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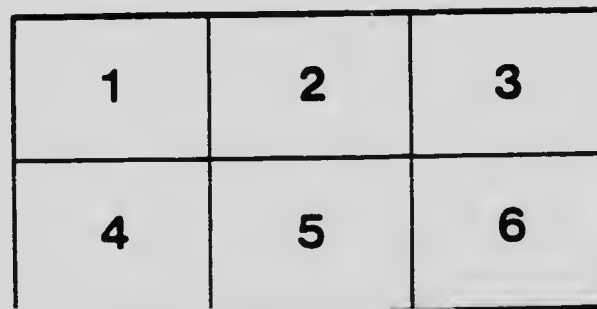
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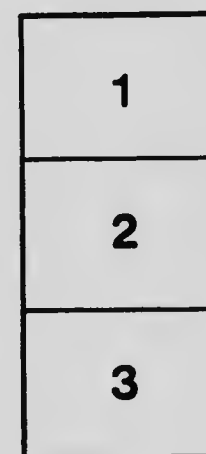
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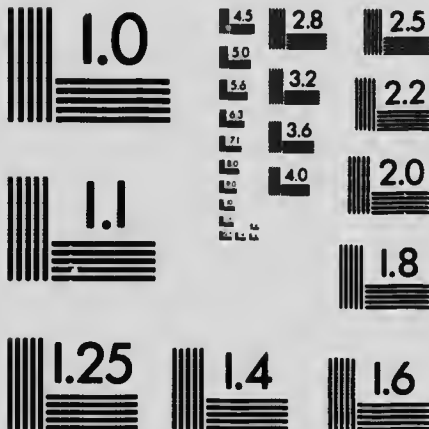
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THE CHURCH AND  
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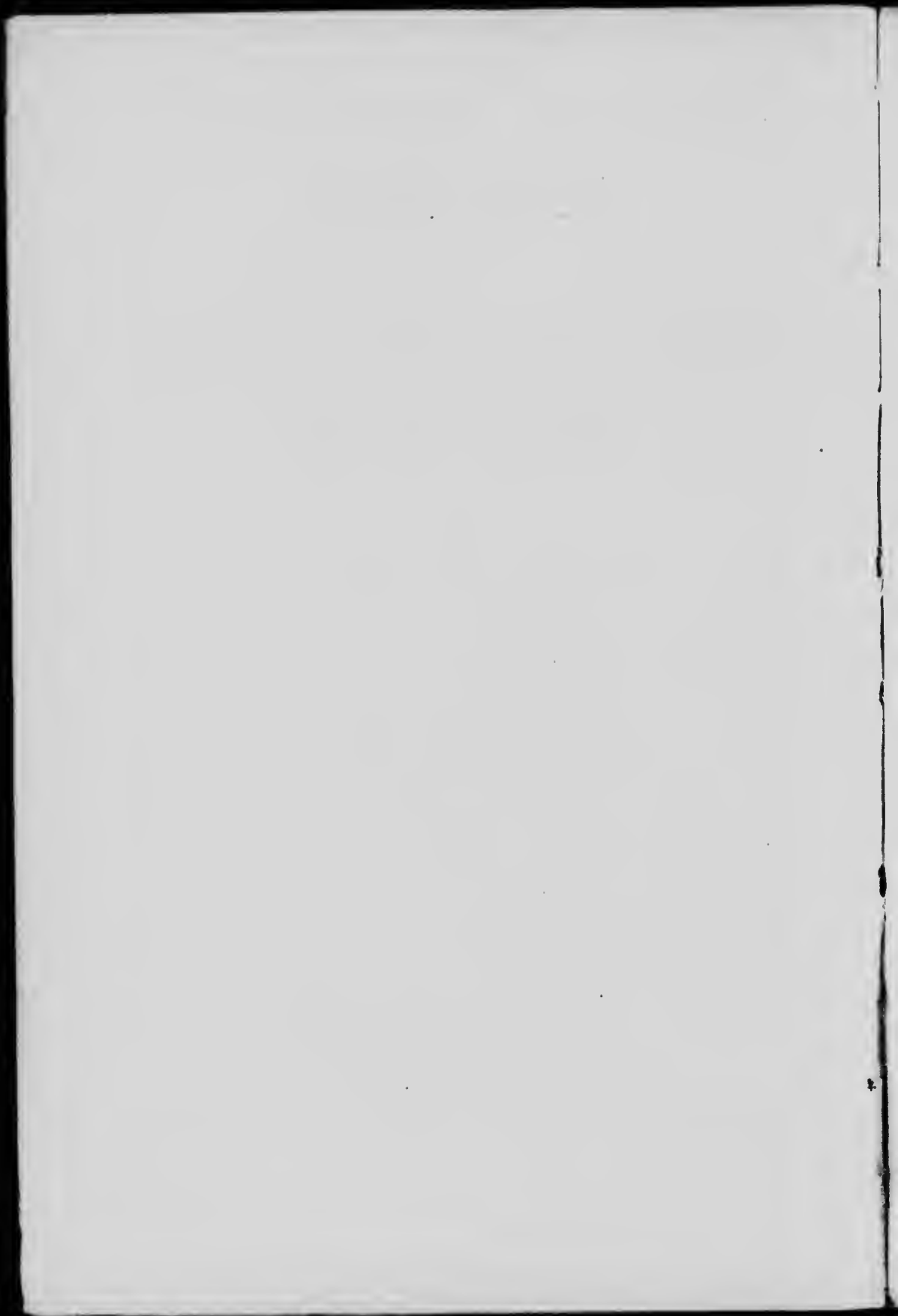
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## THE CHURCH AND THE WAR<sup>1</sup>

THE outbreak of a tremendous European war is a challenge to the nation in every department of its common life: it becomes a touchstone of our patriotism, our unity, our physical strength, of the intelligence and energy of our people, of our resources in every kind of wealth. But it is more: it is a challenge to our ideals. Our moral and religious convictions find here a searching and inevitable test.

To many of us who had hoped and laboured for international peace, and especially for friendship with Germany, the war comes as a terrible shock, upsetting all our plans, and setting back the European clock; destroying in a moment all the efforts of two generations. Gradually but surely there had grown up among us an ideal of international brotherhood, of mutual understanding, through which the European nations might cease from being like crouching panthers waiting to spring upon their prey, and might begin to live in amity. The stupidity of war, its cruelties, its social and other mischiefs, its essential futility—all this seemed so obvious that we wondered men were so slow to learn it. In the life of individual citizens private vengeance, and even private self-defence, have given place to the law of the community, whose decisions are enforced by a common sanction. Was it unreasonable to hope that by degrees the principle of law and the voice of collective humanity (or some organized portion of humanity

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted, by permission, from the *Political Quarterly* of December 1914.



like the European nations) should be capable of enthroning public law so strongly in the midst as to make appeal to warfare needless, absurd, and impossible ?

Such were our hopes. They have been rudely stricken down. Violence has broken out and is being repulsed by violence. Nearly all the European nations are embroiled in the conflict. Christendom perhaps never before exhibited so hideous and shameful a spectacle. What has the Church to say to it ? Is Christianity helpless ? Is the Gospel bankrupt ? I want to answer this question as one who has passed through the gloom of the first days of the war, as if stunned, but having been stunned is recovering from the shock, and begins to open his eyes to the light of day and the living facts of life.

We may derive consolation first of all from the attitude of our statesmen. The Prime Minister in his speech at Dublin laid it down with emphasis that this war has, and must have, for its object the dethronement of violence, the exaltation of law and justice, by means of arbitration, as the appeal of nations. His noble utterance has received confirmation from the language of his colleagues. We are at war not only to defend the neutrality of Belgium, not only to defend the existence and independence of small nationalities. We stand not only for the defence of France from wanton attack, and thereby defend our own freedom as a people ; but we avow it as our resolve, should God grant victory to the Allies and permit us a prevailing voice in the settlement of terms of Peace, to make a war like the present impossible in the future, and this not by merely crushing one or two peoples, but by securing international good understanding and a very large measure of general disarmament.

It is because we have entered upon the war in this spirit, and with these aims, that we feel able to invoke upon our effort the benediction of God, of a God who is the God of all the nations of the earth, and the Father of all our brother men. For we did not want to go to war. It accords with none of our aims and ambitions. We sought no territory, we looked for no reward in gold or in glory. The only hope we have as we bid good-bye to our sons on their way to the front, is the hope of ridding Europe, and ourselves and the German people also, from the curse of Prussian militarism. This is why the nation has entered upon the war in so calm, grave, and resolute a spirit. The issue means life or death to all the ideals we hold dear. Our people in general have displayed a wonderful spirit of quiet courage, without noise or bluster. If we may speak on behalf of the Christian public, we seem to have found and exhibited an austere faith in God, such as speaks well for the character of our people. The churches and chapels are filling, and are frequented at unusual times; the clergy are more than busy with praying, preaching, and leading their people in all kinds of charitable activity. If pleasures and amusements have become impossible through lack of means, or distasteful through a sense of nearing danger, their place has become more than filled by the sense of service, the joy of doing kindnesses. The Christian spirit is spreading wide and deep.

But also, as the war opened, and the invaders supplied us with the evidence of their national temper and aim, as with Bernhardt in our hands, or Professor Cramb to guide us, we studied the doings of the German armies in Belgium, we began to interpret these hideous phenomena, and to understand what the war really

meant. It is avowedly the outcome of a theory of history, and of a conception of ethics in violent contrast with anything like the moral ideas hitherto preached and to some extent followed in Christian Europe. That Christian ideals are impossible, that the Gospel has nothing to do with international conduct, that Germany made an initial mistake in adopting the decadent creed of her decadent Roman conquerors, that Thor and Odin are or should be the national deities and not the Christ of the Gospels, that war is the outcome of all noble nationalism, its flower and fruit, that the virility and splendour of the German race surpass all else of the kind in the world, that Germany takes the lead in all the things of the mind, that German culture is called upon, by its superiority to all other types of civilization, to impress itself forcibly upon all mankind—this was and is the Prussian creed to be thundered from the cannon's mouth and enforced by universal conquest. It was high time, therefore, that Britain, tired of Empire, weary with long wars of conquest and perpetual annexations, rent by internal dissensions, incapable of strong government, already enfeebled by luxury, decrepit with age, should be shaken and shattered by the German legions and her Empire pass to abler and better hands. For this purpose Belgium was to be the avenue to the conquest of Paris and France, and from France the way would be open for the real objective, the humiliation of England. All this we soon grasped, not as a hideous dream, but as the deliberate programme of a Christian and civilized neighbour. Of course these ideas were not new to us: they existed in German literature. In reviews and in translations, at the least, these horrible notions had been brought to our knowledge. But one thing we had not grasped,

for it was incredible : we had no idea that these hideous views had been adopted by the German Government, that they were approved by the German intellectuals, that they were shaping German policy at home and abroad. But as soon as we knew it, we felt that this war, awful as it is in its extent, and its sacrifices, and momentous as will be its results, is yet a war forced upon us by a nation gone mad, a nation possessed by a horrible idea, a nation that should be our friend but had become our bitterest foe. And therefore we have entered upon the war not only in self-defence but in defence of the old moralities, and to vindicate conceptions of national duty that, so far from being obsolete, were growing in public importance and were fast developing into a wider and deeper sense of international obligation. The Hague tribunal was one, and only one, embodiment of the further hope of Christianizing and moralizing international relationship. But the waves of war have swept over all these hopes. History has received a strange set-back.

We British people are not wholly innocent in this matter. We have had our militarists, and we have them with us still. There is one important section of the press which never fails to deride the friends of peace and proclaim the splendours of war, and seldom can forget the doctrines and language which were once named jingoistic. And the source of this tendency goes back rather far. Thomas Carlyle constantly proclaimed the importance of the great man, the great man with the ' big stick ', and as constantly he derided democracy and parliamentary government. His greatest consecutive work was the *Life of Frederick the Great*, whom he always hails as the one great ruler of his age.

That Carlyle would approve of the heathenish and barbarous doctrine of present-day Germany I by no means imagine or assert. But it is clear enough that his exaltation of one-man government and his contempt for the people served as a prelude to the harsher doctrines of modern Prussia. And therefore there is the highest need for us all to clear our minds of the cant of militarism and to fortify our faith in freedom, and in constitutionalism, and in the people. For it is important to observe that our strength in this hour of danger, in this deadly conflict with the foe, is derived precisely from our prevailing Imperial policy, which was the reverse of military or jingoist and proceeded on lines of freedom, of democracy, and of popular government. Why do Canada, Australia, New Zealand send us their sons to help us? Precisely because they are free; they are tied to us less by constitutional bonds than by their own will; their loyalty is the loyalty of free choice, of personal affection. Why is Ireland eager to be at the front with us? Because England is committed to an emancipated Ireland. Why is South Africa making a splendid response, leaders and people? Because a democratic England wiped out the memories of a miserable war by a grant of constitutional liberty. Why is India giving us such powerful and magnificent aid? Because there also, in spite of manifold difficulties and many mistakes, India's peoples prefer the Raj of Britain to any other nation; if India must be subject, she would prefer England, not Prussia because she desires more freedom and not less.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A missionary in Calcutta writes thus: 'The student community is a very good political thermometer; it indicates the popular temperature. Indeed, it is more than a thermometer, for it helps

We dare not say we have no international crimes to confess, no useless wars, and even wars of aggression to be laid at our door. But nations, like individuals, grow not only in strength and in experience but also in moral ideals. We have been led by a Gladstone, at the very time when Germany was being led by a Bismarck. The creed of the latter was the creed of blood and iron; the other believed in human nature, in freedom, in justice, and in international brotherhood. There were many in that day who laughed at Gladstone's idealism, or called it hypocrisy; there were many even on this side of the North Sea who professed their faith in brute force, in a strong policy, in efficiency, in 'Empire', and so forth. But the war of to-day—if by God's mercy it ends as we pray and hope—will be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Prussian policy of Frederick the Great, of Bismarck, and of William II. Our safety as a nation, and as an Empire, will have

to create the atmosphere which it indicates. All over India great meetings have been held; there is no doubt of their spontaneity or of their enthusiasm. One student was speaking to me very candidly. "If we must have any foreign Power over us," said he, "and we know that we must, we want England." And then he added, "Suppose that there had been any other power ruling India when that bomb was thrown at the Viceroy and he was nearly killed, we know that the troops would have been let loose on the people to cut them down; but all that Lord Hardinge said, when his body was torn and bleeding, was, 'I have not lost my faith in the Indian people.'" I have never heard anything like that said by an Indian before. I did not know that they secretly regarded it as an act of great forbearance that the troops had not been let loose to punish the city where the outrage had taken place; but it is certain that the Viceroy's love of India and faith in India, manifested at a moment when his pain might have concentrated his thoughts on his own suffering and disappointment, have contributed something to the loyalty of India to Great Britain in this hour of her great trial.

been secured just because in our dealings with other people we have followed in a large degree a policy the very reverse of the Prussian, and have been devotees of democracy, of freedom, and of the popular vote. The loyalty of South Africa, despite the seditious machinations of German agents, is the most wonderful and convincing justification of the policy pursued by us after the deplorable Boer War, the policy which undid at start the political mischief of the war and gave freedom to the provinces we had conquered. Germany could not have done this, neither was it supported in Parliament by our British militarists. It was carried by a democratic vote in a very democratic House of Commons. But it has saved the Empire.

But while we plead the justice and necessity of our action in this war, and declare our hands to be clean and our motives generous, let us be well assured that a nation engaged in a bloody war can seldom escape the Nemesis of spiritual deterioration. To become accustomed to acts of bloodshed, to read daily of scenes of carnage, to be obliged to rejoice in the news of sinking ships, of the blowing up of troop-trains, and the intercepting of communications—all this must tend to blunt the moral sense and to make callous the spirit of compassion. We begin to hate our enemies and all that pertains to them. The sense of human brotherhood is dulled and extinguished. There is a common fallacy that war ennobles, exalts, purifies the sentiment of a nation. The fact is quite the reverse. The energies of unselfish charity, the labours of wise benevolence, the efforts of the teacher and the educational organizer, the self-sacrificing career of the social and moral reformer—usually derided as a crank or disliked as a fanatic until, too late for him, he is hailed

as a benefactor—these are the elements in a community which make for progress, for enlightenment, for moral elevation. Nor is personal courage more developed by war than by the example of our thousands of colliers, quarrymen, sailors, and others who constantly carry their life in their hands in pursuing their daily vocations, and who when a mate is knocked over by an accident exhibit extraordinary courage in endeavouring to rescue him. And to these we may add unrecorded examples occurring like them in the ranks of peaceful duty. What of our doctors and nurses, engaged every hour, night and day, in fever hospitals and amid all forms of infection, whose heroism is called forth by no circumstance of publicity or excitement, and who are upborne by sheer pity for their fellow men, or by professional duty alone? We do an immense wrong to humanity when we point to war as the great school of courage or self-sacrifice, of devotion to the good of others. We forget the hourly conflict of industrial armies with all the force of the elements, with all the terrific powers of nature. Nor again must we forget that love of fighting is an instinct deeply planted in the British nation: the blood of Vikings, of Danish invaders, of a long ancestry of barbarous warriors runs in our veins. And this instinct has been encouraged since we became a nation by centuries of war. It is the common assertion of German publicists that Britain has ever been a combative Power, and has won her world-wide Empire by the sword. That she pretends now to be tired of fighting is a confession that her day is done. In the sixteenth century she fought and conquered Spain; in the seventeenth she wrestled with the Dutch; in the eighteenth she wrested half a world from France. If she is now weary and longs for peace, it is a proof



that she is effete and deserves only herself to be subdued by a younger and stronger people and superseded in the empire of the world. Such is the German plea. Let us frankly confess our barbarous antecedents, our turbulent career. But that confession does not bind us to perpetual militarism. The Empire which was so strangely won by force can only be retained by wise government, by generous extension of liberty, by home rule, i.e. by consent of the governed. There is a dry saying of Tacitus: *nemo flagitiis occupatum imperium bonis artibus exercuit*. Is it not possible that Great Britain has learned in time rather than Empire, even if won by force, can only be retained by freedom, and strengthened by peace? In speaking of the Church in relation to the war, it is essential for Christian people to be on their guard against a glorification of War, and an unconscious depreciation of Peace—whose victories are far greater than of war though (in spite of that fact) far less renowned.

If we want to appraise the loss incurred by our country through the war, we cannot arrive at our conclusion merely by calculating the numbers of dead and wounded, the misery and impoverishment of families, the destruction of property, the magnitude of the pecuniary cost and the vastness of the ultimate scale of debt and taxation. All these lines of calculation will lead us to appalling sums of loss. But even more serious is the diversion of the thought of the whole people from the study of social problems to the exclusive reading of the war news. We were steadily enlisting the sympathy of all good people, the interest of scientific students, the oratory of politicians and the energies of statesmen, on the side of a mighty battle with social and

moral evils. To quote the words of an eminent peace-lover : ' Far from wishing to destroy the energy or even the combativeness which has made us such fit instruments for the battle-field, we [shall] require these qualities for abating the spirit of war and correcting the numberless moral evils from which society is suffering. Are not our people uneducated ? Juvenile delinquents uncared for ? Does not drunkenness still reel in our streets ? Have we not to battle with vice, crime, and their parent ignorance, in every form ? And may not even Charity display as great energy and courage in saving life, as was ever put forth in its destruction ? ' These words were uttered in 1853.

Much still remains to be done to fulfil that noble prophecy ; but so deeply have the principles of social reform been impressed upon the modern mind, and so strongly has it come to be felt that national greatness is based upon social justice and moral virtue, that our great military commanders find themselves forced to be preachers of ethics and reformers of social evils. The Tsar of Russia, aware of the injury wrought upon his army by intoxicants in the war with Japan, forbade all sale of spirit and of beer during the period of mobilization. The Government of Russia is still so far autocratic that such a decree could be issued and made effective in the interests of the army. And the Government having years ago assumed the perilous monopoly of the liquor traffic, such a sweeping law could only be made by Imperial order. No doubt it caused individual hardships and gave a shock to many prejudices and social customs. But the drinking habits of Russia were horrible and bade fair to demoralize the peasantry. Accordingly this decree issued in the interests of the army was found immediately to bring a great blessing

to the whole country. Crime suddenly diminished, order reigned, the land was better cultivated, people felt themselves improved in health as well as in pocket, and also labour had increased in productivity by 25 per cent. Such an inflow of moral and economic advantage convinced the nation of the soundness of the decree, and the Tsar has yielded to advice, and made prohibition perpetual. Certainly the onward sweep of the Russian army, so vital to our success, is a powerful argument for Prohibition which is not likely to be lost upon English ears. In France the Government, for similar reasons, has prohibited the sale of absinthe, and in Great Britain an Emergency Act (which would have conferred larger powers had not Mr. McKenna surrendered to the Trade) enables magistrates in any licensing area to close liquor shops as early as 9 P.M. or even earlier by permission of the Home Secretary. Lord Kitchener also, as Minister of War, has issued repeated appeals to the nation requesting that no one will treat recruits or put difficulties in the way of those who wish to keep our soldiers chaste and temperate. None of these facts are likely to be lost on temperance reformers. Social reformers of another type, who desire to see the State take stronger steps in the direction of collectivism, have been startled by the freedom with which the Government has dealt with economic difficulties. Paper currency has been extended, the banks have received all kinds of assistance, our railways have been in a sense taken over by the State, the supply of sugar and foodstuffs has been secured by large Government purchases, and the prices of commodities have been regulated by law. In a word, before we knew where we were we found ourselves living under a condition of State Socialism. And nobody complains:

rather everybody praises the Government for its courage and skill in meeting all emergencies. It seems unlikely that we shall ever be willing to go back again to a situation in which grave social evils were allowed to thrive because we were too timid or too dull to employ State interference for their redress. We have had a taste of Socialism, and we like it. In all these developments the Christian reformer may find reason to thank God and take courage. It is too early to forecast the duration or the precise issue of this vast and momentous conflict. While these words are being written the tide of battle in the East is going against our enemy, and in the West, though the balance trembles from day to day, yet we have reason to hope that it will settle definitely on our side. But be the campaign long or short, we have a right to hope and pray for a victory for our arms, and for all the great human issues committed to our keeping. If so, it is by no means too soon for us to be asking ourselves what are the terms and conditions we should desire to secure, if Providence grant us a powerful voice in the settlement of Peace. Let us answer this question as Christian people with the Sermon on the Mount in our minds.

1. While we dislike and disclaim any motive of revenge, we must insist on the complete overthrow of Prussian militarism ; we must combine to exorcise this spirit of evil from Germany and from all Europe.

2. We must not attempt again to secure peace by any balance of power or new grouping of European States. This method has been found disastrous again and again. To safeguard peace by exalting certain other Powers in place of the Power defeated, would be to prepare the way for the repetition of this awful

war. We must effect some serious disarmament, and secure that no State shall go to war before its grievance has been laid before a European tribunal. All this is difficult, but not impossible if we really wish to have a lasting peace.

3. We must encourage the independence and neutrality of small States. Perhaps Europe may have the advantage of several new Republics and a number of new and lesser States. Small States, though they cannot be conspicuous for great wars or make extensive conquests, have probably rendered greater services to humankind in the achievements of painting, poetry, architecture, and sculpture, not to speak of religion and philosophy, than great Empires. Above all, no population must be handed over to any State without the declared consent of that population. Government must be by the consent of the governed.

4. We must have no secret treaties any more. Our Foreign Policy needs to be democratized. Parliament and the people should know far more about negotiations concerning war and peace. These colossal issues should not depend upon the secret bargainings of a dozen European statesmen. Ours at least is a country of free government and of free speech.

5. If we have learned anything from the conduct of business by firms like Krupp and others, then we shall insist that all manufacture of arms and weapons of war shall be nationalized. It is not consistent with the welfare of any nation that a certain large and wealthy section of its citizens should be able to commercialize war and amass enormous fortunes by fomenting wars, thus drawing their profit from the misery of their countrymen. This is the business of a 'Wrecker' only on a European scale.

These are a few suggestions, written down in hot haste. Others with larger experience of affairs and more leisured pens will restate our argument with greater skill. Enough if it has been suggested how a Churchman as a reformer and lover of peace may hold fast to his principles and yet take sides with the Allies in this hideous war.

# WHY WE ARE AT WAR

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