he was included in the list of "'Old Gregorians'" who fought nobly and died gallantly for their country in the war' and was included with his old school fellows when prayers and Masses were offered for the

¹⁸ *The Tablet* 21 November 1914, p. 696.

¹⁹ *The Tablet* 27 March 1915, p. 404.

²⁰ *Beaumont Magazine* (1914), p. 116.

repose of their souls.²¹ Such personal connections made it somewhat easier for Catholics to acknowledge the good faith of Catholics against whom they fought even when they did not agree with the principles of the German government.²²

Such instances served to hearten the British Catholic population and to demonstrate their claim of unity and universality. Although difficult, the fact remained that so long as they were tied to the Catholic Church and the Pontiff of Rome, they were bound to one another as well, regardless of their personal preferences.²³ Although Catholics at times fell to the temptation of extreme nationalism, the Church demanded that Catholics maintain more of a balance in their understanding of national and Christian unity. For instance, Hilliard Atteridge said of Catholic unity in his book on Catholic chaplains during the First World War:

When I saw in that terrible time something of the real Catholic spirit of the Church, French, English, Belgians, and even German prisoners, all receiving the same Sacraments, from the same English priest, the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw the Catholic Church as I never had before. A month later I had the happiness of being received into the Church of God.²⁴

This served as an inspiring story regarding catholicity and the transcendent unity of the Catholic Church. However, creating an atmosphere in which this catholicity could be expressed and yet could still coincide with British nationalism was not achieved without great effort. In facing this challenge, Catholics were pressed to define and express their distinctively British Catholicism, their distinctively Catholic patriotism and their loyalty to both of these authoritative bodies.

²¹ L. Graham, *Downside and the War* (1919), p. 139.

²² See discussion in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

²³ See Holland, 'Patriotism'.

²⁴ *Catholic Chaplains*, p. 17.

British Catholics in the Non-Western World

The unity of the Catholic faith was called into question not only in dealings with Germany but also in Africa and in the Near East. There Catholics had not only to contend with the unfamiliar cultural differences and the Eastern Orthodox expressions of Christianity but also Eastern Rite Catholics whose liturgy and devotion was unfamiliar to them and were nevertheless a valid expression of their own Catholic faith. There was, to begin with, the difficulty of operating in a largely non-Catholic area. Describing his job and the basic circumstances of his assignment in East Africa, one Catholic soldier said that there were many natives who, although not cannibals, 'are everything else that is unpleasant, and my job is by no means a bed of roses'. As for contact with other non-natives, he recorded in a letter which was printed in *The Beaumont Review* in 1918:

I see no white man at all except three priests, White Fathers, of whom two are Frenchmen and one Dutch. They have a mission about ten miles away. They talk very little English and my French is bad; but we manage somehow. They had never had a white man to Mass before. Now each month one comes in on Saturday and spends the night with me, and we have Mass on Sunday in my courthouse.²⁵

Although not ideal, in terms of religious ministrations, this contact certainly opened the eyes of Western Catholics to the idea that the Catholic Church was larger and more culturally inclusive than they had thought previously.

Generally speaking, this recognition of wider Catholic unity was positive but this marriage of cultures was nevertheless difficult. In his wartime journal Father Claude Warren complained of the difficulties he confronted while he was in Mesopotamia. In one instance Warren had gone nine months without seeing another

²⁵ *Beaumont Review* April 1918, p. 370.

priest to whom he could confess, at which point he was finally told of a Chaldean priest whom he could see. Upon locating him, Warren found that one major obstacle existed; namely that the Chaldean priest spoke only Arabic and Warren spoke none. Nevertheless, Warren took the opportunity. About this experience, he recorded that upon being shown into a confessional, he told of his 'nine months delinquencies' without stopping and, at the end 'drew a long sigh of relief and paused.' The priest then commended. After this Warren noted that he began his act of contrition, 'I put all my fervour into the effort, to make up for the defect of language.' However, he noted of the priest:

He was still going strong when I finished it. I started again and repeated it again and again and still again until I almost collapsed into a ruin, with the sheer desperation of having the right dispositions at the effective words of the Form. I was beaten and he was still carrying on. Without exaggeration he muttered and mumbled for fifteen solid minutes. The last five of which I was exercising my mind as to the validity of Chaldean orders, and when the flow of Barbarossa's anthrums would cease... Well he stopped, got up and went out to his teaching again. I followed not much relieved in mind, it was not satisfactory.²⁶

Even in the face of the difficulties which at times existed, Warren made the point that Catholics, by virtue of their very Catholicism and their united communion, had common ground which could neither be ignored nor jeopardised. In his journal Warren noted one particular Sunday as the 'most interesting day' he had experienced. He explained that he went to Mass at a French Church and saw the priest, who was an English Carmelite, after the service. The Carmelite told him that there were two other Catholic Churches in the area, one a Chaldean Church and the other a Syrian Church. In the first of these, the Mass was said not in Latin but in Chaldean, and in the second Mass was said in either Syriac or Arabic. None of the priests who served these

²⁶ Imperial War Museum, First World War Collection, C. Warren papers, 83/31/1. Hereafter archive referred to as I.W.M.

churches knew Latin and their Communion Host was different, but everything else was the same as the Western Rite. Regarding this, Warren noted that the Carmelite priest was amused at his astonishment and assured him that these churches were ‘absolutely orthodox’ since they had been granted the rite to exercise their ‘peculiar differences’ by the Vatican itself.²⁷

In part because of these obvious differences between Eastern and Western Rite Catholicism, Warren addressed the matter of Catholic unity in a homily in which he traced the history of Christianity from the general alliance between East and West to the time when people started to fall away at the height of Islam. He said of this: ‘While the Christianity of the East rested upon the rock of Peter on which the Lord founded his Church, the persecution could not cause any harm to it; but when it abandoned Peter it fell.’ After this, he turned to the Catholics of the Western rite explaining the significance and extent of their unity. He asserted that their edifying example was an aid to the Catholics in the region who considered them ‘brethren’ and that although they were of a different race and from a distant country, these natives nevertheless offered the Sacrifice of the Mass for the Repose of the brave soldiers. The soldiers who died in these regions fell not only for Britain, but for the ‘justice and the liberty of Nations’ more generally and because of this they ‘all joined in the Holy Sacrifice praying for the repose of those generous souls’ asking ‘the God of Peace’ to bring about the day when all people would understand their fraternity in the Lord Jesus Christ. He concluded by praying: ‘May they adore him with the same Faith and become one flock under one Shepherd.’²⁸

This sense of unity was felt even more acutely among some Catholics who went to the Holy Land. When the British marched into Jerusalem, this Catholic unity was

²⁷ *The Downside Review* December 1914, p. 97.

²⁸ I.W.M., First World War Collection, C. Warren papers, 83/3/1.

recognised, in part because of the surroundings from which they received the basis of their Christian faith but which were unfamiliar not only in terms of geography but also in terms of religion and culture.²⁹ Major F.B. Stapleton Bretherton recorded this sense when he was in Bethlehem during Christmas in 1917 saying:

I am writing this in the Holy City, where we came yesterday... There was a great service at the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem... When we arrived they were all singing Compline. It was very impressive – all monks. Midnight Mass began, and at the end there was a ‘creche’ (crib). After the image of the Child Jesus, carried by the Prior, came the representatives of the Allied Army, all into the Stable, at least the leading ones of us, then reformed and went back to the Church. Matins was sung.³⁰

Although cultural differences proved to be an obstacle to most other interactions, Catholics claimed that the Catholic faith could be, and indeed still had to be, practised in as unified a manner as circumstances allowed. In recognising this and in working towards this goal, Catholics attempted to establish, at least to onlookers, that their faith had a source of unity which was stronger than the individual components of Catholicism.

Practical Ministrations in the British Army

Although there were more dramatic challenges to unity which related to Germany and the non-Western world, the greatest challenge, as well as the greatest opportunity for the chaplains to demonstrate the fundamental importance of their faith came with the British soldiers themselves. Even when their work was thwarted by the necessity of war, Keatinge asserted that the ‘chief work’ of the chaplains when the fighting was on was that of caring for the wounded and dying and burying those

²⁹ See especially B. Camm, ‘A Soldier’s Pilgrimage to Rome’, in which Camm talks of the Allied occupation of Jerusalem and his own experiences in the Holy Land. *The Downside Review* July 1919, pp. 17–37.

³⁰ *Beaumont Journal* April 1918, p. 369.

soldiers who had died.³¹ Keatinge maintained that the chaplains should say Mass and that they should hear confessions ‘on every opportunity’³² and most Catholic chaplains recognised the practical benefits which accompanied the vital spiritual benefits which they could provide when going to the front.³³ Henry Day acknowledged that: ‘It worked well both for the men and myself. For them, the extra visits of a priest on the front line often provided a needed opportunity to seek advice or receive the Sacraments; while for myself these visits were profitable occasions for acquiring fresh experience and knowledge.’³⁴

Although this line was commonly taken, some Catholic chaplains were more cautious than others. Certain Catholic chaplains argued that the front was not the best place for the chaplains to fulfil their duties. These chaplains maintained that since the primary duty of Catholic chaplains was to administer the sacraments, he should not judge its scope simply by its proximity to the front but by the degree to which the location allowed him to administer the sacraments. If this was the front, then that was the appropriate place for a chaplain. However as one chaplain explained in a letter printed in *The Tablet*:

My own experience satisfies me that a chaplain is better attached to a field ambulance as when he becomes regimental, the three other regiments of his brigade see little of him. In that case his men will not take advantage of his services to the extent one might expect. The devout ones, of course, come to their duties but the others, as a rule, made their consciences before leaving home, and war has the happy effect of keeping people out of the risk of graver temptations. Then regimentally one can see only the wounded of one’s own particular unit, whereas in the ambulance all the brigade passes under the observation of the chaplain. As for giving the last Sacraments on the field of battle that under the existing conditions of war is impossible. Men are either killed at once or their wounds are attended to in the ambulance in a very short time.³⁵

³¹ See *Hints and Tips* for a general sense of the sacramental obligations of Catholic chaplains.

³² *The Tablet*, 7 November 1914, p. 634.

³³ *Catholic Chaplain*, pp. 5–7.

³⁴ H. Day, *An Army Chaplain’s War Memoirs* (1937), p. 159. Hereafter referred to as *Army Chaplain’s War Memoirs*.

³⁵ *The Tablet* 14 November 1914, p. 659.

In 1918 Father Gill also asserted some of the dangers which existed for chaplains at the front. He maintained that while it was important to prepare for certain eventualities especially among those in forward positions, it would be difficult to convince many of the chaplains that they ought to adopt a more conservative position. The problem, as he set it out was that: 'In the case of a sudden attack there will be great danger of these chaplains disappearing and thus becoming unavailable for work with their Brigades.' Thus it was of great importance to protect the chaplains from being captured.³⁶

Even where they had disagreements about the particular ways in which their Catholic duties could be best fulfilled, Catholic chaplains agreed about their fundamental role in the military. This was the same as their fundamental role as priests, the service of the people under their care and, specifically, the administration of the sacraments to members of the Catholic Church. This was a distinctive element of the Catholic priesthood and a point which Catholics emphasised. Hilliard Atteridge said of this in his wartime book about Catholic chaplains:

But the Catholic priest, because he is a priest, the minister of the Holy Sacrifice and of the Sacraments of the church, can do much more than this. In tent or hut, under a tree in the open, sometimes even in the shelter of a trench, he erects his altar; or it is on the deck of a battleship, or in a cabin or on the lower decks of a transport; and there, with his congregation or soldiers or sailors, he offers the Sacrifice of which the prophet spoke, the pure oblation that was to be offered up in every land, and to make the name of the Lord of Hosts great among the Gentiles... Then, too, the Catholic chaplain does not merely exhort and encourage his flock to repentance for sin. He gives them, as God's minister, God's pardon in the words of absolution.³⁷

This singular purpose provided a means for Catholics to recognise and, subsequently attend to their primary duties as sacramental ministers.

³⁶ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1918 –1919, Gill to Rawlinson, 4 March 1918.

³⁷ *Catholic Chaplains*, p. 6.

This recognition of the sacramental duties and the understanding that priests were the only ones who could accommodate this need dramatically shaped the Catholic approach to the Chaplaincy ministries. The effects of this were evident in the responses of the chaplains at the front to their duties with the men.³⁸ For instance, Father William Doyle said of one occasion that he knew that his regiment was waiting in a village for him to say Mass and that many of them would be going to the trenches in the afternoon. Therefore, if he did not turn up they would lose the chance of Confession and Holy Communion. The only way to reach them was by means of a 'shell swept road'. However, given the sacramental needs of the men and his exclusive role in being able to offer these to them, he decided to go. He said of the experience: 'Call it a miracle if you will, but the moment I turned the corner, the guns ceased firing, and not a shell fell until I was safely in the village church. My confidence in God's protection was not misplaced.'³⁹

Although some Protestants certainly made similarly courageous efforts, the understanding of their duty and indeed their reason for making such an effort, was necessarily different.⁴⁰ At the beginning of the war this difference provided the justification for a Catholic presence at the front even while other chaplains could not go forward even to Regimental Aid Posts or Advanced Dressing Stations until 1915.⁴¹ When non-Catholics were allowed at the front, the different reasons for their presence was made even clearer. M. Brumwell, the author of *The Army Chaplain* noted that the earlier separation 'militated against the influence of the chaplain if he did not share the dangers of the men and confined his activities to times when they came out of the

³⁸ See *Hints and Tips*, especially pp. 1 –9.

³⁹ *A Brave Soldier*, p. 20.

⁴⁰ *Church of England*, pp. 109 –135.

⁴¹ D.A.A./R.C., F. Devas, 27 June 1916.

line. In addition the presence of the chaplain in the line with the men was a source of inspiration and good cheer.’⁴² Moreover, the Earl of Cavan explained:

We all remember and carry pictures, sad and familiar, of the advanced aid posts during a big bombardment. There, quite unobtrusively, always in the shade but ever present was the chaplain. Who was there to carry those thousands of last messages home whether of home or resignation? There was no one but the chaplain. Modern war is so exacting that the doctors, nurses orderlies and fighting men have little time for sentiment, and so it was those brave men formed a precious link between the wounded man and his loved ones far away.⁴³

Although this practical help for the dying was certainly beneficial, Catholics maintained that their primary duty was not to comfort the men as they closed their lives in this world but to equip them with the necessary tools to begin their lives in the next.⁴⁴ This shaped the ways in which the chaplains understood their place at the front. Atteridge asserted that whereas non-Catholic clergymen could ‘exhort and encourage’ their parishioners, ‘urge them to repentance for past errors’ and ‘exhort them to good conduct’ they could not ‘console the sick and dying, instruct the ignorant’ or administer communion, as the wholeness of Christ Himself but, instead, only as a ‘sacred commemorative rite’.⁴⁵ Although most Protestants were satisfied with this because they recognised that it was Jesus himself who provided these comforts, having the physical assistance of one who was acknowledged to be, in a specific and consecrated way, a representative of Christ, was recognised as a deep, and wholly unique comfort which was available to Catholics.

Because of the Catholic understanding of Catholic obligation, and because of the Chaplaincy mandate that they fulfil their priestly duties, most Catholic chaplains were unabashed when asking the Catholic men if they had attended to their religious

⁴² *Hints and Tips*, p. 38.

⁴³ Brumwell, p. 38.

⁴⁴ See Loudon, pp. 52–57.

⁴⁵ *Catholic Chaplains*, p. 5.

duties.⁴⁶ This difference came, primarily, because of their approach to the sacraments of Confession and Communion. For Catholics, the normal recourse was to confess to a priest, receive absolution and, when possible, to receive communion. This had clear benefits to believing Catholics but, what is more, the practice of confession and the administration of communion had practical benefits for the priests as well. In part because of the felt need to perform their priestly functions, Catholic chaplains had an obvious and justifiable niche already created for them in which they could establish a presence among the men. One Catholic chaplain recorded an experience he had with the troops, saying that the men knew he was coming at 'stand to' so that he could offer the sacraments at 'stand down'. They prepared for him by setting up a table in the dugout. On this he laid the Blessed Sacrament between lighted candles. After this he went outside the dug-out to distribute the Blessed Sacrament to the men in the trenches. He noted that most of the men had been to confession before coming up to the trenches and so were able to receive the Eucharist, but even so he gave General Absolution for the benefit of those who had not. He continued by saying:

The work was passed along and we made the act of contrition and I climbed up so that as many as possible could see me, and gave the absolution. The crack of a rifle just behind my head reminded me that we were being carefully guarded. The C of E men had willingly taken on the duties of any Catholics who happened to be on sentry to allow them to come to me. Then I spoke a few words of greeting and encouragement to my warriors, and at once proceeded to administer Holy Communion to them per *modum viatici*.⁴⁷

The Catholic chaplains recognised the necessity as well as the benefits of their sacramental obligations. Speaking of this, Father Rector noted in a letter which was published in *The Xavarian* in 1915 that in the area where he was posted there were three to four thousand Catholic troops and only three Catholic chaplains who could

⁴⁶ *Hints and Tips*, p. 13.

⁴⁷ *Stonyhurst Magazine* February 1916, p. 1354.

administer the sacraments. Given the ratio, the chaplains had to 'wander about these looking for one's sheep'. The chaplain 'finds a sergeant and gets him to call together half a dozen or so men. These make their Confession and perhaps receive Communion, often in the open trench.' Afterwards the chaplain would move on to the next platoon doing the same thing, filling the day with the sacramental duties of the priesthood. Regarding this, Rector said that although he would often travel miles through 'horrible mud' he would get his reward when during the day he would hear 'fifty confessions in these same muddy trenches, [visit] a sick man in a no less muddy dugout and incidentally [baptise] and [receive] into the Church an equally muddy convert.'⁴⁸

Although the men were not often proactive in seeking the help of the chaplains, Catholic chaplains generally agreed that the Catholic men wanted or at any rate, needed, them to be present. One chaplain who spoke of this in *Catholic Soldiers* explained:

Often they come to Confession of their own accord in church, but more often it was *sub divo*, when I was 'looking up the Catholics' in billets or trenches, etc. Always they said they had been 'afraid to come to Confession before'... There is an element of compulsion about *sub divo* confessions that makes perseverance often doubtful. But I am sure some would persevere, as they were so genuinely thankful to be put straight again.⁴⁹

This account was significant because it clearly indicated both the hope of the chaplain and also the reality that many Catholic soldiers did not have a strong commitment to their religion in a practical sense. However, it also demonstrated that, by going out of their way, the Catholic chaplains could generally bring the men to fulfil their Catholic duties and thus receive some spiritual benefits. As Father J.R. Davey reported to Rawlinson: 'So far all the men I have seen are too glad to get to the Sacraments.

⁴⁸ *The Xavarian* April 1915, p. 226.

⁴⁹ Plater, p. 90.

When I meet a person or find he has been slack I get him to go to Confession on the spot. I hardly knew I possessed much cheek till I came out here.’⁵⁰ Likewise, Father C. W. Smith wrote a letter which was published in *Beaumont Magazine* in 1915:

One day last week I spent practically the whole day searching for a certain Scotch regiment and then arranging for confessions for them. One company I heard in a very odiferous stable! Still the inconvenience and trouble was amply repaid when on the following morning (a week day, mark you!) nearly ninety arrived at church for Holy Communion. The *curé* could not find words to express his admiration at their devout behaviour in church.⁵¹

The Catholic press and the hierarchy in Britain of course made a point of stressing this devotion; in response to his experience in the war, one Catholic soldier was noted in *The Tablet* for claiming that the pride he and his fellow soldiers felt for their chaplains was ‘unbounded’ because the chaplains had shown them what ‘limitless sources of help’ could be found in the Catholic faith.⁵²

While Catholics also took on non-spiritual duties, they were reminded that these tasks were secondary to the sacramental and spiritual work laid before them, a distinction which was made plain in an instance involving Father Bradley, a Catholic chaplain who was attached to the regiments of the 6th Division.⁵³ In an exchange with Rawlinson, Bradley defended himself and his priorities after being accused of not ministering to the men in his area and leaving the job to be taken on instead by two English-speaking French priests. He called the accusation ‘an absolute falsehood’ and explained that all of the men’s billets were visited weekly. Absolution was given to all Catholics found there. Mass was said every morning. Confessions were heard before and after Mass or Benediction. Moreover, he claimed that ‘at any time when a soldier

⁵⁰ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1915–1917, Davey to Rawlinson, 28 April 1916.

⁵¹ *Beaumont Magazine* December 1915, p. 145.

⁵² *The Tablet* 25 January 1919, p. 107.

⁵³ I.W.M., First World War Collection, M. Bere file, 66/96/1.

comes I make arrangements at eleven churches in which soldiers can attend Mass.’⁵⁴

Although he might not have been able to minister to all the men and might not have done as much as he claimed, Bradley insisted that he understood what his priorities should have been and what the Catholic Church and the Catholic Chaplaincy expected of him. Such recognition of Catholic obligations provided a striking possibility for Catholics to identify themselves as Catholic and to understand both its internal agreement and its exclusivity.⁵⁵

Case Study: Francis Devas

Just as diverse as the challenges which faced the Chaplaincy were the characters and approaches of the chaplains who comprised the department. Something of the diversity both in personality and responsibility can be seen through a comparison of three chaplains: Francis Devas SJ, a chaplain with a highly Catholic regiment; Francis Drinkwater, a chaplain with relatively few Catholics under his charge; and Thomas F. Bradley, a chaplain in the Royal Navy who served the second battle cruiser squadron in *New Zealand* during the Battle of Jutland. Accommodating differences while also establishing a coherent policy was no small task for the Chaplaincy. Even so, as can be seen in each of these cases, the central goal of the Catholic Chaplaincy, namely the administration of the sacraments, was nevertheless recognised and supported by each of these chaplains and this provided clear demonstration of the Catholic Church’s primary mission.

Francis Devas served as a military chaplain from 1915 to 1918 and earned both the OBE and the DSO. During his time in the military he worked with the Royal

⁵⁴ D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence, 1915–1917, Bradley to Rawlinson, 29 March 1915.

⁵⁵ See Horne, pp. 17–20 and Loudon, p. 5 and p. 15.

Inniskilling Fusiliers in Gallipoli, then Suez and finally France.⁵⁶ With nearly 500 Catholics in its number, the RIF was one of the more 'Catholic' Divisions in the 97th Brigade.⁵⁷ As a consequence of this highly Catholic environment, Devas was able to approach his military duties much as he would have approached his parish responsibilities. There were several advantages to this situation. To begin with, Devas was able to use the Catholic hut as a base from which to listen to confessions and say mass. The usefulness of this arrangement was apparent in a recollection of his time in Arras in 1917. One of the Catholics with whom Devas worked commented:

In the Church (or seminary chapel) attached to the club, it was the same story every evening. Six or seven of us would plant ourselves out of earshot of one another and cope with the queues waiting for confession. Another directed operations from the altar rails giving Communion at regular intervals... Father Devas, a later arrival, loved this exhibition of religious licence and threw himself into it – he and his inseparable dog – who wouldn't, for all the efforts of the army, be thrown out of the Church but squatted happily beside his master and must have become an expert in military confessions.⁵⁸

Even when the military hindered him from holding services, the large number of Catholics in the regiment made it possible for Devas to attend to their sacramental needs quite effectively. Because the men for whom he was responsible were all in the same locale, he was able to put his energies into serving them rather than travelling to find them. Thus, even when 'no drumming up' was allowed he acknowledged that:

... In fact a certain number did 'drum up'...All the morning we crept about or lay still. I heard a good many confessions. I failed to induce Thompson, a young and very gallant, and very charming 1st Lieutenant to confess. He was half a Catholic. On his Father's death his Protestant mother had a sent him to a Protestant school – I am sure he was in good faith.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ F.S., F. Devas papers, Devas Journal, p. 12. Devas stayed with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from 11 July 1915 until February 1918 when the regiment left the 29th division for the Ulster division.

⁵⁷ See D.A.A./R.C., Census and Converts, for the 1916 census of Catholics in each Brigade.

⁵⁸ F.S., F. Devas Journal, p.15.

⁵⁹ F.S., F Devas, papers 'Sulva Bay', 21 August 1915.

While such instances were revealing of his experiences and approach, Devas' strong personality also shaped his understanding of his Chaplaincy duties. Even when he recognised the need for structure and accepted ecclesiastical authority, Devas readily ignored orders which kept him from the front. His approach was conveyed by one of the men under his charge:

There were also various amusing references to an experience we all shared as 'higher authority' attempted, again and again, to regulate the independent ways of RC chaplains in battle. One could never decide whether these attempts were solicitiously paternal or just officious. Invariably they revealed the Army's complete incomprehension of what a priest was up to on such occasions. Of course Father Devas, like most of us, cheerfully ignored these fearsome Army orders. We could always apologise later on for what they could never have had the heart to condemn.⁶⁰

As a consequence of his infractions, Devas' superior said that he did not know whether to: 'arrest him for insubordination...or to recommend him for the VC'.⁶¹

While these instances in which he overstepped his military duties as a chaplain were clearly related to his role as a priest, not all of his military infractions were of a highly religious or pastoral nature. Just as he kept a dog with him throughout the war, he encouraged the troops when they adopted a pet chicken, who, Devas claimed, became fast friends with his controversial dog.⁶² Devas was not at all troubled about his lack of obedience to military authority although such behaviour was clearly without religious justification. Nevertheless, such disregard does, in its way, demonstrate the priorities which Devas maintained.

These priorities can best be seen when looking at the way in which Devas approached his duties day by day. The sacraments rather than military legality were the shaping force in his routine. He recorded that on 1 August 1916 he said Mass to a

⁶⁰ F.S., F. Devas Journal, p. 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

packed congregation in the Church Army Hut and then took a walk to Poperinge for altar wine. On 22 August he said Mass at 7:30, met with an anti-aircraft officer, changed his boots, bicycled to Poperinge and bought some pots for B Company. On 15 October he found that he was not equipped to say mass because his wine flask had been broken. As an alternative, he said the Rosary and preached on 'grace, sin and contrition to a good crowd' of men from the KOSB⁶³ line'.⁶⁴ Later that day he was able to say Mass in a forest with 'crowds at Holy Communion'. However, he also arranged for a service with KOSB and MGC which was washed out by rain and fatigues.⁶⁵ As evidenced in his journal, Devas did not neglect other details of military life but the sacramental duties were the clear shaping factors of his days. Particularly when his devotion to the sacramental duties is looked at in light of his obvious disregard for authority, their importance to him not only as a member of the Catholic Church as a religious institution but as a priest who functioned within that body becomes all the more evident.

Case Study: Francis Drinkwater

The ways in which chaplains approached their duties were shaped not only by their personality. Regimental circumstances also had their effect, as can be seen in the person of Francis Drinkwater.⁶⁶ In his case the number of Catholics to whom he was assigned was so insubstantial that he could not approach his military ministry as he would approach a parish situation. Thus he wrote on 26 May 1915 that he:

Walked to Boeschepe, found several small hospitals and lots of RAMC and ASC men and spent 6 hours there, hearing confessions anywhere and arranged

⁶³ Kings Own Scottish Borders.

⁶⁴ F.S., F. Devas Journal, 15 October 1916.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 October 1916.

⁶⁶ *Hints and Tips*, p. 19.

for them to go to Mass next day...Said Mass on a portable altar for the first time this morning at the farm.⁶⁷

The following day he noted that he: 'Looked up some Catholics in the ambulance'.⁶⁸

Rather than managing a centralised facility for Catholic ministrations, much of Drinkwater's time was spent looking for men to whom he could give the sacraments. When he found them, he spent the remainder of his time giving those men the sacraments. On some occasions, it appears that he had a great deal of success. For instance, on 18 June 1915, he recorded that a hut was crowded with men from the 2nd King's Own and that all took communion. Likewise, the following day he reported that he held mass for the 2nd East Yorks and Yeoman Light Infantry in a barn at which there was a good crowd with many communions. However, the crops were not always so fruitful. For instance on 29 May 1915, he reported that in his searches he found two Catholics, one who was 'no good' and the other who was 'a find' due to the fact that he had been away from the sacraments for a full twenty years. Likewise, on 6 June 1915, Drinkwater recorded that he held an evening service for the soldiers but that only a few came. Again, he reported that on 23 June 1915 he went to say Mass at the huts of the Fusiliers and East Surreys. However, no one came because the Commanding Officer had forgotten about the arrangements which he made two days prior to the event.⁶⁹

To combat some of these difficulties, Drinkwater began experimenting with holding parades for confessions.⁷⁰ Although this system was effective with the Yeoman Light Infantry and the 5th King's Own, Drinkwater recorded that it was less

⁶⁷ Birmingham Archdiocesan archives, F.H.D./Af Francis H Drinkwater, War Diaries, 1915 – 1918, 26 May 1915, Hereafter archive referred to as B.A.A.

⁶⁸ Drinkwater, 27 May 1915.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 May-July 1915.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 July 13 1915.

successful with the Y & L whose commander was less friendly to chaplains.⁷¹ His troubles continued throughout the war. For instance on 22 July 1915, he recorded:

Yeoman Light Infantry was mostly late for Mass and apparently no Engineers! The 86th ambulance ordered to move off in the afternoon suddenly, and a Kitchener ambulance and Brigade comes in: so I am again unattached and worse than ever. Supper with the *curé*. He is very sick of the war and the English occupation. Perhaps he lets things worry him too much, but anyhow it's a pity the soldiers haven't more consideration for property etc. The people say they would be better off under the Germans.⁷²

Again, in October, he recorded that he said Mass: '(offered for the Brigade – living and dead) in the church of St. Vaast' and that he then rode off to Annequin. There he found that with the exception of the Yeomen Light Infantry who were going at 1:00, all of the soldiers had left during the night. Given the circumstances, he went round and collected Catholics from each Company to whom he could offer 'General Absolution and a spiritual communion.'⁷³

Such circumstances were trying, but even with these difficulties, Drinkwater clearly held out some deal of hope for the men under his care. In a letter to a priest friend, Father Pritchard, Drinkwater not only congratulated Pritchard about a booklet guide which Pritchard had written for the Mass but also asserted that these Mass books were helping to make 'good Catholics out of bad ones by the score here', and that he would find useful any suggestions as to how the trend could be maintained upon their return to civilian life.⁷⁴ Both in the priority which he placed on offering the sacraments and in this hope for the future of Catholicism Drinkwater's ideas certainly resonated with those of Devas.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1915.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 22 July, 1915.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22 October 1915.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 August, 1915.

Case Study: T.F. Bradley

Given his position as a naval rather than an army chaplain, Father T. Bradley had a different experience from both Devas and Drinkwater.⁷⁵ Bradley was one of the few Catholic chaplains who served on a naval ship and his record of this provides some indication of the different, yet resonant, experiences available for a naval rather than an army chaplain. Focussing on his experience in the Battle of Jutland, Bradley recorded not only the devastation of the battle but the practical demands which he faced as a Catholic chaplain. Moreover, he assessed his position not only as a wartime minister but as a Catholic priest by comparing his own experience with that of the Anglican chaplain with whom he served.

In his journal, Bradley recorded that at the start of the battle he went to the medical ward as he was instructed and there he offered aid to those he could. Bradley maintained that during the battle it was particularly difficult to do anything useful in the hospital ward and that even the doctors found it impossible to use the operating tables due to the ship's severe tossing. Bradley recorded that this first part of the battle was 'bloody hell' and that, since this was the first time he had been under fire, 'the first few minutes made one feel full of a strange sort of funk but after a time when we became busy with the wounded, one grew more used to it. One would see nothing when down below.' Bradley noted that he eventually found his balance and that throughout the battle he heard confessions and anointed the wounded men. By comparison he noted: 'The parson seemed quite out of touch with his men from a religious point of view though he worked very hard for them. He remarked to me how difficult it was to do anything for the men in the line of religion.'

⁷⁵ I.W.M., First World War Collection, T.F. Bradley, Bradley Journal, 91/38/1.

Bradley provided a contrast to this position by detailing his own experience during the battle:

I heard some confessions of men as they passed back and forwards during the action. Also during the night and next morning. We expected to finish the fight next day and the men had no idea what might be in store for them. I went down to the boiler rooms and condenser rooms and heard them there – also the men in the stoke holes but I did not go below but remained on the gratings above and the men came up from the stoke holes three or four at a time. I heard a different part of the ship wherever I found them and also on deck. Some of them came out of their turrets and I heard them, too, on deck. I suppose I must have heard twenty during the action and afterwards during the night and the next morning.

After the battle, Bradley recorded that all of the men joined the Anglican priest who said his burial services. After this, Bradley said his own funeral service and the two priests then ended their services together. Regarding this funeral, Bradley noted that although only four of the twenty-four Catholics on the ship had been killed, some of these had been so badly hit that ‘it was difficult to collect the pieces.’ Due to the desperate circumstances he noted that: ‘The service was fairly short as everyone was very tired and worn out.’

Bradley had little time to rest, however, as the next morning he recorded that he said Mass as usual and then carried on his normal routine by having breakfast and going on deck. The following day those involved in the battle held a funeral service for the soldiers who died. Regarding this Bradley noted: ‘As most of our dead were buried at sea there were not very many to be buried. I was told to do the RC’s. It was a terrible day, pouring rain.’ Bradley then requested to have a Requiem Mass in the dockyard. Admiral Beattay, however, refused permission for this, saying that the sailors were a ‘very sentimental lot’. Thus ‘he did not think it good for their morale that they should be encouraged to dwell too much on the losses of the squadron which were so severe. He said he had already for the same reason refused to allow the men

to attend officially at a memorial service in Edinburgh.' As a compromise, Bradley asked if he could convey the Admiral's condolences to the relatives of the Catholic officers, all of whom had died in the battle. Bradley conveyed Beatty's response in his journal: 'Tell them that these officers died setting us a noble example,' and that he did not, therefore, 'feel so much for the dead for they died in the exultation of Battle but he felt very much for those sorrowing relatives left behind.'⁷⁶

Although the need to work within and around the military authorities was a common experience for all of these chaplains, Bradley's experiences were in many ways distinctive from those of Devas or Drinkwater. Still, as can be seen with these three examples, while their experiences differed, the primary responsibilities of these Catholic chaplains were more or less consistent. Although they quite possibly had a number of reasons for behaving in the way they did, the time and energy which each of these priests expended in arranging and saying Mass, the effort they made in transporting their altars and service equipment with them to the required localities and the dangerous positions in which they willingly placed themselves all pointed to their clear and unified goal; that of saying the Mass and providing an opportunity for the men to participate in the sacraments. Amidst all of the challenges which the Catholic Chaplaincy faced, one which they were spared and whose lack separated them from other Christian denominations was the central purpose of sacramental administration and the supporting and underlying agreement with their Church's basic sacramental and dogmatic position.

⁷⁶ I.W.M., First World War Collection, T.F. Bradley, Bradley Journal, no date given.

Wartime Consequences of Catholic Universality

The understanding of Catholic universality was reinforced not only by the sacraments and the common devotions of the Church but in the clear points of unity which could be seen at the front; particularly in Belgium and France, countries which were strewn with the symbols of Catholic devotion and whose heritage and general populace were, at least in a nominal sense, Catholic.⁷⁷ Both in the destruction and in the ‘miraculous’ escapes which inevitably took place at the front, the Church emphasised that Catholics should recognise their unity of belief. Likewise, this unity was recognised when religious and priests were killed or when they continued to practise their faith even through the horrors of the war. Catholics were reminded that this was because they were not merely Belgian and French or even Christian; but they were part of the universal Church of which they, as Catholics, were a part. This bond shared between British Catholics and Belgian and French Catholics provided a practical means by which to demonstrate Catholic unity and solidarity.

The tragedy of world events and the unity of the Catholic Church were claimed to be particularly striking when Catholics saw the destruction of Catholic sites or had to fight on hallowed ground. Charles Hines, an ‘old boy’ of Ampleforth, wrote in a letter to the Abbot of Ampleforth that Ypres cathedral was ‘absolutely demolished’. Amidst the other destruction, he pointed to this as a particularly horrific site. ‘You could simply stand and stare aghast – the hideous wantonness of it all is

⁷⁷ As Catholic strongholds, both Belgium and France have been widely recognised for their ‘Catholic’ landscape. See *Church of England*, pp. 190–195 and Snape, p. 315.

astounding – Pillage, plunder, and ruin on all sides.’⁷⁸ Likewise, when the Germans misused a French Trappist monastery, Lieutenant Noel Chamberlain, an old Amplefordian, wrote a letter which was published in *The Ampleforth Journal* in 1918 in which he responded with horror by saying that before leaving, the Germans had ruined everything which they could not carry away, including religious statues and vestments. He noted that the only items left intact were the windows. After taking in the tragic scene Chamberlain asserted that he ‘could not help wondering whether Ampleforth would ever suffer a similar fate, whether the cloisters would ever ring to the sound of the military, and the library be despoiled by the infidel.’⁷⁹ Attention was also drawn to what was held to be the unnecessary destruction of several Belgian towns. No atrocity received more attention or provoked such fury as the ruin of Louvain.⁸⁰ The men at the front and people across Britain remarked at the horror of the destruction inflicted on the town. The fact that it was a centre for Catholic learning and Catholic culture made its demise all the more devastating for Catholics.⁸¹

The unity of Catholics everywhere was brought to the fore, particularly when French or Belgian Catholics were abused at the front.⁸² This was felt in particular when the Bishop of Namur and twenty-four priests from his diocese were taken away and shot.⁸³ For Catholics, these priests were seen not only as victims of the German war machine but martyrs of the faith. *Ushaw Magazine* printed a letter of another soldier who recorded in 1915 how his company marched to a Trappist monastery which the Germans had occupied. Eventually, the Allies drove out the Germans.

⁷⁸ *Ampleforth Journal* (1916), p. 74.

⁷⁹ Printed in *Ampleforth Journal* (1918), p. 299.

⁸⁰ See *The Tablet* especially 7 November 1914, p. 629.

⁸¹ *The Tablet*, *The Month* and *The Harvest* all reported the atrocities committed in Louvain and other Belgian and French towns particularly in 1914–1915.

⁸² See Mercier, *The Voice of Belgium*, especially the introduction by Bourne.

⁸³ This information was given in a special war telegram from Rome. Recorded in *The Tablet* 6 March 1915, p. 306.

However, he said that before this happened, there was a good deal of hand-to-hand fighting even in the cloisters of the monastery. All of those who were killed, including a nephew of the Kaiser, were buried in a garden in the monastery. The soldier said that the British troops eventually went to see the monks in the chapel and dormitories. These 'bowed but did not talk' to the soldiers: 'Could you imagine anything more incongruous than fighting in a Trappist monastery – but such is war.'⁸⁴

The poor treatment of Mercier, the Cardinal archbishop of Malines, also reminded British Catholics of their unity in faith and purpose.⁸⁵ The way in which Mercier stood against the Germans, particularly when he was confined to his house and when his 1915 pastoral was subdued were seen as examples of true Catholic devotion to God, king, country and, in particular, the Catholic Church.⁸⁶ On the one hand Mercier asserted that people were rightly conscious of their own patriotism.⁸⁷ However, as Catholics were reminded, it was not his patriotism alone, but patriotism in combination with religious devotion and acceptance of God's will which characterised Mercier's Catholicism and which Catholics were told to recognise as the essential trait of their faith. As he noted in 1915 and later printed in his wartime book:

The Christian is the servant of a God who became man in order to suffer and to die. To rebel against pain, to revolt against Providence, because it permits grief and bereavement, is to forget whence we came, the school in which we have been taught, the example that each of us carries graven in the name of a Christian, which each of us honours at his hearth, contemplates at the altar of his prayers, and of which he desires that his tomb, the place of his last sleep, shall bear the sign.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Ushaw Magazine* (1915), p. 74.

⁸⁵ Reported in *The Tablet* 16 January 1915, p. 96.

⁸⁶ See Bourne's introduction to Mercier's *The Voice of Belgium*. See also Catholic newspapers in August and September of 1916. In August, Mercier wrote a controversial Independence Day sermon which was suppressed. It proved so popular that it was reported to have been read in pubs and other unlikely locales across Belgium. It was published in Britain and made available to all churches and Catholic schools. See *The Tablet* 19 August 1916, See also S.D.A., *Acta*, Advent 1916, p. 24.

⁸⁷ Mercier, p. 17.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

This combination of patriotism and Catholic devotion reminded British Catholics of the common purpose they shared with their co-religionists in Belgium and France.⁸⁹ Mercier's obvious strength of character and his stance against the abuse levelled at himself and his country were hailed as the ideal Catholic rejoinders to such challenging circumstances.⁹⁰ His responses to the war as well as his personal traits provided an example of living Catholicism and a useful demonstration of the unity of the Catholic Church and the benefits of the Catholic faith.

British Catholicism and European Catholics

The trials with which Catholic Belgium and France were confronted provided rallying points for Catholic unity. However, not only the destruction but even more so the preservation of Catholicism at the front struck Catholics as elements of their unity. In 1917, an old boy from Beaumont wrote of his experiences at the front and the significance which his Catholic faith took on in such a setting:

I don't think I have ever spent such a curious Christmas in my life. We had midnight Mass said by a Polish priest on an altar of ammunition boxes scantily sheltered beneath a small tarpaulin; there were about 300 persons present, mostly officers (one a general). It was bitterly cold and everybody and everything save the tiny altar, was covered with a thick layer of snow, which fell continuously throughout the service, forming the only source of light except two small candles on the altar. I think everybody was praying chiefly for the same thing – that next Christmas may find us all at home and at peace.⁹¹

Other Catholics told similarly impressive stories about their experiences of Mass at the front. One recorded in a letter which was published in *The Tablet* in 1916: 'A plank resting on iron bars and covered with sacks was the altar and the Crucifix rested

⁸⁹ See especially *The Tablet* 16 January 1915, p. 96.

⁹⁰ See *The Tablet* 9 January 1915, p. 36, 16 January 1915, p. 96,

⁹¹ *Beaumont Magazine* December 1917, p. 335.

on a plank raised a little higher and not far from our mugs and plates. The priest was one of our men, a mud-covered soldier like the rest of us.' He continued to describe the scene, explaining that as the Mass began, it was necessary for the men to adapt to 'the misery of the place'.⁹² He went further by saying that he and his fellow soldiers had simply come as they were but that their life 'was summed up round that altar'. He said that the light was 'uncertain' since they relied on two small candles. Because of this the priest hesitated at the offertory since it was hard for him to distinguish between the water and the wine. After this the Mass went on 'simply and quietly in spite of the curious incongruities of the place' which was indeed curious since it was both their refectory and dormitory. He continued by saying that at communion 'several approached the rude altar and went back to their places in silent recollection'.⁹³

Although this was powerful when they, themselves, experienced this rustic spirituality, the survival of the Catholic faith was evident not only when the Catholic men participated in the Mass but when they came into contact with French priests who persisted in their sacramental devotion even at the front. In a letter printed in *The Tablet* in 1914, one British priest reported a particularly notable instance in which French priests could be seen saying Mass in a church near Ypres. When the British priest went to say Mass in this church, he found French soldier-priests all waiting their turn to say Mass. When he returned to the spot, he found that the church had been bombed but that the soldier-priests were still there saying Mass.⁹⁴

Not only religious but the French villagers more generally, were commended for their enduring piety. For instance, the British Catholic soldier Wheeler Drury said

⁹² *The Tablet* 26 February 1916, p. 274.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p 274.

⁹⁴ *The Tablet* 26 December 1914, p. 855.

in a letter which was published in *The Tablet* in 1915: 'It is surprising how soon some of the French people get accustomed to shell fire. They would not leave their homes until forced to. I have seen them walking to Mass of a morning as easy as if there was no danger whatever, and yet guns were barking away all round.'⁹⁵ The point was made, implicitly or explicitly, that Catholics in the Allied nations, whether in the military or civilian population, were both dutiful citizens of their countries and pious, devoted members of the Catholic Church. Moreover, even in the midst of the divisive circumstances of war they were united in their faith and in the Catholic communion of which they were a part.

In addition to the extraordinary preservation of their own religious services and practical devotions, the men were affected by what appeared to be the miraculous preservation of wayside shrines, crucifixes and devotional aids. Dom Antony Barrett, chaplain to the 28th division, reported in *The Ampleforth Journal* at the beginning of the war that the wall had crumbled and cracked in the Irish Benedictine convent near which he was stationed but: 'Poor Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica still stand in their niches in the convent'.⁹⁶ In another area of the front, a statue of Mary was reported in *Stonyhurst Magazine* as not only having escaped a bombardment but having done so with an unexploded shell lying next to it. This statue was regarded with such awe that some men in that region erected a shrine overlooking the battlefield in honour of the statue.⁹⁷ In another instance which took place in 1914, a soldier noted that the main feature of the landscape was a large convent and church. He said that the Germans shelled this so thoroughly for three days that he and his fellow soldiers had to 'squat by and see it gradually crumpling up'. What was worse

⁹⁵ Printed in *The Tablet* 2 January 1915, p. 13.

⁹⁶ *Ampleforth Journal* (1914), p. 314.

⁹⁷ *Stonyhurst Magazine* February 1917, p. 1834.

was that on the third day of the bombardment, the structure caught on fire, leaving it a ruin. He said that when the fire had finally died down, the only remaining object in the church was a large crucifix. Of this, he said: 'The cross was burnt to charcoal, but the figure, (a painted wooden one) was absolutely unharmed, except for one small shell-splinter in the side.'⁹⁸

Such reports were not uncommon even in the later years of the war. About one particular shrine, a British Catholic chaplain recorded in a letter which was printed in *The Xavarian* in 1917:

I have seen people as they went to church for Vespers on Sunday afternoon, cross themselves as they passed (a wayside Crucifix.) I have seen, as night was falling, candles burning in another. I have taken part in an outdoor procession of the Blessed Sacrament. One Altar of Repose was a wayside shrine just on the confines of the village, and I have visited a battery and taken three Roman Catholics along the road to another shrine, where I heard their confession and gave them Holy Communion...If the wayside shrine has no other use, it certainly reminds the men that there is such a thing as religion. As yet my experience so far is but very small, and I have not yet found anyone expressing any contempt for them.⁹⁹

Dom Ambrose Byrne also reported the survival of a crucifix in a letter printed in the *Ampleforth Journal*, noting that although the church stood roofless and without sound walls, and the wall was 'pocked and pitted everywhere with holes from bits of shell', the crucifix was surrounded by them, 'all but absolutely untouched'. He commented: 'You have heard these stories of the miracle of the crucifix before. I have seen some 'Calvaries' that seemed to have had marvellous escapes, but this one is the most remarkable I have seen.'¹⁰⁰

Stories about such images abounded on all fronts, and the most famous of these was the Leaning Virgin of Albert. Early in the war, the golden statue of Mary

⁹⁸ *Stonyhurst Magazine* December 1914, p. 1013.

⁹⁹ *The Xavarian* August 1917, p. 155.

¹⁰⁰ *Ampleforth Journal* (1917), p. 317.

and the Baby Jesus which crowned the village church of Albert was hit so that it leaned over the village. This left Mary holding the Child suspended above the town. One *Tablet* article entitled 'The Huns as Church-breakers' said that thousands had read about the wonders of 'the great statue of the Virgin and Child that once crowned the tower of the basilica at Albert, and that still hangs out horizontally from its base over the town.' Although its church and hospital were shelled by the Germans in the autumn of 1914, the town was described as such:

It is Jerusalem in ruins, but dominated by Mary, who seems to show these ruins to her Divine Son....These are but items taken almost at random from the long tale of destruction given by the Abbé Calippe, but they will serve to illustrate the ruin with which the armies of Kultur have covered the parts of France where they have fought.¹⁰¹

In a dramatic way, these images reminded Catholics of the religious hopes which they held even in the midst of the war.¹⁰² Father William Doyle summarised this hope in his war diaries about a Crucifix at Loos which remained intact although it had been in the middle of fierce fighting: 'Surely if the Almighty can protect the image of His Son, it will be no great difficulty to guard His priest also, as indeed He has done in a wonderful way.'¹⁰³

Not only did Catholic devotion continue to flourish with the help of these wondrously preserved symbols of the Catholic faith but Catholics argued that during the war this devotion became even more evident, particularly because of the example of the French soldier-priests. As with British Catholics, under normal conditions the combatant service of priests would have been considered unacceptable in modern France. However, due to the secularisation of the French government in the late nineteenth century, there was no exemption from military service for the French

¹⁰¹ 'The Huns as Churchbreakers', *The Tablet* 19 August 1916, p. 229.

¹⁰² See Heimann, pp. 40, 58 and 63.

¹⁰³ A. O'Rahilly, *Martyr Priest, The life and death of Father William Doyle* (Limerick, 1998), p. 27.

clergy.¹⁰⁴ This situation was not ideal for the French Catholic Church. As Monsignor Alfred Baudrillart, the rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris, said in a *Dublin Review* article, the presence of French Catholic priests in the fighting ranks was a result of ‘deliberately anti-Catholic laws passed with a view of injuring the Church’.¹⁰⁵ As such, the situation was seen as regrettable. Even so, this large number of priests at the front proved a boon to the Catholic Church in France.¹⁰⁶ Baudrillart claimed that this was because the laws had back-fired and instead of destroying Catholicism by ‘introducing a secular and irreligious spirit among the clergy’, it seemed rather to ‘strengthen the Catholic position by giving those who have been brought up outside the Church the opportunity of learning to respect the men she has chosen to admit to the ranks of her priesthood.’¹⁰⁷

This provided some hope for the revival of French Christianity even with its questionable Catholic past. The war was seen as a purifying factor which could lead the French nation to a more pious and devout practice of their Catholic faith. This was noted in a homily given by Bishop Amigo in Southwark at the start of the war:

In France, too, the Church had been persecuted, Religious Orders suppressed, and the property of the Church confiscated. This war might be a scourge upon that country, which had held the proud position of the elder daughter of the Catholic Church. Since the war had commenced priests had been allowed to accompany the French troops to minister to them the last consolations of their holy faith.¹⁰⁸

The French did not receive the whole-hearted support which was reserved for Belgium and her Catholics. Still, reports that there was a Catholic renewal in France

¹⁰⁴ Becker, p. 33. Given the precarious nature of their situation, Benedict XV allowed French priests a dispensation to fight in the military which did not affect their status as active priests. See also ‘Priests and Military Service’ *The Tablet* 3 July 1915, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Monsignor A. Baudrillart, Rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris, ‘Religion in the French Army’, *The Dublin Review* December 1915, p. 295.

¹⁰⁶ Becker, pp. 33–43.

¹⁰⁷ Baudrillart, ‘Religion in the French Army’, p. 295.

¹⁰⁸ *The Tablet* 12 September 1914, p. 381.

certainly made for a more positive reception of French Catholicism. This acceptance was such that the fiftieth anniversary of Belgium's dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was noted as not just a 'solemn celebration' for the 'much afflicted fellow Catholics in Belgium' but 'a new bond of union with our French brethren now more closely allied with us than ever in the unity of military command.'¹⁰⁹

Even though the situation was generally glossed in terms of regret, the bravery and devotion of the French soldier-priests was recognised as a manifestation of piety and as true devotion to God and country. For instance, Sister Cécile, a nun who had come into contact with some of the soldier-priests, recorded in her journal: 'The French priests serve in the ambulance like common soldiers in everything. They get up early and say their Mass every morning before working time, ten at a time, the others serving. Then they start their work. I do not like to see them working like that.'¹¹⁰ This same nun also asserted: 'I cannot bear to see the French priests living like common soldiers, some in the band, others in offices. They always do all the dirty work for the others: cleaning and lighting the fire, etc. etc. The free masons never speak to them if they can help it, except to find fault if they can.'¹¹¹

While these comments certainly conveyed how unfortunate the situation was, they also offered testimony that the priests were both edified and edifying when they embraced their new role. In a letter to Monsignor Morelle which was printed in *The Tablet* in 1915, an officer put this idea even more plainly:

I discern in the man, the priest giving an example of courage. What good these priest-soldiers, who live the life and share the dangers of and die from the same bullets as the men, do to them. What good they do for religion, for France, by the way in which they raise their courage and their sentiment of duty. Our good chaplain is like a charm. He passes his days in the trenches where the sight of his soutane and gilt-braided cap is always welcomed. He

¹⁰⁹ Printed in *The Tablet* 1 June 1918, p. 718.

¹¹⁰ I.W.M., First World War Collection, Sister Cécile papers, 22 September 1918, p. 22, 97/27/1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

pretends to be afraid of bullets, shrapnels and big marmites, but I declare that he is a brave fellow and I think I know something about it.¹¹²

Although not ideal, many British Catholics maintained that this position had turned out to be fortuitous. In their new capacity as soldiers, the French priests had opportunities which they would not have had in the capacity of civilian priests or even as chaplains. Reports were published in Britain which suggested that because of their bravery and self-sacrifice, these priests were highly respected even among those who considered themselves to be enemies of the church. For instance, in 1915 *The Tablet* printed a letter whose author asserted:

I believe that after the war there will be a complete change in regard to religion. Many who blasphemed or remained indifferent are now converted. There are many wounded, and there are always priest-soldiers to cheer them and give them the Last Sacraments. I know one soldier who on coming to the front would not listen to a word on religion and who is now its defender.¹¹³

The Tablet also drew on reactions of British soldiers, printing letters such as the following: 'These *curés* are wonderful! They look as timid as women, yet once in the fight they will not give way. And yet we have been making war on them for forty years! Do you understand that?'¹¹⁴

Some soldier-priests were considered particularly noteworthy for the way in which their Christianity purified their patriotism and bravery. One letter which was printed in *The Tablet* in 1915, noted that in the heat of battle, the soldiers hesitated when they were supposed to charge. Seeing this, a French Lazarist Father who was wounded in six places 'held up his Crucifix and said that if they did not want to fight for France they should fight for Christ. They did.'¹¹⁵ Catholics held that not only the lay-soldiers but the French priests themselves were rewarded by this experience of

¹¹² Printed in *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 178.

¹¹³ *The Tablet* 9 January 1915, p. 52.

¹¹⁴ From a letter printed in *The Tablet* 6 November 1915, p. 593.

¹¹⁵ From a letter printed in *The Tablet* 30 January 1915, p. 147.

military service. As evidence of this, *The Tablet* reported one chaplain who said of his own work as a stretcher-bearer: 'It is awful work going amid the bullets and shells, but it has its consolations. One forgets everything when one sees the gratitude of the poor fellows and their joy at finding that we are priests.'¹¹⁶

What was seen as perhaps the most impressive element of the soldier-priests was that they could fight alongside their fellow soldiers and still maintain their priestly qualities and fulfil their Catholic duties. Because of the dispensation provided by Benedict XV, they could offer Extreme Unction, hear confessions and say Mass for the men even at the front.¹¹⁷ *The Tablet* recognised this when it printed a letter from a French Assumptionist, which he wrote in the early days of his military experiences.

My Commandant, who was also hit, called for help. I ran to him, took him in my arms and carried him away under hot shell-fire. He asked for a priest and made his confession at the foot of a tree in presence of the troops who were deeply moved. The priest who heard the confession, I forgot to mention, was a simple private.¹¹⁸

The Tablet reported how another French soldier was moved when he saw two soldiers hurrying toward the trenches, one a priest and the other an officer. The soldier recorded that as they journeyed, the priest 'exercised his office by hearing the confession of his comrade'. When he was done with this, the soldier reported: 'The penitent knelt for a brief moment at the roadside and, removing his "kepi" he received absolution. Both then resumed their hurried journey to the post of duty, perchance to glory or to death.'¹¹⁹ In instances such as this it was claimed that the close contact of the French soldier-priests placed the other soldiers in a position where they were more open to respecting and listening to the words of the priests. Although at times the

¹¹⁶ From a letter printed in *The Tablet* 2 January 1915, p. 14.

¹¹⁷ See *The Tablet* 3 July 1915, p. 5 and L. Sturzo, *Church and State* (1939), p. 468.

¹¹⁸ *The Tablet* 14 November 1914, p. 667.

¹¹⁹ *The Tablet* 14 November 1914, p. 668.

position of the French soldier-priests proved difficult, given the rigours of army life, it was claimed that the priests balanced their military tasks and religious calling without compromising the integrity of either. This, Catholics hoped, would not only offer encouragement to Catholics in their faith but demonstration of the superiority of Catholicism to those who did not practice the Catholic faith.

At times, French Catholics operated as witnesses to the Catholic faith. An English officer whose letter was printed in *The Tablet* claimed in 1914 that due to the piety of French Catholics on All Souls Day his servant, who was a Wesleyan, 'is craving to know more of what he tells me he thinks must be the true faith.'¹²⁰ Such reports were looked on with satisfaction by the Catholic Church and were seen as affirmation of the correct teaching and practice of the Catholic Church. A non-Catholic even wrote of this to *The Times* saying:

Religion has of late been so conspicuous in the French political arena and has suffered such hard blows that we are apt to conclude that it is moribund... But, 'the universal acceptance and practise of religion came as a surprise [to the writer.] Most men had their rosaries, and nearly all wore religious medals round their necks. When well enough they crowded to Mass, when sick they welcomed the visits of the *curé*, when dying they asked for the last Sacrament and when dead they were buried with full Catholic ceremonial.'¹²¹

Catholics hoped that this would have a positive affect on their non-Catholic compatriots. More important, however, they hoped that it would strengthen their own Catholic faith by emphasising the unity which, they claimed, existed in Catholicism and which extended beyond the bounds of nationalism and culture.

¹²⁰ *The Tablet* 21 November 1914, p. 696.

¹²¹ J. Britten, *Anglicanism at the Front* (1916), p. 13.

Dying a Good Death

While the teachings of the Catholic Church emphasised the sacraments and Catholic duty as the means to right Catholic living, in this time of war even more than in peacetime the Church focussed specifically on the role of the sacraments in helping Catholics to prepare for death.¹²² This, too, offered demonstration of the unity of the Catholic faith; in dying as a good Catholic, a man was offered the hope that he would join the rest of the Church; the angels and saints in heaven.

Of course, to some extent having a 'Christian' burial was important to all Christians, even those who were only nominally Christian. Burial services were seen as a crucial part of a chaplain's work and as the last act of kindness and respect that could be offered to a man who had left this world for the next. A soldier recognised this in a *Tablet* article, 'Impressions at the Front':

I was helping to bury a man a few hundred yards behind the trenches, a man whom I never saw until I saw him dead, and whom yet I know as well as any I have met lately among the living. So sudden are the friendships of war and so imperceptible between dead and alive. That the veil falls does not make old friendships to cease, or prevent new ones beginning. To bury the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy. It is also the sacrament of comradeship.¹²³

This Christian burial closed out the earthly life and reminded those still on earth that the dead were being welcomed into the next life with the rest of the Church.

For Catholics, however, there was an added significance to this procedure of Christian burial. In the Catholic understanding the hour of death and the eventual laying to rest not only involved the 'sacrament of comradeship' but also, when

¹²² R. Staudacher, p. 12, *Church of England*, p. 135.

¹²³ Shane Leslie, 'Impressions at the Front', *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 202.

possible, the sacraments of Communion, Confession and Extreme Unction. An account published in *Stonyhurst Magazine*, conveyed this Catholic understanding of death and the afterlife by telling the story of a Cameronians officer who witnessed both a Catholic funeral service and the administration of the Catholic sacraments. This officer said that he had heard of soldiers who had been influenced towards Catholicism by seeing priests administering the last rites under fire. In one instance he witnessed a French padre who came to minister to a man who had been shot in the head. He said that the priest sprinkled holy water on the man. The priest could not wear his stole because, being white in colour, it would give away his position. For the same reason he was not allowed to light his candles. Because of this he was left to 'struggle along in the dark'. The man said that although this ritual was 'rustic' it was nevertheless, 'a very touching short service.'¹²⁴ The point made by this officer and taken further by *Stonyhurst Magazine* was that the comforts and spiritual consolations of the Catholic Church benefited people not only on this earth but aided people who passed on to the next.

This was recognised as a valuable consolation for those who grieved over the loss of a loved ones and the letters which were written after the deaths of Catholic soldiers demonstrated the importance this held for Catholics in their period of grief. For example, *Stonyhurst Magazine* said of Philip Colley: 'He died peacefully after receiving the Last Sacraments, on October 31st happily and confidently as he had lived. It was a privilege, said his confessor, to do what I could for your dear son; the sting of death is taken away when it is so beautifully entered upon.'¹²⁵ Likewise, Father Knapp DSO MC said of Captain Valentine Blake who died on 28 January 1916 that although he could not console Blake's parents in their grief; 'It will be a

¹²⁴ *Stonyhurst Magazine* February 1915, p. 1078.

¹²⁵ Irwin, p. 46.

consolation to you to know that your son was well prepared. He came to Confession and Holy Communion on Christmas day. I can also assure you that his loss is deeply felt by all, and you have their sincere sympathy.’¹²⁶

This consolation was all the more significant when the casualty was himself a priest. When Father McGinity died, the Catholic Chaplain of the 39th CCS in the Italian Expeditionary Force recorded: ‘Father McGinity died at 2:45 this morning, fortified by the last rites of the church. There is some consolation in knowing that he made this great sacrifice doing God’s work, for he was out three or four days and nights in the swamps on the *Piave* giving spiritual consolation to those Catholic souls which he loved so dearly.’¹²⁷

Although it was primarily the Catholic priests and other devout Catholics who pointed to this as a potential source of comfort, some Protestants recognised the value that Catholic devotion and the sacraments held for Catholic families. Of Dermott Mascherry, a fellow officer wrote: ‘Although I am a Protestant, I have made enquiries from a Roman Catholic Officer in the company, and I am sure that it will be a great consolation to you to know that your son was at Confession the night before he went into the trenches.’¹²⁸

Based on this different understanding of how one ought to prepare for death and what this meant for the life to come, there were distinct differences in the ways in which Catholics understood the requirements for dying a ‘happy death’. *Saint Aidan’s Magazine* demonstrated this in its depiction of one of the school’s Old Boys, Lance Corporal Anthony Reginald Tidbury. Tidbury, it was said, not only: ‘fought bravely and died in the best disposition’, but did so as, ‘a good and fervent Catholic’ who

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

loved the Mass and the Sacraments, and who had frequently received the sacraments before he died. His chaplain recorded that because of this he was prepared for death, explaining further that he saw Tidbury shortly before he died and that he, 'was never happier...He had no fear of death and had no reason to be afraid. Although he had been sure that he would not die, God saw otherwise and deigned to take him to His own happy home in heaven where there are no wars and all is peace.'¹²⁹

Likewise, Downside's *War Record* maintained that an Old Boy, Captain Oswald Bamford was prepared both spiritually and mentally to face death, taking the words of his chaplain who had written:

In a little country church we assembled 'to make our souls' and prepare in our Master's company to face the danger. Captain Bamford came forward and served my Mass that morning and went to his duties with many others. It was in the early phase of the attack that he fell shot, and died immediately. They afterwards recovered his body and buried him with many of his companions. We had a little chat in the sacristy after Mass was over and knowing the danger he was going into, he said: 'If I am called this time, Padre, you have prepared me well; I trust all in God now.'¹³⁰

Thus, even as the Catholic soldiers passed on, their Christian deaths were considered to be extensions of their virtuous Catholic lives. Their bravery in life and death were commended and both served to encourage those who were left on earth. Moreover, their Godly submission to death gave loved ones hope that, based on the way they lived and died, these men would be given a brief time in purgatory and a short path to heaven as they entered the next life.

To some extent this rhetoric was much like that found in non-Catholic quarters and particularly in the public schools which fostered the sense of duty, patriotism and British manhood. However, the specific link which Catholics claimed to exist between the reception of the rites of the Church and a noble death set Catholics apart

¹²⁹ *Saint Aidan's Magazine* December 1917, p. 13.

¹³⁰ Irwin, p. 10.

both in their preparation for death and in their response to it. This was demonstrated most notably in the Catholic school journals. In these, Catholics stressed that comfort was to be found not only in the noble life which a person lived but quite explicitly in the fact that he had died in the good graces of the Church and with a clean conscience before God. As a friend of his wrote of Captain J.H.A. Ryan MC:

He was an officer who always was ready to make sacrifices for the Regiment, and I am sure that he himself does not regret or grudge his death. I was talking to him late at night the night before we went up to the trenches, and he was saying how his religion stood to him in a time like this (I myself do not belong to the Old Religion) and how he felt quite ready for death if necessary.¹³¹

Given the importance attached to this understanding of a 'good death', when mentioning Catholic death in letters to families, chaplains inevitably made a point that the person had, indeed, received the sacraments before passing on. For instance, Father Tiberghien recorded of an old boy of Stonyhurst: 'We prayed together. At five o'clock I was called by the Sister, who was very carefully attending to him. I gave him a last Absolution, told some prayers, and asked him to give his soul in the hands of God. He did it.'¹³² Likewise, a friend recorded of Lieutenant E.J.V. Collingwood-Thompson: 'He was carried to the field hospital where he received the Last Sacraments and died on the following day.'¹³³

It was particularly comforting when a chaplain could provide this specific assurance that a man had died in a state of grace. However, even if a man died without Extreme Unction, Catholics believed that it was possible for him to die a holy death. As a chaplain said of one Stonyhurst man: 'It was impossible to give him Extreme Unction, but only the other day he was at Confession – and that is always

¹³¹ Graham, p. 118.

¹³² *Stonyhurst Magazine* October 1915, p. 1336.

¹³³ Graham, p. 84.

enough.’¹³⁴ Likewise, Henry Day commented that before one battle all the men except one had accepted his invitation to participate in the sacraments. Even when that man died in battle, Day held some hope for his soul saying: ‘I was sorry but had no reason to doubt the sincerity of his purpose. God judges the heart.’¹³⁵

In addition to this recognition that God, rather than the priests, judged the hearts of the men, Catholics asserted that if there was not a priest, a man could still die in a right place with God if he merely had the desire to have the sacraments. Father C.H. Pollen recorded that although he was unable to find a priest, a dying man wrote in the ground with his blood: ‘I believe in God.’ He died shortly afterwards but Pollen recorded that this man not only had hope for his own salvation but that he had influenced another soldier towards Catholicism. Pollen explained that although the man died a few moments after this act of faith, the chaplain had later explained to him: ‘you were not the only spectator. This death has made a conversion; one of your friends, who had been very indifferent was touched by this act of faith of the gallant soldier-lad; he came to confession. For many years he had not seen a priest.’¹³⁶ Thus, although the sacraments were certainly desirable and were, in themselves, considered to be efficacious, Catholics still maintained hope for those who showed signs of belief, even if circumstances kept them from the benefits of the Church.

Even when Catholics were not overt in the practice of their religion, their faithfulness was recognised if they were devoted to the sacraments. It was recorded of Brigadier General Francis Johnston CB, an Old Boy of Stonyhurst:

Though not demonstrative, he was a staunch Catholic, and had received Holy Communion ten days before his death. At his grave side Sir Alexander Godley spoke in high terms of the soldierly qualities of the late General and sympathised with the Catholic body on the loss of such a fine man.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³⁵ H. Day, *A Cavalry Chaplain*, (1922), p. 129.

¹³⁶ Pollen, p. 18.

¹³⁷ Irwin, p. 128.

Whatever the level of devotion, the fact that a man had or would have wanted to take recourse to the sacraments was mentioned as a point of comfort for those left behind. As it was recorded of Lieutenant R. Emmet: 'He died after three weeks' illness... fortified by the rites of the Church.'¹³⁸

Stonyhurst Magazine was quick to point out that Wilfred Ratton, an Old Boy of the school had, 'a deeply religious spirit shown through all his life', which, it noted with some added weight, even a lady who did not know his family acknowledged as due to his being a Catholic. The priest who was with him when he died reported: 'Never have I seen such a calm, peaceful and happy leave-taking of life. Only the Sunday before his illness he was here at Confession and Communion.'¹³⁹ In the case of John Liddell MC, VC, the help he gained from his religion was regarded as the shaping influence in his pious life. *Stonyhurst Magazine* attempted to demonstrate this by recording the pious way in which he died, offering some consolation in this description of his piety. Liddell, it was recorded:

Died in hospital after receiving Holy Communion, saying his final Confession and receiving Extreme Unction...He was perfectly conscious, and with great fervour and devotion repeatedly kissed the crucifix, and repeated over and over again the holy names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph and other ejaculatory prayers and the act of contrition.¹⁴⁰

In addition to the individual devotion and piety that soldiers might demonstrate, Catholics maintained that the corporate spirit of Catholicism was seen as a great source of strength for their faith. *Stonyhurst Magazine* recorded that in one Irish regiment, the Catholic spirit was evident throughout all the ranks and that an officer, therefore, said of the men: 'We were eventually reinforced by the Gordons,

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹³⁹ *Stonyhurst Magazine* October 1915, p. 1357.

¹⁴⁰ Irwin, p. 164.

and drove the Hun back; but this was after I was hit...The men who died, died fine deaths, praying and calling on the Sacred Heart till the last.'¹⁴¹ This recourse to the rites of their Church was seen as advantageous for the men both individually and collectively. The priests' administration and the soldiers' acceptance of Catholic assistance was also recognised as a comfort for those people still on earth, particularly to those who believed in the efficaciousness of the sacraments and the comforts of the saints in heaven. These practical displays of the Catholic faith reinforced the unity of the Church and likewise conveyed its distinctive understanding of Catholic life, death, and afterlife.

¹⁴¹ *Stonyhurst Magazine* February 1916, p. 1695.

Chapter 6: Catholic Soldiers: Expectations and Preparation

The faith of the Catholic soldiers was very much strengthened by the war. By the nature of things he was brought face to face with death... As a Catholic he had answers ready for the questions that must have asserted themselves.¹

This confidence in the Catholic response to the difficulties of the war, which was expressed by Plater in the survey, *Catholic Soldiers*, was widespread in the British Catholic populace and particularly amongst the clergy. However, such claims had to be justified with evidence. For the Catholic Church to do this and for it to express the coherence of Catholicism, the Church had not only to communicate the significance of the international and supra-national Catholic body but also to show that the Catholic laity recognised, and could therefore take advantage of, the distinctive advantages which Catholics claimed were available in their Church.² Demonstrating this Catholic understanding was particular urgent during the war because of the common concern which Anglicans and Nonconformists had about the decline of Christianity in the modern age; the Church's success or failure with the soldiers was seen to imply its corresponding success or failure more generally. Catholics, like other Christians were, therefore, faced with the challenge of demonstrating that the soldiers knew and practised their faith and that, although they and the Church body

¹ Plater, p. 15.

² See Hastings, pp. 131–155.

were subject to human weakness, their Catholic faith and the Catholic Church had not failed in its duty as God's instrument on earth.³ They did this primarily by asserting the teachings of the Catholic faith and by providing evidence of practical Catholicism within the Catholic laity.

Assessing their success or failure was a matter of concern for both Catholics and non-Catholics and inquiries about the religious devotion and practice of the soldiers were made by both of these bodies. These inquiries took their most comprehensive form in *Army and Religion* and *Catholic Soldiers*, two surveys which were both published in 1919 and which explored and addressed the challenges which existed for the Christian churches in wartime Britain. *Army and Religion* was funded by the YMCA and written by the Free Church Professor, Reverend D.S. Cairns. It was compiled by a committee consisting of several Church of England and Nonconformist priests, ministers and theologians and headed by the Anglican Bishop of Winchester, E.S. Talbot.⁴ The poll took the form of a questionnaire and asked soldiers of all ranks and religious backgrounds to comment in their own words on the attitudes and actions of the soldiers in relationship to the Christian church. This survey was criticised by Catholics for being unrepresentative of the totality of Christianity and limiting itself to Protestantism. Indeed, *Army and Religion* was researched and written by Protestants and with a particular Protestant understanding of Christianity in mind. Therefore the uniquely Catholic aspects of devotion and practice were not recognised or conveyed in their entirety.

Although this was the case, it was so because Catholics made an active choice not to participate in *Army and Religion*. Although Catholics were asked and agreed to

³ See Horne, p. 14.

⁴ The background and development of the survey are discussed in the introduction to *Army and Religion*. See Cairns pp. v –x.

participate in the survey, as indicated in Chapter Four, Rawlinson only asked a select number of chaplains to respond to the poll.⁵ Furthermore, Baron Friedrich von Hügel, the Catholic modernist and theologian, was invited to sit on the committee but did so only in an unofficial capacity.⁶ Likewise, the Jesuit priest and writer Charles Plater was asked to advise the committee in the later stages of the project. Instead of endorsing it, he undertook the task of compiling information for a similar survey which he hoped would better express the experiences of Catholics at the front and which, in the end, he published as *Catholic Soldiers*.⁷

As *Army and Religion* had done, Plater's survey asked a series of questions about religion at the front. Although their methods and subjects were largely the same in that both surveyed English-speaking Christian chaplains and men, the different assessments in these two surveys, especially in the light of the practical similarities found with regard to the religious devotion of the men, are notable.⁸ This difference is in part because the scope of their studies differed. As Cairns noted and as Snape has pointed out, *Army and Religion* attempted to look not at the religious devotion of a particular denomination as *Catholic Soldiers* did, but at the religion of the men in the army at large. Given this reason alone, the level of religious devotion found amongst the men surveyed would quite understandably be lower in *Army and Religion* than in that of a particular religious denomination, in this case the Catholic Church.⁹ Moreover, *Catholic Soldiers* was quite openly a response to *Army and Religion* and, as such, must be viewed not as an objective study of this particular subject but in the light of its attempt to show Catholicism in a different and more positive position than

⁵ See C.C. Martindale, *Charles Dominic Plater, SJ* (1922), pp. 345–346. Hereafter referred to as *Charles Dominic Plater*.

⁶ Cairns p. ix.

⁷ See *Charles Dominic Plater*, pp. 345–346.

⁸ See Snape, pp. 343–352.

⁹ See Snape, p. 349.

the common strain of British Christianity or religiosity. What is more, it must be kept in mind that the presentation of the soldiers in these surveys was based on clerical perceptions rather than lay commentary. Thus how the editors framed their responses offers substantially more evidence about how they and the clergy understood their relationship to the men than it does about the positions of the men themselves.

Although these qualifications delimit the uses of such surveys, when taken within the context of the other literature of this type which was written and circulated during the war, a comparison of these two studies, and more fundamentally, of the questions posed by these and like studies, allows for some basis on which to found a picture of how the churches viewed the men, what the churches hoped they could expect from the soldiers, and how the clergy attempted to accomplish their tasks as priests and pastors.

When assessing the religious devotion of the soldiers, the churches came to a general agreement that the soldiers did not know or practise their faith. This idea was contained most explicitly in Neville Talbot's comment: 'The soldier has got Religion, I am not so sure that he has got Christianity.'¹⁰ Regarding the Christian understanding of the men, *Army and Religion* claimed that they were self-sacrificing and even 'Christ-like' but that they did not have much knowledge about the Christian faith.¹¹ An Anglican chaplain claimed: 'In times of danger men cry out to God. In spite of the fact that very often stark fear may be at the bottom of their prayers, yet it must be remembered that these cries have been wrung out from the utmost depths of their hearts.'¹² *Army and Religion* did not hold that such responses were Christian but the clergy nevertheless maintained some hope that due to the traumas at the front:

¹⁰ See Cairns, especially his introduction, pp. xxiii –xxxi.

¹¹ See Gray. See also G.A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Hardest Part* (1919).

¹² This was in response to questions regarding the impact of the war on the faith of the men. Cairns, p. 12.

‘Religion [would] awaken. With all its rough brutality, the battlefield [was] not a nursery of atheism... Every man here puts up some sort of prayer every night.’¹³

However, the concern was that a decreasing number were actually well-versed and practising Christians.¹⁴ This fear was corroborated by *Army and Religion* which maintained, quite alarmingly, that the men, although not necessarily immoral or atheistic, did not actually think about religion.¹⁵ One Anglican chaplain noted of the general level of religiosity among the soldiers: ‘The soldier is quite amazingly ignorant of the Christian religion. I have had confirmation candidates who did not know the names of the four Gospels.’¹⁶ The other respondents confirmed this general trend and lamented the state of Christianity in Britain.¹⁷

Picking up on this point in ‘God’s Will and Happiness’, the Benedictine Roger Huddleston asserted that while people were interested in religion, ‘the spirit of enquiry’ was so widespread that many people were:

... Apt to make the fatal mistake of putting search above discovery or preferring a state of expectation to one of assurance, the search for truth to truth itself; as if a low degree of knowledge were better than a higher one, or a religious system possible without definite, fixed first principles.¹⁸

As Huddleston suggested, the churches, as well as society more generally, recognised that people did pray, believe in God and uphold a type of natural religion which was certainly Christianised even if it was not Christian.¹⁹ But people remained ‘unsatisfied, discontented, restless’ and ‘they want something, they scarce know what’.²⁰

¹³ *Stonyhurst Magazine* September 1914, p. 998.

¹⁴ Horne, pp. 15–20.

¹⁵ *Army and Religion* and pp. 100–123.

¹⁶ See Cairns, p. 109. This religious ignorance was reported as common among the educated officer class as well as the relatively uneducated enlisted class.

¹⁷ Cairns, pp. 100–123.

¹⁸ R. Huddleston, *God’s Will and Happiness* (1917) p. 2.

¹⁹ See *Religion and Society* p. 221.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

While this inarticulate religiosity seemed to describe the Christianity of the majority of the men at the front,²¹ Catholics and non-Catholics both claimed that if there was an exception to this tendency, it was found among Catholics.²² A *Catholic Truth Society* pamphlet made this claim saying that the army was filled with uninformed and non-practising Anglicans whereas the Catholic soldiers provided a 'striking contrast' to these other 'unfortunate men'. The difference which the author claimed to exist between Catholics and non-Catholics was not that all Catholic soldiers were saints or even that they practised their faith; rather it was that even nominal Catholics knew what to do to prepare themselves before God. He claimed that as a consequence of this, most Catholics made a point of receiving absolution and communion before going to the front and that 'even though in their lives they had fallen far' Catholics were apt to ask their priests to help them back onto the right path, and that when injured in the war, Catholic soldiers who returned 'wounded in body' sought the assistance not only of the doctor but also of the priest. Although the pamphlet did not claim that the men were always practising their faith, it maintained that the men knew how they ought to respond with regard to their own failures and that even when they had fallen away in previous days they were often willing to make amends.²³ Although such a depiction did not precisely convey the nuances of Catholic relations nor did it offer an account which was necessarily accurate, this perception of Catholic zeal shaped in a positive way the manner in which people thought about the Catholic Church and those British people who were within the 'Roman' fold.²⁴

Aiding the Catholic Church inadvertently were Anglo-Catholics who hoped to promote their own cause by praising the rituals of the Catholic Church. A 1916

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126–162.

²² See Wilkinson, p. 135 and pp. 153–159.

²³ *Catholic Chaplains*, p. 17.

²⁴ Davis, p. 124.

Church Times article claimed that while Anglicans suffered from disunity in practice and belief: 'The Roman Catholic always knows what he ought to believe and to do.'²⁵

While Anglo-Catholics certainly had personal motives for regarding Catholic ritual and practice in a positive light – namely that they wanted other Anglicans to adopt these 'Catholic' elements of worship, in praising Catholic worship they also pointed out some of the specific differences which existed, whether for ill or for gain between Catholic and non-Catholic Christianity.²⁶

In general terms these differences which both Catholics and Anglo-Catholics emphasised, had to do with the churches' acceptance of ritual and authority. For the Catholic laity, as for the Catholic chaplains, the core of the Catholic faith was the system of sacraments, the structure of the Mass, the liturgical calendar and the ritualism which went with these.²⁷ Personal belief was important to Catholic worship in that this drove a person to practise his or her faith. However, in the Catholic understanding, this was of less importance to the Church more broadly than were the maintenance of orthodox belief and participation in the sacraments. The dogmas defined and limited theological understanding of the mystical and the sacraments and the rituals surrounding them brought faith to life and provided the driving force behind Catholicism.²⁸ Although some Catholics certainly questioned details of doctrine, Catholics necessarily accepted the imposition of dogmatic and magisterial authority, even when they did not fully understand them.²⁹ Regarding the mystery of transubstantiation, for instance, the Catholic priest, Father McKenna asked:

What did this doctrine mean to the thousands of people calling themselves Christians in England? To the majority very little but to Catholics it was an

²⁵ Printed in *The Tablet* in response to a *Church Times* article entitled 'The Christianity of our Fighting Men.' See *The Tablet* 20 May 1916, p. 650. See also *The Church Times* April 1916.

²⁶ See 'Pretending' and *Higher Anglicanism*.

²⁷ See *More Roman than Rome*, especially 'Ultramontanism', pp. 157–185.

²⁸ See Heimann, pp. 4–14 and p. 33.

²⁹ See Reardon, pp. 10–17.

article of their faith which must be believed, implicitly or explicitly. Did they understand the mystery? No. Did they believe it? Yes. Why? Because it was a doctrine which had the authority of the Church when speaking under the assistance of God who cannot deceive or be deceived.³⁰

Catholics held that this uniformity was critical to right religion, explaining that this submission to dogmatic authority did not compromise their ability to choose their faith. Rather, they argued that it provided the structure by which they could better understand the mysteries of their faith.

In his war memoirs, the Catholic naval chaplain Edwin Essex spoke of this when relating a conversation he had with the captain of his ship. He explained that the captain had an open attitude to Catholicism because he could appreciate the idea of a central church authority due to his understanding of military authority. Despite being an Anglican, the captain maintained that he did not understand and had no sympathy with Anglicans, particularly if they did not have the power or courage to enforce unity of belief and practice. Essex reported that the captain even went so far as to claim: 'There is only one solution for all our modern problems, padre, and only one institution that can save the world, and that is the Catholic Church.'³¹

The quality which Essex recognised in the practice of the Catholic faith was its uniformity and its acceptance of and submission to both an absolute and a hierarchical authority. This was in part due to the formulaic expression of the mass and it was, more broadly, a result of the strict teachings of the Catholic Church in matters of dogma, doctrine and liturgy. In the first of his series of articles 'Impressions at the Front', Shane Leslie pointed to a comment made by von Bülow in his book on Imperial Germany: 'The only two perfect machines in the world are the

³⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* 21 July 1917, p. 90.

³¹ E. Essex, *From a Chaplain's Log* (1934), 17.

German army and the Catholic Church.³² Father R.H.J. Steuart also noted of the German prisoners of war for whom he was responsible:

The curious contradiction between the unscrupulousness, savagery and treachery of the Germans at war and their striking religiousness and piety at home (the Catholics, at any rate) puzzled me for a long time. Either religion was somehow (impossibly!) at fault, or we are mistaken about them. Yet neither can be true. It has just struck me what the real solution is. I was led to it by experience of the way in which Mass is always accompanied by congregational singing, prayers and meditations read aloud, the recitation of endless Hail Marys and Our Fathers etc. I believe the case to be that the people are drilled to public worship just as their troops are drilled to their duties. It is militarism in another dress in much the same way as their apparent devotion to music is also. The spirit of militarism – corporate action – motivated and sustained not by the individual but by autocratic authority, for a national ideal of domination has infected even their religious life. Performance of their religious duties has been drilled and beaten into them by the authority... their religiousness is not, however, a sham: it is a uniform.³³

Although some non-Catholics like Essex's captain did maintain this more positive stance regarding Catholicism, not everyone considered the Catholic structure and organisation to be positive. The Anglican chaplain, Oswin Creighton, recognised these qualities of uniformity and coherence, but unlike Essex's captain, he glossed them in negative terms, saying in his war memoirs:

I often wonder if it would not be better if all the men were Roman Catholics. For men who don't think and have no initiative, what can you have but a dogmatic, authoritative externally imposed religion? And even the men who do think are often quite prepared to submit to authority and accept unquestioningly the dogmas for the sake of the unity and strength that are gained. I am always absorbed in insoluble problems, the Roman Catholics have none. Everything of immediate importance is settled. I believe that is what makes most Roman Catholic padres so unfailingly cheerful, often boisterous.³⁴

Whether for good or bad, Britons, especially British Christians, recognised this uniformity as a trait of the Catholic faith. This stemmed from the unity of dogma and

³² *The Tablet* 6 February 1915, p. 169.

³³ F.S., R.H.J. Steuart file, Steuart diary, 1919–1920, OK/1.

³⁴ L. Creighton, *Letters of Oswin Creighton* (1919), p. 199.

liturgy. However, the Catholic Church stressed that this was only the starting point and that it extended to the more basic and practical levels of teaching and procedure as well. For them to defend this claim, the Catholic Church needed to demonstrate how and to what extent these Catholic ideas shaped the lives of the Catholic laity.

I believe in One God: British Soldiers and Christian Knowledge

Although the chaplains and other British clergy offered some room for hope, many of them were concerned about the religious orthodoxy and practice of the British soldiers and, because of this, the clergy at times called into question the orthodoxy of the men. In *Army and Religion*, one chaplain posed the question: ‘Despite all that can be said about the unconscious Christianity of our men, can Christian character be long maintained unless it be rooted and grounded in a personal relationship towards the Christian God?’³⁵ The answer given by the *Army and Religion* committee was a hearty ‘no’. Consequently the committee suggested that the solution to the problem was to be found in promoting religious revival in Britain. Cairns said: ‘My feeling is that what the churches need is to have brought before them the real state of matters viz. that they have lost, or are in danger of losing the faith of the nation and that they have got to look deeply into the matter and set their hearts and minds to the problem of how the situation may, by God’s grace, be retrieved before it is too late.’³⁶

Notably, *Army and Religion* did not hold that the men were opposed to Christianity. Rather, irreligion was generally accounted for by lack of education and

³⁵ Cairns, p. 25.

³⁶ ‘Religion and English Society’, p. 174.

an inability to demonstrate Christian faith rather than by a rejection of Christianity. One Anglican chaplain noted: 'Much of this [irreligion] is due to a lamentable ignorance and misconception of what men are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of them.'³⁷ Moreover, *Army and Religion* asserted that the lack of understanding by the men was not a fault that could be placed entirely on the men themselves. As one nurse noted: 'Many of the men are willing to come to church and be brought into touch with religion but they want simple, definite, sympathetic teaching, not vague platitudes.'³⁸ This clarity was not to be found, however, and this *Army and Religion* found not only lamentable but detrimental to Christian practice. As one respondent asserted: 'They do not know what Christianity is. And after all, what is it? Does the Church know? A very general idea finds the symbol of Christianity in a fussy old lady asking the wounded soldier, "Do they really give the poor men in the trenches rum to drink?"'³⁹ *Army and Religion* held that if the soldiers were to be made into Christians the church would first have to agree on its goal and purpose. Notably, these comments indicate not so much the claim that the men were lackadaisical in their religious devotion but that the clergy recognised this lack of fervour as a fault of the Church. Of equal significance, these comments indicated that the clergy failed to agree both on what the root problem actually was and on how this problem could be rectified.⁴⁰

In this matter, Catholic opinion took a different trajectory. On the one hand, *Catholic Soldiers* agreed with the position of the committee regarding the general irreligiosity of the soldiers. *Army and Religion* and, indeed, the war itself provided incontestable demonstration that the majority of soldiers were not practising

³⁷ Cairns, p. 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴⁰ Snape, p. 342.

Christians in any sense which the churches could recognise.⁴¹ However, the Catholic opinion regarding religious orthodoxy, personal belief and Christian understanding among the Catholic men, whether nominal or devout, differed dramatically from the claims of *Army and Religion*. On the one hand, *Catholic Soldiers* reported, just as *Army and Religion* had done, that the vast majority of the men did not actively seek religious services or adhere strictly to a Christian moral code. Although the survey argued that Catholics practised their faith both at home and at the front, it also recorded that among the men, religious devotion during the war was not so different from beforehand. In this vein one of the *Catholic Soldiers* respondents claimed: ‘Their hearts are good but heads too empty.’ Just as starkly, one respondent to the survey claimed that there was ‘no reasoned faith or practical apologetics except among converts’.⁴²

However, unlike the respondents in *Army and Religion*, the respondents in *Catholic Soldiers* were hopeful about the spiritual fate of the Catholic troops. Although the survey concluded that the war had not improved the religious devotion of the men, it recognised at least a basic desire on the part of the men to identify themselves with the Catholic Church and a basic understanding of Catholic teachings which equipped them to do this. Whereas *Army and Religion* questioned whether or not the men were religious, based on what the survey viewed to be a vague concept of God, *Catholic Soldiers* maintained that even if it was vague, most Catholic soldiers possessed a sense of the deity which was firmly rooted in the tenets of the Catholic faith and in the body of the Catholic Church.⁴³ Thus they had a higher confidence in the orthodoxy of the Catholic soldiers.

⁴¹ This is the premise of *Army and Religion* and is the point made throughout each of the chapters by the editor. See Cairns, pp. v–x.

⁴² Plater, p. 145.

⁴³ See Cairns, pp. 59–72 and Plater, pp. 9–24.

This difference which was located in clerical perceptions far more than in lay practice, could also be seen when looking at the ways in which the polls discussed the matter of fatalism and providence. Although Anglican and Catholic, Christian and non-Christian soldiers alike were reported as expressing the sentiment that: 'If there is one for you you'll get it',⁴⁴ *Army and Religion* regarded 'fatalism' as a result of the soldiers' distinct distrust of God. Some suggested that it resembled the fighting creed of Islam, was a result of materialism or, among the better-educated troops, was a reflection of the nihilistic philosophy of Omar Khayyam.⁴⁵ *Catholic Soldiers*, however, regarded talk of fate as merely an alternative way of talking about God.⁴⁶ Of this, one chaplain explained: 'I think that expressions, apparently fatalistic on their face value, are only used as camouflage for "God's Holy Will"'.⁴⁷

Even more obviously, Catholics and Protestants differed in their views of the soldiers' use of devotional aids which, the wartime press recorded, both Catholics and Protestants used. In her study on French Catholicism, Annette Becker found that as they passed through Albert, the Protestant British soldiers asked the nuns for medals, crucifixes, and pocket rosaries.⁴⁸ A letter written to *The Tablet* by 'Missionarius' in 1915 also asserted that: 'This moment, thousands of Protestant soldiers are wearing the medal of our Lady, invoking her name with faltering but half-believing lips, and begging their Catholic friends at home to send them more cigarettes, more soap and more medals.'⁴⁹ The Jesuit chaplain, C. H. Pollen, recorded in a CTS pamphlet which was published in 1916: 'Men out here respect everything that is of religion. They will ask for medals, rosaries and scapulars, even though they do not know the meaning of

⁴⁴ Cairns, p. 160.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁴⁶ Plater, pp. 18–23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Becker, p. 61.

⁴⁹ Missionarius, 'The War and the Conversion of England', *The Tablet* 20 February 1915, p. 234.

these emblems of our religion.’⁵⁰ Another *Tablet* article, ‘The Catholic Religion and the British Soldier’ which was written by the Jesuit C.C. Martindale in 1917 asserted that non-Catholic soldiers were so ready to accept and ‘profit by the pious paraphernalia’ of the Catholic men that the situation was ‘almost laughable’. This article claimed that priests found it ‘impossible to keep pace with requests for rosaries, medals and badges of the sacred heart’.⁵¹

Protestants chaplains had some concerns over such devotional aids, in part because objects of piety did not have a clear place in Protestant worship and because pious aids were considered in many Protestant circles to be superstitious rather than genuinely Christian.⁵² In contrast, Catholics held that devotional aids were not only sources of comfort but that they were generally used for orthodox purposes.⁵³ Even when confronted by sceptics about the motives of his Catholic men, the Catholic chaplain Henry Day defended the orthodox use of these aids saying that his men were not merely ‘fond of decorations’ but that they were ‘Soldiers of Christ and Our Lord as well as soldiers of the King’.⁵⁴

Like non-Catholics, Catholics recognised the real possibility that some men had, and would continue to use devotional aids as good luck charms. However they did not see this as a valid reason to question the orthodoxy of the men or the effectiveness of their prayers to the saints. A respondent to *Catholic Soldiers* justified this saying:

It is probable that many Catholic soldiers are content to carry their rosaries about with them, seldom or never ‘saying’ them. And no doubt the ‘souvenir’ or ‘keepsake’ idea often comes in. Yet seldom, if ever, is the rosary regarded, even by an ill-instructed Catholic, merely as a charm or mascot. It is certainly

⁵⁰ C.H. Pollen SJ DSO, *A Catholic at the Front* (1916), p. 16.

⁵¹ *The Tablet* 6 October 1917, p. 427.

⁵² Cairns, p. 59 ff.

⁵³ See H. Day’s defence against this scepticism. *Army Chaplain*, p. 18.

⁵⁴ *Army Chaplain*, p. 18.

looked upon as 'protective' but this through the intercession of the Mother of God in whose honour the rosary is carried.⁵⁵

Such confidence was made possible not because of the more devout Christian practices of the Catholic soldiers but because of the clear teachings about these matters by the Church.

This difference in clerical perception of the soldiers' religion stretched also to the matter of prayer more generally. Concerning the prayer life of the men, a private reported to *Army and Religion* that the men: 'Value prayer, but do not pray as a little child of God. They pray to an Unseen Power whom they know and feel is there. I think the whole story of the New Testament sort of slips away into the background. They do not connect it directly with Christ, but the Lord's Prayer is on the men's lips.'⁵⁶ Indeed, a significant number of chaplains were unconvinced that this was truly 'Christian' prayer and they were hesitant to support it as something truly 'Christian', particularly if it appeared to be motivated by fear. Of a man who prayed only in times of distress, Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy asserted in a wartime sermon which he gave to some troops: 'It isn't religion, it's cowardice. It isn't prayer, it's wind. I'd like to shut him up. He probably seldom, if ever, prayed before and now he substitutes prayer for pluck. I wouldn't mind if he'd pray for pluck but it's all for safety. I hate this last resort kind of religion. It's blasphemy.'⁵⁷

Although they took Studdert Kennedy's point, some Catholics, and particularly chaplains, generally held a different position on this matter. Because they were taught not only that they were supposed to pray but how and why they were supposed to do it, Catholics tended to have fewer concerns that the men were

⁵⁵ Plater, p.25.

⁵⁶ Cairns, p. 167.

⁵⁷ G.A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Best of Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy* (1947), p. 12.

insincere or that they confused superstition with what could be accepted as genuine prayer. Moreover they viewed prayer of any kind as at least an initial step toward God. The Catholic view was that trench prayer might not ultimately lead a person back to God but neither did it lead him away. *The Tablet* indicated this when it quoted an excerpt from the letter of a Catholic soldier. He wrote that prayer was the basis of his self-confidence, saying: 'Before I was under fire, I was afraid, terribly afraid. I thought I should run, but now all that fear is gone, and in its place has sprung an easy self-confidence based absolutely on a Higher help, which I have prayed for as I never prayed in my life: so when at church pray for my men, their trust in me, my own power over them, rather than for my own personal safety.'⁵⁸ Even among the more devout, prayers at the front were very often for safety and this, the Church deemed to be acceptable and right. Even Father F. Ratcliffe turned to such prayers in battle as he acknowledged in a letter which was published in *The Xavarian* in 1916. In this he recorded a particularly rough stay in the trenches, saying: 'By George! Talk of praying! I was simply saying "*Sub tuum praesidium*" like mad. I didn't feel frightened, but knew I was in a tight corner and all my other thoughts were of dug-outs.'⁵⁹ The point made in both of these instances was that the men had turned to God in their time of need and that God had thus helped them to overcome their initial fears.

In addition, Catholics at the front were assumed by their Church to have had recourse to the prayers of the Church; most notably the hours of prayer, the Angelus and the Rosary, and this, Catholics claimed, demonstrated their devotion to God and the Church.⁶⁰ To the great satisfaction of his priest and his old school, Ampleforth,

⁵⁸ From a letter printed in *The Tablet* 4 November 1916, p. 596.

⁵⁹ *The Xavarian* January 1916, p. 26.

⁶⁰ See Pike, 'On Active Service', and Bourne's address to the troops in *The Tablet* 17 February 1917, p. 213.

Worsley Worswick noted the utility of Catholic prayers at the front when he reported the activities at the Ampleforth Hut in France. He stated that common prayers were an integral part of the Catholic life which he led in the military. In his experience, along with two or three daily Masses and Benediction on Sundays and Thursdays, 'the day always ends with Rosary and night prayers, and the chaplain can be seen any time'.⁶¹

While the priests in their role as sacramental administrator were vital, even when there was no chaplain available, it was claimed that Catholics had recourse to and made use of the central elements of worship in the Church. A chaplain claimed the good results of this in a letter which was printed in *The Tablet* saying that prayers were said at daybreak and that the 'Kyrie', 'Gloria', 'Credo', 'Sanctus' and 'Agnes Dei' were sung by the men as at Mass. Then the men would practise singing for Mass the following Sunday. In the afternoon, after a game of cards, they would 'have a conference and the rosary; night prayers at 4 o'clock, and during the night those who are on guard [would say] the rosary whilst their comrades [slept].' This chaplain went on to claim that when the men were awake, the whole trench would give the response to the rosary.⁶² These prayers, Catholics claimed, formed a structure around which Catholics could build their personal devotional life. At the same time, they provided the means for Catholics openly to demonstrate and acknowledge their unity with the rest of the Church as a body united in common prayer.⁶³

Among Catholics, prayers were considered to be useful not only for the devout but also for lapsed Catholics who were at the front. Memories of childhood prayers were recognised as effective tools for the reconciliation of soldiers with the Church even at the last moment before death. *The Tablet* stressed this when it printed a story

⁶¹ *Ampleforth Journal* (1917), p. 316.

⁶² From a letter printed in *The Tablet* 20 February 1915, p. 243.

⁶³ In Britain, projects such as 'Million Rosaries', an attempt to secure a million prayers of the rosary, were uniting Catholic prayers in a similar way. *The Tablet* 1 June, 1917, p. 711.

from the Bishop of Nevers who recorded that two French soldiers who had been in school together were dying next to one another on the battlefield. One had been a devout Catholic and the other had not. The one who had fallen away said to the other that they should pray together and that he would repeat the words of his friend since he had forgotten his prayers. The friend agreed and they started the 'Our Father'. The bishop reported that when the soldiers got to the words: 'And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive; they got no further, for the one who had been repeating the prayer after his companion gasped his last in these words that are an act of contrition.'⁶⁴ Whether or not this account was true, such stories were used as reminders to the faithful of the effectiveness of prayer and were used as demonstration to non-Catholics of the Catholic devotion and reliance on prayers. These offered assurance to Catholics that it was never too late to be reconciled to God and the Church, in this case, quite notably through the use of the 'Our Father'. This was used to demonstrate not only a desire of the fallen soldiers to make amends but also to indicate the Church's clear hand in providing the means for this reconciliation to occur.

Catholic devotion was recognised not only in dramatic battle scenes but, more notably, in the specific devotions and practices of the Church, particularly in Catholic devotion to Mary.⁶⁵ Lourdes remained a particularly popular site and sign of Marian devotion. The devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes was such that, even when they could not actually make a pilgrimage to Lourdes, Catholics made their affection to the shrine widely known. For instance, in 1916 on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, a package was presented at Lourdes which had in it several hundred

⁶⁴ Printed in *The Tablet* 4 September 1915, p. 307.

⁶⁵ See for instance the report in *The Tablet* 19 February 1917, p. 173.

sheets of paper on which the names of 27,000 soldiers and sailors of the British Empire were inscribed. *The Tablet* reported that this pack was sent by a group of soldiers who, although unable to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes nevertheless: 'had wished that their names should be placed in the grotto as a witness to their love and confidence.'⁶⁶

Although they had concerns that some men would go on the trip simply because they wanted an excuse to take a holiday, particularly after reports of some trouble-making Belgian refugees who not only wreaked havoc in Lourdes but who insisted on 'associating freely' with the British soldiers, the Chaplaincy and the British Catholic Church generally, nevertheless maintained that, on the whole, the men were strong and sincere in their devotion.⁶⁷ Evidence of this was given from one of the pilgrims who attended the first Lourdes Pilgrimage. He piously recorded in a journal that some of the men came directly from the front, some had gone over the top the night prior to meeting for the pilgrimage and one even walked for two days so that he could arrive on time. He reported that all of these men: 'came with a touch of that enthusiasm which fired the pilgrimages throughout and formed its distinguishing feature.' Of the trip, this pilgrim recorded that he found himself and his fellow travellers 'singing the hymns of [their] childhood'. They then said the Rosary in common, and once again 'sang the same old hymns' until each of them fell asleep. Of Lourdes itself, he noted:

Suddenly the beautiful church of Lourdes broke in our view, and we saw the Grotto nestling underneath, and the 200 candles burning, and the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, and the crowd of worshippers at the 6 o'clock Mass... We marched to our hotel, secured rooms, left our packs there, and went to the Church of the Rosary, to assist at Father Farden's Mass at the High Altar. What turned out to be the six happiest days of our life had begun...⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Printed in *The Tablet* 22 January 1916, p. 115, see also D.A.A./R.C., Lourdes.

As the success of the Lourdes pilgrimage was used to indicate, Catholics claimed that this soldier was not alone in his enthusiasm and not surprisingly, the Catholic Church as well as the Catholic Chaplaincy encouraged such devotions.⁶⁹

Although this devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes was particularly popular, in part because of the promise of healing attached to it, Marian devotion took countless other forms as well and the Catholic clergy were quick to claim the significance which these held amongst Catholics. Shrines to Our Lady were set up all across Belgium and France and most churches accommodated and promoted Marian devotion. One British soldier noted a particularly powerful example of Marian devotion in a village church at the front which was ‘crowded each evening with soldiers’. In a letter which was printed in *The Tablet* in 1917 he said that although the church was never fully lit, there were always a few candles burning on the Altar of our Lady of Dolours when the rosary was recited and that during the recitation of the rosary the scene was most impressive. The soldier said of this:

The writer of these lines has seen many an impressive spectacle of large congregations at prayer in great and spacious churches in many lands, but nothing more truly touching, impressive, and moving has ever been witnessed than the darkened church behind the lines, thronged with troops fervently invoking the intercession of the Mother of God under almost the very shadow of the wings of the Angel of Death!⁷⁰

Although these more public displays of Marian devotion were important for demonstrating the depth of Catholic devotional life, Catholics claimed that the most popular devotion was also the most common one, the rosary. Whether nominal or devout, most Catholics at the front carried or were at least familiar with the rosary and, by this means, Catholics claimed that they maintained some connection with

⁶⁷ See D.A.A./R.C., Lourdes.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* 19 February 1917, p. 173.

Mary and the Church even when they could not go on pilgrimage or did not have access to a Marian shrine.⁷¹ One chaplain claimed that the men with whom he worked had a great desire for the comforts provided by the rosary. Consequently he pleaded to *The Tablet*: 'The men need chocolates and cigarettes but more importantly, they need rosaries, crucifixes, badges.'⁷² The chaplain Kenneth Rose Dennys even asserted in a letter which was printed in *Ampleforth Journal*:

My men want rosaries and they shall have them, if I have to write to every layman or prelate at home. Let good people who knit enormous woollen garments in the spare time fling away their knitting, and sent out penny prayer books, strong rosaries, and the like! The soldier's body is always in the thoughts of those at home, his soul seems forgotten.⁷³

This devotion to the rosary was recognised to be of especial importance in its indication of Catholic unity since, as Heimann demonstrates for the pre-war years, the rosary was highly regarded by all classes and nations. As such, it was recognised as 'the most Catholic devotion of Catholics'.⁷⁴ After researching the history of the rosary the Jesuit Herbert Thurston acknowledged this:

Whatever may be the history of its origin and first development, the Rosary, for the learned and unlearned alike, is not only one of the simplest prayers, but also, as I sincerely believe, one of the most helpful means by which the soul may learn to live continually in the thought and presence of the son of God made Man.⁷⁵

This provided a sense of comfort for Catholics by ensuring a means in which they could pray whether individually or corporately. At the same time it provided clear evidence of specifically Catholic devotion and with this, Catholic unity, which the

⁷¹ Becker has noted the popularity of rosaries among non-Catholic British soldiers. See Becker, p. 61.

⁷² *The Tablet* 15 April 1916, p. 505.

⁷³ *Ampleforth Journal* (1916), p. 89.

⁷⁴ Heimann, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Herbert Thurston, cited by Heimann, p. 63.

Church could use to support their claims about the universality of Catholic faith.

I Confess to Almighty God...

The differences which existed in clerical perception of Catholic and non-Catholic belief were due not only to the differences in devotional practice and dogmatic teaching but also, in part, to the different understandings which the denominations had of sin, immorality, and the related places of confession and communion. To begin with, Catholics and non-Catholics differed in their understandings of what the relationship between moral behaviour and Christian belief was. The theory which was upheld by many non-Catholics and which was put forward by *Army and Religion* was that if actions spoke louder than words, the tendency towards or resistance to vices could be used as a barometer in assessing true religiosity and Christianity.⁷⁶ This was a fundamental shaping factor in non-Catholic understanding. Although the churches would have, in any case, been disappointed with the young men in the army when they discovered, as they did, that many of the men had fallen to the temptations of alcohol, gambling, swearing and, most troubling of all, women, because of the premises which they used to assess Christian belief such falls were seen not only as human weakness but as evidence that the men did not hold the Christian faith.

Catholics also acknowledged the ever-present possibility of falling into sinfulness. However, even when they did commit grave sins, Catholics had a clear-cut way of reconciling themselves to the Church by means of confession. Not only a high level of morality but a sense of deep contrition after immorality was used to indicate

⁷⁶ Cairns, pp. 360–380.

the true devotion of a Catholic. Thus Catholics had a much more optimistic view of the Catholic soldiers than many Protestants did. Their primary reliance on the sacrament of confession was particularly important as evidenced in Father Casgrain's prayer book. In this he advised:

Never be ashamed to confess your Faith before men. You have the inestimable privilege of being Catholics; be proud of your Religion. Make the sign of the Cross on getting up and say a short prayer quietly but fearlessly, and every Christian worthy of the name will respect you and your Religion. Do the same before going to bed. You will find short forms of prayers in this book. Say what you can according to the circumstances. Lastly, remember that your Chaplain is always at your disposal and will always be glad to see you and to render you every assistance and especially to help you to make a good confession.⁷⁷

Based on this understanding of reconciliation, a respondent in *Catholic Soldiers* claimed: 'A hearty act of perfect contrition may if it is really genuine, obtain forgiveness of all sin, provided there is the desire of confession and the resolve to go when opportunity offers.'⁷⁸ Another chaplain recognised this, saying that although 'moral falls' occurred quite frequently because of the negative examples which the Catholic men were around, 'a very considerable proportion' of the soldiers kept out of such sinfulness. He asserted further that in his own experiences in the confessional, he found that 'if a soldier keeps up some practise of prayer, and attends Mass when he can, there will not be much moral failure. Contrition (very sincere)⁷⁹ follows very closely on any such lapse.'⁸⁰

Evidence that confession truly did bring about holiness and that recourse to the sacraments provided strength was offered through the examples of devout Catholic men at the front. For instance, Captain B.P. Neville's chaplain reported of

⁷⁷ Casgrain, *Catholic Soldiers' and Sailors' Prayer Book* (1916), p. 6.

⁷⁸ Loyola, p. 34.

⁷⁹ Plater's parenthesis.

⁸⁰ Plater, p. 72.

Neville:

You can have no idea of the value to a Catholic chaplain of a man like Neville, absolutely simple and child-like and a regular communicant. He thought little of getting up at six in the morning after his regiment had returned from the trenches – arriving perhaps at midnight – muddy, wet and tired, to come and serve Mass and have Communion... I simply can't give you any adequate idea of the man. He was just a Christian gentleman and soldier.⁸¹

This devotion to the sacraments was also emphasised as a sign of Catholic piety by a Jesuit chaplain who noted the considerable distances which some men travelled to be present at Mass. He said that by posting a notice in a conspicuous spot or by asking a soldier to tell his companions of a service, he would generally be ensured of a well-attended Mass. Chaplains claimed that this method was also effective for confessions. The chaplain referred to above noted that the men were always willing to go to confession before action and were even willing to go otherwise so long as a time was fixed. The chaplain went further by claiming: 'For that matter you can hear Confessions anywhere... I have heard more Confessions walking along the road, in camp, in crowded villages, and even in towns like Pop⁸² or Arras than anywhere else.' Although the men found it useful if mass times had been set up, he asserted:

Many a Catholic soldier have I met belonging especially to Labour Corps working by the roadside and he will salute you and then very often the greeting, Good Day, Father. That is enough for you. 'Have you been to Confession lately, old man.' 'No Father, I don't know when I saw a priest last.' 'Then come to Confession now.' 'I will Father, and be very glad to get the chance.'⁸³

The Ampleforth Journal also connected this love of the sacraments with Catholic piety in a tale about some Irish soldiers at the front. This said:

We cannot vouch for the following story, but it is told by one of our 'old boys' who was at Mons, and was wounded in the course of the retreat: A party of Catholic soldiers of the Warwicks, finding themselves near an Irish regiment

⁸¹ *The Downside Review* March 1916, p. 26.

⁸² Poperinghe

⁸³ *Stonyhurst Magazine* February 1918, p. 197.

went in search of a priest. But in those days ‘a padre’ of the right sort was a luxury, in many cases denied even to the sons of Erin. Undaunted and now joined by some Irishmen, they decided to capture one for themselves, and ended by stalking a French *curé*, who, struggling and loudly vociferating, was triumphantly carried off into the presence of the retailer of the story. Having deposited their burden upon the ground they made a formal request that the officer would be good enough to explain to the affrighted *curé* that they had no designs on his life, but wanted absolution. Absolution followed, and the *curé* recovering from his rough handling marched and ministered to his captors for many a long mile of the retreat.⁸⁴

Although the above account may be apocryphal and is at any rate embellished, the attitude of these men was recognised and appreciated within the Catholic community.

This Catholic understanding of the sacraments and their implications for Catholic morality and devotion applied not only to the sacrament of confession but also to that of communion. This, too, separated Catholic and non-Catholics in their assessments of lay devotion. Although communion was a central element of worship, whether Catholic or Protestant, the Eucharist was not considered the hallmark of Nonconformist nor even of the wider part of Anglican devotion. Many did not, therefore, go to communion even when they believed the teachings of Christianity. On the one hand there were Anglo-Catholics such as Julian Bickersteth who asserted:

Man after man with no knowledge of the Faith of his Fathers, man after man to whom religion is simply a name and has never touched either his heart or mind; man after man who has never been brought into contact with any sacramental teaching of any kind... I cannot see how we are to win the men of England without a fervent Evangelical Catholicism – that is, a clear exposition and insistence upon the importance of Sacraments – shot through with a burning love for the master.⁸⁵

More typically, however, Protestants believed, as a private acknowledged in *Army and Religion*, that: ‘The Holy Communion [was] not the affair of the “average man”’.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Printed in *Ampleforth Journal* (1916), p. 221.

⁸⁵ Bickersteth, p. 78.

⁸⁶ Cairns, p. 173.

For most non-Catholics, communion was seen as a practice of only the most devout and thus, among most Anglicans and Nonconformists the sincerity of occasional communicants was called into question in a way which did not stretch to the Catholic Church. Regarding this, a sergeant asked: ‘Men take the Holy Communion before going up to the trenches as if they then became secretly armed against all Death’s endeavours, a kind of extreme unction. Is it wise to cultivate this idea rather than that the Holy Communion should be a strength for living not so much as a strength for dying?’⁸⁷ This proved problematic for non-Catholic churches when they attempted to assess the devotion of the men. While, on the one hand, they were sceptical of occasional communicants, they had no other means by which to assess the devotion of the men. This being the case, it is not surprising that many of the men fell short of the churches’ hopes.

Of course, this absence at communion was a tendency not only amongst Evangelicals who held a lower view of the sacraments. It stretched also to Catholics and, because of this, the Catholic chaplains recognised the challenges which they faced in this matter of lay devotion.⁸⁸ However, Catholics held that if the Church could make available the sacraments to the men they could help to bring the men, whether lazy or zealous, into a better relationship with God and the Church. This possibility of helping the men to practise their faith shifted some of the responsibility of lay-worship back to the priests and made the growth of the men’s faith a more corporate effort.

Catholic opinions were distinctive in this matter and most dramatically in the matter of occasional communicants. Although many Catholics were only nominal in

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁸⁸ Plater, pp. 89–106.

their observances, when going to the front, the chaplains and the Catholic press claimed that most had taken advantage of any opportunity to fulfil their Catholic duties even if they had not practised on a regular basis before the war.⁸⁹ *The Ampleforth Journal* noted of this: ‘Holy or indifferent, keen or lazy, the soldier who ever goes to the Sacraments at all, goes when he is leaving the base for the firing line i.e. when he is leaving his Reinforcement camp. And thus in the Ampleforth Hut thousands and thousands of men have been to Confession and Holy Communion, in some cases for the last time in their lives.’⁹⁰ Similarly, William Doyle asserted that:

There is nothing like the prospect of a German shell for putting the fear of god into one; and many an old rooster, whom no mission ever moved has been blown out of his nest by the news of our departure. I cannot help thinking that when the day of reckoning comes in spite of all the misery and suffering caused, this war will turn out to have been the biggest act of God’s love, saving the souls of scores of poor fellows, certainly among my own men.⁹¹

As indicated in Doyle’s statement, Catholics hoped that all the men would be devout and faithful communicants, but also recognised that regardless of the circumstances, a return to the sacraments by lapsed Catholics was an occasion for hope rather than scepticism.

This recognition of the men’s lack of initiative and the need for the Church to assist them in coming to the sacraments was laid out as the primary reason for having Church Huts made available to the men. Stephen Harding, the force behind many of the Catholic Huts which were built on the western front asserted in a letter which he wrote to Rawlinson:

A chapel pure and simple answers as well for Mass on Sunday, but having it joined to a club is an enormous advantage for bringing men to the sacraments and to week-day services... Those who need the most help and attention are the lazy and the careless and most of all the lapsed. Many of these are proud of the name of Catholic; they like to have their own club, and once they are there

⁸⁹ Plater, p. 40 ff, and *Saint Aidan’s Magazine* December 1917, p. 12.

⁹⁰ *Ampleforth Journal* (1919), p. 99.

⁹¹ *A Brave Soldier*, p. 19.

they are at the door of the chapel. In our huts we used to shut the counter, call 'time' and allow all who wished to clear off, and then have Rosary and night prayers; and the room was often full.⁹²

Rawlinson and the Chaplaincy agreed with the need for these huts and assisted Harding in his efforts.⁹³ This too was distinctive. On one level, this desire for huts was something akin to the desire of Oswin Creighton who pushed for a recreation centre in Gallipoli. Creighton explained that he did this because he believed that the greatest enemy of the men was not the Germans or even sin, but boredom.⁹⁴ However, the Catholic effort contrasted with this in that the primary reasons which Catholics used to justify these huts was not to alleviate boredom or to keep the men away from the bad influences of the local surroundings but to draw them nearer to the sacraments and the devotions of the Catholic Church. This, Catholics hoped, would facilitate and bring to life, true Catholic commitment.

Purification and Perfection: Requirements and Consequences of Purgatory

The Catholic belief that the men wanted to go to the sacraments and to live a good Catholic life was combined with the realisation that these men, although good, were still not perfect. Because of this understanding, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory proved particularly important during this time, providing hope for those who had lost loved ones; most significantly for those whose loved ones were nominal Catholics.⁹⁵ Bishop Amigo of Salford asserted this position in his Lenten address in 1917 in which he said that although the scourge of war was awful, there were:

⁹² D.A.A./R.C., Correspondence 1919. See also *The Universe* 6 June 1919.

⁹³ D.A.A./R.C., Catholic Huts, Harding to Rawlinson 14 June, 1914 to 27 January 1919.

⁹⁴ O. Creighton, *Letters of Oswin Creighton* (1920), p. 139.

⁹⁵ See 'Mourners', pp. 4–6.

...probably thousands and tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of souls, especially of young men, who have met their death by land or sea, owing to this war, in a state of grace and so have saved their immortal souls who quite possibly had they lived on in times of peace and died under other circumstances, might not have secured their eternal salvation. What a consolation...and what a lesson to us of the mercy and loving-kindness of our God who thus converts a most awful scourge into a source of blessing!⁹⁶

This possibility of purgatory was regarded as a likely one for the young men who went to war: 'Masses and prayers for the dead, again, have become familiar to our men, and the doctrine of Purgatory has suddenly revealed itself as an obvious truth in view of the splendid deaths of men who yet were assuredly not saints. It is felt that neither instant heaven nor, certainly, hell were for these.'⁹⁷ As the courage and sacrifice of the soldiers were revealed, so too were their goodness and purity of heart. The idea that the men were unprepared for heaven and yet, that they could still be saved from eternity in hell was accepted more and more readily as the war continued.⁹⁸ Because of this, the hope of heaven was still very genuine. However, the reality of purgatory was equally real.

This Catholic belief in the possibility of reaching heaven through purgatory was recognised as having consequences not only for the dead but also for those still on earth. Praying for the dead was one way in which Catholics could actually assist the souls of their loved ones while also finding comfort for themselves. Thus Hudleston asserted in a pamphlet which he wrote for mourners:

If you, dear reader, have lost by death anyone whom you love, think of our Lord at the grave of Lazarus and you will be comforted. Your loved one is in Purgatory suffering in order that he may be purified for the presence of God. What divine power alone could do has been effected; he has passed from death to life – from the death of sin to the life of sanctifying grace; it is by divine power alone that such a resurrection is accomplished... Dry then, your eyes,

⁹⁶ *The Tablet*, 3 March, 1917, p. 292.

⁹⁷ C.C. Martindale, 'The Catholic Religion and the British Soldier', *The Tablet* 6 October 1917, p. 427.

⁹⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 23 June 1917, p. 799.

and cease to mourn. You can help to loose the bonds which prevent those whom you love from gazing upon the face of God.⁹⁹

Catholics claimed that such prayers could speed the way to heaven, decrease the time in purgatory and bring comfort to a person who died. Because of this, Catholics not only had the opportunity to pray for the dead but it was believed they would be naturally inclined to do so. In a homily which he gave in December 1915, the Bishop of Northampton said that the scriptures offered assurance that prayer for the dead was 'holy and wholesome'. More than this, he claimed that the idea of assisting the dead was a basic need and that prayer for the dead was 'a universal and prominent feature in the Christian Liturgy between' people on earth 'and those who have passed behind the veil'.¹⁰⁰

As much as it was a comfort for those who were still on earth to pray for souls in purgatory, it was also a responsibility. Due to the doctrine of the communion of saints, it was believed that members of the Universal Church could help one another on earth as well as the 'suffering souls in purgatory'. At the same time, 'those happy souls, who have reached their eternal home in heaven' could intercede for those people who were still on earth. This being the case, Catholics maintained that 'the whole Church, in heaven, on earth, and in Purgatory, is linked together by the bonds of charity, and forms one vast body of which the head is Jesus Christ the Divine Redeemer of mankind.'¹⁰¹

The idea that they were doing something to help their loved ones who had passed on to the next life certainly provided some comfort for Catholics. In North Finchley where a war shrine was unveiled in 1917, Bourne preached a sermon in

⁹⁹ 'Mourners', p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* 18 December 1915, p. 800.

¹⁰¹ 'Mourners', pp. 7–8.

which he asserted:

They are gone. But they exist still, and in a sense are even closer to us that before. They have gone forth into the presence of God. But who is so noble and good that he can enter straightway into the joy of his Lord. Surely the completion of this task is the greatest satisfaction they can have, that they may do penance in the next world for what they never did penance for in this. In that way we are bound to them... They have gone forth and fallen. Their work in this world is done but in eternity it is only just begun. We can show our appreciation by praying for them, and helping them in the next world. And every chance we get of helping the – what a consolation it is for us!¹⁰²

Such ideas were widespread amongst Catholics and even stretched to some non-Catholics as indicated by the success of Ronald Knox's wartime booklet *An Hour at the Front*, which he wrote in 1914 before his conversion to Catholicism.¹⁰³ This book of meditations which sold 70,000 copies during the war, suggested that people should devote five minutes of prayer and meditation to twelve different subjects such as victory, the justice of the Allied cause and the churches in the front line. In addition to these, he said: 'Picture to yourself that even now as you pray, there are probably numbers of souls enduring the terrible agony of parting from their bodies and few of them able to face the next world with sure confidence... think of the poor souls in Purgatory.' Such meditations were of the highest importance because they helped people to grieve and also to participate in the journey of the ones they had lost.¹⁰⁴

Prayers were recognised to be so crucial that Catholics were encouraged to make their prayers extra potent. For instance a letter to the editor of *The Tablet* suggested that it was not only important to say the Rosary but that it was possible to replace the 'Gloria' with the 'Requiem' and not lose indulgences.¹⁰⁵ Thus the Rosary could be said for the specific intention of a dead loved one, inciting not only the aid of

¹⁰² *The Tablet* 6 October 1917, p. 445.

¹⁰³ R. Knox, *An Hour at the Front* (1914).

¹⁰⁴ *Church of England*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁵ *The Tablet* 31 October 1914, p. 610.

Mary but also committing the soul of that loved one to God.

In addition to these more personal prayers, Catholics were encouraged to go to Mass and specifically, Requiem Masses. *The Tablet* said of this in 1917: 'The Church teaches us that our prayers on this earth will bring comfort and consolation and a shortening of the time of purification of those whom we have loved and who have passed beyond this world to give an account of the lives spent in our midst.'¹⁰⁶ Such ideas gave Catholics, if not a hope that their loved ones would be in heaven, then a responsibility to help them get there sooner by means of prayer. In this way, although they were separated by life and death, prayers could still be seen as bringing unity to the whole Church, both in this world and the next. This demonstrated yet another aspect that fit into the composite of universality and Catholicism.

Given their supposed efficaciousness, not only individuals but lay organisations, parishes and schools promoted such prayers for the dead. For instance, a committee for a Sailors' and Soldiers' Requiem fund was established in Britain. This group committed itself to securing two weekly masses for the repose of the war dead. Moreover, it helped generally in the remembrance of the Catholic war dead.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, support was gained for the Association of the Crusade of Prayer for the Souls in Purgatory. This was an organisation which was blessed by Leo XIII in 1893 and which Pius X and Benedict XV both endorsed. Its object was: 'To pray for the deceased who have a special claim on the members' prayers and suffrages such as relations, friends, neighbours and also priests and religious, whilst at the same time the Holy Souls in general are included.'¹⁰⁸ Such instances made clear that the dead were not forgotten and that their souls, being of utmost importance, were cared for

¹⁰⁶ *The Tablet* 23 June 1917, p. 799.

¹⁰⁷ Advertisement in *The Tablet* 2 June 1917, p. 691.

¹⁰⁸ Printed in *The Tablet* 6 May 1916, p. 609.

even after their bodies were gone.

This was of particular importance to British Catholics. Because they did not share this belief regarding prayers for the dead with Protestants, they did not have support from their fellow Christians in this crucial matter.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, the responsibility rested entirely on them. Even in August 1914, Catholics were asked to pray with special emphasis for the dead. The editor of *The Tablet* claimed:

Prayers to the eternal Father for the dead, to the son who has tasted of death for the dying and to the Holy Spirit who is the Lord and giver of life for the living, must be rising from unnumbered Catholic hearts at this hour; and from the heart characteristically and peculiarly Catholic it is prayer for the dying that is most urgent and impassioned.¹¹⁰

Likewise, in November 1914, just after All Souls, Catholics were reminded of the importance of praying for the souls of the departed in part because during the dark season of the war, ‘only the voice of the Catholic Church will be raised in intercession for the dead’. Catholics were reminded of the ‘meaning of national apostasy’ and of the extent of the ‘common heritage of Christendom the English people lost when they revolted against the Holy See.’ Although England had once been full of chapels and there had once been many masses which had been founded for the ‘repose of the souls of the faithful departed’, given the state of the national church, these could no longer do anything for her dead. Rather, because of the English embrace of Protestantism, the state church would: ‘know how to give glory and honour to their memory: but for their souls she can do nothing.’¹¹¹ Due to this Protestant deficiency British Catholics were encouraged to pray with all the more devotion for those who died.

In the individual diocese in Britain, this advocacy of prayer for the dead was also stressed. For instance, the Bishop of Menevia told his diocese that there was a

¹⁰⁹ Anglo-Catholics were a notable exception to this. See *Church of England*, pp. 177–179.

¹¹⁰ Printed in *The Tablet* 22 August 1914, p. 292.

¹¹¹ *The Xaverian* November 1914, p. 211.

need 'to pray for the men at the front and the men who have died and are in purgatory.'¹¹² In Southwark, a Requiem Mass for those who fell in battle was held at which it was proclaimed: 'We hope the clergy and the faithful will assist in this great act of supplication for our brave dead. Let us do all we can to help the sailors and soldiers who have died in this war.'¹¹³

At Farm Street, Masses were said for the Jesuit priests who died, and for Old Boys from Catholic schools such as Beaumont and Stonyhurst. At Westminster both the national and the international impact of the war were taken into consideration. In 1914 a Mass was held for the departed soul of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Masses were also held for the Catholics of the nations at war. In announcing a Solemn Requiem for the Italian soldiers who had fallen in the war, British Catholics were reminded that such services were necessary, and were already being held, for England and France.¹¹⁴

In keeping with this, most of the Catholic schools held Requiem Masses for all of their old boys who had died as soldiers. For instance, the memorial established by Ampleforth included not only a specific monument but also stipulated that for a period of several years, an annual Mass would be said for each old boy who had lost his life in the war.¹¹⁵ Likewise, at Stonyhurst and Saint Aidan's part of the memorials established to commemorate the war were days which were set aside each year for a Mass for the fallen in the War. This was considered to be beneficial to both the men themselves and also for those who loved them and cared for the comfort of their souls. It was explained at Saint Aidan's that they were 'sensible of the great debt of gratitude' that was owed to the men who fought and died in the war. Because of this,

¹¹² *The Tablet* 5 December 1914, p. 763.

¹¹³ From the Bishop of Southwark, printed in *The Tablet* 28 October 1916, p. 580.

¹¹⁴ *The Tablet* 28 September 1918, p. 333.

¹¹⁵ *Ampleforth Journal* (1919), p. 302.

they proposed: 'to discharge some part of that debt by celebrating, on some fixed day every year, in the College Chapel a Solemn Requiem for the repose of their souls.'¹¹⁶

In this remembrance of the men who had died, the Catholic schools brought together the members of their body who had passed into the next life with those members who remained on earth for the proclaimed benefit of both.

Other Requiem Masses were coordinated by whole dioceses. For instance, in August of 1918, Requiem Masses were said throughout Southwark. These drew significant crowds and it was said of this diocese-wide cooperation:

In the churches in the diocese of Southwark on Sunday, pulpit references were made to the commencement of the fourth year of the war, and the prayers of the various congregations were asked for their co-religionists who have made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of justice and freedom. In accordance with the wishes of the Bishop special prayers are offered daily for all Catholics who are serving with the Allied Forces and when the roar of the guns is silenced, the bravery of the Southwark Catholics who had made the supreme sacrifice during the war will be perpetuated in an appropriate manner.¹¹⁷

In this emphasis on prayers for the dead, the Catholic Church stressed the need for the whole Church to be united in prayer, both with and for one another and, as seen, the Catholic populace generally supported this initiative. One example of popular support was in the diocese of Salford where parishioners were eager to participate in Masses dedicated to the dead. In August 1918, *The Tablet* reported that rather than waiting for the day of prayer which was to be held for this purpose on 2 November, the Catholics of Manchester resolved to use the August bank holiday as 'a great commemoration of the souls of the faithful departed'. The article noted that 4000 people arrived and were standing in the open air in preparation for the Requiem Mass.¹¹⁸ Such enthusiasm was held to be a consequence not only of the great need that people had to grieve for their

¹¹⁶ *Saint Aidan's Magazine* December 1918, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Printed in *The Tablet* 11 August 1917, p. 175.

¹¹⁸ *The Tablet* 10 August 1918, p. 149.

losses, but of their general commitment to the men who had died. It was, moreover, proclaimed as a demonstration of the unity and solidarity found in the British Catholic community during the First World War.

Remembrance, Recovery and Recollection

Both Catholics and Protestants held memorial services but the differing views on prayers for the dead created a situation where Protestant services were only in memory of, and not of benefit to, the dead. They were thus more for the profit of the grieving than for the dead. This lack of recognition that the souls in purgatory benefited from the help of those on earth was seen as a serious weakness by some non-Catholics and, as the Anglican priest, Father Frere lamented: 'Prayer for the dead is one of our greatest levers and our neglect of it one of our worst faults...we are starved and dumb, particularly in face of death. While of preaching we have already too much and for lack of the prayer it runs to waste.'¹¹⁹

The difference in these approaches was considerable not only in practice but in effect. For instance, Winnington-Ingram asserted that the Anglican Church would find it necessary to 'go back to a much brighter view of death; we have lost our faith in the beauty of death'.¹²⁰ For Catholics, on the other hand, the obligations attached to the belief in purgatory allowed a belief in the efficacy of prayers for the dead. It also admitted some element of hope which could not exist in a faith which did not hold such doctrines. As Annette Becker asserted of French Catholics: 'Being a Christian, then, meant remaining in permanent attendance at an immense Mass for the dead, an

¹¹⁹ Shiels, p. 343.

¹²⁰ *Church of England*, p. 180.

infinite Requiem.’¹²¹ While this grave responsibility was by no means a cheerful task, it at least amounted to something concrete which Catholics could do for their loved ones who were dead.

This responsibility to the dead also created additional opportunities for Catholics to go to Mass and a specifically religious forum in which they could grieve. Annette Becker recognises this commemorative value of Requiem Masses in her study of the French army. With the French, she claims, an ordinary Sunday Mass did not attract large numbers of men, but a Mass offered for the dead drew an attendance that was substantially higher. Pictures which were taken of ordinary Masses at the front gave evidence that attendance ranged from two to ten men. On the other hand, when it was dedicated to the dead, this number was often in the thousands. In light of this difference, Becker concludes that such Mass attendance was not a matter of religious devotion as much as it was one of ‘paying one’s last respects to friends’.¹²²

This combination of commemorative masses being both useful and comforting was certainly utilised by British Catholics. After the Battle of Jutland, for instance, a naval chaplain recorded that he held a Requiem Mass on each of the ships in the harbour where he was located. Of this he said: ‘The number of men going to Communion was very consoling.’¹²³ As this suggests, Requiem Masses were often attended not only by the faithful but even by nominal Catholics, whereas other voluntary Catholic services often did not draw this wider circle. In this way, the situation for British Catholics was similar to that of France. However, the fact that Requiem Masses had the effect of drawing nominal Catholics into religious services was not considered a negative element among British Catholics. Rather, it was seen as

¹²¹ Becker, p. 41.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹²³ From a letter printed in *The Tablet* 30 September 1916, p. 432.

a benefit. Of such services, Bourne asserted in a 1917 homily:

We hear often in these days of memorial services such as were quite unknown only a few years ago to the great multitude of our fellow countrymen and I take it that in the mind of most Englishmen those memorial services are intended, in the first place, to do honour to the dead and in the second, to give comfort and consolation to the living.¹²⁴

So long as the priorities were kept straight, commemorative masses were seen as beneficial in every respect.

That Requiem Masses and prayers for the dead were useful in ways which extended beyond this primary function was certainly seen as a benefit to British Catholics. If they encouraged Catholics to go to Mass it was considered to be all the better.¹²⁵ So too if they kept Catholics from unorthodox means of grieving such as spiritualism, the practice which was brought to the public eye by H.G. Wells in his novel, *Mr Britling Sees it Through* and by Oliver Lodge in his book *Raymond*. The Catholic Church was formally opposed to such practises, as is demonstrated in a review of *Raymond* by C.C. Martindale. In this he said:

The book will probably be read by Catholics, though it is not written for them, nor for anyone already in possession of a strongly articulated eschatology. It considers itself to be a sort of inquiry into the conditions of the next life, and an attempt at offering scientific proof of the fact and nature of the soul's continued existence. A Catholic, of course, does not participate in this without already abdicating his faith, which teaches him to hold with certainty particular dogmas with regard to the soul's destiny, and, in a thousand ways, puts him into organic communion with the dead.¹²⁶

As important as recognition of Lodge's heretical approach, however, was the Catholic assertion that Catholics did not need to make such an inquiry into the fate of the Catholic deceased. Rather, Catholics claimed that because they already had a

¹²⁴ Printed in *The Tablet* 23 June 1917, p. 799.

¹²⁵ *Mourners*, p. 5.

¹²⁶ C.C. Martindale, 'Some Impressions of a Reader of *Raymond*', *The Dublin Review* January 1917, p. 76.

comforting understanding of the afterlife, Catholics would not need to search for consolations in these 'scientific' practices. Rather, as C.C. Martindale asserted in his review of *Raymond*, Catholics would presumably prefer their own ideals of heaven or even purgatory to the 'summer lands with brick houses, pink people, and airy cigar smoking' of the spiritualists. He claimed, moreover, that it was not only because the Catholic understanding was more inviting. Rather the: 'essential dogma is, for a Catholic, still more sacred than its vesture', and Catholics would perceive that in *Raymond*: 'The fundamental dogmas of Christ's divinity and office, and of hell, and of the whole economy of grace and the supernatural are disregarded, tampered with, or denied. But as we said, the book is not meant for Catholics as such.'¹²⁷ While this was an optimistic and not wholly accurate view of the orthodoxy of the Catholic populace, it was endorsed by the fact that many Protestants turned not to un-Christian approaches to the dead such as those supported by Lodge or Wells but to Catholic doctrines of purgatory and prayers for the dead.¹²⁸ A *Tablet* article about prayers for the dead which was written by the abbot of Farnborough explained:

The present war has quite naturally again drawn attention to the subject. Many Anglicans have lost someone dear to them, on the field of battle, and are asking themselves with some anxiety how far it is permitted to faithful members of their church to pray for their dead. They want something more than a mere empty remembrance of those who are gone. They would like to pray for their dead, to feel themselves in closer communion with them. In a word, they would wish to do what is done throughout the universal Catholic Church, that Church which so faithfully guarded devotion to the dead.¹²⁹

Such assertions did not necessarily affect the actions of Catholics or non-Catholics but they affected the perceptions which people had of the Catholic faith and of what the Church had to offer to grieving people.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹²⁸ H.G. Wells, *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916), p. 421.

¹²⁹ Michel Cabrol of Farnborough, 'Prayers for the Dead', *The Tablet* 27 February 1915, p. 265.

The consequences of this are clear in that although the Protestant majority certainly did not adopt this line, Catholic doctrines regarding the afterlife became notably more acceptable during this period. Even among sceptics the idea was not rejected outright. Regarding this, Allan Ross said in his wartime pamphlet, *A Little Book for Mourners* (1916), that in situations such as that presented by the war when ‘there is scarcely a family in the warring nations that has not been visited by death, the Catholic Church’s teaching on life beyond the grave ought to make a special appeal to men.’ He acknowledged that while there was no explicit teaching from Christ in which he bade his followers to pray for the dead, this practice was certainly not condemned in the New Testament. He claimed, furthermore, that the evidence which was available in the very earliest times of Christianity demonstrated that, ‘The practice of prayer for the dead had evidently taken deep root, and had become a matter of general observance.’¹³⁰ Because, of this, he claimed that such prayers were acceptable and beneficial.

In his *Dublin Review* article, ‘Anglicanism Past and Present’, James Britten even reported that such ideas had stretched to Nonconformists: ‘Requiem masses and other public devotions have received a great impetus from the war, and prayer for the dead is finding a footing even in Nonconformist circles.’ *The Glasgow Star* even reported that in a Free Church in Edinburgh, the preacher paid tribute to a Lieutenant Colonel who had been killed in the War. The cleric ended his address with the words: ‘Our prayer today is: Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord and may perpetual light shine upon him.’¹³¹ Although not necessarily representative of a wider trend, this provided an indication that at least some Protestant churches had become more open

¹³⁰ ‘Mourners’, pp. 1–2.

¹³¹ Quoted from J. Britten, ‘Anglicanism Past and Present’, *The Dublin Review* July 1915, p. 110. See also *Glasgow Star* 21 May 1915.

to these Catholic ideas of prayers for the dead, not only in a commemorative sense but in relation to their progress in the after-life. The Anglican Father Paul Bull also asserted that Anglicans needed to pray more actively for the war dead. He even recognised that one of the most important works which Catholics could do for the church was to pray for the dead and in so doing ‘roll away the reproach which lies upon the name of England’ for neglecting this important practice. He explained his reasons behind this position saying that British soldiers marched alongside French, Belgians and Italians and that when these soldiers died, their souls were ‘sustained beyond the Veil by his nation’s prayers’. In contrast, when British soldiers fell, their comrades stood around their graves silently because they had not been taught to pray and ‘give utterance to the heart’s dumb affection in a prayed for the departed soul’. He said that this was not a matter of accepting a position of the Roman Catholic Church since Orthodox Christians from Serbia, Romania, Russia and Siberia also prayed for the departed souls. He concluded by saying that Britain was alone in its neglect of the departed souls and that this was due to the ‘blind prejudice of Protestantism’ which had for the three preceding centuries, ‘robbed the departed of the assistance of our prayers, and deprived the mourners of the true expression of their love.’¹³²

Bull clearly set out to demonstrate the receptiveness of some Protestants to the idea of praying for the dead. However the belief in purgatory was condemned in the thirty-nine articles and this created some difficulty for the Church of England. Because of this, when he addressed the issue of prayers for the dead in 1915, Archbishop Davidson explained: ‘If the distinction be borne in mind, I have no doubt at all that prayers for the dead are permissible to loyal sons and daughters of our

¹³² P. Bull, *Peace and War* (1917), p. 87.

Church so long as they do not imply a condition of the departed which our Article XXII (of purgatory) has definitely condemned.’¹³³

In its regular ‘Notes’ column, the editor of *The Tablet* suggested that the difficulty of the position rested in the idea that prayers for the dead were generally connected with the notion of purgatory. Although Protestants could pray about the circumstances connected with the death of a loved one and could, as Davidson acknowledged, pray for the dead who were in heaven, *The Tablet* inquired: ‘One wonders whether these cloudy words will bring comfort or consolation or enlightenment to anyone. For if the idea of Purgatory is excluded –what is the meaning of prayer for the dead? What is there left to pray for?’¹³⁴ Nevertheless, that the Anglican Church attempted to find a way to hold to its position while still allowing these prayers offered some indication of the perceived value of these prayers and the corresponding desire that people had to adopt these devotions.

Meanwhile the Catholic Church continued to stress the importance of prayer for the dead, using the Anglican adoption of ‘Catholic practices’ to reinforce the validity and efficacy of these practices. This was of practical benefit to Catholicism because whether they were accepted or rejected, the Catholic approaches to death were seen by Catholics and non-Catholics as effective and appropriate means of mourning, particularly in this time of war. On a personal level, Catholics found encouragement and a channel for their grief due to their acceptance of these positions. Moreover, this had consequences for the Church more generally for in recognising that the dead were still part of the Church and that they were not separated forever but only temporarily, the unity of the Church was reinforced. Catholicism, then, was

¹³³ Reprinted in *The Tablet* 23 January 1915, p. 107. See also letters to the editor in *Church Times* 5 November 1915, p. 448.

¹³⁴ Reprinted in *The Tablet* 23 January 1915, p. 107.

shown to have a basis in something higher than nationality or political agreement which stretched even beyond life on this earth; it had a unity which extended beyond the grave. Such an understanding brought comfort to Catholics and emphasised the universality and completeness of the Catholic Church.

Conclusions

At the outbreak of the war John Galsworthy had forecasted: 'If this war is not the death of Christianity, it will be odd.'¹ A survey of Christian churches in Britain on 11 November 1918 would have shown that to some extent Galsworthy's prophesy had proved accurate.² In striking contrast to this trend, both in expectation and outcome, stood the Catholic Church. After three centuries of recusant status followed by a century in which Catholics rebuilt their position in Britain, the First World War gave the Catholic Church in Britain the opportunity to assert its advantages and to define its role within British Christianity and the British state. From the start of the war, Catholics hoped and made steps to ensure that the Catholic faith would be recognised as both timely and timeless. To a significant extent, how the Church presented itself was how it was perceived. In large part because of this, just as it had grown in the years preceding the war, the Catholic Church continued to grow in the years which followed it. This, Catholics hoped, would not only sustain the Church in the difficult years of recovery after the war but would lead it to further growth and even greater acceptance within Britain.

Although this was the hope, in the months and years which followed the war, the Catholic Church along with the other Churches in Britain as well as the nation at

¹ D. Roberts, p. 35.

² See Gill, pp. 7–16, and Currie.

large, had to come to terms with the ways in which they had been altered by the difficulties of war. They had also to recognise how their understanding of God and religion had been affected by these experiences and what this meant in terms of religious belief and practice. Among those most closely involved, the news of the armistice was greeted not with a sense of jubilation but rather with a sigh of relief.³ In a letter which they wrote jointly to the Catholic chaplains, Bishop William Keatinge and Father Stephen Rawlinson asserted that for the military chaplains the cessation of hostilities ‘must indeed be... a most happy relief’. They noted further that during the war the chaplains had taken on the difficult task of ministering to the living, wounded and dying ‘under shell fire or bombing or gas attacks, and in daily companionship with death’. Rawlinson and Keatinge acknowledged that the men were worthy of congratulations on their ‘noble and self sacrificing way’ of carrying out their ‘sacred trust’. They went on to acknowledge that ‘During the war no Catholic man has been allowed to die without the Sacraments when there was any possibility of his being reached’. They claimed that the non-Catholic men had noticed this and that the benefits were already being reaped. On an administrative note they reminded the chaplains that when Thanksgiving or commemoration services were ordered by the military authorities, as Catholics they would be ‘unable to take part’ but should arrange that ‘services for the Catholic soldiers should be held on the same day and for the same reasons, as has always hitherto been our practice.’⁴ The war had changed many of the perceptions which people had of Catholics but in terms of religious practices, the Catholic Church remained apart.

Of course, Catholics, like other Britons, joined in the general spirit of thanksgiving that the war was over. In a sermon which he gave to his London

³ See A. Gregory, *The Silence of Memory* (Oxford, 1994); hereafter referred to as *Silence of Memory*.

⁴ *The Tablet* 7 December 1918, p. 675.

parishioners at the close of the war Father Joseph Bampton SJ claimed that the hearts of Catholics were ‘full to abundance, full to overflowing; full of reminiscences of the four fateful years’ that they had just endured. In response to those whom he knew would be mourning, he asserted: ‘Let them be comforted. Their dead have not died in vain.’ He recognised the validity of their grief saying that like those of the dead, ‘their hearts have bled too’. Given this situation, he asserted: ‘The price of victory is not only the blood, the lifeblood, of the slain, it is the blood, the heart’s blood of the living. Let them be comforted, let them be proud in the thought of the victory which they, as well as theirs, have helped to win.’⁵

Although his relief at the war’s conclusion was evident, *The Tablet* reported the qualified enthusiasm conveyed by Cardinal Mercier to his diocese and the country of Belgium:

Could God refuse victory to so much faith, to so much virtue? He gives it you, complete and magnificent. Not that you have it in the way you prayed for it; it came not to you at the moment when you clamoured for it in your feverish impatience; the Master’s plan was to surprise you by the suddenness and the majesty of his omnipotence.⁶

Back in Britain, Bernard Vaughan whose fervent patriotism had inspired many to support the British cause in the war was decidedly unconvinced that Britain had finished asking questions about the meaning of the war or the reason for its long duration. In a homily which he gave three months after the war’s conclusion he said:

The war leaves people asking questions like ‘Why did God not stop the war? How can I believe in him when he permitted it?... ‘You cannot hurry up God; give him time and he will draw good out of the conflict... It had taught us that our place in the sun was merited by the boys and girls who had upheld our empire, fought for it, and sacrificed their lives to pay for it... We are now suffering from the swing of the pendulum. We are trying to grasp what we can

⁵ *The Tablet* 23 November 1918, p. 576.

⁶ *The Tablet* 29 March 1919, p. 373.

get. We are discontented and disconcerted and distrustful seemingly for the moment, but give everyone a fair hearing and things will adjust themselves.⁷

Indeed, given its magnitude it is no surprise that some Catholics responded to the armistice with sobriety. *Stonyhurst Magazine* reported with characteristic emphasis on both the national patriotism and religious piety of the boys that after classes finished on the day of the armistice, the boys spontaneously crowded around a Statue of Our Lady which was located at the end of the school corridor. They then said a short prayer of thanksgiving and offered votive candles and: 'For the rest of the day the statue was a blaze of light. *Regina Pacis, ora pro nobis.*'⁸

At the front, sentiments were often even more reserved. Father R.H.J. Steuart SJ recorded in his diary that the men received the announcement 'with a calmness and a complete absence of demonstration'. This, he suggested, would probably 'have annoyed the people at home who were doubtless at that very moment filling the streets with jubilation.' He mused further that: 'During the idle days that followed... one dwelt more on the past than on the present. In most men's minds one thought, I suspect, was uppermost: If only so and so were alive today.'⁹

While Catholics, both at the front and back in Britain contemplated the conclusion of the war and dealt with the changes which would shortly take place for them personally, nationally, and on a global scale, the Catholic Church made arrangements for practical liturgical matters. The diocese of Salford announced on the first day of the armistice that Catholics were to substitute the *Orationes imparatae Tempore belli* with those '*pro grataiarum actione*' of the same rank and to continue in this manner for one month. They also announced that the saying of the *Memorare* could cease and that the benediction and *Te Deum* could once again be said. In this

⁷ *The Tablet* 22 February 1919, p. 220.

⁸ *Stonyhurst Magazine* (1918), p. 354.

⁹ F.S., R.H.J. Steuart.

way the diocese recognised a return to the Ordinary calendar and an end to this time of sorrow and abstinence which had begun at the start of the war.¹⁰

Although the celebration and thanksgiving had begun, the difficulties of the war and the strained relations with Germany were not forgotten. In some cases, hostility actually increased. *The Tablet* asserted that German Catholics had been ‘whining’ to the Pope and that they had addressed him in an appeal for help against the heavy reparations imposed on them in the armistice conditions.¹¹ Another article claimed:

The long agony of the war is over, and after four years and four months the triumph of the Allies is absolute. The armies of the autocracies have gone down before the Armies of the parliaments and the whole system of Prussian Militarism is in the dust. All the old silly talk about ‘shining armour’ and ‘mailed fists’ is done with and put aside, as the broken toys of a child are swept into a cupboard.¹²

Likewise, in Bishop Cassartelli’s 1918 Advent pastoral ‘Et in Terra Pax’ he noted that the peace to men of good will that was announced at Christ’s birth was hoped for and that, in November of 1918 it had come. Yet he also asserted that not everyone was of good will and that this was the reason why the war had lasted as long as it did.¹³

While this antagonism toward Germany remained, some British Catholics, along with other British Christians recognised that the end of the war offered the potential for more than simply a victory over Germany and the Germanic ideals of Kultur; it ushered in the possibility of making the first step towards peace. No one stressed the importance of this more than Pope Benedict XV who, in his 1918 encyclical letter *Quam Iam Diu* which responded to the conclusion of the war, asserted that ‘the time for which the whole world has long sighed’ for which he, as

¹⁰ S.D.A., *Acta* 1918, p. 146ff.

¹¹ *The Tablet* 23 November 1918, p. 573.

¹² *The Tablet* 16 November 1918, p. 539.

¹³ S.D.A., *Acta* 11 November 1918, p. 146. ff.

Pope had 'never ceased to pray' and for which the Christian religion more generally, had 'implored with such fervent prayer' had finally come. 'The clash of arms [had] ceased.'¹⁴ This being the case, Benedict XV asserted the need to pray and to thank God for the ceasefire. However, he also warned that the war had not solved their problems since, at the root, the trouble was not the particular ills of Germany but sin itself. He maintained that there still remained:

...Moral evils, hatred, desire for vengeance, and the like, which in future it will be the work of the Paternity of the Pope to cure, just as much as he tried to assuage the material evils of the past four years. Love is needed for this: Social union in order to be reasonable must be founded on natural good will; in order to be Christian must be rendered noble by the love of Christ.¹⁵

Such deep-seated matters had still to be addressed if there was to be any hope for a true peace and true Christian revival in the world. This, the Catholic Church maintained could not be done other than through pious devotion not only to the nation but first and foremost to the teaching and practice of the Church and to the person of Christ.

Memorials

On some levels, Britons across the nation recognised that there was more work to be done before peace could actually be achieved. In their grief, the British people set about expressing both the reasons why they had been involved in the conflict of the previous years and in what ways their sacrifices had actually been of value. One of the most obvious ways in which they did this was by setting up memorials, a phenomenon which has been widely explored, most notably by Alex King in *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbols and Politics of Memorials*, and

¹⁴ *The Tablet* 7 December 1918, p. 679.

¹⁵ *The Tablet* 4 January 1919, p.15.

Adrian Gregory in *The Silence of Memory, Armistice Day 1919-1946*.¹⁶ For Catholics, even more than for Anglicans, commemoration was blatantly religious. Objects of commemoration were very often explicitly Catholic, taking the form of crucifixes, altar serving sets, plaques and *pietàs*. They were also generally located in religious settings such as church buildings, monasteries and church grounds.¹⁷ These all served as reminders of those who died in the war. Moreover, they served as symbols of what the nation had struggled to achieve and, more importantly, what the Catholic community wanted to emphasise about the war they had just supported.

Commemoration took a variety of forms. In Southwark during the summer of 1918 it was reported that in addition to the shrines which were being erected in churches, street shrines had become a common feature of the missions in South London, North Lambeth, Wimbledon and other London districts.¹⁸ In Northampton, a war memorial which featured Our Lady of Perpetual Succour was set up in honour of the fifty-one Catholic men from the parish who had been killed and the 316 who served in the war.¹⁹ In Birmingham, a memorial was set up in which families and friends were encouraged to donate a token of remembrance from their loved one; a letter, rosary, badge or other item of personal significance, as a way of honouring and preserving the memory of the war dead.²⁰ The Dominican Fathers in Woodchester opted to erect a large wayside crucifix at the bottom of the monastery hill. In explanation of this choice *The Tablet* noted:

All are aware of the impression which the wayside crucifixes of Flanders and France have left on the minds of our soldiers. They have not been slow to see in these tall crosses which still raise their heads amidst the ruins of everything

¹⁶ See A. King *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbols and Politics of Memorials* (1998), and A. Gregory, *The Silence of Memory, Armistice Day 1919-1946* (1994).

¹⁷ 'Leeds', p. 47.

¹⁸ *The Tablet* 8 June 1918, p. 746.

¹⁹ *The Tablet* 13 January 1918, p. 92.

²⁰ This memorial was opened in 2000 and although the contents are no longer available, records of the items inside the memorial are at Saint Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham.

around them an inspiring emblem of the inner meaning of the war. It is hoped that the erection of such a crucifix will serve to perpetuate the memory, not only of those who have given their lives, but of the true teachings of the war.²¹

In part because of the manner and extent of loss they sustained, the Catholic schools tended to take a practical approach to commemoration of the war dead. As noted earlier, the Ampleforth memorial took the form of an annual Mass for each old boy who had died in the war, scholarships for the sons and dependents of old boys who lost their lives in the war and the building of a chantry which was to be dedicated to those who lost their lives in the war.²² Stonyhurst proposed a similar scheme which included annual masses and scholarships. Instead of a chantry they designed a monument for the school grounds and erected and equipped a science laboratory for future generations of Stonyhurst students.²³ In this choice was evident not only the intention of remembering the dead but that of preparing the next generation to live similarly devout and heroic lives.

Although there was a wide variety of memorials, the image of the crucified Christ was by far the most common image chosen for Catholic commemoration. This was recognised in Clifton in 1917 when the bishop noted that ‘The public erection of the Crucifix’ in parts of Britain were ‘a most encouraging sign of the trend of religious thought’. This, he explained, was because such memorials not only suggested that people were praying for the dead but because they were ‘a distinct invitation to show reverence to the Passion of Christ’.²⁴

While the popularity of such images was understandable among Catholics, it is significant that this recognisably ‘Catholic’ style of memorialising the dead extended to some Anglicans as well. Alex King explains that the use of the crucifix as

²¹ *The Tablet* 3 June 1916, p. 734.

²² *Ampleforth Journal* (1918), p. 302.

²³ *Stonyhurst Magazine* (1917), p. 125.

²⁴ *The Tablet* 17 March 1917, p. 355.

an image to memorialise the dead was a recent innovation due to the suspicion that many English held for it during the Reformation and the subsequent centuries. In the Boer War the cross had become a much more common symbol but the crucifix was still used only rarely. However, by the time of the First World War, because of the increasing popularity and prominence of Catholicism in both its Anglican and 'Roman' forms, the crucifix had gained much wider acceptance among Anglicans.²⁵

Some Anglo-Catholics attempted to use the popularity of the crucifix on the continent to justify its legitimate use as a symbol for the war dead. Upon seeing a crucifix which was erected by the Carmelite Priory of Saint Joseph, Major L.E. Haynes suggested that Anglicans should employ the use of Wayside Crosses during the National Mission. He said of this: 'If a similar image of the crucified Saviour were placed in other parts of the country at the time of the National Mission surely this would do considerably more good than countless leaflets. It would at the same time serve as a memorial to the War.'²⁶

Although Catholics felt some vindication in this increased popularity of Catholic imagery, the acceptance of such images did not stretch to the majority of non-Catholics in Britain. Disapproval of Catholic images was clearly demonstrated in Croydon when in 1918 a memorial crucifix was vandalised. It was said of this incident that: 'The figure of Christ was smashed in two and the lower portion found lying on the ground.' The parish priest asserted that he thought it was the work of one or two people and was not a reflection of a common attitude. However the incident provoked a reporter from *The Croydon Times* to assert that there were still people who looked on prayers for the dead as anathema and who regarded the erections of crucifixes as 'nothing less than idols'. To balance this statement he made the point

²⁵ King, p. 47.

²⁶ Letter to *Church Times* 29 September 1916, p. 260.

that regardless of personal opinions on such images, people ought to show respect to them. This, he maintained, was because such images were ‘for the comfort of the bereaved and for those who sacrificed their lives in what they...considered to be a religious duty.’ Consequently, people should have ‘stayed their hands from such unjustifiable folly’ even if their own sense of ‘Christian forbearance’ did not prompt them to have a tolerant frame of mind toward such images.²⁷

Although such resistance certainly existed, the movement, nevertheless, appeared to be growing in force. In his 1917 Lenten pastoral, the Bishop of Clifton even asserted, with at least some justification, that the increased popularity of such memorials suggested that people were praying for the dead and that they invited a ‘distinctive’ form of reverence for the Passion of Christ. He said further that until recent days, such devotion would have been found exclusively within the Catholic Church and that even the most religious minded people ‘appeared to shrink from the contemplation of a spectacle, whose first effect was to disgust and repel...Our so called reformers retained the Cross, removed the Figure of Him who hung upon it pleading that they had therein the warrant of primitive usage.’ Although he recognised that with most Protestants this repulsion remained, he said the opinion and devotional practice related to the devotion to Christ’s passion were changing.²⁸ To some extent this was the case. The appropriate symbolism of the crucifix was also recognised at a dedication of a memorial crucifix in Edinburgh where the celebrant said to the gathering:

In Belgium it was difficult for our men to go more than a few hundred yards without seeing a representation of our Blessed Lord upon the Cross...It represented God the unchangeable and unchanging... In the crucifix, too, we saw the sorrow and the suffering of our Blessed Lord...Our Lord’s words were ‘Greater love than this no man hath that a man should lay down his life

²⁷ *The Tablet* 11 May 1918, p. 627.

²⁸ *The Tablet* 17 March 1917, p. 355.

for his friends.’ These men had followed his example and had laid down their lives for others.²⁹

Father Aveling spoke of this changing attitude in the context of the military. In particular he claimed in an article which was published in *The Tablet* a month following the cessation of the war that in the period of the war, thousands of British soldiers had ‘gazed upon the crucifixes’ in France and that they had undoubtedly asked their Catholic comrades about them. Regarding this he asked: ‘What words can [the Catholic comrade] have framed to tell them? The cross has shown a remarkable immunity to shells and bombs.’ He went further by saying that there were many instances in the battle zone where the Crucified Christ looked ‘down from the unabandoned post at the cross roads’ and watched as thousands of other ‘rough, hasty crosses’ had risen in reply to the call of duty and war.³⁰ Given this situation, he maintained: ‘When the noise and the shouting have died down and the fighting has passed on to its glorious and tear dimmed close, then indeed does the incongruity of the crucifix disappear. The dead are gathered round the parent cross. They know its secret.’³¹

Cardinal Bourne saw such openness to the Catholic crucifix as a more general openness to the Catholic Church. In a homily which he gave in February 1918 Bourne asserted to this effect that English people were moved by a ‘new sense of the reality of religion’, and that they observed the effectiveness of Catholicism ‘in the face of danger and death, its power to heal, tranquillise and uplift, the definiteness and uniformity of Catholic teaching.’ He said further that the religious significance found in the war – shrines, crucifixes and rosaries, found ‘an echo in the heart of the people,

²⁹ Printed in *The Tablet* 29 September 1917, p. 417.

³⁰ See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

³¹ *The Tablet* 21 December 1918, p. 732.

a stirring, it may be of the old Catholic tradition, never wholly obliterated.' He continued by saying that the belief regarding the 'efficacy of prayers for the dead' was becoming more prominent and that it was 'dawning upon many that their choice must be between the religion of Catholics and no religion at all.'³² This was certainly an embellishment of Catholic appeal and of any Protestant acceptance of Catholic devotions. However, there was a grain of truth in it and so long as the Anglican and Nonconformist Churches did not contest this claim either by asserting their own superiority or by questioning the Catholic claim, this confidence was bound, as indeed it did, to regain lapsed Catholics into its fold and to attract to itself other British Christians who were looking for an alternate system of beliefs.

Effects of the War

Unlike the Catholic Church which gained members and popularity in the years which followed the war, the Anglican Church and many of the large Nonconformist denominations saw a decline in church attendance and popularity. Particularly in the Anglican Church, the presumption was that people had stopped attending because they lacked confidence in the Church and its teachings.³³ Specifically, the clergy maintained that the Church's response to the 'problem of evil' had been judged as inadequate; that the trials of the war had proved too great for the Church and that it had not, therefore, addressed this grave matter sufficiently. The Catholic Church also had something of a trial of faith but for the most part the Catholic Church did not assert its failures nor was it subject to the accusation of having 'failed' during this crisis either in a practical or theological sense. This relative sense of 'Catholic

³² See *The Tablet* 16 February 1918, p. 224. See also, Aspden, p.128.

³³ *Church of England*, pp. 13–31.

success' was prevalent not only within the Catholic body but was also evident among other Britons. This shaped the ways in which Catholics viewed the war and their place in Britain during the post-war years.

Precise reasons for this preference cannot be asserted but the germ of perceived Catholic success can be found in a 1916 article written by Sydney Smith, 'Is the war a Failure of Christianity?'.³⁴

Primarily the Catholic Church exists to care for the souls of men by leading them to heaven and if her action is also beneficial to them in regard to their earthly life, this is because the virtues which conduct men heavenwards are also those which fit them best for living and serving one another.³⁴

As Smith inferred, so the Church maintained that the practical advantages of Catholicism were not in themselves the greatest assets of the Catholic faith. Catholic rituals and practice were not consoling primarily because of their inherent qualities. Rather they were recognised to be satisfying because they pointed to the greater theological significance, the heavenly authority, which Catholics claimed to be located in the Church and which they recognised to take their forms in the unifying devotions, teachings and sacraments of the Church.

The results of this understanding were deemed beneficial and the wartime devotion of Catholic soldiers was used to demonstrate its practical good effects. In *Catholic Soldiers*, Plater said that even taking into account the assertion of one chaplain who claimed that: 'War does no good which cannot be done tenfold without it', the war had seen the renewal of Christian faith among some soldiers and that 'The general opinion seems to be that, as a rule, good men have been made better and many careless Catholics at least temporarily reclaimed.'³⁵ He supported this position further by relying on responses given to the question: 'What difference has the war

³⁴ S. Smith, 'Is the War a Failure for Christianity?', *The Month* February 1916, p. 120.

³⁵ Plater, p. 144.

made in the moral and religious character of the men?’³⁶ Although they approached the question from different angles, the general consensus among Catholic chaplains was that the war had brought Catholics back to the faith, if not permanently then at least at the moment of crisis. On the one hand, the Catholic Church did not expect that these changes would be permanent among most of the men. However, Catholics held that the good effects would last for some and that, in any case, the men would return to civilian life with a more positive impression of the Church and its sacramental benefits. One chaplain said of this: ‘Catholics have found they had no reason to be shy of their religion. Above all they have faced death and found their priest by their side in the hour of danger.’³⁷

To some extent this was certainly the case, many men did respond favourably to the Catholic Church. However, as Michael Snape has recognised, the positive statements which the chaplains made about the religious practices of the men were a combination of what they as representatives of the Church saw and what they wanted to see rather than a picture of a markedly devout Catholic body.³⁸ As such, they need to be qualified if an adequate picture of popular Catholic practice is to result. Even so, clerical perceptions shaped the ways in which Catholics understood their Church and the ways in which non-Catholics viewed the Catholic faith. The fact that this positive perception of the Catholic religion was widespread and the fact that it so obviously contrasted the more self-critical assessment offered by the Anglican Church made the Catholic Church immediately more alluring to some even if the practical differences were insubstantial. Moreover, it made the Church more confident in the way it

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.144.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁸ See Snape, p. 351.

presented the Catholic faith and its legitimate place within the construct of British Christianity.

This more positive view of the Catholic faith and the Catholic soldiers who practised it extended even further. Although Catholics claimed that they, like Anglicans, did not necessarily improve in their religious devotion during the war, a respondent in *Catholic Soldiers* nevertheless maintained that this was simply because ‘Catholics came to the war with a good working religion’. They had faith and instruction and a ‘clear and definite rule of Christian life’. When judging their religious devotion and practice during the war they could be seen to have ‘stood the test’ even the ‘supreme test of war and the awful temptations of a soldier’s life in foreign towns’.³⁹ Another chaplain took a slightly different approach by saying that although he did not think that Catholics had benefited from their war experience in a substantial and practical way, they were nevertheless made to ‘realise better the universality of the Church’ since the war brought them into touch with the Church abroad.⁴⁰ Yet another maintained that he did not see that Catholics had improved in their religion at the front but that this was because Catholics had always been more eager to go to Mass than other men had been to go to their religious services. He added weight to this statement by indicating that this was not his own finding but that non-Catholics had brought this to his attention.⁴¹

British Catholic chaplains accounted for this confidence by maintaining that it was not only having access to the Mass but having the reminders of Catholic unity, namely in Catholic Belgium and France, which brought Catholics more readily to practise their faith during the war. They claimed that this also had a positive affect on

³⁹ Plater, p. 146.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

non-Catholics in the British Army. In a letter which was published by *The Tablet*, Father Aveling presented this point saying that the Nonconformist ministers had done a remarkable job in their support of the men, and that their show of unity was impressive since they appeared to have ‘few or no fundamental religious differences.’ However, he questioned the usefulness of this agreement because, in his opinion, Nonconformist Christianity had, ‘an extreme vagueness of fundamentals, in its substitution of trust for faith, in its lack of logical coherence’. He pointed out that one chaplain had commented on the Catholic contrast to this, complaining that the Catholic Church was too logical. This priest also noted that Catholic priests were ‘audacious’ in the way they presented the faith with such uniform consistency. In response to this, Aveling asserted:

Audacity and logic. Something of a combination! The fact that Catholic chaplains and therefore presumably other Catholic clergymen have always the same answer in substance to give to the same question regarding religion, strikes our non-Catholic brother chaplains with no less force than the fact that they know exactly what to do for their men in emergencies.⁴²

He said further that Protestants had come to understand that this was not due to Catholics blindly accepting the positions of Rome, or having learned ‘parrot wise’ the answers to the questions of the catechism. They had come rather to a realisation that there was ‘such a thing as a systematic theology in the Catholic Church, and that once granted the principles, the conclusions follow them.’⁴³

Such acknowledgement by non-Catholics gave Catholics substantial hope for the conversion of Britain to the Catholic faith. This hope was also found by Catholics when they looked at the ways in which some Protestants had begun to embrace ‘Catholicism’, or at least the term ‘Catholic’. This increased acceptance led *The*

⁴² *The Tablet* 21 December 1918, p. 709.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 709.

Tablet to note that there was a ‘real movement in Protestant circles to promote a “free Catholicism”’ which involved people who admired Rome but neither understood the workings of the Catholic Church nor wanted to be under papal and magisterial rule. Books such as *The Coming of Free Catholicism* written by Reverend W.G. Peck or *The Catholic Faith and Practice in English Parishes* written by Reverend Francis Underhill were used as indications by Catholics that the Catholic faith was being more favourably received by their Protestant countrymen. Such suggestions, whether true or not, demonstrated the increased self-confidence within the Catholic body at the end of the First World War.⁴⁴

Catholics regarded such movements with a mixture of defensiveness and optimism. This defensiveness was evident in a *Tablet* article which asserted:

Let us put the situation clearly. There are certain truths and practices for which our forefathers shed their blood while ministers of the Church of England stood at the scaffold and exhorted them to repent. Ministers of the same Church now claim not merely that their church has always had the same truths and practices but actually usurp our name of ‘Catholics’! We are indignant because this is a gross example of hunting with the hounds and running with the hare, and also because the claim is fantastic.⁴⁵

But a sense of hopefulness also existed. This was demonstrated by Cardinal Bourne who pushed for both the expansion of dioceses and an increase in the number of parish and regional priests. He asserted the importance of this in a sermon he gave in February 1919: ‘The conversion of England ought to be regarded as a national undertaking and to be supported by a national effort.’ ‘He explained, however, that: ‘No real progress will be made in bringing England to the unity of the Catholic faith until in every town and large village we have both church and priest.’⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *The Tablet* 15 March 1919, p. 305.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁴⁶ *The Tablet* 22 February 1919, p. 204.

In recognising this, the Catholic Church accepted the difficulties which they faced but also considered with some delight the opportunities which existed for the Catholic Church in Britain. This confidence was supported by the conversion of several quite prominent Anglicans such as G.K. Chesterton and Ronald Knox.⁴⁷ It was also supported by the weight of several 'war writers', most particularly by Siegfried Sassoon who converted to Catholicism in 1957.⁴⁸ Even when they did not convert, writers such as Henry Williamson, Vera Brittain, Robert Graves and Rose Macauley all wrote of how the war had demonstrated to them or those whom they loved that there were benefits to be found in the Catholic Church which did not exist in the Anglican faith in which they had been brought up.⁴⁹ Likewise, although he was nominally a Catholic, C.E. Montague wrote to a non-Catholic audience of the benefits of Catholicism and the Catholic chaplains.⁵⁰ Such testimonies about the benefits of the Catholic faith did not bring about a mass revival nor did they actually offer a complete or even accurate picture of the Catholic faith. However they did paint Catholicism in a positive light. This was beneficial in terms of the perception of Catholicism in Britain.⁵¹ Such accounts were particularly important when the Catholic Church was compared to the Anglican Church. As seen, the Anglican Church was not only accused of having failed but actually admitted to having fallen short as an organisation and an institution. Conversely, the Catholic Church not only was said to have succeeded but actually claimed that this was a valid assessment.

⁴⁷ As noted in the Introduction of this thesis, the number of conversions that has been most often presented is 40,000. See *The Tablet*, 1918 Dungan p. 61, and *Cross on the Sword*, p. 109.

⁴⁸ See S. Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), Sassoon converted to Catholicism in 1957. See R. Hart Davis (ed.), *Siegfried Sassoon Diaries, 1915–1918* (1983).

⁴⁹ See H. Williamson, *How Dear is Life* (original publication 1954, see 1995 edn.), p. 198, and p. 316, R. Macauley, *Non-Combatants and Others*, (original publication 1916, see 1986 edn.), R. Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (original publication 1929, 1998 edn.), pp. 198–199, V. Brittain, *A Testament of Youth* (original publication 1933).

⁵⁰ C.E. Montague, *Disenchantment* (1922).

⁵¹ See, for example, Fussell, Hynes and Ellis.

The difference in their self-evaluations was stark even if, to some extent skewed. However, the much greater difference which existed between the Churches was not in their measurement of but in their criteria for success.⁵² Catholics claimed that the aim of the Church was not to create a religion which the British nation could understand and embrace but rather to provide access to the teachings and practical aids of the universal Church to those in Britain who would embrace them. As it had held before and during the war, so the British Catholic Church maintained after the war that the church as an organisation of the state would not bring about revival nor could it ever succeed in the goal of issuing peace. Catholics maintained, instead, that the Church, if it was truly Catholic rather than partisan, could and, indeed, would, as an instrument of God's sacramental graces succeed in leading sinners to holiness. Thus, knowledge of the Church's teachings, repentance of sins and frequent recourse to the sacraments were seen as the elements which could bring individuals and the nation to holiness. Catholics firmly asserted that it was not the nation which could save the world, and it was not a church-inspired revival or 'national mission' such as that attempted by the Anglican Church which could save the nation. Rather, salvation could come through submission to the age-old teachings and practices of the Catholic Church and frequent recourse to the sacraments instituted by Christ.

Although this was the Catholic position even before the war, the benefits of the Catholic faith, both in its unity and in its exclusivity and particularly in its position as an authoritative spiritual body were exposed more dramatically during the First World War. As the Catholic men fought and died, non-Catholics and Catholics alike came to recognise the benefits, even if not the validity, of belief in the sacraments, the doctrines regarding the departed souls, and the unity of belief which came with the

⁵² See Pollard, pp. 140 –161.

unity of dogma and ecclesiastical hierarchy. This overall coherence and the comforts of the church turned many people, both Catholic and non-Catholic toward the Catholic Church.

Indeed, as *The Edmundian* certainly hoped to demonstrate when it published his letter in 1916, Captain A.V. Gompertz was not alone when he mused:

One thing I have thought (I wonder if I am alone here) and that is that those who do not believe in anything eternal must have extraordinarily little self respect left after they have seen a battlefield. It really is the consummation of the temporal part of us. For those who do believe, of course, we have the only thing which will carry us through everything; and I think that if all the world were always at war, everyone would become a Catholic.⁵³

Although Catholics never really expected that a nation-wide conversion would occur, and none actually did, these advantages, either perceived or real, shaped the way in which British Catholics thought of themselves and their Church as well as the ways in which their non-Catholic compatriots understood the Catholic faith. The experience of the war provided a chance for Catholics to assert their specific and unique place in Britain and to demonstrate that the unity of the Catholic Church with its claims and demands of universality could shape national and personal allegiances in such a way that it did not devalue but rather improved natural virtues. The war also provided scope for Catholics to demonstrate that Catholic practice and ritual were not the pinnacle but rather the practical forms of Catholic faith. Most of all, the war provided a chance for Catholics to assert their distinctive advantages at a time when other denominations in Britain were lamenting their decline. By doing this, the Catholic Church in Britain articulated a way in which Catholics could practise and integrate their faith into the unique national context of Great Britain with greater confidence.

⁵³ *The Edmundian* January 1916, p. 50.

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