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Soldiership, Christianity, and the Crimean War: The Reception of Catherine Marsh's *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars*

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ABSTRACT

Recent scholarship has done much to illuminate the cultural significance of Catherine Marsh's popular evangelical biography of Hedley Vicars, a British officer killed during the Crimean War (1853–1856). However, scholars have not systematically examined the ways in which Marsh's hagiographical portrait of this officer – who, in the eyes of many contemporaries, was the epitome of the 'Christian soldier' – was drawn into religious debates following its publication in December 1855. A crucial part of its reception history thus remains incomplete. Building on secondary literature which has recently opened new avenues for the fruitful investigation of the interface between religion and war in Victorian culture, and employing hitherto untapped sources, this article advances fresh perspectives on the place of Vicars's 'Christian soldiership' in wartime religious thought. The article situates Marsh's *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars* within the context of debates on the lawfulness of war for Christians in general, and on the justice of the Crimean War in particular, before tracing the deployment of the religious and heroic themes of the *Memorials* by pro-war clergy against peace advocates. The article then explores the peace movement's critiques of Marsh's *Memorials* which sought to undercut the idea of the 'Christian soldier' and to demolish the argument that Vicars's martial valour and fervent piety affirmed the compatibility of war, soldiering, and Christianity. The result is an account which demonstrates the centrality of religious debate to contemporary understandings of a war which helped to define the Victorian era.

KEYWORDS: militarism, pacifism, heroism, evangelicalism, war, Hedley Vicars, Catherine Marsh, religious debates

On 2 June 1855 *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper*, the penny weekly which had by this time reached the staggering circulation of half a million copies – far outstripping that of the now better-known *Illustrated London News* – printed an illustration (Figure 1) by the draughtsman and wood engraver Thomas Henry Nicholson.[1] Readers of *Cassell's*, engrossed as they would have been by the extensive pictorial coverage of the Crimean War (1853–1856) – raging for more than a year now between Britain, France, Turkey, and Piedmont-Sardinia on the one hand, and Russia on the other – would not have missed the theme of heroic martial masculinity evoked in this vivid, action-packed glimpse of a battle scene 3000 miles away. The image (hitherto unknown to scholars) depicts the

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1 Thomas Smits, *The European Illustrated Press and the Emergence of a Transnational Visual Culture of the News, 1842–1870* (Abingdon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), pp. 131, 140, 156. Nicholson was 'the principal artist for wood engravings in *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper*, 1853–57': Rodney K. Engen, *Dictionary of Victorian Wood Engravers* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1985), p. 194.

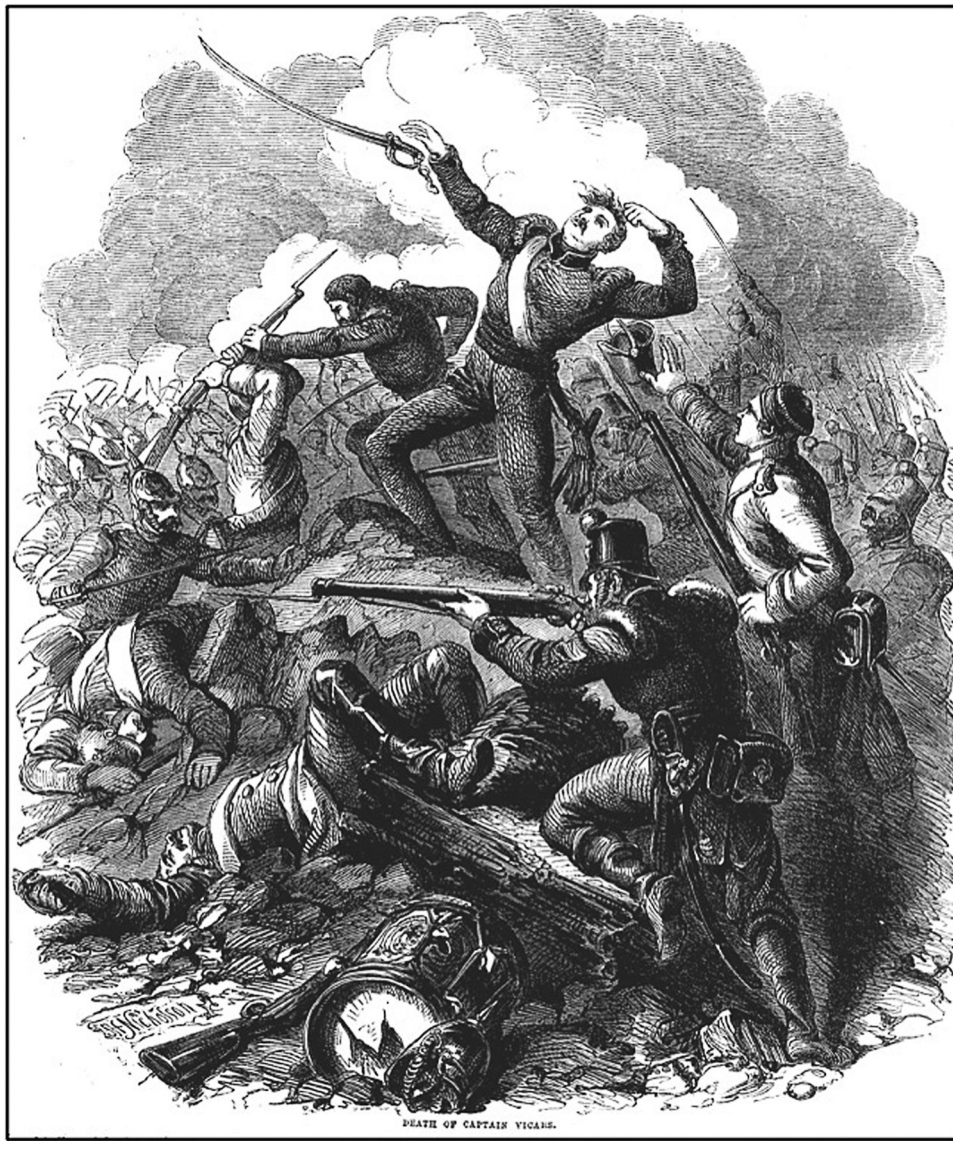


Figure 1. [Thomas Henry Nicholson], 'Death of Captain Vicars', *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper*, II.75, Saturday, 2 June 1855, p. 173.

death of Captain Hedley Vicars of the 97th regiment on 22 March 1855. *Cassell's* accompanying article explained how this 28-year-old officer who had led a detachment during a Russian sortie, lifted up his arm 'in the act of waving his sword, while he was turning to cheer on the men, when a ball struck him in the arm-pit, and he fell'.[2] Nicholson's illustration contributed to, and reflected, a growing public interest in acts of military valour – an interest later translated into the official 'institutionalization of courage' with the foundation of the Victoria Cross.[3]

[2] 'Siege of Sebastopol – The Bombardment', *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper*, II.75, Saturday, 2 June 1855, pp. 173–74.

[3] Melvin Charles Smith, *Awarded for Valour: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 5.

Nicholson presented Vicars as the embodiment of heroic militarism and the masculine ideal. This portrayal would have not been alien to the reading public, steeped as it was in Carlylean notions of heroism.[4] The close associations thus drawn between military heroism and manliness have featured in scholarly work on masculinity in the nineteenth century.[5] In Nicholson's illustration, however, there is another, more subtle theme: that of the 'Christian soldier'. This is suggested in the image's sacrificial undertones, the (almost) crucifix-like figure of the dying officer, and the contrast of light and darkness bringing him into focus and conferring on him an exalted status. These elements in Nicholson's illustration evoke a biblical or even a martyrological scene, and Victorian readers would have almost certainly picked up the religious hints.[6]

The importance contemporaries attached to the religion of servicemen has been widely recognized by historians.[7] Olive Anderson's seminal article of 1971 traced the development of 'Christian militarism' to the 1850s and specifically to the Crimean War. '[T]he emotions and experiences of the Crimean war', according to Anderson, 'and its literary aftermath between them offered the religious public plausible evidence both that a soldier could be a good Christian, and that there could be such a thing as "the Church in the Army"'.[8] John Wolffe concurs, arguing that the war 'proved to be something of a turning point in the relationship between the churches, the army and warfare', given that previous assumptions about the immorality of the army dissipated as emphasis began to be placed on the compatibility of soldiering and Christianity.[9] Although Jonathan Parry has endorsed the thesis that '[t]he war made the army appear a more respectable and even a Christian institution', he also warns that 'the rapidity of the change can be exaggerated'.[10] According to Gareth Atkins, even as early as the turn of the nineteenth century most evangelicals believed 'that the truest Christian was also the best soldier, the best sailor, the genuine patriot'.[11] Nonetheless, Anderson remains convincing in her argument that the Crimean War marked a more decisive shift in public and religious attitudes towards the army. What has been less appreciated by scholars, however, is that the increasingly popular conceptual synthesis of religion, warfare, and soldiering during

4 Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

5 See for example, J. R. Watson, 'Soldiers and Saints: The Fighting Man and the Christian Life', in *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture*, ed. by Andrew Bradstock et al. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 10–26. See also Julia Banister, 'Burying Lord Uxbridge's Leg: The Body of the Hero in the Early Nineteenth Century', pp. 17–34; and Helen Goodman, '"A Story of Treasure, War and Wild Adventure": Hero-Worship, Imperial Masculinities and Inter-Generational Ideologies in H. Rider Haggard's 1880s Fiction', pp. 232–54 in *Martial Masculinities: Experiencing and Imagining the Military in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Michael Brown, Anna Maria Barry, and Joanne Begiato (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

6 *Cassell's* was part of the religious press. It is included in Josef L. Altholz's Index of Religious Periodicals: Josef L. Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760–1900* (New York, NY, and London: Greenwood, 1989), p. 184.

7 For instance, Watson, 'Soldiers and Saints'; Kenneth E. Hendrickson, *Making Saints: Religion and the Public Image of the British Army, 1809–1885* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998); Michael Snape, *The Redcoat and Religion: The Forgotten History of the British Soldier from the Age of Marlborough to the Eve of the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2005).

8 Olive Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *English Historical Review*, 86 (1971), (p. 46–72).

9 John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland, 1843–1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 225. See also Mike Horswell, *The Rise and Fall of British Crusader Medievalism, c. 1825–1945* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 41.

10 Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 77.

11 Gareth Atkins, 'Christian Heroes, Providence, and Patriotism in Wartime Britain, 1793–1815', *The Historical Journal*, 58 (2015), (pp. 393–414).

this time was contested. This article returns to the subject of Christian militarism and uses Vicars's 'Christian soldiership' as a case study to demonstrate that Victorian Britain's religious culture showed its moral and ideological divisions in its engagement with the complex question of the relationship between Christianity and war.

Many observers took a keen interest in the religious side of Vicars's character. A letter to the editor of the evangelical Anglican *Record* dated 7 April 1855, around a fortnight after Vicars's death, by the Rev. William Marsh, a prominent cleric who counted Vicars among his dear friends, shed light on the officer's piety. The Rev. Marsh cast Vicars as a paragon of Christian faith – a quality construed as complementary to his exemplary military conduct. According to the Rev. Marsh, after Vicars had experienced a conversion and accepted the doctrine of the atonement, he purchased a copy of the Bible and began spreading God's word among his companions. Vicars thus appears as the paradigmatic evangelical whose life exemplified the four 'special marks' of the evangelical faith identified by David Bebbington: 'conversionism', 'biblicism', 'crucicentrism', and 'activism'.[12] 'He was permitted to die', wrote the Rev. Marsh, 'illustrating his favourite maxim, that "A soldier of the Cross should be the best soldier of his Queen and country"'.[13] Nicholson's illustration in *Cassell's* appeared a few months after Rev. Marsh's letter, so it is likely that Nicholson knew of Vicars's fervent piety. Nicholson would have also learned about the circumstances around Vicars's death from the report of the 'special correspondent' of the *Daily News* published on 7 April 1855.[14] The visual (Nicholson's illustration) and textual (Rev. Marsh's letter) fashioning of Vicars as a manly hero and the epitome of the 'Christian soldier' – a 'soldier-saint', to borrow J. R. Watson's felicitous term – thus began shortly after his death in the Crimea.[15]

Vicars's 'Christian soldiership' would be fully fleshed out by Rev. Marsh's daughter, the evangelical philanthropist Catherine Marsh, in her hagiographical biography published in December 1855 under the title *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars, Ninety-Seventh Regiment*. Trev Broughton has done more than any other scholar to illuminate the 'making' of Marsh's *Memorials* and to chart its publication, republication, and transnational cultural impact. Broughton has shown that after Marsh had received a request from Vicars's family – the young officer was her 'spiritual protégé and confidant' – she assembled his letters to herself and to his mother and sisters, and overwrapped them in narrative prose.[16]

Marsh's biography of Vicars was a literary sensation. 70,000 copies were circulated in the first year of publication. As was commonplace, summaries and extracts were published in miscellaneous periodicals, widening a circulation which is hard to quantify.[17] The interest it generated was most apparent among clerics across the Protestant denominational spectrum and the wings of the Church of England. Marsh received encouraging words from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the evangelical John Bird Sumner, and the liberal Anglican Charles Kingsley

[12] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 16.

[13] 'The Late Captain Vicars', *Record*, Thursday, 12 April 1855, p. [4].

[14] 'Our Army in the Crimea', *Daily News*, Saturday, 7 April 1855, p. 5, in *Gale Primary Sources: British Library Newspapers* [accessed 4 April 2021]. *Cassell's* later reprinted parts of this report to accompany Nicholson's illustration.

[15] Watson, 'Soldiers and Saints', p. 21.

[16] Trev Broughton, 'The Life and Afterlives of Captain Hedley Vicars: Evangelical Biography and the Crimean War', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 20 (2015), 5 <https://19.bbk.ac.uk/article/id/1684/> [accessed 1 March 2021].

[17] For example, 'Captain Hedley Vicars', *Sunday at Home*, 10 April 1856, pp. 236–38, in *British Periodicals* [accessed 4 March 2021].

(who would soon become associated with 'muscular Christianity'), among others. The poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson also wrote to her saying that 'even the stranger warms to the memory of so good and brave a Christian'.[18] A review of the *Memorials* in the *Morning Post* would have found most clerical and lay readers in agreement: this was a work which proved 'that there is nothing in the profession of a soldier inconsistent with the duties of a Christian'.[19]

Yet not all observers were comfortable with this alignment of martial virtues with the religion of the 'Prince of Peace'. A review in the *Friend*, a monthly journal animated by the pacifist doctrine of non-resistance of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) which was based on the precepts of the New Testament, commented on the exploitation by war advocates of the incongruous mixture of militarism and Christianity embodied in Vicars: 'We are aware that this extraordinary memoir of a sincere Christian, paradoxical as the term may appear, will, doubtless, be eagerly caught at by the upholders of war'. And it continued: 'We feel sure that those who declare that taking up arms in certain cases is perfectly compatible with the teachings of the New Testament, will point at the subject of the book before us as a triumphant proof of their position'.[20] The reviewer's concerns were well founded: the religious and heroic themes of the *Memorials* were widely and zealously deployed by supporters of war as argumentative ammunition in debates with peace advocates: with Quakers, with members of the nondenominational and ostensibly pacifist London Peace Society (founded in 1816), and with other peace-minded individuals.[21] These debates were highly interactive, with both sides engaging closely with the arguments of the other. While British servicemen were fighting in the East, a 'war of words' was being fought at home, and Marsh's volume, although a relatively late arrival, was drawn into it.

This point has never been adequately examined by scholars, so a crucial part of the reception history of the *Memorials* remains incomplete. Historians of the Crimean War have long been preoccupied with its origins, diplomacy, strategy, and campaigns.[22] Largely due to the work of Broughton, Stefanie Markovits, and Holly Furneaux we now have a better understanding of the cultural impact of the war and its place in the Victorian imagination.[23] In particular, Broughton and Furneaux have examined the place of masculinity in the wartime constructions of soldiery. But what is more important for the purposes of this article is that these two scholars have opened new avenues for exploring the interface between religion and

[18] L. E. O'Rorke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), p. 122.

[19] 'Literature', *Morning Post*, Wednesday, 19 March 1856, p. 3, in *Gale Primary Sources: British Library Newspapers* [accessed 5 March 2021].

[20] 'Literature', *The Friend*, September 1856, p. 172.

[21] Important works on the nineteenth-century peace movement which examine both its pacifist and 'pacificist' contingents include Martin Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1730–1854* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); idem, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement, 1870–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001). See also Heloise Brown, *'The Truest Form of Patriotism': Pacifist Feminism in Britain, 1870–1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

[22] See for instance, Paul W. Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War: The Destruction of the European Concert* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1972); Andrew D. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy Against Russia, 1853–56*, 2nd edn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London: Penguin Books, 2011); Andrew C. Rath, *The Crimean War in Imperial Context, 1854–1856* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); and Part I in *The Routledge Handbook of the Crimean War*, ed. by Candan Badem (London: Routledge, 2021).

[23] Broughton, 'Life and Afterlives'; Stefanie Markovits, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Holly Furneaux, *Military Men of Feeling: Emotion, Touch, and Masculinity in the Crimean War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

war. Building on this work and employing hitherto untapped sources, this article advances fresh perspectives on the place of Vicars's 'Christian soldiership' in wartime religious thought. Norman Vance has argued that during the 1850s preachers seized upon examples of servicemen such as Vicars who 'helped to give an attractively literal significance to the language of Christian warfare and the Church Militant'.[24] Although valid, Vance's point is divorced from the context of debates between the religious 'war party' and the peace movement. To illuminate the reception of the *Memorials* and Vicars's 'Christian soldiership', this article first sets out the landscape of the Victorian religious polarization over war. In Part I, this article situates the *Memorials* within the framework of debates on the lawfulness of war for Christians and about the justice of the Crimean War, before tracing the deployment of the religious and heroic themes of the *Memorials* by pro-war clergy against peace advocates. Part II explores the peace movement's attempts to undercut the idea of the 'Christian soldier' – the epitome of which was for many contemporaries Captain Vicars – so as to demolish the argument that this officer's martial valour and fervent piety affirmed the compatibility of war, soldiering, and Christianity. The result is an account demonstrating the centrality of religious debate to contemporary understandings of a war which helped to define the Victorian era.

1. THE *MEMORIALS* AND RELIGIOUS APOLOGIES FOR WAR

'War', wrote William E. Gladstone to his brother Robertson Gladstone on 29 March 1854, one day after Britain's declaration of war against Russia, 'has hitherto been to us Englishmen but a remote and abstract idea: and when we say we are going to War . . . we do not know what we mean'.[25] Gladstone's comment might, at first, appear mystifying. After all, between the 1830s and the outbreak of the Crimean War, Britain fought wars in China, Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Cape. Yet for most contemporaries this was the first time after an almost 40-year period that Britain resorted to arms in a major conflict on European soil against such a formidable power as Russia. The year 1854 then seemed like an historic caesura which freighted this war with a sense of urgency and anxiety. As the first 'media war' which saw the publication of harrowing accounts by war correspondents, the visual reportage of the campaign by 'special artists', and the novel use of telegraphy and photography, the Crimean War acquired an unprecedented degree of immediacy and 'visibility' which, in turn, kindled and sustained an intense public interest.[26]

The Crimean War also occurred in a period of profound ideological tensions. Martin Ceadel has rightly noted that the year 1851 saw the acme of the British peace movement and the triumph of its principles; these were physically manifested in the Great Exhibition's Crystal Palace and resonated during the London Peace Congress.[27] Paradoxically, this was also a time of resurgent militarism stimulated by a crusading spirit on behalf of the oppressed European nationalities, by the 1852 French invasion scare, and by the reopening of the Eastern Question in 1853.[28] The Crimean War thus marked a moment when ideas of peace

[24] Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 27.

[25] British Library, Gladstone Papers Vol. CCCCXLIV, Add MS 44529, ff. 72v–73r.

[26] Markovits, *Crimean War*, p. 3. See also Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (Epping: Bowker, 1984); and Ulrich Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (Australia: Gordon and Breach, 2001).

[27] Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, pp. 31–33.

[28] Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, pp. 33–35.

were put on a collision course with ideas of war. All these factors generated vibrant debates on war and its place in the life of a professedly Christian nation.

These wartime debates acquired a particularly sharp edge among clergymen. From their pulpits on the occasions of special national worship observed between 1854 and 1856, pro-war clergymen sought to reconcile Christianity and war in opposition to peace advocates, especially those holding the 'extreme' or absolutist view that the precepts of the New Testament were fundamentally incompatible with any form of violence.[29] The first day of solemn fast, humiliation, and prayer on 26 April 1854 which called the faithful to humble themselves to receive pardon for their sins and to implore God's blessing on their arms, was widely observed by the established churches and Nonconformist denominations. The exception was the pacifist Religious Society of Friends. For the *Friend* there was 'something of solemn mockery' in the nation's act of first plunging into war and then humiliating itself and asking God to grant it victory over its enemies: 'In plain words, to enable to massacre, "take, burn, and destroy" those whom Christ has bidden "*to do good to*" and "*to love*"'.[30] As the Quaker and radical MP for Manchester John Bright commented in his diary: 'The public sentiment is demoralized and Christianity is impeded, and its character tarnished by impieties of this kind'.[31] Later in the war Richard Cobden, Bright's close associate and radical MP for the West Riding of Yorkshire who preached the gospel of free trade and peace (whilst disclaiming Quaker pacifism), wrote to one of his correspondents that 'there [was] something indescribably shocking in the practice of invoking the sanction of Heaven for the deeds of blood perpetrated in this diplomacy-bred war'.[32] Although the two parliamentarians made these comments in private, they nevertheless echoed the sentiments of many peace advocates concerning the warlike stance of clergymen and the religious public.

The outbreak of a major war on European soil after almost four decades of peace compelled clergymen to grapple with the complex question of whether war was lawful according to divine law – for Christians. Homiletic attempts to establish the lawfulness of war were almost invariably framed within a broader debate with the peace movement, especially with its pacifist contingent made up primarily of Quakers. Sermons on the first day of humiliation and on subsequent occasions of special national worship varied in how they formulated their apologies for war, but at their core they did not differ from that which John Jackson, low-church Bishop of Lincoln, preached on 26 April 1854 in the cathedral of that city. After recognizing that war was a terrible evil, the prelate dismissed the pacifist position that all war was unlawful as 'untenable'. Instead, he argued that it could be 'the duty of a Christian nation to aid a weaker State to repel the attack and resist the tyranny of powerful and unprincipled ambition'.[33] Typically, pro-war sermons resorted to the belligerent verses of the Old Testament to show that God authorized Israel's wars, before citing certain episodes from the New Testament to reinforce the argument that the Bible did not prohibit war and soldiering: the

[29] During the war, the Victorian religious public observed two days of solemn fast, humiliation, and prayer; a day of thanksgiving prayer after the fall of Sevastopol; and a thanksgiving day for the return of peace. See *National Prayers: Special Worship Since the Reformation*, ed. by Philip Williamson et al., 3 vols (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013–2020), II, 884–907.

[30] 'London, Fifth Month 1st, 1854', *The Friend*, May 1854, p. 86.

[31] John Bright, *The Diaries of John Bright*, ed. by R. A. J. Walling (London and Toronto: Cassell, 1930), p. 170.

[32] Letter to William Hargreaves (7 October 1854), in *The Letters of Richard Cobden*, ed. by Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007–2015), III, 47.

[33] John [Jackson], *War: Its Evils and Duties. A Sermon* (London: William Skeffington, 1854), pp. 7–13.

soldiers who went to John the Baptist, it was argued, were not told by him to abandon their profession, and Jesus did not reprimand the centurion for serving in the Roman army.[34]

Anglicans also used the Thirty-Seventh Article of the Church of England ('It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars') to underpin their apologetics for war.[35] The Article's Latin version specified that Christians could lawfully fight only just wars: '*Christianis licet, ex mandato magistratus, arma portare, et justa bella administrare*'. Indeed, the idea of just war was central to sermons the aim of which was morally to justify Britain's resort to arms in support of Turkey.[36] This idea informed religious and moralistic responses to the war throughout its course. *The Times*'s leader on 26 April 1854 caught the public mood: 'It is for the eternal interests of justice and truth, for the independence of States and the liberty of mankind, to check the aggressor [Russia] and to protect the oppressed, that we have undertaken this quarrel'.[37] The poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote in a letter in early November 1854 from her house in Florence: 'It seems to me a most righteous & necessary war . . . there are great interests involved, besides the specific Turkish interests: the liberty & civilization of all Europe, & the good of the world for centuries'.[38] Charles Kingsley's popular religious tract *Brave Words to Brave Soldiers and Sailors* (1855) which he sent to British servicemen fighting in the East, registered the idea that 'whosoever fights in a just war, against tyrants and oppressors, he is fighting on Christ's side, and Christ is fighting on his side'.[39] For most pro-war commentators – both clerical and lay – it mattered not that Turkey was a Muslim country and Russia a Christian one; what mattered were those eternal principles of justice and right governing international relations. '[T]he sympathies of the nation', historian J. A. Froude wrote in an 1857 *Westminster Review* article, 'were roused easily for a weak people struggling unequally for their liberties, and England threw itself into the quarrel with an enthusiasm for justice and right almost reminding imaginative persons of the days of the early Christians "who were all of one heart and one mind"'.[40]

Marsh's biography of Vicars appeared a few months after the day of thanksgiving prayer for the fall of Sevastopol observed on 30 September 1855. Her account of the life and death of the heroic, manly, and pious officer of the 97th regiment aimed to refute those claiming that 'in making a good Christian you may spoil a good soldier'.[41] Vicars's memorialist portrayed him as an individual of conspicuous martial valour and manliness, although she associated some of his early and formative virtues (his 'gentleness and a sensitive regard for the feelings of others') with the feminine gender.[42] As summarized by Marsh, the defining moments of

[34] For example, William Robertson, *Sermon Preached on the Day of Humiliation on Account of the War Ordered by Her Majesty* (Edinburgh: Paton and Ritchie, 1854), p. 11.

[35] For example, Sanderson Robins, *War in its Relation to Christianity. A Sermon* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, [1854]), p. 8.

[36] Olive Anderson, 'The Reactions of Church and Dissent towards the Crimean War', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), 210–11; Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, pp. 119–20; Paul Huddie, *The Crimean War and Irish Society* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 92–97.

[37] 'London, Wednesday, April 26, 1854', *The Times*, Wednesday, 26 April 1854, p. 8, in *Gale Primary Sources: British Library Newspapers* [accessed 10 April 2021].

[38] Letter to Henrietta Cook (5, 6, 7 November 1854), in *The Brownings' Correspondence, Volume 20*, ed. by Philip Kelley et al. (Winfield, KS: Wedgestone Press, 2013), p. 341.

[39] 'Brave Words for Brave Soldiers and Sailors' [1855], in Charles Kingsley, *True Words for Brave Men* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1878), p. 204.

[40] [J. A. Froude], 'The Four Empires', *Westminster Review*, 68 (October 1857), p. 416.

[41] [Catherine Marsh], *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars, Ninety-Seventh Regiment* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1856), p. x.

[42] [Marsh], *Memorials*, p. 6.

Vicars's life were the time he received his commission in 1843, his path-breaking conversion and repudiation of his sinful ways, his growing faith ('Jesus is very precious to my soul – my All in all'), as well as his conviction that he had a duty to convert sinners ('Let me devote all my energies to the work of endeavouring to bring my fellow-sinners and fellow-soldiers unto Jesus').[43] His Spartan camp life, Bible-reading classes, tireless provision of comfort to the hospitalized, and constant efforts to exhort them to accept Jesus suggested a man who practised what he preached. In its entirety, Marsh's *Memorials* spoke to the contemporary cultural negotiation of the relationship between religion and militarism. During the war, reports from army chaplains describing the keenness with which sick and wounded servicemen awaited to hear the gospel fed the notion that Christian piety did exist in the army.[44] Moreover, newspapers such as *The Times* observed a "tone of religious feeling" in scores of letters from servicemen.[45] Marsh's *Memorials*, the professed aim of which was to inspire the 'manly hearts' of young Englishmen 'to emulate the noble example of a CHRISTIAN SOLDIER', thus contributed to, and simultaneously exemplified, a paradigm shift in Victorian culture – a change in how many contemporaries perceived the army: no longer as a hotbed of immorality, but as an institution in which heroic valour and religious piety coexisted.[46]

This fusion of militarism and Christianity emblematized by Vicars became central in the debate between the religious 'war party' and peace advocates. For John Cumming, the popular Scottish Presbyterian preacher of Covent Garden's Crown Court Church, the letters servicemen sent home showed 'that religious hearts can beat under red coats, that there is a church in the camp as real . . . as in many a cathedral'.[47] In his sermon on the death of one 'Christian soldier' at the battle of the Alma, Cumming emphasized that these letters were expressive 'of a deep and solemn sense of God'.[48] Anglican clerics such as John Hampden Gurney agreed.[49] Cumming, who was a vociferous detractor of the peace movement, seized upon such letters to build his polemic. In his lecture in the National Schoolroom, London in January 1856, a month after the publication of Marsh's *Memorials*, Cumming asked his audience: 'Is war justifiable under any circumstances? Is the soldier necessarily the exponent of a sinful, criminal, and unholy profession?'[50] 'If he be so', Cumming argued, 'and if war be a crime in its every aspect':

> then to expect Christian men in the midst of our battalions, or to be able to trace Christian heroes in our conflicts and in our victories, would be as unreasonable as to expect fragrant moss-roses in the stagnant ditches, or to pick up what is beautiful and fair amid the mud in the streets of London.[51]

43 [Marsh], *Memorials*, pp. 65, 162.
44 'Scutari and the Crimea', *Colonial Church Chronicle and Missionary Journal*, Vol. VIII (February 1855), p. 306.
45 Quoted in E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815–1914* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 103.
46 [Marsh], *Memorials*, p. xi.
47 John Cumming, *A Word in Season: or, Comforting Thoughts to the Relatives of the Fallen Brave* (London: John Farquhar Shaw, 1855), p. 56.
48 John Cumming, *The Place of Duty; with Reflections on the Fallen at Alma. A Sermon*, 2nd edn (London: John Farquhar Shaw, 1855), pp. 33–34.
49 John Hampden Gurney, *Grave Thoughts for the New Year; in Four Sermons* (London: Hatchard and Seeleys, 1855), pp. 53–54.
50 John Cumming, *'The Church in the Army'. A Lecture* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1856), p. 3.
51 Cumming, *'The Church in the Army'*.

Cumming's motive was twofold: first, to vindicate the lawfulness of war and soldiering, and second, to challenge outspoken peace advocates such Bright and Cobden who 'would look upon the uniform of a soldier . . . very much as they would look upon the uniform of an inmate of the hulks, of Botany Bay, or of some ordinary house of detention', as well as those who held 'that as a soldier becomes holy he ceases to be heroic'. To achieve his goal Cumming drew on the Bible, but also quoted liberally from letters of servicemen such as Vicars to 'trace Christianity in soldiers, the Church in the Army'.[52] Cumming thus tapped into the heroic and evangelical ethos suffusing Vicars's letters in the *Memorials*, and zealously deployed it to demonstrate that war and Christianity were not mutually exclusive.

The Scottish cleric was not alone in this. The Cambridge-educated William Cadman soon afterwards delivered a lecture titled 'Christian Warriors' before the Church of England Young Men's Society in Freemasons' Hall, London. In seeking to contest the position of pacifists and of those who subscribed to the idea 'that a good Christian must be a bad soldier', the clerical lecturer used examples from 'a bright constellation of military worthies', including Vicars, whose lives combined bravery and godliness.[53] Vicars's commendable qualities of character were also cited by evangelicals such as Henry Montagu Villiers, canon residentiary of St Paul's, in their attempts to show that the conduct of the soldier ought to be an example for the Christian.[54] Marsh's *Memorials* thus provided evidence that a good Christian made the best soldier. At the same time, clergymen treated this biography as a manual of moral instruction for those at home. Most significantly, it provided plenty of argumentative ammunition in the hands of those who polemicized against the pacifist view that Christians could never fight wars.

An important point of contention between upholders and critics of war was the justice of the Crimean War on Britain's part. In a letter of 2 November 1854 written from Piraeus on his way to the Crimea, Vicars had stated that '[t]here [could not] be a doubt that it is a just war we are engaged in; and therefore I say . . . the sooner we are "let loose" the better'. At the same time, he denounced the Russian Tsar for making 'an aggression upon [Turkey] . . . which had given him no just cause of provocation' and thus for 'disturb[ing] the peace of Europe, and let[ting] loose upon us the horrors of war'.[55] These ideas found wide acceptance in Victorian society. The fact that such a heroic and devout officer as Vicars could declare the justice of the war in which he was fighting, drew the attention of the religious 'war party'. In January 1856, the same month that Cumming and Cadman delivered their discourses, the Oxford-educated Rev. Francis Trench, brother of the dean of Westminster Richard Chenevix Trench and brother-in-law of Catherine Marsh, gave a lecture in Reading to the Young Men's Christian Association.[56] The subject of the lecture was 'War in a religious aspect, and at times just and needful'. The Rev. Trench trod the path of scriptural exegesis followed by most pro-war clergymen: in the Old Testament, he argued, Israel's wars received divine sanction, while in the New Testament 'there [was] not to be found one single instance where any blame or

[52] Cumming, *'The Church in the Army'*, pp. 4, 7–11, 13–19.

[53] William Cadman, 'Christian Warriors', in *Lectures Delivered before the Church of England Young Men's Society, for Aiding Missions at Home and Abroad, at Freemasons' Hall* (London: Benton Seeley, 1856), pp. 4–10.

[54] Henry Montagu Villiers, *The Lessons which War Teaches. A Lecture* ([London, 1856]), p. 14.

[55] [Marsh], *Memorials*, pp. 200–1.

[56] E. I. Carlyle and H. C. G. Matthew, 'Trench, Francis Chenevix (1805–1886), Church of England clergyman and author', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2004) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-27697> [accessed 20 April 2021].

reproach is cast on the profession of arms'.[57] For Trench, the lives of British servicemen such as Vicars bore immediate witness to the fact that militarism and Christian piety walked hand in hand. 'Have you read the life and memorial of Captain Vicars?', he asked his young male audience. In order to prove that British servicemen believed in the just nature of their war against Russia, Trench went on to read out Vicars's Piraeus letter, before criticizing 'the fantastic doctrines' of those 'who would permit an insolent aggressor to continue unchecked'.[58]

Although the pulpit and the platform became primary sites of religious polemic against peace advocates, the religious press also intervened in the debate. For the pro-war Anglican *Churchman's Magazine*, the *Memorials* served as the best answer to pacifist literature which supposedly proved 'the sinfulness of bearing arms, even in a just war'.[59] Vicars's 'short and brilliant career', the magazine argued, demonstrated that Christianity was 'compatible with the most earnest and devoted attention to military duties, and with the highest state of military efficiency'.[60] Like Trench, this periodical cited Vicars's Piraeus letter to rebut 'the peace-at-any-price-men' for whom there was no such thing as a 'just war'.[61] Here was a young, heroic, manly officer of demonstrable piety who held a deep conviction in the higher moral objectives for which he was fighting, and whose life proved that war and Christianity were not antithetical.

The expectation of one reviewer in the newspaper *Empire* which opposed the war that the *Memorials* 'will probably become a text-book, to which the religious war-party will appeal, as a proof that the occupation of a soldier is not at variance with religion' was thus fulfilled.[62] Notwithstanding the widespread mobilization of the *Memorials* in polemical endeavours of the religious 'war party', peace advocates managed to uncover inconsistencies in Marsh's portrait of Vicars. As we shall see, they used these skilfully to demolish the idea of the 'Christian soldier' and to topple Vicars from the religious pedestal on which Marsh and clerical apologists for war had placed him.

2. THE PEACE MOVEMENT'S CRITIQUES OF THE *MEMORIALS*

The propagandistic use of the religious and heroic themes of Marsh's *Memorials* presented a significant challenge to the peace movement. From its outset, the Crimean War threatened the ground gained by peace advocates during the previous years, and especially in 1851 which saw the 'peace festival' (Great Exhibition) and the London Peace Congress – 'the most confident moments in the history of the peace movement', as Ceadel describes them.[63]

Adherents to the principles of the peace movement did not shy away from offering a sustained opposition to the 'war party'. Throughout the war, the Peace Society and the Religious Society of Friends, as well as many peace-minded clerical and lay commentators, circulated tracts and other publications to challenge arguments in support of war in general and Britain's decision to resort to arms against Russia in particular. For example, between the end of 1854 and early 1855 the Religious Society of Friends circulated 210,000 copies of a short tract positing the kernel of its doctrine of non-resistance: '[A]ll War, on whatever plea of policy

[57] 'Rev. F. Trench on War', *Berkshire Chronicle*, Saturday, 19 January 1856, p. 6, in *Gale Primary Sources: British Library Newspapers* [accessed 20 April 2021].

[58] 'Rev. F. Trench on War'.

[59] 'Captain Hedley Vicars of the 97th, Hero of the Trenches', *Churchman's Magazine*, 38 (February 1856), p. 65.

[60] 'Captain Hedley Vicars of the 97th', p. 71.

[61] 'Captain Hedley Vicars of the 97th', pp. 73–74.

[62] *The Example of Good Men in Relation to War: – Captain Hedley Vicars. Reprinted with a few Alterations and Additions, from* THE EMPIRE *Newspaper* (Bath: J. Cogswell, [1857]).

[63] Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 33.

or of necessity, is unlawful under the Gospel Dispensation'.[64] Furthermore, between the early months of 1854 and the signing of the Treaty of Paris two years later, the Peace Society circulated various anti-war publications mainly in pamphlet form. The Peace Society reported that the number of publications issued from around May 1854 to May 1856 amounted to an astounding 600,000.[65] Simultaneously, the Peace Society extended the circulation of its official monthly periodical, the *Herald of Peace*, which under the editorship of the pacifist Henry Richard, Congregationalist divine, secretary of the Peace Society, and Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil from 1868, consistently picked apart religious and moralistic vindications of war. Aware of the pulpit's influence on public opinion, the *Herald* critically reviewed sermons preached by established and dissenting clergy on the days of special national worship to hammer home the message that the indisputably irenic ethos of the New Testament could not be reconciled with war.[66] At the same time, peace-minded clergymen published tracts seeking to demonstrate that a true Christian could never be a soldier.[67] Thus, on the home front the Crimean War turned into a fierce 'war of words'.

Not long after the publication of Marsh's *Memorials*, peace advocates became aware that the religious 'war party' was exploiting the religious and heroic themes of the popular biography to its own ends. The 'peace party' therefore recognized the importance of responding vigorously to the *Memorials*. The most detailed and lucid response came in the form of an anonymous pamphlet titled *Soldiership and Christianity: Being a Review of the Memoirs of the Late Captain Hedley Vicars* (1856) (Figure 2). This pamphlet has recently attracted new scholarly attention: excerpts of it have been republished in the second volume of the edited collection *Nineteenth-Century Religion, Literature and Society* (2020).[68] Regrettably, the editor of this otherwise noteworthy sourcebook has not established the authorship of the pamphlet. Some scholars have suggested that it was written by a Quaker.[69] In fact, the pamphlet was a collation of two leading articles of the Peace Society's *Herald* published in the aftermath of the Crimean War.[70] It is likely, then, that the anonymous author of the pamphlet was Henry Richard, the *Herald*'s editor. The motive behind the Peace Society's decision to reprint – with minor revisions – the *Herald*'s two leaders in pamphlet form was to circulate them beyond the pages of its organ, and in this way to have a wider impact on public opinion.

The Peace Society's pamphlet made a detailed and compelling intervention in the wartime debate. It began by recognizing the 'extraordinary circulation and celebrity' of the *Memorials* 'among a certain section of the religious world'.[71] Yet the pamphlet immediately expressed its concern that Marsh's work was 'being turned to a very mistaken and mischievous use by many, who seem to imagine that the example of a good man is of value

[64] [Robert Forster], *A Christian Appeal from the Society of Friends to their Fellow-Countrymen on the Present War* ([London: Society of Friends, 1855]), p. 1; Stephen Frick, 'The *Christian Appeal* of 1855: Friends' Public Response to the Crimean War', *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, 52 (January 1970), (p. 203–210).

[65] 400,000 copies in 1854, and 200,000 copies in 1855: 'Annual Report of the Peace Society', *Herald of Peace* (June 1855), p. 211; 'Report [of the Peace Society]', *Herald of Peace* (June 1856), p. 64.

[66] 'The Christian Pulpit on the War', *Herald of Peace* (June 1854), pp. 66–68.

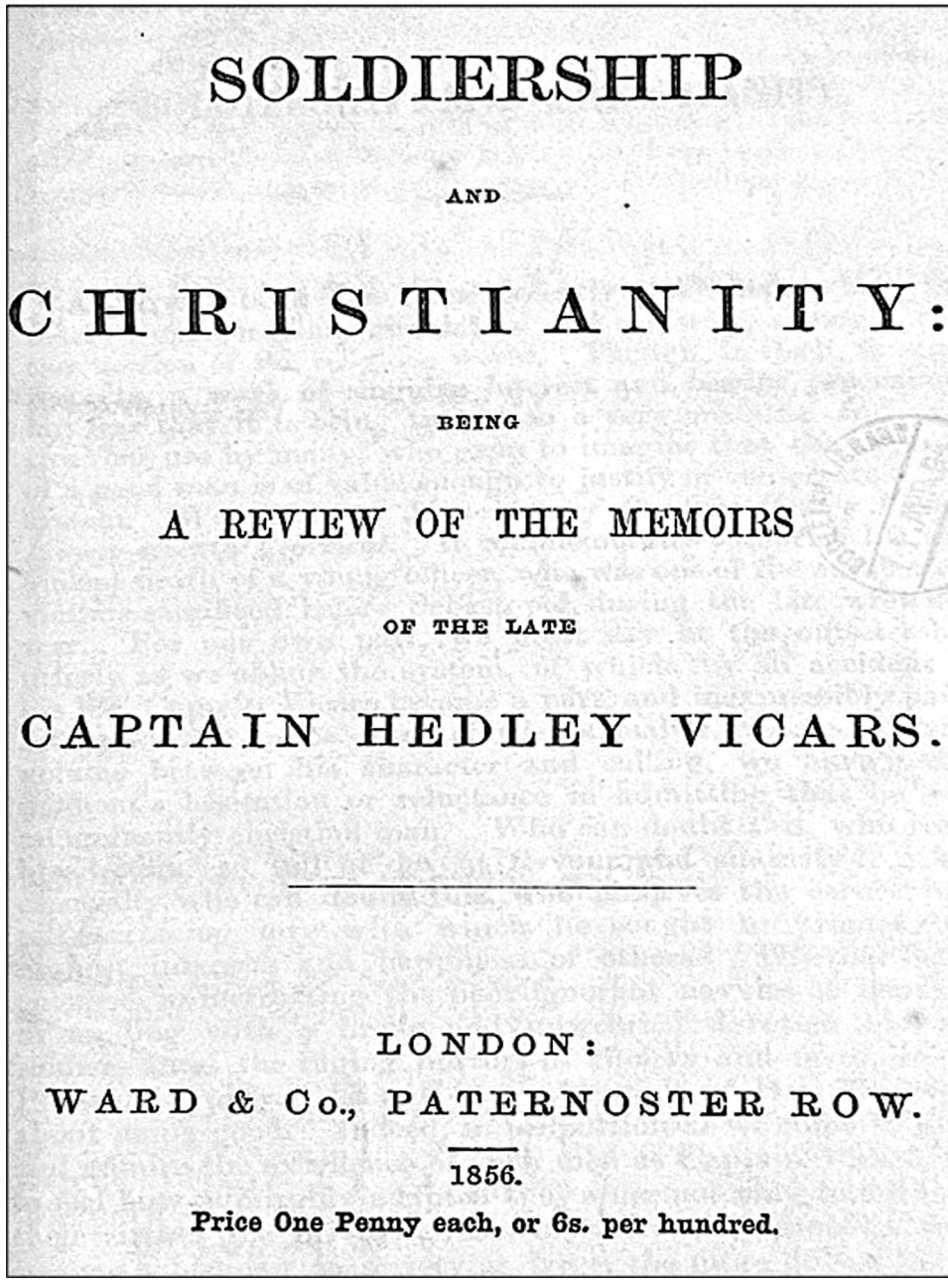
[67] For example, Anon., *The Soldier and the Christian. Addressed to All Willing to Hear both Sides. But especially to Parents about to Choose a Profession for their Sons. By a Clergyman of the Church of England* (London: Lumley, 1855).

[68] See No. 7, Part 1: 1.4 'Masculinity and Leadership' in Vol. II of *Nineteenth-Century Religion, Literature and Society*, ed. by Angharad Eyre (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 61–69.

[69] Broughton, 'Life and Afterlives', p. 21; Furneaux, *Military Men of Feeling*, pp. 70–71.

[70] 'Soldiership and Christianity', *Herald of Peace* (June 1856), pp. 66–68; 'Soldiership and Christianity', *Herald of Peace* (July 1856), pp. 78–79.

[71] Anon., *Soldiership and Christianity: Being a Review of the Memoirs of the Late Captain Hedley Vicars* (London: Ward & Co., 1856), p. 3.


SOLDIERSHIP

AND

CHRISTIANITY:

BEING

A REVIEW OF THE MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

CAPTAIN HEDLEY VICARS.

LONDON:

WARD & Co., PATERNOSTER ROW.

1856.

Price One Penny each, or 6s. per hundred.

Figure 2. Title page of the pamphlet *Soldiership and Christianity*.

enough to justify or consecrate a bad system.'[72] There was no doubt as to Vicars's piety, conceded the pamphlet. But it dismissed the argument that the commendable qualities of his character demonstrated the reconcilability of war, soldiering, and Christianity. If no one would claim that the 'diabolical' slave-trade was lawful for Christians by appealing to the

[72] *Soldiership and Christianity*.

example of the 'sainted John Newton', how could apologists for war seek to establish its lawfulness based on the example of Vicars, notwithstanding his undeniable piety?[73] 'Human conduct', declared the pamphlet, 'is to be tested by Christian principle, not Christian principle by human conduct'.[74]

A second key argument was that the fundamental condition of military service, that is, the unequivocal submission of the individual's conscience to the authority of a superior, was entirely at variance with Christianity. Soldiers, argued the pamphlet, were expected to be machines bereft of reason, feelings, and conscience. From this it followed that if an individual entered the military service he faced the risk of being commanded to commit wrong. The essence of the argument was that a Christian was not 'at liberty to become the blind instrument for the performance of acts having a moral character, without consulting the voice of conscience, or paying the slightest heed to the will of his master [Christ]'.[75]

This issue of military obedience had a direct bearing on the question of the justice of wars. As we have seen, Vicars asserted his conviction as to the just nature of the Crimean War on Britain's part in one of his letters. The pamphlet argued that Vicars 'was probably little qualified by position or intimate knowledge of the facts to form an impartial judgement of [the war's] justice or injustice'.[76] 'What right had Captain Vicars', it asked, 'to import into the account any considerations whatever of the justice or injustice of the war? He has sworn to obey his Queen and his superior officers in whatever they prescribed him to do, be it just or unjust'.[77] This line of reasoning was not original: in his influential pacifist treatise of 1823 titled *An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity*, Jonathan Dymond, a Quaker intellectual and a leading figure of the early peace movement, had argued that the military system's demand for the soldier's 'unconditional obedience' meant the abandonment of his powers of reasoning and 'moral agency'. This suggested that the soldier was always obligated to obey his superiors, notwithstanding the criminality of the command or how criminal he himself acknowledged it to be. Dymond also emphasized the difficulty for a soldier to know whether war be 'just' or not: '[S]ome moralists tell us that a soldier should assure himself, before he engages in a war, that it is a lawful and just one . . . But how is he to know that the war is just? . . . he cannot; and the truth is, that there is no way of avoiding the evil but by avoiding the army'.[78] Most adherents to the principles of the peace movement would therefore have recognized and endorsed the argument of *Soldiership and Christianity*. Indeed, similar ideas were being ventilated during the Crimean War by some peace-minded clergymen. 'If you enlist in the British army', the English Presbyterian minister Philip Pearsall Carpenter told his audience in Warrington and Liverpool in late 1854, '[y]ou have no longer any liberty to consider whether the deed be right or wrong; whether those you are commanded to kill are innocent or guilty . . . [Y]ou have no right to keep a conscience'.[79] Whatever Vicars might have believed, then, he

[73] *Soldiership and Christianity*, pp. 5–6.
[74] *Soldiership and Christianity*, p. 4.
[75] *Soldiership and Christianity*, pp. 9–12.
[76] *Soldiership and Christianity*, p. 12.
[77] *Soldiership and Christianity*.
[78] Jonathan Dymond, *An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity, and an Examination of the Philosophical Reasoning by which it is Defended*, 4th edn (London: Charles Gilpin, 1843), pp. 97–99.
[79] [Philip Pearsall Carpenter], *Words in the War: Being Lectures on "Life and Death in the Hands of God and Man"* (London: W. & F. G. Cash, 1855), p. 51.

could not pass moral judgements about the war since neither his position – one of strict obedience – nor his knowledge – limited and imperfect – permitted him to do so.

The critique launched by the Peace Society's pamphlet did not end there. Through a methodical sifting of the *Memorials*, it attempted to subvert the idea of the 'Christian soldier' epitomized by Vicars. It was clear that the officer was '[p]rofoundly impressed with the infinite worth of the soul, and the incalculable peril involved in men's dying and going into the presence of God unprepared' – hence his determination in bringing those around him 'into a state of salvation'.[80] 'There are wounded men', Vicars wrote in a letter quoted by Marsh, 'who have souls to be saved, and dying men to be told to "look to Jesus": not to speak of the comfort to a poor soldier of having a "friend in need"'.[81] But how could Vicars's indefatigable evangelical activism and soteriology be reconciled with the fact that he himself was 'an instrument in hurling scores and hundreds of immortal spirits into eternity, in what he . . . must have considered an unsaved condition?'[82] Vicars's conduct seemed, at best, hypocritical.

The conclusion of the pamphlet offered an explosive counterargument. In one of his letters quoted by Marsh, Vicars confessed that '[h]ad [he] loved Jesus when [he] was seventeen, or rather had the love of Jesus been then made known to [his] soul, [he] *certainly* should not have been a soldier'.[83] The pamphlet identified behind these words 'a lurking misgiving' in Vicars's mind regarding the lawfulness of his profession. If war was indeed compatible with Christianity, as the religious 'war party' claimed, why then did its poster boy seem to be having doubts?

> If the military profession is perfectly in harmony with the mind of the Saviour, and if, as is repeatedly affirmed in [the *Memorials*], it affords special opportunities for serving him, and making known his truth and grace, why should Captain Vicars say he would certainly never have entered upon it, had he been converted at an earlier age?[84]

Either unconsciously or (more likely) consciously, apologists for war sidestepped this awkward point. Amidst those images in the *Memorials* which impressed their minds with the idea that a good soldier could also be a pious Christian, the Peace Society's pamphlet pointed to such overlooked nuances in Vicars's character to undermine the paradigm of 'Christian soldiership'. Vicars's own admission, concluded the pamphlet, was 'pregnant with significance'.[85]

In the end, the Peace Society's pamphlet failed to deliver this 'significance'. As Ceadel has shown, such was the blow the Crimean War dealt to the peace movement that it would not again attain the position of influence it had enjoyed at mid-nineteenth century until the late 1920s.[86] Despite their noteworthy efforts, peace advocates could neither stem the tide of support for the war, nor counteract the increasingly popular notion that war, soldiering, and Christianity were compatible. The image of the 'Christian soldier' which the Crimean War consolidated in Victorian consciousness would gain added cultural and ideological weight following the death of Sir Henry Havelock during the Indian Mutiny of 1857 – an event which saw an outpouring

80 *Soldiership and Christianity*, p. 13.
81 [Marsh], *Memorials*, p. 189.
82 *Soldiership and Christianity*, p. 14.
83 [Marsh], *Memorials*, p. 132.
84 *Soldiership and Christianity*, p. 16.
85 *Soldiership and Christianity*, p. 16.
86 Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, pp. 31–2, 54.

of religious sympathy and the publication of a sizeable 'hagiographical literature' extolling his Christian virtues and action of standing up for the empire.[87] With the peace movement licking its wounds, dissenting voices such as that of the poet Philip James Bailey, who in 1858 declared that '[o]f all conceits mis-grafted on God's Word, | A christian soldier seems the most absurd', would be drowned out in a culture in which the term 'Christian soldiers' was becoming ubiquitous.[88] The following decade would see the composition of 'the most notorious of English militant Christian hymns': 'Onward Christian Soldiers' by the Anglican cleric Sabine Baring-Gould (later adapted to the tune 'St Gertrude' by Arthur Sullivan).[89] Ultimately, as Wolffe has rightly argued, the melding of religion and war would inform the 'frame of mind' of 1914.[90] It was no coincidence that the last British edition of Marsh's *Memorials* would appear two years later.[91] 'As a book for Soldiers of the King', stated the advertisement, 'or Soldiers of the King of Kings, it is unequalled for interest, pathos, and unction.'[92] 'Christian soldiership', which defined the life of the heroic, manly, and pious officer of the *Memorials*, thus retained its powerful ideological hold in British culture at a time when the nation was fighting another European conflict, more devastating and consequential than the one six decades earlier.

3. CONCLUSION

On 19 March 1955, three days before the centenary of Vicars's death, *The Times* carried a notice informing readers that the life of this Crimean hero would be commemorated in two religious services. It also briefly commented on his devotion to evangelical Christianity and his model military conduct.[93] The notice construed these two defining aspects of Vicars's life as complementary. Yet following Vicars's death 100 years earlier, the compatibility of war, soldiering, and Christianity seemingly affirmed by his martial valour and fervent piety had been a live point of contention. Examining the reception of Catherine Marsh's popular evangelical biography of Vicars, this article has demonstrated that the complex religious culture of mid-nineteenth century was hospitable to divergent arguments about 'Christian soldiership'. Within a wider 'war of words' which played out on the home front, supporters of Britain's resort to arms against Russia deployed the heroic and religious themes of Marsh's *Memorials* to vindicate the lawfulness and justice of the war and to undercut the principles of the peace movement, while peace advocates anxiously sought to challenge the compelling idea of the 'Christian soldier' epitomized by Vicars. The findings of this article contribute to scholarship on the Crimean War by illuminating how the war was experienced and debated at home, and by adding to recent interest on the interface between religion and war. The religious debate of a war which helped to define the Victorian era offers a window into a culture grappling with a range of intractable questions involved in warfare – questions which are of interest even in our secular, but by no means conflict-free, age.

87 Anne Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War', *History Workshop*, 2 (1976), (pp. 104–123).

88 Philip James Bailey, *The Age; A Colloquial Satire* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), p. 17; Anderson, 'Growth of Christian Militarism', p. 60.

89 Robert Griffiths, '"Fight the Good Fight!" War and Peace in British Hymnology', in *Religious Writings and War. Les Discours Religieux et La Guerre*, ed. by Gilles Teulié (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry-Montpellier III, 2006), pp. 156–57.

90 Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, p. 235.

91 Broughton, 'Life and Afterlives', p. 22.

92 [Catherine Marsh], *Captain Hedley Vicars 97th Regiment, The Christian Hero of the Crimea, who was Killed during the Sortie from Sebastopol, 22nd March, 1855* (Glasgow: Pickering & Inglis, [1916]), p. [2].

93 'Commemoration of Capt. Hedley Vicars', *The Times*, Saturday, 19 March 1955, p. 8, in *Gale Primary Sources: The Times Digital Archive* [accessed 1 May 2021].

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