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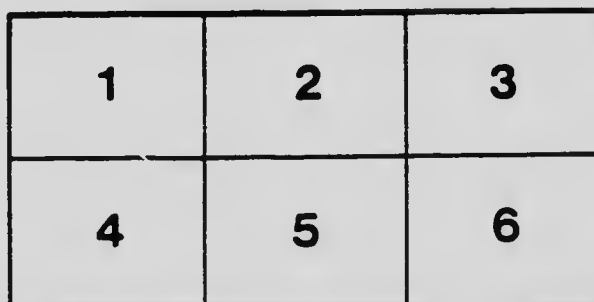
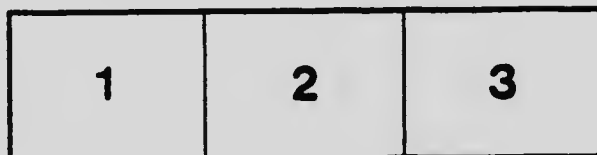
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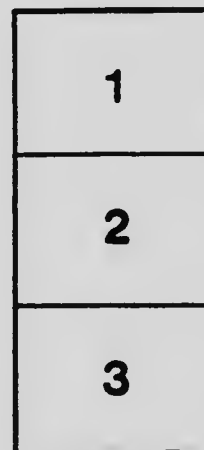
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THE WAR AND
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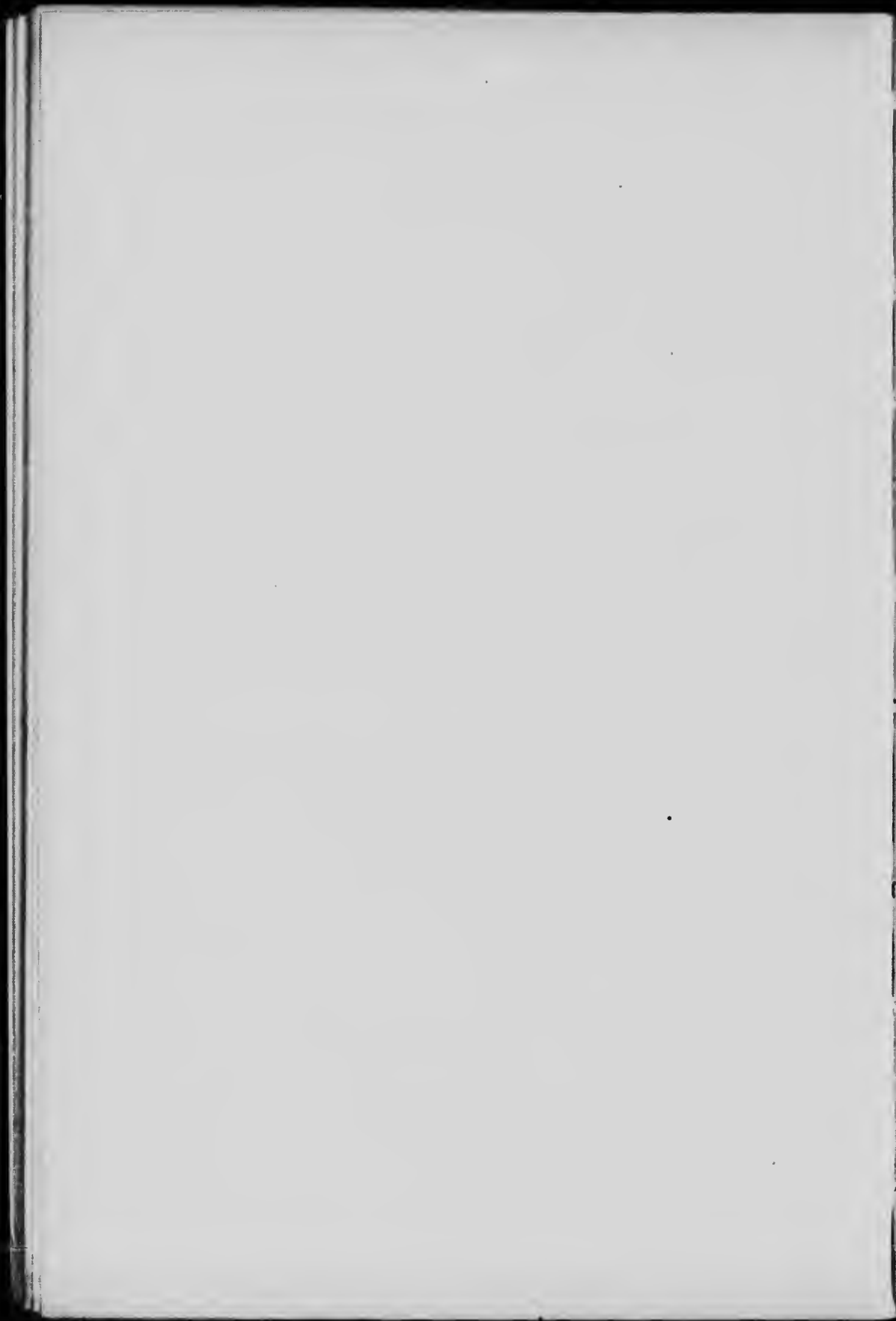
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THE WAR AND THEOLOGY

It is an accepted commonplace that nothing can be quite the same again, after the war. Men and women will no doubt fall into the old ruts, and take up once more the familiar round of duties, but they will no longer be the same men and women. They will mostly be sadder, perhaps wiser, and certainly poorer. Many of them, too, will be conscious of a changed mentality, a more sober mood, and a deeper insight into things. So they tell us that the war will affect our religious outlook. Even in France there are signs of an awakening ; and in this country those who are best able to judge anticipate some real renewal of religious interest and devotion. There is at least a possibility of this, and a right use of the opportunity by the Churches may make sure of it. But, whatever may be the case in regard to religion, we may assert quite confidently that the war will bring about great changes in Theology. In this department, at any rate, our indebtedness to Germany cannot be disputed, and any alteration in the relations between the two countries, whether in practice or in sentiment, cannot fail to influence the course of our theological development. Already advantage is being taken of the present crisis by those whose fear of German theology is greater than their knowledge of it. They argue that British theology has been over-germanized, and that, now that our eyes are opened to the true character of the German spirit, we had better have done with this obsession once and for all. But debts are not

to be so easily repudiated. In a matter like this it were better not to act hastily or under the influence of passion. And it may therefore not be without profit to attempt a brief but balanced estimate of the influence of German over British theology, and to indicate the gain or loss which may be expected to follow from the changes in the relations between the two countries which are now inevitable.

The effect of German thought on British theology began to be felt first in Reformation times ; but it was neither marked nor widespread till the middle of the nineteenth century. In the year 1857 Mark Pattison was able to write,¹ ' It must not be supposed that German theology is some obscure national product, the concern exclusively of the country which has given it birth. It is no insulated phenomenon. Though generated in Germany it belongs to Christendom. It is the theological movement of the age. It is only because there is fuller intellectual life in Germany than elsewhere —only because it so happens that, at present, European speculation is transacted by Germans, as our financial affairs are by Jews, that German characteristics are impressed on the substance of the Christian science. The capital of learning is in the hands of Germans, and theirs has been the enterprise which has directed it into theological channels.' True as this judgement is, it had been, up to that time, by no means universally accepted. Both in Liberal and orthodox circles, by Arnold as well as by Pusey, German ' neology ' was regarded with dislike and alarm. In 1825, in his preface to a translation of Schleiermacher's *Critical Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Connop Thirlwall had written, ' It would almost seem as if at Oxford the knowledge of German subjected a divine

¹ *Essays*, ii. 216.

to the same suspicion of heterodoxy which we know was attached some centuries back to the knowledge of Greek.' At that time, and for some years to come, there were very few English translations of German books, and very few theologians who were able to read such books in the original. Nevertheless there is no doubt that, during the whole of the first half of the nineteenth century, a German leaven was working in English religious thought, and preparing the way for a better understanding. Carlyle and Coleridge, each in his way a very potent influence, had familiarized the popular mind with German methods and conceptions, and men like Julius Hare, F. D. Maurice, and Erskine of Linlathen carried the new spirit into theology. Of the three great movements of religious thought in the nineteenth century, the Evangelical, the Tractarian, and the Liberal, the last-named alone can be said to have been born and nurtured under German influence. But even the two former were not altogether free from it. Traces of German Romanticism are to be found in the pietistic side of the Evangelical Revival, and in certain aspects of the Oxford movement. Its love of colour and ritual, and the stress laid on the element of mystery, may be traced in some measure to this source. But it is in the Liberal movement in English theology, represented by the Broad Church school among Anglicans, and the more advanced elements in the Free Churches, that the influence of German thought has been supreme. In this the most dominant factor was Hegelianism mediated partly through various critical schools, and partly through the work of British philosophers. Hegel worked with explosive effect through Strauss and Baur on the study of Christian origins. The rise of the new historical method, for which Lessing and Herder were responsible

along with Schelling and Hegel, made possible that critical study of the Old and New Testaments in which the Germans did such splendid work as pioneers, to be followed more soberly and constructively by numerous scholars in this country. The same influences were responsible for the comparative method in the study of religions, and, *longo intervallo*, for the rise of the brilliant religious-historical school of the present day. At the same time philosophical idealism was making itself felt in the reconstruction of Christian dogma through writers like Biedermann and O. Pfeiderer and, on the more orthodox side, Marheineke, Daub, Rothe, and Dorner. In England the same forces were at work in producing the theology of the Incarnation (*Lux Mundi* and Westcott), and generally in the reconstruction of doctrine on a Christo-centric basis.

In more recent times theology both in Germany and England has been powerfully affected by the work of Ritschl and his more or less independent followers Herrmann, Harnack, Kaftan, and others. Ritschl himself represents a reaction against Hegel and a partial return to Kant and Schleiermacher. His system is marked by a distrust alike of metaphysics and mysticism, a new emphasis on the Christian community (*Gemeinde*) and on the redemptive and experimental aspects of the Christian faith. Largely through his followers he has exercised a deep and widespread influence on theology both in this country and America. Though his ideas have not been received with any uncritical acquiescence, they have proved very fruitful and have helped to restore the balance of interest as between dogmatic and purely critical theology. It has therefore come about that, during the last decades of the nineteenth century up to the present time, relations between German and British

theology and theologians have become more and more close and cordial. Almost every book on a theological subject written in this country shows traces of our indebtedness to Germans. They have worked so assiduously and thoroughly in all the various fields, their scholarship is so exact and their speculation so bold and far-reaching that their writings cannot but win the appreciation of all serious students of the subject. It has also been the custom for theological students from England and Scotland, in ever increasing numbers, to spend some part of their course at a German University. They come back imbued with something of the German spirit and method ; and full of admiration for teachers like Harnack and Herrmann, Troeltsch and Jülicher, Johannes Weiss, Seeberg and Loofs. There is indeed some ground for the apprehension that theology in this country is coming to depend too exclusively on work done in Germany. This is seen in the fact that we are not sufficiently ready to give credit to our own men for the excellent and original work which they do. There are men living among us at the present time who in theology proper, and in philosophy of religion as well as in Old and New Testament criticism, have done work which will bear comparison with that of any continental scholars, and are sometimes more fully appreciated abroad than they are at home. Though there is no doubt that these men would be the first to acknowledge the debt which even they owe to their German *confrères*.

Now what is to be the effect of the war on the situation thus described ? As has already been said, all this long history of indebtedness and co-operation cannot be allowed to go for nothing. It is impossible to undo the past, and a wise man will not attempt it. At the same time the attitude which German theologians have taken

up in the course of the present struggle is bound to produce a very marked effect even on those who are most conscious of their obligations to them. To many in this country, it has been the most painful experience of their lives to find men, whose names they have long been accustomed to revere, showing themselves so blindly and bitterly partisan in their judgements regarding the causes of the war. The letter addressed by a number of German theologians to their English friends soon after the outbreak of the war might have been excused as a document evidently written under political influence and in ignorance of some vitally important facts. But no such excuse can be urged in favour of the second letter recently issued under the title, 'Another word to the Protestant Christians abroad.' This document is a most unworthy piece of special pleading, in which Great Britain is accused of having been the first to violate the neutrality of Belgium, the rise of the war spirit is attributed to the yellow press of this country, and Germany held up to admiration as always seeking for peace. The following sentences will suffice to show how amazingly blind to facts even trained historical scholars can become.

Our Emperor and our Government exerted every effort in their power in order to avert, if possible, the fearful disaster of such a war, being at one in their efforts with Parliament, the mass of the people and their intellectual leaders. No one has taught us more emphatically that even the Government exists under divine authority and must justify its power by the pursuance of moral purposes than has Heinrich von Treitschke : no one has condemned more than he the wanton breach of treaty or unscrupulous carrying on of war. The present war would never have arisen had England's politics been carried on in the spirit of Treitschke.

The spirit and temper revealed in this and other similar manifestoes—notably in the letter addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Professor Graf von Baudissin—will do even more than the general feeling of hostility exerted by the war to modify British opinion as to the work of the German theologians. Without giving way to any unreasonable prejudice, we shall be justified in altering our perspective so far as to make more allowance for the defects in their system and method of which we have always been more or less conscious. Recent events and revelations have forced upon our notice the way in which the whole German mentality has degenerated under Prussian influence. So far as the scholastic world is concerned, there is ground for believing that a gradual and subtle change has come about of which we are only now perceiving the fruits. In a very sweeping indictment of German scholarship Professor L. T. Hobhouse¹ writes, 'It is learning divorced from its social purpose, destitute of large and generous ideas, worse than useless as a guide to the problems of national life, smothering the humanities in cartloads of detail, but fatal to the intellect.' Extreme as this judgement is, some of the points indicated can be illustrated from German theology. There is a real divorce in Germany between theology as a science and its social and religious purpose. Of the splendid work which is done in the University class-rooms, little or no reflection is to be found in the pulpits of the Churches. The professors are, as a rule, not preachers. They are largely out of touch with practical and experimental religion, and their students are not always free to make use of what they learn. The orthodox and evangelical Churches are dead and obscurantist in their theology, and there is

¹ *Democracy and Reaction*, p. 83.

danger in being anything else than orthodox in a pulpit. The case of Pastor Jatho, and the action of even so liberal a theologian as Harnack¹ in regard to it, is a startling revelation of the truth of the saying that in Germany theology is free but religion bound. It is true that there have been of late many attempts among German evangelicals to remedy this state of things. Efforts to bring Christian people into touch with a more enlightened theology are constant and widespread, and theological students are everywhere seeking for a more real religious life. But Professor Weinel of Jena well expresses the need of the hour when he writes :

The resolve to achieve a new world, a kingdom of God, is far too weak among us. I mean the aspiration after a world ruled by truth, love, and purity, in which all that is shameful in the political and social life of the present day shall be impossible : a world in which war and retaliation, duelling and revenge, prostitution and the exploitation of the unfortunate, and all that opposes the will of a God of Love, shall be no more. Only when this lofty ideal of Christianity shall be again preached in all seriousness, when God shall be again vitally felt as ever present and speaking to us—only when Christianity, thus rejuvenated in earnest and enthusiastic, again becomes powerful in our midst, will our generation appear to be inwardly not unworthy of the splendid age in which it outwardly lives.²

These are sentiments which we might well echo in this country. And it is not unlikely that, in our more critical attitude towards Germany, we shall discover our own need to keep theology in closer touch with experience and life and always to use its historical and critical processes for a constructive end. There is still a great deal of truth

¹ Cf. *Jatho und Harnack, ihr Briefwechsel*, von Martin Rade.

² *Hibbert Journal*, vii. 745.

in the saying, *Pectus facit theologum*. Germany gives us many an object-lesson in the consequences of neglecting it, and if we can take warning from her mistakes our theology may become a more living and useful thing. There is good ground for the statement that the theology of a country is made by its preachers rather than by its professors, and if we are ever to have an English theology that is worth the name these two classes must work together and speak in tune.

But it is time to turn to an altogether different aspect of the subject. One result of the war will be that, for some time to come, there will be far fewer English and American theological students to be found in German Universities. It is to be hoped, therefore, that some effort may be made to improve and extend the facilities for theological teaching, especially in its higher branches, in this country. It would be altogether a good thing for both lands if more American theological students were to come to British Universities. They do so not infrequently as it is, and they can find very much to help them at Oxford or Cambridge, or some of the Scottish University towns. At the same time there is need for more and better theological teaching in this country. Many of the newer Universities do not attempt it, and in others it is sometimes carried on under restrictions which make it difficult to obtain the best results. If the changed conditions after the war create a demand for more advanced theological teaching it will be all to the good. There is also reason to hope that, as German influence diminishes, our theology may become more original and more British. The brilliant example which the Germans have set us in historical and critical work has been only too diligently followed by us, and this department of the work has tended to overshadow others.

If we can now persuade ourselves that we have something more to do than pick up crumbs from the German tables ; if we can reach out boldly towards a reconstruction of Christian doctrine in the light of all the new material that has been gathered from Biblical criticism on the one hand and from the comparative study of religions on the other ; if we will realize that, in the theology of the future, the new psychology has as great a part to play as that played by any philosophical system in the past, then we shall be doing a much needed work and meeting a demand of the age. The necessity for such effort has already been recognized in Germany, and we have in England and Scotland many men who are well capable of carrying it out. They are indeed better equipped than the Germans for the work of reconstructing doctrine. The German touch is apt to be rather hard, their spirit is academic and aloof from religious realities. Here we are more alive to such dangers and do not easily divorce doctrine from life.

A further impulse in the direction indicated will probably be obtained from the effect which the war is producing on the national temper, and which will probably deepen before it is over. It has already been suggested that the war will affect religion and the religious outlook. It will make men and women more serious, will raise some grave questions, and will incline many to seek a religious solace for them. All this constitutes a challenge to the theologians. If it is not to evaporate in mere emotionalism, there must be some sustained effort to meet the situation and to give ground and reason for the Christian world view. There have already been loud complaints that the Churches have not given the lead that might have been expected of them in the present crisis, and that they have spoken in too uncertain

tones on the great moral and spiritual issues involved. Such a charge is far too sweeping, though there may be some modicum of justification for it. So far as there is, it is probably due to the condition of theological unrest and uncertainty which has affected both the ministry and the Churches for some time past. As the consequences of this condition of things become more manifest the need for instruction will be more acutely felt, and the willingness to receive it will increase. Here again is a challenge to the theologians. The war is forcing to the front such questions as those of Divine Providence, Sacrifice, the immortality of the soul, and the application of Christian Ethics in national affairs. Face to face with the grim realities of the present need men and women will not be put off with conventional maxims or the stereotyped phrases of orthodoxy. The situation requires clear thinking and courageous sympathetic speech, such as can only come from men who are at once intellectually equipped and spiritually enlightened. The theologian of the future will have here a great opportunity if he will rise above the level of mere academic discussion, and give himself to the larger task of building up anew the faith of the Churches on broader and more secure foundations. On the much neglected subject of Christian Ethics especially, there is need for careful research and very definite pronouncement. This task will be easier for us than for the Germans, because we have not shrunk from the social consequences of our religion. As Professor Harnack has said, 'In the last two generations religious considerations have more than once helped to determine the home and foreign politics of England. We can point to nothing which corresponds to this, and we might hesitate to imitate it, because German Protestantism is individualistic.' There has been danger

of falling into religious individualism on this side also, but we are alive to it, and recent events will no doubt increase the tendency to give a social and international expression to the Christian faith. But if this is to be done with any good effect, the theologian will need to come down into the market-place, and address himself to the needs and problems of common men. There will always be a great deal of preparatory investigation which must of necessity be carried on in the background. But the results of it, and its bearing on the things that really matter in life and experience must be explained and brought out into the open so that he who runs may read. This must not be left to those whose task it is to popularize theology. It must be done by the theologians first and done well.

But there are yet other directions in which the war will modify the task and outlook of theology. It should open up new fields. Both in France and Russia theological work has been done that deserves to be better known and appreciated. The new religious attitude in France will surely lead to a revival of theology, and there are already many French writers on Biblical and doctrinal subjects whose clarity, sanity, and breadth of view make them well worthy of attention. It may be also that the *entente cordiale* will lead to a better understanding between the Protestant and Roman Churches. The pitiful invasion of this country by the Belgian refugees is bringing into thousands of British homes a new knowledge of Romanists and of their faith, and the knowledge will lead, it is to be hoped, to greater sympathy and charity. We cannot forget that the heroic figure of Cardinal Mercier is that of a great scholar as well as of a true pastor, and in the new conditions and broader outlook which will obtain after the war we may expect

that he, and others like him, will be respected and listened to far outside the borders of their own Church.

For many years past there has been a comity of scholarship which bade fair to become a potent influence in preserving the peace of the world. In theology, at any rate, the scholars of different countries and creeds were known to one another and respected for their works' sake in spite of all racial and ecclesiastical barriers. This happy condition of things has been rudely disturbed by the war, and it may be a long time before it can be restored. But to work for its restoration is a duty incumbent upon all those who put the pursuit of truth before any other aims. What has been said here as to the relations between theologians in this country and Germany is not intended to lead to any permanent estrangement, or to preclude the possibility of even better relations in the future. It will be a good thing for us to be compelled to readjust our perspective, and to realize that Germany has no monopoly of theological learning. It is well, too, that we should learn to develop our own theology on our own lines, and in such a way as to meet the needs of religion in our own lands. Also it is right that we should make more of the good work done in America and the Roman Catholic countries than we have generally done in the past. But we cannot leave Germany out of our calculations. She, like ourselves, will emerge from this terrible conflict sobered and chastened. It is to be hoped that both countries alike will slough off something of that materialism which has obscured their better selves, and that those spiritual elements which have played so great a part in their history will again come to the fore. The two countries have so much in common that they cannot afford to be permanently estranged. Whatever may be the case with politicians, or men of business, those who

stand for theology and religion cannot acquiesce in a lasting condition of hatred, misunderstanding, and suspicion. In the pursuit of these studies there may be found the common task and common interest which will lead the way to better feeling and more charitable judgments. German theology too will be changed by the war. We may expect there the same kind of readjustment for which we are ourselves looking. More vital matters will occupy attention, religion will become more serious and alive, the Churches will revive and there will be a greater demand for broad, constructive, spiritual thinking. This similarity in conditions, due to a companionship in suffering, can hardly fail to make for a more sympathetic mutual understanding. The mere idea of such a thing just now may be resented, but time is a great healer and, if we are wise, we shall let the years do their work and prepare ourselves to enter into their labours. If this war is to end in a lasting peace, it will only be by the efforts of men of goodwill directed towards such a consummation. There can be no better ground on which to carry out such a plan than that of theological scholarship and religious teaching. So far it would seem that the theologians have only darkened counsel by what they have written. But they are capable of better things, and when these mists of misunderstanding and suspicion have been dispersed, and the truth has come to light, we may reckon on their being the first to accept the facts of the situation. Meanwhile let them go on with their proper work in the spirit of patient inquiry and abounding faith. The course of events is opening out before them a great opportunity, and if they use it well the whole world will be in their debt.

