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CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE
SECOND WORLD WAR

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Admittedly the author of this thesis felt impelled to do the research required because of his own misgivings regarding the wisdom and justice of our involvement in the Second World War. The ready compliance of most churches with whatever was demanded by government decree or popular sentiment seemed like a surrender of Christian witness. The apparent acceptance by much of the clergy of everything that happened, no matter how vile and inhumane, as a sort of inevitable concomitant of war, was a source of deep concern. The cruel excesses and the mass slaughter of whole populations did not seem to elicit the compassion one would expect from those who claim Christ as their Head. Sometimes hatred and vengeance were even promoted in ecclesiastical quarters. Where there was not enthusiastic endorsement of the military there was usually submissive conformity.

Underlying the attitude which prevailed are traditions of unquestioning obedience to government, an extreme view of the separation of Church and State, and avowed Christian support for what is called a just war. The present writer is convinced that these concepts should be judiciously scrutinized and carefully reevaluated. A number of thorough studies should be made to determine wherein we failed to fulfill our full obligation in the last war so that we can better discharge our Christian responsibility in the present world situation.

With due allowance for our personal qualms and scruples in hesitat-

ing to underwrite America's role in the last war it should be stated that we have made every effort to present an objective and unbiased account of how the major church bodies did react to Christian participation. In most sections the treatment of the denomination has been read and checked by clergymen of the communion under consideration, and in every instance where this has been done the individuals consulted have agreed that the presentation is accurate and fair.

Since the Lutheran Church accepts the Holy Scriptures as the only rightful norm and source for faith and life we have introduced our study by a brief examination of the material pertinent to the problem of war and peace in the two Testaments. Militarists, as well as some church groups, are quick to "exploit" the Old Testament as an apologia for the stand they take. Christian pacifists, vocal and demonstrative throughout the War, made a continuous appeal to the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus.

Naturally the "conclusions" drawn by the writer are subjective to the extent that they are based on his own findings and no one person can pretend to be cognizant of all the data that would be relevant to a study so comprehensive in scope. Nor would we deny that our ultimate aim in offering this thesis is didactic and hortative. We will endeavor to uncover some of the shortcomings and past mistakes of the established churches, and we will indicate what we believe to be some correctives and safeguards for the future.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Militarism in the Old Testament?

Lutheran Christians, committed to the orthodox conception of Biblical inspiration, have always defended the authenticity and canonicity of the Old Testament. The New Testament writers, they point out, always assume that the Sacred Books of the Hebrews are reliable and God-given. Both Peter and Paul are emphatic in their assurance that Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit in a unique manner that would imply the full accuracy of the records. The Gospel narratives present Jesus as giving the stamp of approval to the writings of Moses and the Prophets.

Many modern theologians, including a number of ardent pacifists, have sidestepped the problem of militarism in the Old Testament by subscribing in a greater or lesser degree to the contentions of critics who call into question the historicity of the stories and look upon the Judaic ethic as a gradual development from a lower to a higher plane. They do not feel obliged to defend or explain the wars of Israel for they can be dismissed as the skirmishes of a semicivilized people or as evidences of an extreme nationalism that led to fanatical outbursts of ferocity.

Lord Raglan, a British scientist, addressing the Society of Friends, insisted that the Old Testament was undesirable for youthful readers:

Moses, David, Samuel, Joshua, and others were monsters of aggression, cruelty, and atrocities unequalled in any modern conflicts. The fact that such cruelty both in peace and war,

was characteristic of the times and countries in which these Bible heroes lived, may explain them to an anthropologist, but does not excuse us in using them as examples of manliness and morality before the young people in Sunday School.¹

Citations from the Old Testament are usually evaded by relegating them to the pre-Christian era. When Christ came, it is urged, He manifested a new ethic of non-resistance which was alien to the authors of the historical books, such as Judges or Kings, but which was at least partially anticipated in the lofty pronouncements of the Prophets. One leading pacifist has contended: "The God of Jesus differs fundamentally from the Jehovah presented in many sections of the Old Testament where Jehovah is frequently pictured as authorizing pillage and slaughter, and often as Himself an active participant."²

There is no denying that war in the Old Testament is a gruesome business that causes manifold problems for Christian interpreters. The pages of Hebrew history are red with the blood of God's saints, who, in turn, wreaked havoc among their enemies. None of the gory details are spared. "Man's inhumanity to man" is redundantly displayed. Some of the revolting horrors are so vividly portrayed that some Bible critics have called for an expurgated edition.

The Book of Joshua, for instance, records the utter annihilation of the heathen inhabitants of Canaan. All the military tactics and strategy are outlined. Sometimes the population of whole cities was exterminated. In a desert battle "they slew them until not one remained or escaped."

¹Quoted by Arthur F. Steinke, The Bible and War (Brooklyn: The Studio Press, 1941), p. 18.

²Kirby Page in Jesus or Christianity, quoted by Steinke, op. cit., p. 18.

Men and women were put to the sword. "Joshua did not withdraw his hand . . . until he had massacred all the inhabitants of Ai." (Josh. 8:26).³ In the same way, when the Hebrew general captured Makkedah no one was spared. Both the king and his subjects were killed. Then, as the Israelite armies advanced and the conquest proceeded the refrain is repeated: "He put them to the sword, and massacred every person that was in it, sparing no one." A total of thirty-one vanquished kings are listed in this manner.

After the death of Joshua we are told that the tribes of Judah and Simeon continued the attacks on the Canaanites to safeguard their borders from molesting heathen. Not content with mere victory, they resorted to cruelty. The captured Adoni-bezek, with his thumbs and big toes cut off, bemoans his fate as the same as that meted out to seventy other kings. (Judg. 1:4 ff). While Deborah, the prophetess, was governing Israel, it is related that a woman by the name of Jael took a hammer and drove a tent-peg through the forehead of Sisera, the Canaanite general, while pretending to be his benefactor.

When the Moabites imposed their suzerainty on Israel, Ehud played a dastardly role. After paying the required tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, he coaxed him into a private audience "and drawing the dagger from his right hip, he plunged it into his abdomen, so that the hilt also went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade. . . . (Judg. 3:21 ff).

³Unless otherwise specified all quotations are from An American Translation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939).

After Gideon's nocturnal invasion caused consternation in the camp of the Midianites, the Ephraimites joined in the rout and captured the two leading chieftains of the enemy. As a trophy of the war they brought their heads to Gideon. Later, when the officials of Succoth refused to give provisions to his exhausted army Gideon seized them and trampled them into the desert thorns and briars. (Judg. 8:16). In civil conflict Jephthah rallied the Gileadites to defeat the Ephraimites. Forty-two thousand were identified and slain at the fords of the Jordan river when they could not pronounce "Shibboleth" correctly. (Judg. 12:4 ff).

In a fit of anger Samson killed and despoiled thirty Philistines to "pay off a bet". (Judg. 14:19). Because his wife was taken away and given to a rival he took revenge on the Philistines and burned their crops. After killing a thousand Philistines who attempted to capture him Samson boasted with a cry of triumph: "With the red ass's jawbone I have dyed them red; with the red ass's jawbone I have felled a thousand men." (Judg. 15:16).

The crime of Gibeah provoked furious vengeance upon the tribe of Benjamin. The battle scenes are depicted in full horror. During the first and second days of fighting the ranks of the Israelites were decimated with 30,000 deaths. On the third day 25,000 Benjaminites were slaughtered. Before the carnage ended it is reported that the Israelites turned their attention to the civilian population and "put to the sword both man and beast, and every thing that was to be found; all the cities too . . . they set on fire". (Judg. 20:48).

Bloodshed and conflict continued after the establishment of the monarchy. Saul and David were revered because they were capable war-

rriors. And often the campaign strategy was based on the ruthless destruction of the opposing forces. Following up on advantages gained during the day Saul recommended to his army: "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder among them until dawn, and let us not leave a man of them." (I Sam. 14:36).

A particularly vicious act seems to be perpetrated when Samuel has the king of the Amalekites at his mercy. The trembling Agag is hewed in pieces "before the Lord in Gilgal". Even David's slaying of Goliath must appear truculent as well as valiant. The stone sank into the giant's forehead and the youth cut off his head. Hatred against the Philistines had become so intense that David did not hesitate to kill a hundred Philistines to acquire Saul's daughter, Michal, as his wife. Little value seems to be placed on the human character of these heathen as the expedition almost sounds like hunters bringing in the pelts of a hundred fur-bearing animals. During the period of David's banishment and seclusion he would lead his band of men in sporadic attacks against different tribes. He would not spare the women and he would confiscate all the wealth he could. (Cf. I Sam. 27:9 ff).

After David's ascendancy to the throne the bitter warfare continued. After subduing the Philistines he defeated the Moabites "and measured them off with a line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death and one line to save alive".⁴ The

⁴In II Sam. 12:31 we have recorded what seems to be the most ghastly atrocity of the entire Old Testament. David captured Rabbah of Amon (through his general Joab) "and he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus he did

Syrians made a futile attempt to forestall the expansion of the Hebrew empire. When they rushed to the assistance of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, 22,000 were slain.

Centuries later under king Amaziah in the southern kingdom we have an especially odious ferocity inflicted. Ninety thousand men of Seir were killed in battle, and 10,000 more were captured. The prisoners were promptly hustled to the top of a precipice and hurled down "so that all of them were dashed to pieces". (II Chron. 25:11 ff).

The history of Israel reeks with violence and turbulence. When God's people were not engaged in combat with an alien power they were involved in internecine strife.

Why all this bloodshed in a Book that purports to come from God? This is not a simple problem for the modern reader that can be lightly dismissed. But at least a partial answer is to be found in the apostolic reminder that "whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction". (Rom. 15:4 RSV). The repetitious recital of wars and cruelties in the Old Testament should be nauseating to the regenerated

unto all the cities of the children of Amon." One Bible commentary exculpates this torture as "an act of retributive justice on a people who were infamous for their cruelties." Commentary on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, n.d.), p. 202; cf. Amos 1:13. Matthew Henry faults David for excessive harshness with his prisoners of war, but looks upon it as "a sign that David's heart was not yet made soft by repentance, else the bowels of his compassion would not have been thus shut up," Commentary, II, 505-506.

In the translation of Leroy Waterman the verse in question reads differently: "He also brought forth the people who were in it, and set them to the saws and to cutting instruments of iron and to axes of iron, and on occasion he made them labor at the brick-molds. Even thus he did in turn to all the cities of the Ammonites." An American Translation, op. cit.

Christian. Nevertheless, it is a realistic portrayal of what actually happened. Dehumanized men gave vent to their homicidal instincts. Then, as now, war was hell on earth. To gloss it over, to omit even the most shocking episodes, might cause us to underestimate the depths of the depravity to which man can sink. The Biblical writers are concerned with relating enough of the insane antics of frenzied men to show the ultimate result of rebellion against God.

Then too, we need not assume that every brutality recorded and every battle fought met with divine approval, any more than the immorality and idolatry which recurs time after time. Occasionally war was due to the blunders of individual leaders. Often war was caused by the folly and stubborn waywardness of Israel. As Paul told the Corinthian congregation: "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come". (I Cor. 10:11).

In historical retrospect Moses reminded his people that they had once scorned the injunction of the Lord and recklessly lunged into the highlands of the Amorites only to be chased back in disgrace. (Deut. 1: 41-46).

Certainly another basic key to an understanding of how war could be sanctioned, and even commanded, in the Old Testament lies in the attribute of God's justice. God cannot condone sin. His holy nature obliges Him to use punitive measures in effacing evil. Many calamities since the Fall of man have been manifestations of God's retributive justice. The deluge of Noah's day was provoked by the appalling wickedness of men. The confusion of tongues and the subsequent consternation were occasioned

by the proud and rebellious spirit of man. In a similar way earthquakes, drouth, and epidemics are mentioned as the media through which God's displeasure over human iniquity is revealed. The most recurrent catastrophe through which God castigated human depravity was war. All the bloodshed and heartache incurred by the ravages of war emphasize the gravity of sin and the folly of man's persistent attempt to rule God out of his affairs.

A morally sensitive person quite naturally inquires: Why did God command the annihilation of the inhabitants of Canaan? How could He endorse the harsh brutality that occurred? This may seem inexplicable unless we recall that God has the sovereign right to punish evil. Just as the immoral perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah reeked to high heaven and called down upon the populace fire and brimstone, so the abhorrent pagan rites of the Canaanites summoned purgation by sword and merciless attack.⁵ Evidently God wanted to wipe out all the traces of degeneracy in the territory where His Chosen People would live. It is expressly stated that "it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is about to drive them out of your way." (Deut. 9:5).

Earlier in the perambulations along the border a thousand troops from each tribe had been mobilized "to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian." (Num. 31:2-4). There was a frightful carnage in which every male was slain. But again the warfare was commanded because of the vile conspiracy of the Midianites to have Israelite men seduced by Moabite

⁵Cf. His, December, 1945. Archaeological research in Palestine is said to have yielded ample evidence of moral corruption among the Canaanites.

women. (Cf. Num. 25:16-18).

But what aggravates the difficulties of interpretation for the Christian theologian is the apparently close relationship between the evils of warfare and the announced purposes of God. According to every indication Jehovah is often the causative factor. Frequently He sanctions, and sometimes even commands, the utter annihilation of the enemy.

Already in the desert skirmishes the Lord promised protection and support for His Chosen People. When confronted with extreme peril, and when the odds against them seemed overwhelming, the importunity of Moses would result in miraculous intervention and dramatic rescue. The pursuing army of the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea while the Israelites walked through on dry land. In the song of triumph that commemorated their deliverance the people sang: "The Lord is a warrior . . . Pharaoh's chariots and his army He cast into the sea. . . . It was Thy right hand, O Lord, that shattered the foe. By the greatness of Thy majesty Thou didst overthrow Thine adversaries; Thou didst loose Thy wrath, it consumed them like stubble." (Ex. 15:3 ff). When the Amalekites challenged the passage of Israel at Rephidim Joshua led the army against them while Moses, assisted by Aaran and Hur, implored Jehovah's help. Full victory was achieved and the Lord assured Moses: "I will blot out the very memory of Amalek from under the heavens." (Ex. 17:8-16). Shortly before his death the Lord expressly directed Moses "to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian. (Num. 31:2 ff).

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness the Israelites were commanded by God to enter Canaan and drive out or exterminate the inhabitants. They were told that their military campaigns would be a

divine mission. They were encouraged to be stalwart and brave because they would be fighting the Lord's battles. As Joshua stood before the walls of Jericho he met a stranger with a drawn sword in His hand. This was the Angel of the Covenant who gave him specific instructions from God for the demolition of the city.

Deborah, the prophetess, and Barak, the captain of the army, were directed by God in the battle against Sisera and the Canaanites. In Deborah's victory song she exclaimed: "Curse Meroz; said the angel of the Lord, curse utterly its inhabitants; for they came not to the help of the Lord." (Judg. 5:23). During the first two days of battle with the Benjaminites the rest of Israel suffered severe casualties, but Jehovah demanded that they persevere in the assault until the obdurate tribe was vanquished and their crime punished. (Judg. 20:18 ff.).

Victory against the Philistines, on one occasion, was attributed to the fervent intercession of Samuel at Mizpeh and the subsequent repentance of the people. "The Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines, and threw them into confusion and they were overcome before Israel." (I Sam. 7:10). When the witch at Endor called up the departed spirit of Samuel, Saul was reminded of the cause of his rejection: "Because you did not listen to the voice of the Lord, and did not execute the fierceness of His wrath against Amalek." (I Sam. 28:18).

After the surrounding tribes had been subdued and many invasions had been repulsed God spoke to David through the prophet Nathan: "Thus says the Lord of hosts . . . I have cut off all your enemies from before you." (II Sam. 7:9). In summarizing all the battles of the warrior-king

it is asserted: "Thus the Lord gave David victory wherever he went." (II Sam. 8:14b). Facing both a frontal and a rear attack from the Ammonites and the Syrians, Joab bolsters the morale of his army with a "pep talk": "Be courageous, and let us show ourselves strong for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do that which is good in His sight." (II Sam. 10:12).

In the victor's hymn of praise appended to the second book of Samuel Jehovah is depicted as the Avenger of David's foes. The narrow escapes in the face of imminent peril, every coup de maitre, and all acquisitions of subjugated territory are ascribed to the intervention of a favorably disposed Providence. When calamity threatened and defeat seemed inevitable: "He let fly His arrows and scattered them, lightning, and discomfited them." David does not fear his antagonists "for through Thee I can break down a rampart, through my God, I can scale a wall." The Lord approves of David's military ventures. He is "the one who trains my hands for battle." "All hail to the Lord!" exclaims David, ". . . the God who gives me vengeance." The Lord ignores the desperate cries of his opponents, while "I grind them to powder like the dust of the earth, I crush them like the dirt of the streets by stamping upon them." (II Sam. 22).

In the following chapter thirty-two heroes of war are listed and their exploits glorified. Honors were conferred upon Ishbaal because he "raised aloft his spear over eight hundred slain at one time." The valiance of Benaiah is acclaimed because he overcame a formidable-looking and well-armed Egyptian.

In the chronicles of the kings it is related that soon after David

established his reign in Jerusalem he contemplated a sortie against the Philistines. But first he waited for divine endorsement. The assurance was forthcoming: "Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand." Following the successful onslaught of his army David gave full credit where it was due: "God has broken through my enemies by my hand, like the bursting water through a dam." (I Chron. 14:10-17).

The secession of the ten northern tribes dissociated them from the benefits accruing to membership in the established realm. This illegal rupture broke their line of continuity with the Messianic promises. When civil war pitted Jews of the Southern Kingdom against their former countrymen of the North divine favor rested with the "loyalists". A cunningly contrived ambush failed to enmesh the warriors who had the Lord and the priests on their side. "God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah . . . thus the Israelites were humbled at that time and the Judeans prevailed because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers." (II Chron. 13:15-18).

When Asa became king in the city of David he removed the foreign altars and other evidences of idolatry. Not only was he personally righteous, but as a bold reformer he told his subjects to remember their covenant relation with God and obey the Law. During a ten year respite of quiet on the borders he efficiently supervised the fortifying of the cities and the equipping of the army. An invasion by a million Ethiopians did not catch him unprepared. Besides, Asa was a pious king, and did not neglect to invoke the power of the Almighty. Before the battle he lifted his voice in fervent prayer:

"O Lord there is none besides Thee to help,

As between the mighty and him that is without strength.
 Help us, O Lord, our God;
 For we rely on Thee,
 And in Thy name we have come against this multitude,
 O Lord Thou art our God;
 Let not man prevail against Thee."

The outcome was overwhelming victory. The Ethiopian hordes were routed and fled in panic. Cities were captured and a rich plunder was enjoyed. (II Chron. 14).

"The terror of the Lord" prevented surrounding nations from making war against Jehosphaphat. Because "he walked in the earlier ways of David his ancestor and did not seek the Baals", he was rewarded with wealth and prosperity. (II Chron. 17:10 ff).⁶ After numerous victories had repelled most of the traditional foes it is reported: "Then a terror from God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel." (II Chron. 20:29). Accordingly, when Uzziah campaigned against the Philistines and the Arabs he gained the ascendancy because "God helped him." (II Chron. 26:7).

Some of the psalms are songs of thanksgiving over triumph in battle. David clearly attributed his skill in war to the propitious dispensation of God. His praise is directed to "the God who girds me with might . . . the One who trains my hands for battle." His opponents cry for help, but all to no avail. "Then I pulverize them like dust before the wind; I crush them like the dirt of the streets." Foreigners submit to him because he wields the invincible power of God:

⁶Cf. II Chron. 18:31. When Jehosphaphat was encircled in a battle with the Syrians he "cried out, and the Lord helped him", while the disguised king of Israel was detected and fatally wounded.

"All hail to the Lord! And blessed be my Rock!
 And may the God of my deliverance be exalted!
 The God who gives me vengeance,
 And puts peoples in subjection under me;
 Who frees me from my foes.
 Yea, Thou dost exalt me above my adversaries;
 From violent men Thou dost rescue me." (Ps. 18).⁷

So the vexing problem still arises: How can Christians harmonize Old Testament militarism with their profession as a peace-loving and peace-promoting people? Granted that some of the excesses and atrocities were contrary to God's will. Admitted that not every battle or war was instigated by Jehovah. Many were. How is the Christian apologist to explain the dominating spirit of "Mars" in the Old Testament?

Undoubtedly, we will fall short of a completely satisfying answer. The inscrutable mysteries of God's judgments cannot be measured according to standards we have evolved. The sovereign Lord of the universe cannot be confined within categories of morality that we have set up. We are only the clay that He has fashioned into human form. We cannot pry into the mystery of His unsearchable decrees and His eternal purposes.

Why God selected Abraham to be the progenitor of the Hebrew race; why He promised the patriarchs that in their Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed; why He chose the children of Jacob as His special people may never be comprehensible to our obscured vision and limited reason. But the Old Testament centers around the fact that God did these very things. As the bearers of the Messianic mission the Israelite people were stamped with a singular character that distin-

⁷Cf. Ps. 144:1: "Blessed be the Lord, my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle."

guished them from all other nations. Their monotheism, their religious festivals, and their high moral code made them unique among neighboring tribes and kingdoms. By an act of His majestic will God denominated them as His select people. To them He promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance. For their protection and benefit He sometimes suspended the normal course of nature. To rescue them from Egyptian bondage He sent ten devastating plagues and caused the Red Sea to permit their passage on dry land. With manna and heaven-sent supplies He satisfied their hunger during forty years of wandering in the Arabian wilderness. Through His prophet Moses He conveyed to them His inviolable commandments in written form. As a constant reminder of their peculiar status before God the Israelites were obliged to follow an intricate and detailed system of religious ceremonies and rites. In all the history of the world, ancient or modern, there has been nothing to duplicate, or even approximate this preeminence of the Hebrew race. They were the original branches in God's olive tree, and the Gentiles were only grafted in after the intended benefactors had rejected the salvation offered in Christ. (Cf. Rom. 11).

In view of Israel's God-appointed role as the harbinger and vehicle of redemption the many wars of the Old Testament begin to take on different meaning. The descendants of Abraham could claim, as no other people could, that they represented divine purpose. As individuals they might fall short of fulfilling their covenant obligations, but the cause they exemplified was righteous. The religion bequeathed to them was the true and pure one. Whoever dared to interfere deserved to suffer the consequences of incurring divine wrath.

At the same time it should be remembered that God's Chosen People were called upon to separate themselves from the rest of the world. (Cf. Ex. 33:16). They were required to practice the proper worship as attested in the Book of Leviticus. They were to avoid every contaminating contact with the heathen. They were told: "You must be holy to Me; for I, the Lord, am holy, and have separated you from other peoples to be mine." (Lev. 20:26).

Even so, God's election of this one nation was a result of His gracious dispensation, and not in keeping with their deserts. "It was not because you were the greatest of all people that the Lord set His heart on you and chose you . . . but it was because the Lord loved you, and would keep the oath that He swore to your fathers . . ." (Deut. 7:7,8).⁸

⁸Cf. Deut. 9:1-14: ". . . Never say to yourselves, 'It is because of my goodness that the Lord brought me into possession of this land.' . . . for you are a stiff-necked people."

CHAPTER III

PACIFISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Just as the exponents of militarism have drawn heavily on Old Testament sources, so the advocates of pacifism have gone to the New Testament to bolster their case. The claim is frequently advanced that Jesus was a pacifist, or at least that He taught non-resistance. The love which our Lord exemplified and taught, it is maintained, is utterly incompatible with Christian participation in warfare. Here again the pertinent sections of Scripture should be carefully examined as a prerequisite for evaluating the reaction of various church groups to the Second World War.

If we expect to encounter unequivocal assertions by Christ or the apostles either endorsing or condemning war we are doomed to disappointment. When, in our investigation, we turn to the New Testament for guidance we find little or nothing that deals directly with the problem of war and peace. A retired chaplain, endeavoring to defend the traditional position of the Lutheran Church in encouraging her sons to fight in loyal support of the government, has explained Christ's silence on this point as proof that God's will as revealed in the Old Testament was not to be superseded or controverted by the New.¹

Non-pacifists usually make the most of those occasions on which Jesus does not appear so gentle and mild. They call our attention to

¹Col. Gynther Storaasli, "War and Peace", The Lutheran Chaplain, (January-March, 1951), 22-28.

the physical force exerted in cleansing the temple. In an outburst of righteous indignation, Christ drove out the money-changers, who with their dishonest practices were contaminating the temple which had been dedicated to the glory of God. Apparently, this is a rare exception in the life of the Savior since none of the Gospel accounts record that He used violent means under any other circumstances.

Some of the strongly worded statements of Jesus are then quoted to further the argumentation against pacifism. The many times He met and berated the Scribes and Pharisees are usually mentioned, especially the scathing anathemas which label them liars and hypocrites and sons of the devil relegated to perdition. Wherever the stern justice of God is stressed in the parables the militarist may assume that he has found grist for his mill. Does God not threaten destruction to those who have done evil, such as the wicked vine-dresser? (Matt. 21:41). In the parable of the pounds the nobleman who represents God concludes: "But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me." (Lk. 19:27). In the familiar judgment scene Christ Himself sits as Judge and condemns His opponents to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his cohorts. (Matt. 25:41). Obviously these stories describe the exercise of God's justice in eternally punishing sin. How or why this should be adduced to sanction modern warfare is not at all clear.

One of the most popular texts used in defense of war is the declaration of Jesus: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matt. 22:21). This passage was pivotal in Augustine's approval of war. Here Jesus draws

a line of demarcation between two spheres of authority. The obligations which are due to God are spiritual and no secular government dare infringe upon this sacred realm. At the same time there must be social and political control if anarchy is to be averted. Even though Caesar may be pagan he has a right to impose taxation and require certain forms of service to the state.²

Coupled with the statement of Jesus has often been Paul's appeal to the Romans for subordination to the existing authorities. (Rom. 13:1-4). The usual argument is that "the powers that be" have a responsibility in maintaining a semblance of peace and outward conformity with law. To be effective they must develop police protection and recruit military forces. It is difficult to see, though, how these verses can definitely settle the issue about a Christian going to war. In themselves they contain no refutation of pacifism. They would still not allow the state to be independent of the God by whose permission they rule. Divine Law continues to be superior to temporal power. There is a limit to what the government can demand. It dare not go contrary to the higher law which insists that "we are to obey God rather than man." (Acts 5:29). The problem remains whether or not Christian involvement in the rapacity and ruthlessness of war can be harmonized with the moral law and the interpretation provided by Christ and the apostles.

Augustine claimed that early Christians who were soldiers were never directed to renounce their military profession before being

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Cp. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith in Boettner, The Christian Attitude toward War (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), p. 42.

accepted in the Church. It is true that the believing centurion was not reprimanded by Jesus for being a soldier. His ailing servant was healed without any reference to his occupation. Peter welcomed into the Christian fellowship another centurion, Cornelius, who was pronounced "a righteous man and one that feared God". (Cf. Acts 10). Evidently, there was no demand that he first abandon his position in the Roman army. When the soldiers were converted in the Jordan wilderness by the fiery preaching of John the Baptist they inquired what they should do to display their newly experienced repentance. The reply seems to assume that they will remain soldiers after their baptism: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." (Lk. 3:14).³ But again we find nothing conclusive in these instances which are frequently cited. Defenders of slavery could argue on the same grounds that Jesus supported the domination of one class by another because He never required that the masters free their slaves.

The use of our Lord's assertion, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34) is obviously based on a literal misinterpretation of what was intended to be a metaphorical expression. As the context shows Jesus was stressing the self-sacrifice that would be necessary whenever anyone took his discipleship seriously. The cost of following Christ may even include the estrangement of family and friends.

³Cf. The Lutheran Witness, LXI, 17 (Aug. 18, 1952) where the entire issue is dedicated to the Lutheran flyers in Army and Navy, and the military profession is defended.

More disturbing to the pacifist outlook is the last discourse which Jesus had with His disciples when He cautions them to be prepared for future exigencies by equipping themselves with ample provisions, including a sword. (Lk. 22:35-38). The exact intent of our Lord's remarks is rather obscure. Some commentators suggest that He is recommending means of self-defense which will be indispensable during their later missionary journeys because of the physical perils they will face.⁴ Other exegetes are inclined to think that Jesus was preparing them for the situation immediately at hand, namely, His arrest in Gethsemane.⁵ At any rate, pacifist writers are quick to remind us that when Peter used his sword in the Garden he was rebuked and told that those who take the sword shall perish with the sword.⁶

The martial symbols used in the Scriptures have been mentioned as evidence against pacifism. The Christian Church is often compared to an army following Jesus Christ as the invincible Commander. The Book of Revelation pictures Christ as a Warrior on a white horse leading His celestial legions to triumph in battle. John testifies that in his astounding vision he saw a sharp sword issue from His mouth with which to smite the nations. In bellicose terms he describes how "He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Rev. 19:11-16). Paul admonishes the Ephesians to put on "the whole

⁴e.g. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), II, 123.

⁵e.g. S. MacLean Gilmour in The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952), VIII, 386: "It is possible that Jesus contemplated the emergence of a situation in which His followers would have to resist aggression by use of force."

⁶Cf. Rutenber, The Dagger and the Cross. (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1950), p. 34.

armor of God," which includes "the breastplate of righteousness," "the shield of faith with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one," "the helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the Spirit." (Eph. 6:13-17). Along with his figures of speech taken from athletic contests the apostle makes comparisons with military life. He encourages his young friend Timothy to persevere in his hardships: "Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him." (II Tim. 2:3,4).

And yet all this use of warlike imagery need not imply divine sanction. Evil is a reality in the life of the Christian and the spiritual struggles in which he is involved are inescapable. It is no more than natural that Biblical writers would seek to make these conflicts more vivid by using illustrations from the battleground of physical combat. At the same time, in criticism of the dogmatic pacifist it would seem strange that all these allusions are made to war without a hint that the Christian must renounce all things military. The impression conveyed by the New Testament is that the stationing of Roman battalions in Palestine and the application of force by the prevailing authorities is something necessary to maintain the structure of that society. The Christian is neither a revolutionist nor an anarchist. Jesus told Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world. We cannot imagine Him leading the fanatical Zealots in an insurrection designed to overthrow the existing regime. Neither can we feature His recommending that the police power of the state be rescinded and disavowed. His Kingdom was a spiritual domain that brought people into a living relationship with God. Those

who were committed to Him in faith and trust had "one foot in heaven." But the foot that remained on earth still had to reckon with "the kings of the Gentiles," comply with their laws, and offer them support. There is no intimation that Jesus expected that His followers would be able to evade the harsh realities of war in a corrupt and sinful world.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR II

A. The Lutheran Church

To evaluate correctly the Lutheran reaction to participation in the second World War it is necessary to recall the position taken by Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. The Augsburg Confession declared: "It is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers . . ." ¹ The Apology refers to the wars of David as "holy works." ² Private vengeance is forbidden but public redress is commanded. Among the ways in which public redress may be achieved are "legal decisions, capital punishment, wars, military service." ³

One of the classical sources for the Lutheran attitude toward war is the Reformer's treatise defending the proposition That Soldiers Too, Can Be Saved. The sum and substance of his thought is that force in itself is a divine and useful ordinance established by God. The occupation of the soldier is an honorable one. If the soldier performs his duty in obedience to the government, if he kills only as a last resort, and if he is prayerful and reverent even in the shedding of blood, he

¹Article XVI, Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; 1921), p. 51.

²Article III, Ibid., p. 175.

³Article XVI, Ibid., p. 331.

cannot be held responsible for his acts. However, if he destroys human life for the sheer joy of killing and holds hatred in his heart against his fellowman, he must be held accountable for transgressing against the fifth commandment. A soldier must have the proper motives. He dare not fight to attain personal glory. Then too, he dare not violate his conscience and join in a war which would obviously be unprovoked aggression.⁴ No one should instigate war. At the same time no one should refuse to bear arms when required to do so for the defense of family and neighbors. If a person has ties binding him to both sides in a conflict, he must fight for the one which he believes to be right.⁵

Submission to the authorities ordained by God is mandatory in Luther's thinking on the problem of war. In his Treatise Concerning the Ban he avers: "God cannot and will not permit authority to be wantonly and impudently resisted when it does not force us to do what is against God or His commandments."⁶ Referring primarily to ecclesiastical lead-

⁴Cp. "How Far Secular Authority Extends", Works of Martin Luther, (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company and the Castle Press, 1932), III, 270: "But when a prince is in the wrong, are his people bound to follow him then too? I answer, No, for it is no one's duty to do wrong; we ought to obey God Who desires the right, rather than men. How is it, when the subjects do not know whether the prince is in the right or not? I answer, As long as they cannot know, nor find out by any possible means, they may obey without peril to their souls. For in such a case one must apply the law of Moses, when he writes in Exodus xxi, that a murderer who has unknowingly and involuntarily killed a man shall be delivered by fleeing to a city of refuge and by the judgment of the congregation. For whichever side is defeated, whether it be in the right or in the wrong, must accept it as a punishment from God; but whichever side wars and wins, in such ignorance, must regard their battle as though one fell from the roof and killed another, and leave the matter to God. . . ."

⁵"That Soldiers Too, Can Be Saved", Ibid., V, 34-74.

⁶Ibid., II, 50.

ers who impose the ban unjustly he recommends non-resistance. In the same connection he comments: "The world is far too wicked to be worthy of good and pious lords, it must have princes who go to war, levy taxes, and shed blood . . ." ⁷

Luther severely criticized the Council of Nicea because of its opposition to war. The decree forbidding Christians to perform military service on pain of seven years penance proves to him the fallibility of Church Councils:

If a king or prince has to fight and defend himself in a just war, he has to take what soldiers he can get. But if these volunteers are condemned what will become of emperors, kings and princes, now that there are no soldiers to be had except volunteers? Tell me, are the lords to fight singlehanded, or weave strawmen to oppose their enemies?"

Luther is sure that the milites and equites in 325 A.D. were paid professional soldiers, and he inquires: "If it was right before Baptism to serve heathen emperors in war, why should it be wrong to render the same service to Christian emperors, after Baptism?" ⁸

In the Lutheran elucidation of what comprises a just war frequent reference is made to the Lutheran dogmatician of the seventeenth century, John Gerhard. ⁹ Usually citations are limited to his enumeration of three causes of a just war: necessary defense, just vindication, and the legitimate recovery of lost property.

It would make for a more balanced view if Gerhard were examined on

⁷Ibid., II, 51.

⁸Ibid., V, 156-158.

⁹e.g. L. J. Roehm, "The Christian's Attitude towards His Government and on War", Reprint from Concordia Theological Monthly (May, 1941), pp. 7-9.

all aspects of this problem. He warns against perpetrating war without due provocation: "When kings hear that right and just warfare is approved by God, let them by no means think that free rein is given to their cupidity, lust and passion, nor that the most unrestricted power of waging war is granted them."¹⁰ He denies that recourse to arms is permissible in every case of defense. The circumstances must first be scrupulously examined.¹¹ A further caution is to prevent private offense from instigating a war that would involve a whole region or state "lest the innocent are made to expiate the guilt of others."¹² Pious and Christian rulers are to remember that they must render an account before God for the way in which they exert their authority. They are forbidden to recklessly embark on a course which will lead to needless bloodshed.

1. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

In a tract entitled War and Christianity Dr. Graebner¹³ of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis quoted the pertinent paragraphs from the Lutheran Confessions, defended the distinction between a just and an unjust war, and insisted that Lutherans should render loyal and patriotic service in accord with Romans $\frac{1}{2}$. It is even conceivable, the professor asserted, that "the aggressor may have a good cause." Effective military strategy

¹⁰Loci Theologici, edited by Preuss (Berlin: Sumtibus Gust. Schlawitz, 1866), VI, 507.

¹¹Cf. Ibid., p. 509: There should be a checkup to be sure that the enemy has not been aroused through our own fault. "Ne adversus eos, qui justis injuris laccessiti bellum nobis inferunt, ad arma properemus . . ."

¹²Ibid., pp. 509-510.

¹³Tract No. 20 (New York City: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau).

may compel the innocent nations to take the offensive. Sometimes, he admitted, the whole issue of war or peace may be confused by a complexity of causes. Then he recommended that the individual conscience follow the advice of Luther and "give his own country the benefit of the doubt." Unless it can be unmistakably established that his government is pursuing a policy of deliberate and premeditated aggression there is no justification for becoming a conscientious objector.

In 1941, before our country was directly involved in the war, Rev. Louis J. Roehm advised the youth with a doubting conscience to observe the common rule "Tene certum, relinque incertum." (If a person cannot determine for himself what is right or wrong, then he ought to relinquish what is dubious and take his stand on something certain.) "Your government is instituted by God; therefore obey its mandate, and you can have a good conscience." Besides, the Church is scarcely in a position to make a valid pronouncement on the justice or injustice involved because of the deceptive propoganda with which the issue is clouded. Not everyone has access to the archives of the government, which might reveal the underlying causes of a war which we are called upon to support. So he concludes with the thesis:

"A Christian pastor should therefore counsel and exhort his parish-
 oners to pray for their government and be alert citizens; through
 the orderly processes of democratic government to make their voices
 heard in opposition to all measures they consider as militating
 against security, order, and righteousness; in time of national
 stress to uphold the government loyally and to resist only when
 commanded to sin."¹⁴

This position was reaffirmed throughout the war, and since the war,

¹⁴L. J. Roehm, Op. Cit., p. 23.

in church magazines and publications. The armed forces of a country are called its police force. If a Christian can resist evil in civilian life by serving as an officer of the law, he can also uphold order on a national and international scale by joining the army or the navy.¹⁵

An editorial in 1946 quoted Douglas MacArthur with approval for upholding the death sentence imposed upon Japanese General Yamashita. Our commander in the Pacific lauded the role of the soldier in protecting the weak and the unarmed, and said: "The traditions of fighting men are long and honorable. They are based on the noblest of human traits-- sacrifice." Once more the right of Christians to take part in just wars was maintained.¹⁶

Although admitting a measure of American responsibility for the outbreak of the war, Dr. O. A. Geiseman¹⁷ demanded that criminal actions like that evinced at Pearl Harbor be restrained. The government should wield the sword as speedily and effectively as possible. Along the troubled horizon, he saw a "silver lining"; for the war had unified the nation. It might have other beneficial results. It might pave the way for future international agreements by showing the need for them. It might cause men to experience the futility of their vain ambitions, and turn to Christianity.

Sermons printed by the Armed Services Commission of The Lutheran

¹⁵Cf. Otto E. Sohn, "Keep Them from Evil", The Lutheran Witness, LXX, 9 (May 1, 1951), p. 140.

¹⁶Theodore Graebner, "The Worth of the Military Man", Ibid., LXV, 9 (Apr. 9, 1946), p. 120.

¹⁷Cf. "We Are at War", The Gresset (Jan., 1942).

Church—Missouri Synod sometimes tended to identify the allied cause with the righteousness of God and the axis powers with Satanic evil. The definite claim was made that God was on our side. In a V-E Day sermon the Rev. F. C. Proehl¹⁸ compares our victory over Germany and Japan to Jacob's deliverance from his brother Esau. "We have become strong in this business of war and carried the war to the very strongholds of the enemy. The Lord has blessed our efforts. He has given success to our arms . . ." Miriam's triumph song over the drowning of Pharaoh's hosts is applied to allied victory in Europe. Gratitude is expressed for the sparing of our cities from the ravages of war. "For the sake of the righteous God has preserved our cities and kept them from harm."

In a sermon based on Israel's battle with the Amalekites (Ex. 17: 8-13) Dr. Louis B. Buchheimer¹⁹ wanted to reassure disturbed young minds: "Let none of you doubt the scripturalness of bearing arms in our country's defense . . . our soldiers and sailors are wielding 'the sword' for our government, for us. We must make the sword as keen as possible." Just as Sennacherib's army was smitten by an angel of the Lord in the days of Hezekiah so in modern times the Spanish Armada was destroyed "by a God-sent storm." The English army contrived a remarkable escape from Dunkerque after the debacle in France because God provided a dense fog and the extraordinary calmness of the English Channel.

¹⁸In The Lutheran Chaplain (1945).

¹⁹"The Power of Uplifted Hands", a sermon study (Chicago: The Army and Navy Commission).

August F. Bernthal²⁰ compares the Christian soldier's call to duty with God's call of Abram to leave his homeland and become the progenitor of a great nation. "Our country's call to the Christian soldier is God's call." All of the promises regarding God's providential care and protection can be applied to the Christian soldier in his loneliness and peril.

In the orders of service prescribed for the day when hostilities would cease, victory is always ascribed to Almighty God's intervention in our behalf. "Great is the victory Thou hast given to our Nation and to our Allies," was the pronouncement in one recommended prayer.²¹ A sermon published for use with the V-Day Thanksgiving service devotes an entire section to "God, the Giver of Victory." There are "imponderable factors which only God can know and control." Why were Germany and Japan unable to follow through on their initial successes? What prevented Rommel from marching on Alexandria? The implication is that God was on our side and not on theirs.²²

A special song was composed and the text written in honor of the armed forces of our nation by Walter E. Buszin.²³ It sounded a martial note:

²⁰"God's Call to Duty," Op. Cit..

²¹"A Service of Song and Prayer on the Day of Victory", for use in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

²²Paul F. Bente, "Suggested Sermon Material" (Dept. of Missionary Education and Publicity, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod).

²³Issued under the auspices of the Army and Navy Commission and printed by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

Fear not the foe, ye men of war,
 Strong in the power of Almighty God;
 Courage maintain, on, on, and fight,
 Our cause is just, our faith is strong.
 Forward to battle, win this war,
 God be your Shield, He's e'er by your side.

Fear not the foe, ye sons of peace,
 Think of the outcome, ponder the end;
 Forward to vict'ry, let freedom ring,
 Loud songs of triumph sing with glee.
 O God in heaven, hear our prayer,
 Help those who battle, grant them Thy care.

With favorable editorial comment The Lutheran Chaplain printed a statement by General Dobbie, former Governor of Malta, in which he confessed his reliance upon Biblical truth, and then appended this thought:

When we compare this type of leadership with that which has guided Germany during the past era, we thank God that our allies are motivated by the Spirit of Christ in their dealings with the enemy and that they cannot become ruthless in their conduct over against him. Our warfare is tempered with compassion and love. Thank God for this type of leadership!²⁴

In the light of subsequent disclosures of allied brutality and vengeance, the admitted maltreatment of war prisoners, and the use of "saturation bombing" as an accepted method of warfare, these sentiments would strike many as naive chauvinism.

Pastors serving Lutheran students at state universities during the war years reported that there was considerable criticism of the traditional concept of a just war. To some it seemed like an oversimplification of an intricate situation. Many expressed their misgivings about the righteousness of our cause. Questions like these were raised: How can we say that one side is a hundred per cent right and the other a

²⁴Cf. The Evangelical Christian, September, 1943.

hundred per cent wrong? Does not our own country participate in the game of power politics? Is not our government employing pressure devices, such as economic sanctions? Do these tactics not indirectly urge a rival nation to declare war on us? Admittedly, it was difficult to provide adequate answers in line with the historic Lutheran approach.²⁵

Church editors occasionally ventured opinions that had to be retracted or revised when the war was over. Expediency made strange alliances. Before the outbreak of the war The Cresset called Stalin "the prince of the devils" and warned against being misled by pro-Russian propaganda.²⁶ The Russian invasion of defenseless Finland was called "unprovoked aggression" and compared to King Ahab seizing Naboth's vineyard.²⁷ But after the German invasion of the lowlands criticism of Soviet Russia was conspicuously omitted, while no condemnation was too severe for the Nazi "barbarism" which was running rampant in Europe. Attacking peaceful neutrals like Denmark and Norway was "a moral wrong of the most infamous kind."²⁸ Apparently there was little or no concern any longer about the fate of eastern Poland and the Baltic countries who were under the iron heel of Russian oppression. An editorial in the official publication of the Missouri Synod intimated that Soviet Russia had changed its colors. What was once reprehensible had in all likelihood been removed. The charges of atheism and ruthless Communism once

²⁵Cf. Rudolph Norden, "Are there Just Wars?", The American Lutheran, XXVII (Sept., 1944), p. 9.

²⁶"The Russian Terror", an editorial (June, 1939).

²⁷Cf. The Cresset (Jan., 1940).

²⁸Ibid. (June, 1940).

associated with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 were dismissed as out-moded labels. As evidence the editor pointed to the dismemberment of the Third International and its official disavowal by the Kremlin. The reopening of the churches in Germany by the Russians presumably indicated a new tolerance toward religion. It would be particularly embarrassing today to recall the appraisal of China:

The Russian armies did not make common cause with the Chinese Communists as everybody expected, but with the government in Chungking, and they promised to give up Manchuria and make a thirty year treaty of peace with China. Where are the Bolshevik hordes which some of us saw rolling across China and engulfing in Red Communism all of Asia?²⁹

With bitter irony an observer in 1952 would give an altogether different answer than the rhetorical question anticipated by bluntly exclaiming: "Killing American soldiers and ravaging the Korean peninsula." And so two years later the same editor had to reverse his judgment and admit:

Soviet Russia has capitalized fully upon the disorganization and chaos in this area, exactly as she has done in Europe. Soviet propaganda and Soviet support of the Chinese Communist movement have increased the difficulty of establishing order in China.³⁰

The threat of Communism belittled during the war was gradually unfolded so that even the unwary, duped by the propaganda emanating from Moscow, could no longer shut their eyes to its fateful import.

The sudden death of Franklin D. Roosevelt excited some curious and almost adulatory eulogies. Some congregations arranged special memorial services. A Missouri Synod ministerial preparatory college conducted a

²⁹Theodore Graebner, "The Russian Mystery", The Lutheran Witness, LXIV, 19 (Sept. 11, 1945), p. 298.

³⁰Graebner, "And Then There Is China", Ibid., LXVI, 26 (Dec. 30, 1947), p. 425. Cp. Graebner, "The Communist Menace", Ibid., LXV, 18 (Aug. 27, 1946), p. 284.

devotion in his honor and pronounced him a great man.³¹ Even the Spanish publication for Lutherans took notice of his passing and was confident that he was a faithful Christian.³² Dr. O. A. Geiseman expressed his conviction that the magnitude of Roosevelt's achievements was founded on his passionate adherence to "the promises of God and the ethical principles of Christ." All the world, he is certain, could be transformed if "all who profess Christianity were to give a similarly genuine expression to their faith."³³ In a sermon preached in Baltimore the Rev. Rudolph Hessmeyer lamented the untimely decease of our President which would prevent his appearance at the peace table. "It reminds us", he opined, "of Moses not reaching the promised land."³⁴

To the credit of many church leaders in the Missouri Synod it should be mentioned that they made a concerted effort to warn against a spirit of vengeance, and tried to prepare their members for a humble acceptance of victory. Aware that "the majority of our people will again refuse to recognize that our victory is an act of divine grace" they urged all pastors to be prepared with appropriate services which would express full gratitude to God.³⁵

Some preachers during the war did not shrink away from castigating

³¹St. Paul's College Courier, Concordia, Missouri (June, 1945).

³²Noticiero Luterano (May, 1945): "El Presidente Roosevelt era miembro de la Iglesia Anglicano or Episcopal, y siempre trato todos sus asuntos del punto de vista cristiano."

³³ "While It Is Day", The American Lutheran, XXVIII, 5 (May, 1945), p. 5.

³⁴The sermon was based on the text from II Sam. 3:38, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

³⁵E. G. the Frontispiece, Ibid., XXVII, 9 (Sept., 1944).

our national sins and reminding their hearers that the war was a call to heartfelt repentance.

Outstanding was the clarion voice of Dr. Walter A. Maier, renowned radio orator on the International Lutheran Hour broadcast. Like a modern Jeremiah he lamented the waywardness of the American nation and the apostasy of many Christians. With poignant accusations he enumerated and denounced the favorite sins of the people. Racial intolerance, divorce and moral laxity, greed and corruption in high places were singled out as causes of American decadence.³⁶ Military defense, he asserted, could never become a substitute for spiritual defense. "On your knees, America" was his continual plea for revival and reformation.

During the months and years preceding our active entrance into the war Dr. Maier indicted the false propaganda and profiteering that were pushing us down the road toward war. He warned against the scheming forces that were endeavoring to maneuver us away from our neutrality. Frequently he bemoaned the increasing hysteria that threatened to stampede us into the European conflict. Fervent prayers for peace were preliminary to many sermons. With all the influence that he could exert over the airways he sought to prevent the collapse of peaceful negotiations.

When hostilities came there was never the slightest hint of disloyalty, however. The youth of the land were encouraged to make every sacrifice necessary in support of the armed forces. But the Lutheran Hour speaker always maintained a moderate tone in his advocacy of

³⁶Abundant evidence for these statements and those following can be found by perusing the series of sermon books published by Concordia Publishing House, 1940-46.

patriotism. There was no letup in his insistence that "only righteousness exalts a nation." Our involvement in war and all the attendant suffering were our due punishments for outright unbelief, or at least widespread indifference to the Truth of God's Word.³⁷

While vicious outbursts of hatred against the enemy came from many quarters Dr. Maier spoke of how we must emulate the merciful forgiveness displayed by Christ on the cross. A proposal by a New York psychiatrist to keep fanning the fires of hatred to insure German and Japanese suppression after the war was rejected as "utterly absurd." With all our aversion to the evils of Nazism "we dare not . . . permit our hearts to be filled with bitterness and malice toward the German people."³⁸

Editors of Sunday School literature advised teachers to put "the soft pedal" on the subject of war and avoid its brutalizing aspects. Nothing should be said which might engender hatred against our enemies. Children should be taught to pray for the Christianization of Japan. True patriotism should be depicted as contributing to "the righteousness that exalts a nation" and not in blatant boasting about American military might. Drawn into this conflict, we should recognize it as "a just

³⁷Cf. "Keep America Christian!", For Christ and Country, p. 190: "Yet history testifies that there is one inner loss which is final that can remove national glory forever and permanently reduce any country, however rich and powerful. That deadliest danger is unbelief . . . God's Truth . . . warns, 'The nation and kingdom that will not serve shall perish.'"

³⁸"Father, Forgive Them--And Us!", Victory Through Christ, p. 330. Cf. "Lord, Teach America to Pray!", America Turn to Christ, p. 251: (We should not) "ask God to damn Hitler and Hirohito, the people of Germany and Japan, to the deepest hell; we are to plead for our enemies, asking the Almighty to lead them to Christ and for His sake to forgive them."

visitation of Heaven" censuring and chastising our drift toward paganism.³⁹

2. The United Lutheran Church

While the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in its official publications and declarations never deviated from its insistence that loyalty to government was the paramount consideration and that our participation in the Second World War was fully justified, the United Lutheran Church allowed for a greater latitude of variant opinion. Pacifist sentiments were not barred from the pages of The Lutheran, and the right of conscientious objectors to full tolerance was maintained. Just prior to Pearl Harbor the entire case for pacifism was presented in a series of articles by Herbert T. Weiskotten, and the counter-arguments by T. A. Kantonen.⁴⁰

Shortly after the outbreak of war in Europe Dr. Traver affirmed: "The Church must speak out for peace in the name of God." The Spirit of Christ, he insisted, cannot be reconciled with "the wholesale murder we call war." As a method of settling international disputes war must be renounced because it recompenses evil for evil. No Christian can subscribe to the principle that "the end justifies the means" or "of two evils choose the lesser."⁴¹

Almost simultaneously a Canadian minister contended that "England

³⁹Cf. A. C. Mueller, "Children and War", The Teacher's Quarterly (Jan. - Mar., 1943).

⁴⁰"The Status of War in Christian Morality", XXIV, 8 (Nov. 19, 1941), to XXIV, 12 (Dec. 17, 1941).

⁴¹John Amos, "The Christian View of Politics", Ibid., XXII, 1 (Oct. 4, 1939), p. 17.

is right in this war, and that she is fighting a just war, perhaps one of the most just in her long history." Even the Church has a stake in the outcome, he asseverated. Should the opposition emerge triumphant Christianity might be suppressed. "The Church in Canada is praying that victory may be assured for the forces of right."⁴²

A statement released by the ULCA Board of Social Missions on January 17, 1940 pleaded for a restudy and reinterpretation of the stand taken by the Lutheran Confessions in regard to war. Unwilling to propose that war is per se evil they felt uncomfortable because so many sincere and careful reviews of the teachings of Jesus indicated that it was. With clarity and emphasis they expressed their belief that it was the obligation of the Church to stand resolutely against recourse to war and "admit the inviolability of the individual conscience in its attitude toward war."⁴³

The executive board of the ULCA gave painstaking consideration to the plight of the conscientious objector which was viewed with sympathy, if not approval, in some quarters. The interpretation of the Board allowed that although "it is the duty of the Christian citizen to bear arms and offer his life if need be in defense of his country . . . the individual right to conscientious objection is recognized." The Church might not approve of this stand, but it should safeguard the person who feels conscience-bound not to take up arms. As a practical aid to the government it was recommended that the Church record the names of those

⁴²Rev. Douglas Conrad, "Canada at War", The Lutheran, XXII, 6 (Nov. 8, 1939).

⁴³"War Problems", Ibid., XXII, 16 (Jan. 17, 1940), p. 25.

among its members who are approved as bona fide c.o.'s. The absolute pacifist position was decried as inconsistent as it "would seem to call for dissociation from citizenship." If necessary the c.o. must be willing to stand alone and take the disciplinary consequences which may be incurred. A refusal to defend righteousness is called a denial of Christian love. No attempt is made to judge where righteousness would be represented in the contemporary struggle in Europe.⁴⁴

A number of pastors in the United Lutheran Church disagreed with the supposition that the c.o.'s position was morally questionable or inferior to that of the soldier who accepted military duty. One rejoinder demanded that a pastoral ministry be provided for those opposed to war with the understanding that their course of action might prove to be the wisest, and that the Church should not permit them to be subjected to any indignities or disabilities other than those imposed on other citizens during wartime. Another minister argued that the sixteenth Article of the Augsburg Confession requires modification in the light of modern scientific development. In the future we might have to think in terms of international authority which was not envisioned by the sixteenth century reformers. Still another wrote that the Church should vigorously denounce the civil powers for constantly resorting to an unchristian method of righting wrongs.⁴⁵ At the Omaha convention of the ULCA in 1940 a resolution was offered giving the c.o. official approval along

⁴⁴The statement by the Executive Board was issued in January, 1940 and comment was offered by Dr. Paul H. Krauss, in Greever, "Meeting of the Executive Board", The Lutheran, XXII, 17 (Jan., 1940), p. 6.

⁴⁵Cf. The Lutheran XXII, 51 (Sept. 18, 1940) and XXII, 52 (Sept. 25).

with one who serves in a military capacity, but it was voted down.⁴⁶

The Rev. C. C. Georgi reexamined the attitude of Luther toward war and concluded that he could not be used with such facility as a patron of our modern wars. In Luther's estimation even a defensive war wrought devastating havoc on the citizenry. That no Christian can really fight in a war as a Christian is clear from three facts: "1. It is against the command of Christ. 2. It hurts the Church., 3. Civilization is nowhere Christian . . ."⁴⁷

On March 5, 1941, president Knobel formulated a proclamation entitled "Christian Realism as to War":

It seems to be quite true that a drift towards war for the United States has long been going on and steadily increases in strength. One senses the existence of a seeming conspiracy, or a planned desire, for war. One can almost name the groups of various characters which have been pressing for the attainment of war as an end. . . . The United States has been going farther and farther on this path and perhaps the nation has gone too far to stop 'short of war'. When men and nations go too far God permits them to have their way in order that ultimately His purposes may be carried out.

Another controversy concerned with Lutheran reactions to the war came to the foreground when a pastor questioned the propriety of one of the prayers used in the Army and Navy Service Book: "O Lord God of our Salvation, we beseech Thee to go forth with our Army, Navy, and Air Forces, and by Thy right hand and Thy mighty arm gain for them the victory."⁴⁸ It was disparaged as contrary to the Sermon on the Mount and

⁴⁶Charles L. Ramme in an open letter in The Lutheran, XXIII, 20 (Aug. 6, 1941), p. 45, submits that the word "right" in the sixteenth Article of the Augsburg Confession should be interpreted "privilege, not duty or responsibility."

⁴⁷Rev. C. G. Georgi, "What Did Luther Think?", Ibid., XXIII, 15 (Oct. 9, 1940), p. 2.

⁴⁸No. 36, p. 31.

Christ's spirit of forgiveness. Dr. Fischer defended its use with the allegation that a Christian may be able to fight with a good conscience. The individual soldier cannot be charged with "personal guilt" for his actions. Whatever the Christian prays for must be conditional because there is no absolute justice in human relations.⁴⁹

After the Pearl Harbor attack there was editorial silence in The Lutheran on the moral question of involvement in the conflict. Lutheran cooperation with the war effort seemed to be assumed. People were asked to plan and search for peace. Mother's Day collections were sponsored for the support of service centers. The chaplaincy was called a necessary ministry. Beneficial results were seen: Military service teaches cooperation and increases respect for other denominations. Pastors who serve gain a renewed appreciation of missionary endeavor. Through varied contacts and constructive criticism Lutherans learn how to improve their liturgy and services.⁵⁰

A National Lutheran Council bulletin released on July 10, 1942 reveals a sincere attempt to define the relation between the Church and a world at war:

1. We call all people to repentance and a rededication of their lives to the will of God.
2. We call upon our people in particular, and all Christian people in general, to dedicate themselves wholly, with every resource of heart and mind and conscience, to the defeat and destruction of this evil. We call upon our own people to give to our country the fullest measure of devotion and support, as the privilege and duty of Christian citizens.
3. We summon our people to an earnest, searching study of the ways

⁴⁹Cf. "Prayer for Nation's Victory", The Lutheran XXIII, 31 (Apr. 30, 1941), p. 8.

⁵⁰Herman Edgar Knies, "What the Church Can Learn from Chaplains", The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XIX, 2 (Apr., 1946).

- and means to an enduring world-peace.
4. If enduring peace is to come to mankind it can come only to men and through men who are wholly dedicated, through faith in Christ, and by the power of His Holy Spirit, to righteousness and good will.
 5. (Warns Christians against the passions of hate and revenge.)
 6. (Calls for a generous support of relief programs.)
 7. (Advises that we seize the opportunity presented for world missions.)
 8. The paramount service the Church has to render to a world at war is to proclaim the redemptive love of God, and to make men, indeed, the sons of God by the power of His Holy Spirit.

B. The Roman Catholic Church

To understand the reaction of the Roman Catholic Church in America to the Second World War it will be helpful to scan the position of the early Church Fathers and trace briefly the origin of the concept of a just war.⁵¹

Although the evidence is scanty for the first 150 years it appears that the early Church Fathers were opposed to participation in war. Celsus, an early literary opponent of Christianity, reproached Christians for being unpatriotic and refusing military service to the Emperor.⁵² Justin Martyr, an ardent defender of the faith in the second century, took Isaiah's prophecy literally that swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, and said that the followers of Christ would gladly go to death for His sake, but they would refrain

⁵¹The inclusion of references to the early Church Fathers in this section does not imply that they are to be regarded as exponents of Roman Catholicism. Their position on war would be more in accord with Pacifist groups. Here our concern is with the historical development of the "just war" idea.

⁵²Cf. G. J. Heering, The Fall of Christianity (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1943), p. 25.

from making war on their enemies.⁵³ Origen disposed of the Old Testament wars with an allegorical interpretation, and took an absolute stand against the use of force: "We do not serve as soldiers under the Emperor, even though he require it."⁵⁴ Likewise, Tertullian and Cyprian repudiated war with outspoken disapprobation. As late as 374 Basil the Great recommended that those who were required to kill in war should abstain from Communion for three years.⁵⁵

But during the reign of Marcus Aurelius it was already reported that Christians were marching under the Emperor's banner. The Council of Arles in 314 proclaimed that "they who throw away their weapons in time of peace shall be excommunicate."⁵⁶ With the conversion of Constantine and his official adoption of the Christian religion, the tide turned completely. Later theologians, enjoying the protection and favor of the state began to justify Christian collaboration in war. Athanasius (c. 350), known as the father of orthodoxy, concluded: "Murder is not permitted, but to kill one's adversary in war is both lawful and praiseworthy."⁵⁷ Ambrose (c. 375), professed: "And that courage which either protects the homeland against barbarians, in war,

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"For Caesar's soldiers possess nothing which they can lose more precious than their life, while our love goes out to that eternal love which God will give us by His might." In Apology, I, 11.39, quoted by Heering, op. cit., p. 25.

54Cf. Contra Celsum, V. 33; VIII, 73, quoted by Heering, Op. cit., p.27.

55Cf. Heering, op. cit., p. 34.

56Canons of Synod of Arles, 3, quoted by Heering, op. cit., p. 35.

57Athanasius: Epistle to Ammonius, quoted by De Jong, Dienstweigerung, p. 50, quoted by Heering, op. cit., p. 36.

or defends the weak at home, or saves one's comrades from brigands, is full of righteousness."⁵⁸ Living at the time of the barbarian invasions Augustine looked upon war as the defense of a peace-loving state against plundering aggressors. Together with Ambrose he gave the first fully elaborated formulation of the theory of a justum bellum.

Gradually this developed into the classic Catholic doctrine on "permissive war". Reference was made to it in an attempt to determine what stand the Church should take on the Second World War. Active Christian support of war was said to be justifiable: 1) When there is no doubt but that one side is right and the other wrong; 2) when the means for peaceful arbitration have been exhausted; 3) when there is a clear chance for success; 4) when the war is waged with civilized weapons; 5) when it remains a war between armed troops and not against helpless civilians; and 6) when such evils as the murder of noncombatants and the violation of women have been banished.⁵⁹

Due to the variance among the Church Fathers and the difficulty in harmonizing all the papal encyclicals on the subject, the Roman Church

⁵⁸De Officiis, I, 27, 129, quoted by Heering, op. cit., p. 36.

⁵⁹Cf. Thomas F. Doyle, "To War or Not to War", The Catholic World, CLIX (December, 1939): The "Ten Commandments" released by the German Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment were said to express the attitude of the Catholic Church: "1. Fight chivalrously, without unnecessary brutality. 2. A soldier must be uniformed. 3. A soldier must spare the life of any opponent who surrenders. 4. Treat prisoners humanely. 5. Refrain from the use of dumdum bullets. 6. Respect the Red Cross. 7. Spare the civil population unnecessary hardships and refrain from plundering. 8. Respect the neutrality of non-combatant states. 9. On capture give name and identification, but nothing respecting army organization. 10. Report violations of these principles by the enemy."

allowed considerable latitude of opinion among its scholars and leaders in their reaction to World War II. Conscientious objectors were neither categorically condemned nor openly encouraged. The Catholic Association for International Peace, founded in 1926, which had long pleaded for the reduction of armaments, printed a leaflet after hostilities had commenced in Europe which commended a refusal to bear arms:

In these days of unjust wars of aggression, far better that the names of Catholic youth be inscribed on the list of conscientious objectors than on city halls and other places. It is much nobler for youth to live and fight the present battle for justice and charity than to die in order that the greed of rulers and international bankers be satisfied and the coffers of the munitions manufacturers filled.⁶⁰

After we had entered the War there were still Catholic youths who went to c.o. camps. They quoted statements made by some of the popes in their defense, such as Pius XII who said: "Nothing is lost with peace; all may be lost with war."⁶¹ Paul L. Blakely countered the arguments of c.o.'s and warned that if they trusted their own conscience alone they were guilty of following a Protestant principle to the extreme. Nevertheless, he concedes: "I have no objection to Catholic conscientious objectors."⁶²

During the months of "the great debate" between "interventionists" and "isolationists" there was extensive vocal and literary opposition in Catholic circles to our entrance into the war. Not all were as bombastic and obstreperous as the Detroit radio priest, Father Coughlin,

⁶⁰Thomas F. Doyle, "To War or Not to War", The Catholic World, 150:592 (December, 1939), pp. 268,269.

⁶¹Ibid., 150:588 (Aug. 24, 1939).

⁶²Cf. Paul L. Blakely, "Re-Examination of Conscience for Conscientious Objectors", America LXVI, 17 (Jan. 31, 1942), pp. 453-455, and "An Answer to the Objectors who Deny any War is Just", Ibid., LXVI, 22 (Mar. 7, 1942), pp. 593-595.

who launched trenchant verbal blasts against the administration over the airways. Yet there was widespread resistance to the drift toward war. In the fall of 1939 James M. Gillis⁶³ expressed his loathing for Nazism together with his mistrust of England. There was such an admixture of right and wrong on both sides, he complained, that the only reasonable moral attitude for Americans to assume was to remain aloof. Early in 1940 James McCawley⁶⁴ censured the churchmen who were beginning to beat the drums for war. A Catholic editor regretted that Jacques Maritain was pronouncing the war "just". John P. Delaney⁶⁵ inquired: "Why do we fight in their war?" Our neutrality, he predicted, might be the only means of salvaging world civilization. John LaFarge⁶⁶ admitted his sympathy for the allied cause, but doubted that American intervention would achieve the desired result. Our interference might well compromise our principles. We would be called upon to defend English capitalism and safeguard French colonial policy. Daniel M. O'Connell⁶⁷ warned that the steps leading to war should be critically scrutinized and resisted. If we became engulfed in this European tragedy it would only produce another Versailles Treaty with its vicious aftermath. Paul L. Blakely⁶⁸ controverted the arguments that moral obligations or legal commitments

⁶³"The War, What Else but War?", The Catholic World, 149:585 (Oct., 1939), p. 1.

⁶⁴"Churchmen and War", Ibid., 150:590 (Feb., 1940), p. 4.

⁶⁵"We Fight in Their War? Why?", America, LXII, 1 (Oct. 14, 1939), pp. 6,7.

⁶⁶"War May Be in Europe While America Is at Peace", Ibid., LXII, 4 (Nov. 4, 1939), pp. 88,89.

⁶⁷"Steps that Lead to War", Ibid., LXII, 13 (Jan. 6, 1940), pp. 340,341.

⁶⁸"All Will Be Lost by War", Ibid., LXIII, 12 (June 29, 1940), p. 317.

should induce us to manufacture armaments for England. We would not be justified in taking the initiative against Germany and Italy. "All will be lost by war," he averred.

As late as December, 1941, the Catholic World still presented and upheld the isolationists position, and even after Pearl Harbor regretted the course of action our government had pursued.⁶⁹ After the cessation of hostilities the administration was blamed for the debacle at Pearl Harbor.⁷⁰ A satirical jibe entitled "Intervention Begins to Pay Off" insinuated that with trouble spots in Palestine, Iran, and Indonesia, besides a war raging in China, "we are in a pretty kettle of fish."⁷¹

Generally speaking though, Roman Catholics, as most Americans, accepted Pearl Harbor as an irrefutable verdict in the interventionist controversy, and as a clarion call to a united war effort. With some reluctance, the editor of The Catholic World called the conflict in the Pacific a "duty we cannot dodge." It was wise and praiseworthy to "beware of entrance to a quarrel," but being in we had to accept the reality of a deplorable situation.

The Jesuit weekly was quick to announce full support for our government after the Japanese had launched their attack. "In accordance with its consistent and traditional policy of sound Catholicism and sane Americanism" the editors promised to use every resource at their command

⁶⁹Of. Articles appearing in America (October, 1941), in which the president's speech against the axis powers on September 11 is called a declaration of war, and the fear is expressed that democracy is disappearing as the chief executive in exerting dictatorial powers.

⁷⁰James M. Gillis, "The Blame for Pearl Harbor", The Catholic World, CLXII, 967 (Oct., 1945), p. 1.

⁷¹James M. Gillis, Ibid., CLXII, 970 (Jan., 1946), p. 291.

to bring about "a speedy termination of war through the defeat of the enemy powers." Although not endorsing it as a holy war or religious crusade they did esteem it as "a struggle between the established Christian order and the revolutionary order of Fascism, Nazism, and Marxism."⁷² In 1945 the terms for unconditional surrender offered a desperate Japan were evaluated as "severe but hopeful." Admittedly it was an ultimatum because the only alternative to capitulation was utter destruction, but supposedly the stringency of the terms was mitigated by the prospect of "a new order of peace, security, and justice."⁷³

Not all Catholic theologians and commentators were content to accept the popular dictum that "all's fair in love and war." Major Eliot was rebuked for asking the United States to turn a deaf ear to any appeal for sending food to those who might starve in the conquered countries during the winter of 1940-41 because it would ruin the effectiveness of the British blockade. "Granted the war--must they starve?" inquired Jerome P. Holland. Can we call ourselves Christians and harden our hearts to the cry of the hungry? Must we assume that Almighty God will "reward our charity by permitting a strengthened Hitler to destroy us?"⁷⁴

"The morality of obliteration bombing" was critically examined by John C. Ford. This was defined as strategic bombing by means of incendiaries and explosives in which the target to be wiped out is a large area of a whole city, including residential districts. Not all the

⁷²Under "Editorial Comment", America, LXVI, 11 (Dec. 20, 1941), p. 283.

⁷³"Grand Finale for Japan", (Editorial), Ibid., LXXIII (Aug. 4, 1945), p. 354.

⁷⁴"Granted the War: Must They Starve?", Ibid., LXIV, 1 (Oct. 12, 1940), p. 6.

inhabitants of an enemy country--men, women, and children--can be regarded as legitimate objects of direct attack, the writer maintained. Obliteration bombing, he concluded,

is an immoral attack on the rights of the innocent. It includes a direct intent to do them injury. Even if this were not true, it would still be immoral, because no proportionate cause could justify the evil done; and to make it legitimate would soon lead the world to the immoral barbarity of total war. The voice of the Pope and the fundamental laws of the charity of Christ confirm this condemnation.⁷⁵

The Commonweal carried an approved article by Norman Thomas⁷⁶ in which he deplored the exaltation of mass destruction and the degrading influence that it was having on our own people. That atrocities were not limited to the Japanese, he said, was established by the recurrent accounts of our own soldiers about American brutalities against the enemy. Particularly shocking to him was the hate campaign directed against the Japanese as a sub-human species. A sadistic short film, he revealed, was being sponsored and circulated by our War Department, entitled, "Have You Killed a Jap?"

Catholic editors fell in line with the papal condemnation of American use of the atom bomb against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One indignant reaction did not hesitate to record:

I here and now declare that I think the use of the atomic bomb, in the circumstances, was atrocious and abominable, and that civilized people should reprobate and anathematize the horrible deed.

Phelps Adams is quoted from The New York Sun as reporting that he

⁷⁵Theological Studies, V, 7 (Sept., 1944).

⁷⁶Reported in the issue, 42:554 (Mar. 20, 1945).

noticed little real rejoicing over the bomb among the people. Rather, he detected a "sense of oppression" and "shamefacedness" that might denote qualms of conscience.⁷⁷

The war crime trials in Nuernberg were greeted with dubious misgivings in the Catholic press. Melanie Staerk outlined the proposals of Justice Jackson as in conformity with "the organic, though painfully slow, growth of international law." But, he admitted, "it is not easy to be victorious in the name of justice."⁷⁸ Percy Winner compared our role in the war trials to that of a high priest arrayed in Caesar's robes, and was not surprised that many consciences were ill at ease. In his estimation

it was a posthumous triumph for Hitler that we should have needed to go beyond the rule of existing law to try him. It was a tragic defeat for viable reason that we should have needed to improvise a new fantasy of spiritual virtue to unmake Hitler's evil fantasy.⁷⁹

Throughout the conflict the interests of the Roman curia were always carefully safeguarded. No doubt the position taken by the highest ecclesiastical authority helped shape Catholic attitudes. Soon after the invasion of Poland the Pope was offering to serve as mediator in negotiating a "Roman peace." While others were fighting the Vatican was "busy with constructive plans." The Supreme Pontiff who commanded the allegiance of 20,000,000 Americans as well as nearly 40,000,000 under the control of Hitler was inclined to straddle fences as he purported to

⁷⁷"The Atom Bomb" (Editorial), The Catholic World, 161 (Sept., 1945) p. 449.

⁷⁸"War Crime Trials", America, 73 (July 7, 1945) p. 268.

⁷⁹"Atom at Nürnberg", The Commonweal, 43:566 (Mar. 22, 1946), p. 9.

see good and evil commingled on both sides. Germany was at least partially exonerated because the "fiendish menace from Moscow" had misguided her into sanctioning the partitioning of Poland and the subjugation of "an ancient Catholic people." England and France were blameworthy because they "lacked the constructive power to encourage the sane Christians of Germany in a fruitful cooperation."⁸⁰ Later the Pope authorized the publication of a report by the Catholic primate of Poland on the Nazi abuse of the clergy, but again and again it was reiterated that England and France could not be crusaders for a holy cause because they were not Catholic countries.⁸¹

Hilaire Belloc⁸² argued that in a sense every war is a religious war because it compels a man to make sacrifices for what he worships most--in this case "the nation." The Roman Church, he was convinced, stood as the only bulwark that might bring order out of chaos. Meanwhile, the Vatican had ceased remonstrating with the Nazi government over their domination of religion and gave de facto recognition to their conquests. American Catholics were assured: "If the time comes when this war assumes the character of a battle for God against Satan the Holy Father will recognize that fact and proclaim it." The ambivalence of the Pope at this juncture was excused because he had "insufficient jurisdiction."⁸³ In 1944 when the plea of Pius XII for a just peace

⁸⁰Cf. Robert Sencourt, "The War and the Church", The Catholic World, 150:179 (Nov., 1939), p. 84.

⁸¹Cf. under "Editorial Comment", Ibid., 50 (Mar., 1940), pp. 642 ff.

⁸²Cf. Newsweek, 16:11 (Sept. 9, 1940).

⁸³Cf. "The Pope's Neutrality" (Editorial), The Catholic World, 152 (Oct., 1940), pp. 1-9.

was called appeasement the retort was that it was only discreet for him to be reticent about Nazi misdeeds from the time of France's collapse until the allied invasion of Germany.⁸⁴

In the fall of 1941 the American bishops promulgated their joint declaration on "The Crisis in Christianity". Nazism and Communism were simultaneously objurgated as subversive and evil influences contaminating the world. But there was no en masse condemnation of the Russian people. Genuine concern was manifested for the Germans suffering under the Hitler regime. The papal exhortation for a just peace was reaffirmed: "Triumph over hate, over mistrust, over the spirit of ruthless selfishness, over the conflict in world economy, over the false principle that might makes right." But full support was pledged to the war effort.

Catholic moralists drew some fine distinctions in treating problems related to the War. One subject considered was "The Supernatural Value of a Soldier's Death." Can a soldier be a martyr? In those righteous crusades which were incontrovertibly just since they were directed against infidels and helped the propagation of the faith this would indubitably be true. The present conflict would not meet the requirements, however, because the war aims were not clearly defined. Yet it was conceivable that the death of a Catholic soldier might be an act of charity. This promise of divine approval for rendering the supreme sacrifice was based on "the certain doctrine of extra-sacramental justification of a soul by a perfect act of charity."⁸⁶

⁸⁴Robert A. Graham, "What Kind of Peace Does the Pope Ask For?", America, LXXI, 12 (June 24, 1944), pp. 315, 316.

⁸⁵"The Hierarchy Speaks on the Issues of the Day", Ibid., LXVI, 8 (Nov. 29, 1941), p. 201.

⁸⁶Daniel J. Saunders, Theological Studies, VI, 1 (Mar., 1945), p. 35.

C. The Protestant Episcopal Church

Opinion was by no means uniform among Episcopalians on what attitude we should adopt toward the European conflagration. But, for the most part, there was a leaning toward intervention. The close affiliation with the state Church of England readily explains why the sympathies of the clergy and membership would lie in that direction. After our involvement there was frequent ecclesiastical endorsement, and much encouragement was given toward a vigorous prosecution of the War to a successful termination.

Seldom did there appear to be much disturbance of conscience over the vicious instruments of warfare that were used. The God-approved justice of our cause was rarely brought into question. After V-J Day The Living Church exclaimed: "Victory is ours. . . . Let us indeed rejoice that God, who reigns omnipotent above all battles, has prospered the cause of the United Nations . . ." There was no moral indignation registered over the atomic blasts that reduced Hiroshima and Nagasaki to charred ruins. That the Hague convention was now outmoded and superseded, there was no doubt. That the atomic blast belonged to the class of "arms, projectiles, or material of a nature to cause superfluous injury" could not be gainsayed. "But the whole moral atmosphere of the old laws of war has disappeared." Isolationism is no longer possible. The United Nations must function with sufficient force and effective weapons for policing the whole world.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Clifford P. Morehouse, "Let Us Give Thanks", The Living Church, CXI (Aug. 19, 1945), p. 8.

they should back aid for Britain. The times were out of joint and something drastic would have to be done to set them right. Hitler's proposed "wave of the future" would have to be resisted by sending munitions abroad to fortify the island bastion of England.⁸⁸

Militant Dean Beekman, an Episcopal prelate assigned to shepherd a Parisian flock, flayed the Nazis so relentlessly that they compiled a dossier of his sermons and intended to arrest him. But he escaped and returned to America to make "509 speeches in the nation's churches, colleges, and Rotary Clubs, pointing out the imminence of German victory if the United States didn't join the Allies." His final tour was even arranged under the auspices of the War Department. After we became embroiled in the conflict his injunction was: "Don't pray for peace; pray for triumph."⁸⁹

A Baptist minister writing in the Anglican Review endeavored to justify Christian military service by applying Schweitzer's "interim theory." The teachings of Jesus must be understood within their eschatological framework. Absolute non-resistance cannot be put into practice until the Kingdom is fully established. Besides, Christ did threaten violence, even if He did not use it. There is a place in the Church for the Christian pacifist who keeps the ideal situation before us, but also indispensable is the realist who is ready to cope with the actual danger by resorting to force.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Reported in The St. Louis Globe-Democrat (February 5, 1941).

⁸⁹Cf. "Churchman Militant", Newsweek, 25:76 (January 15, 1945).

⁹⁰H. Straton Hillyer, "Jesus, Exegesis, and War", Anglican Review, XXIV, 1 (January, 1944).

D. Churches in the Calvinistic Tradition

In the teaching of John Calvin the omnipotence of the Sovereign God is the dominant principle. The rightfulness or wrongness of any human action must be judged in respect to whether or not it contributes toward the greater glory of God. The justice or injustice of a war must be determined by whether or not it is in conformity with the Will of God. Whenever kings and nations take up arms to execute God's wrath upon evildoers they deserve the loyal support of every Christian. Church and State should be closely allied in the endeavor to uphold law and order. Leaning heavily on the Old Testament to mold his theocratic ideal Calvin might be expected to endorse war as a legitimate necessity, and so he does. Going a step beyond Luther who only sanctioned defensive war he deemed it permissible to send out armies for the infliction of "public vengeance."⁹¹ The enemy he spoke of as "armed robbers". The causes underlying war in ancient times are still in existence, so princes cannot be blamed for defending their subjects. War is a device which the State may employ to further its own mundane interests, "provided only that the aim is just, and that moral discipline is maintained."⁹²

Orthodox Presbyterians and conservative Reformed churches usually subscribed to Calvin's analysis of war, and were unqualifiedly and uncritically behind the prosecution of the war. After the United States became an active participant Robert Hastings Nichols advised the churches to end all discussion about avoiding war. Our people are in this war,

⁹¹Cf. Kerr, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1939), p. 208.

⁹²Cf. Heering, Op. Cit., p. 60.

he maintained, to overcome tyranny and prevent the spread of totalitarianism. The Church must learn and teach that this is God's world and all that transpires is a reflection of His majestic Will. It is the design of God to turn this conflict into good. "The Church . . . surely recognizes that this war is in a good cause. . . . It is a war to preserve our country, its material life and its far more precious spiritual life. It is a war that has been thrust upon us."⁹³

Bible Fundamentalists with an unmistakable Calvinistic strain were vociferous in their patriotism at all times. Political and social issues were characteristically intermingled with moral and religious questions. Opposition to the whole Roosevelt administration was often evident. Our pre-Pearl Harbor foreign policy was relentlessly denounced. Some of the popular Fundamentalist leaders were identified with the "America First" crusade and contended bitterly against the "war-mongers."⁹⁴

The scions of Dwight Moody blamed "unbelief and modernism" for causing the war. Such a gruesome conflagration has arisen because "men love darkness rather than light." We must remember that we have been a "God-forgetting nation." America has a spiritual responsibility during and after the war. The distressing conditions which prevail emphasize anew the need for repentance and revival.⁹⁵

A posthumous article by Rev. James M. Gray⁹⁶ explaining "what the

⁹³ Robert Hastings Nichols, "War . . . Its Causes . . . And Cure . . . The Church in the War", The Religious Digest, 14:78 (March, 1942), pp. 1-7. Taken from the Presbyterian Tribune.

⁹⁴e.g. Gerald Winrod, editor of The Defender.

⁹⁵ Cf. Moody Monthly, XLIII, 9 (May, 1943) and XLIV, 2 (Oct., 1943).

⁹⁶ James M. Gray, "What the Bible Teaches about War and the Christian's Attitude in the Present Crisis", Moody Monthly, XLVI, 1 (Sept., 1945), pp. 5,6.

Bible teaches about war and the Christian's attitude in the present crisis" was typical of Fundamentalists. The basis for a national declaration of war was found in the fifth commandment and the Genesis edict against the shedding of blood. The government is the executioner of those who commit murder, whether individuals or whole nations are the culprits. Nations, under God, have magisterial functions to perform in conducting war. In Old Testament wars Jehovah was often the aggressor against pagan idolaters. Assyria, on the other hand, was the rod of God against Israel punishing her apostasy. If Israel had not taken up the sword against the surrounding peoples the true religion might have been lost, and she would have defied God. Similarly, if Charles Martel had not fought the Saracens in the eighth century we might be Mohammedan today. "Few will deny that the victory of Wellington at Waterloo was an act of God." Judged accordingly, the revolutionary and civil wars were essential. And so, by implication, is the present struggle with the Axis Powers. Romans 13 demands participation in war. The Old Testament is an authentic guide. The Sermon on the Mount must be understood in the light of Christ's declaration: "I did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets." What He condemns is limited to retaliation between individuals. Nevertheless, the Christian who has conscientious scruples should be respected.

E. The Methodist Church

The founders of the Methodist movement in England and America inclined toward the theological position that is historically known as Arminianism. Most of the controverted points in Reformed circles centered around the opposition to the distinctively Calvinistic doctrines like unconditional election and inamissibility of grace. Arminians, and their later offspring--the Methodists, veered away from viewing war as a revelation of the eternal and irresistible Will of God. They wanted to allow room for the operation of free choice. Man was more than a mechanically maneuvered object being shifted about on the chessboard of fate according to divine whim. His responsibility in war as well as peace was deemed to be considerable.

Especially pertinent to this discussion was the Arminian disavowal of total depravity. Natural man, the anti-Calvinists said, has the power to obey when the Spirit calls. There is "in man, since the Fall, the glimmerings of a natural light whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment . . ."97 Closely aligned to this is the teaching that already in this life the adherent of Christ may arrive at a state of perfection. Limborch, the systematizer of Arminian theology, admitted that "the habit of sinning cannot be exterminated at once," but through persistent effort and gradual development "it is altogether

⁹⁷Cf. Neve, History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), II, 20.

extinguished." From this it was only another step to advise that good works are essential for salvation.⁹⁸

With this theological orientation it is easy to see why Methodists have always been actively concerned about reform and improvement in the political realm. During the heyday of the Social Gospel Methodism was definitely enamored by the prospects for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. We would expect that the optimistic hopes for world peace and the betterment of international relations would die a slow death where they had been cherished so fondly.

Thus it was no surprise that spokesmen for the Methodist Church were in the forefront of many pre-war peace movements. There was considerable semi-official as well as popular sentiment against militarism during the thirties. Many Methodist young men declared their unwillingness to take up arms in another futile crusade to "save the world for democracy." But when the actual war situation came the feeling rapidly changed. Most Methodists were as enthusiastic as others in giving vent to their patriotic emotions. Some members of the Church protested against the reversal of position that followed Pearl Harbor and remained pacifist, but they were only a small minority.

Perhaps one of the most official pronouncements on the War came in the form of a resolution at the General Conference in Kansas City in 1944. After much debate and committee work they agreed upon the following statement:

⁹⁸Cf. Engelder, Popular Symbolics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), pp. 230 ff.

Christianity cannot be nationalistic; it must be universal in its outlook and appeal. War makes its appeal to force and hate, Christianity to reason and love. The influence of a church must, therefore, always be on the side of every effort seeking to remove animosities and prejudices which are contrary to the spirit and teachings of Christ. It does not satisfy the Christian conscience to be told that war is inevitable. It staggers the imagination to contemplate another with its unspeakable horrors in which modern science will make possible the destruction of whole populations. The methods of Jesus and the methods of war belong to different worlds. War is a crude and primitive force. It arouses passions which in the beginning may be unselfish and generous, but in the end war betrays those who trust in it. It offers no security that its decisions will be just and righteous. It leaves arrogance in the heart of the victors and resentment in the heart of the vanquished. When the teachings of Jesus are fully accepted, war as a means of settling international disputes will die, and dying, will set the world free from a cruel tyrant. We have looked to international diplomacy to prevent war and it has failed. We have trusted in international law to reduce the horrors and eliminate in a measure the cruelties of war, but war grows only more hideous and destructive. The time is at hand when the Church must rise in its might and demand an international organization which will make another war impossible.⁹⁹

In the fall of 1944 Georgia Harkness wrote a series of articles on "God and the War." The whole problem of evil was posed. The familiar enigma of why the innocent must suffer with the guilty was considered. Readers were reminded that God's Kingdom grows as suffering is banished by self-giving love. "Whatever happens to men, God suffers most."¹⁰⁰

Dr. Harkness mentioned five ways in which God overcomes the hideous evil of war:

- 1) God delivers us from evil by imparting courage to those who suffer; 2) By "using any gift that is brought to Him in love for

⁹⁹"General Conference of 1944", The Christian Advocate, 119:20 (May 18, 1944), p. 5.

¹⁰⁰Pertinent reference was made to the Oxford Conference: "War is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in this world, and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No justification of war should be allowed to conceal or minimize this fact."

the service of men." Such gifts may be brought by c.o.'s by those on the side of the United Nations, and by persons fighting for the Axis powers; 3) By "the creation of a community of understanding and love that is world-wide in its scope." The Church holds Christians together in a world fellowship in spite of war; 4) By "stirring us to political action to create the conditions of peace;" and 5) By "imparting faith through Christ that the triumph of His Kingdom is sure."¹⁰¹

The role of the Church in establishing a lasting peace was a topic of concern at many Methodist conferences and Church conventions.¹⁰²

Charles A. Ellwood pleaded for an expression of Christian love in establishing peace terms according to the Atlantic Charter. From a post-war perspective his admonitions were directed against what proved to be some of the temptations and pitfalls of victory. Specifically, he warned against seeking reprisals, and dividing Germany contrary to the wishes of her people. We "must not give the impression of Anglo-Saxon domination of the world."¹⁰³ To prevent economic inequalities we should grant access to raw materials on the same terms to all nations.¹⁰⁴ The editor of The Christian Advocate commented on the success of the meeting at Dumbarton Oaks. He was exuberant over the agreements reached that committed us to world-wide responsibilities, and the provision made for small nations to participate.¹⁰⁵ Presuming the necessity for an all-

¹⁰¹Georgia Harkness, "God and the War", The Christian Advocate, 119:36, (Sept. 7, 1944), p. 6, and following issues.

¹⁰²Cf. Articles like John Foster Dulles, "The Churches and the Peace", The Christian Advocate, 120:6 (Feb. 8, 1945), p.p. 11,12, and Roy L. Smith, "Toward Winning the Peace", Ibid., 119:4 (Jan. 27, 1944), p. 3.

¹⁰³In 1953 these are the very fears expressed by even the non-Communist world in Europe and Asia.

¹⁰⁴"A Christian Peace", Ibid., 117:26 (June 25, 1942), p. 6.

¹⁰⁵Roy L. Smith, "Terrorism Always Defeats the Terrorist", Ibid., 119:30 (July 27, 1944), p. 3.

out military victory Norman Huffman¹⁰⁶ inquired "Which Peace Plan?", and sketched some Christian proposals. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam¹⁰⁷ frankly predicted a third world war by 1975 if "we fail to establish world law and order." He seriously questioned our right to condemn the vengeful reactions of those who have endured the cruelties of war. Dumbarton Oaks, he averred, was a step in the right direction.¹⁰⁷ Near the end of the conflict there was comment on the recommendation of Congressman Gordon McDonough of California that a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, and a Jewish rabbi be included in the delegation to a peace conference. It was suggested that church laymen be urged to make a contribution toward a Christian peace. But already a dismal note was introduced because of the trend toward a victors' justice: "There is very little probability that any formal parleys will be held. . . . The Germans and Japanese will be required to accept terms in the formulation of which they will have no part."¹⁰⁸

The demoralizing effect of the War on the younger generation was seriously deplored. After describing the malnutrition and disease found among the war orphans, Roy L. Smith reminded his readers that "these are the ones who will make the next war!" His plea for food and clothing came under the caption, "We Must Make Peace with the Children."¹⁰⁹ Another striking article entitled "Bombed Babies" lamented the psycholog-

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 119:45 (Nov. 9, 1944), pp. 12 ff.

¹⁰⁷"The Church and the Third World War", Ibid., 119:48 (Nov. 30, 1944), pp. 9,10.

¹⁰⁸Roy L. Smith, "Preachers at Peace Conference", Ibid., 120:6 (Feb. 8, 1945), pp. 3,4.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 118:50 (Dec. 16, 1943), p. 3.

ical consequences of bombings on children. Attention was called to a special study on War and Children by Anna Freud and Dorothy T. Burlingham.¹¹⁰ "When Hatred is Normal" related the story of a fifth grader who had been sitting under the instruction of a Christian woman in the public school system of a Pennsylvania town. The little girl was mystified by her teacher's attitude: "I don't understand her. She don't hate the Germans, she don't hate the Japs. She don't hate anybody. She's funny, ain't she?"¹¹¹

Sometimes American policy was lauded as indicative of our moral superiority. The heading "Americans Can Be Proud" contrasted the bestiality of the Japanese army in Nanking with the fine treatment accorded 1500 Japanese prisoners of war rounded up by the federal government and incarcerated at Missoula, Montana.¹¹² But some cynics might well inquire if popular outbursts of ill will against Japanese-Americans and their enforced detention in special camps was likewise praiseworthy? The Hood River, Oregon Post of the American Legion decided to eliminate the names of fifteen Japanese-Americans serving with the armed forces from the community honor roll, but later reconsidered and rescinded the order.¹¹³

A premonition was expressed, "Suppose We Win," and find that in fighting the Nazis we have become Nazified ourselves? In bombing German cities, it was intimated that we were no less brutal than the Germans who

¹¹⁰Roy L. Smith, "Bombed Babies", Ibid., 119:9 (Mar. 2, 1944), p. 3.

¹¹¹Roy L. Smith, Ibid., 119:7 (Feb. 17, 1944), p. 4.

¹¹²Roy L. Smith, Ibid., 117:5 (Jan. 29, 1942), p. 4.

¹¹³Roy L. Smith, "The Courage of True Americanism", Ibid., 120:13 (Mar. 29, 1945), p. 3.

bombed London and Coventry. Decrying the militarism of our enemies we are advocating universal military training for our own youth. Nietzsche is quoted: "When you fight a monster beware lest you become a monster." The United States is reprehensible for its indulgence in rotten movies, liquor interests, and racism. "What shall it profit a great nation if it win the war and lost its own soul?"¹¹⁴ The accusation is made that atrocity tales were fabricated to advance the war loan. This unscrupulous fund-accumulating device is stigmatized as "traffic in the blood and agonies of American boys." The American people should be trusted to respond without a base appeal to anger and revenge.¹¹⁵

Bishop Wilbur E. Hammaker maintained that the Church always should remain the conscience of the nation. He criticized changes that were made in the Delaware findings of the Federal Council of Churches' Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace. He wanted retained the unequivocal assurance that any world organization must be created by all nations without any alliances calling for counteralliances, and guaranteeing that the weak would not be dominated by the strong. He was opposed to "The Six Pillars" issued in "The Statement of Political Principles" in the late spring of 1943 which suggested that the United Nations continue their wartime collaboration, and include the neutral and enemy nations later. This trend was deprecated as a "compromise."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Roy L. Smith, Ibid., 119:12 (Mar. 23, 1944), pp. 4,5.

¹¹⁵Roy L. Smith, "More Atrocity Tales Coming", Ibid., 119:38 (Sept. 21, 1944), p. 4.

¹¹⁶"The Church as Conscience", Ibid., 120:1 (Jan. 4, 1945), pp. 15 ff. Cp. in contrast the statement of the International Round Tables of Christian leaders at Princeton in July, 1943: "They want no postwar military line-up of victorious big powers; they seek an all-nation world body instead." Time, XVII, 4 (July 26, 1943).

The Protestant pulpit was congratulated for exercising more restraint in the Second World War than in the First. Although the "Salesmen of Hate" were not as blatant this time as last we may live to rue "the unreasoning virulence with which large numbers of Americans hate everything Japanese."¹¹⁷ Chaplain Howell G. Guin¹¹⁸ discovered that every nation looked upon itself as a peace-loving people, forced against its will to wage war. Japan, Italy, and Germany all made protests of innocence. Their soldiers were persuaded in their own minds that they were fighting in a just cause. German prisoners asked: "Why do you Americans fight us?" Their belt-buckles were stamped with the motto: "Gott mit uns." Wars will not cease when those declared guilty are punished by the victors.

Several printed prayers for victory are characterized by their humility, their acknowledgment of our own guilt, and their concern for the enemy. The Rev. W. Arthur Faus prayed:

Infinite Father, in deep penitence we confess that not once but many times we have strayed far from Thee in our attitudes and conduct. . . . We commend to Thy care the millions of young men of all nationalities who are plunged into the holocaust of war. Whatever their race or creed or nation, they are Thy children. Keep them spiritually safe even when they cannot all be kept physically safe. Grant, O God, that in some way this scourge of war may soon be brought to an end and the Christ spirit of aggressive love, universal justice, and magnanimous forgiveness may increasingly dominate the nations and peoples of the world. Amen.¹¹⁹

A prayer for victory in verse reads:

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Roy L. Smith, The Christian Advocate, 120:2 (Jan. 11, 1945), p. 3.

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"War Blame, War Horrors or Salvation"?, Ibid., 120:7 (Feb. 2, 1945), pp. 6129

"A Prayer for the Times", Ibid., 119:1 (Jan. 20, 1944), p. 5.

From vain display and pride of power,
 From every boastful word,
 From all designs that mercy shun,
 Deliver us, Good Lord.

O God, whose aid our father sought,
 In crises of the past,
 Help us a righteous peace to gain,
 And stablish it at last.

We humble crave Thy pardon, Lord.
 Our nation went astray.
 We failed as sentries of the Peace,
 And now its foes we slay.

The aims and language that they shout
 We must not imitate,
 But strive to win a better world,
 Where love can blot out hate.

We seek a democratic peace,
 That shall forever guard
 The common man, in every land.
 So grant us victory, Lord.¹²⁰

Reading the wartime issues of The Christian Advocate will convey certain general impressions to the reader. In spite of the tragic upheaval through which the world was passing the editors preserved a rather optimistic outlook for the future. Permanent peace was more than an elusive and unattainable mirage. It was a distinct possibility, if only Christian principles would be invoked. The "liberal" view of human nature was not entirely abandoned. There were still considered to be some innate good qualities in man which could be developed and utilized in the formation of a more stable and harmonious society. The heritage of Arminian theology with its denial of man's utter depravity was still in evidence. Thus, Methodists were reliable propogandists in backing

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T. A. Stafford, "A Prayer for Victory", The Christian Advocate, 119:3 (January 20, 1944), p. 12.

the United Nations. Writers waxed enthusiastic in their post-war vision of "one world." No one seemed to feel compelled to adopt an eschatological outlook that would suggest the deterioration of our civilization and the approach of doomsday.

Perhaps one glaring inconsistency might be detected. Fascism and Nazism were invariably singled out for abusive denunciation while the menace of atheistic Communism was completely ignored. Along with most other denominations Methodists fell in line with the Moscow-Washington alliance and were, for the most part, undisturbed by the incongruity involved. Religious journalists were hoodwinked by the outward allegiance which American Communists offered our government as long as it served their own purposes. The rude awakening did not come until after the Yalta and Potsdam agreements and the rupture in East-West relations.

In all fairness it should be mentioned that Methodist writers were not "blind followers of the blind." Their editorials were critical, and at times provocative. But after Pearl Harbor there was usually unquestioning acceptance of the righteousness of our arms, and an understandable reluctance to censor political and military decisions propounded in pursuit of victory. We search in vain for bristling moral indignation over the atomic massacre at Hiroshima or the vengeful Morgenthau plan to reduce Germany to an agricultural state.

During the controversy over the government of Chiang Kai-Shek some would claim that Methodist bias entered in. The Christian sympathies and Methodist persuasion of his wife would be expected to merit some defense from the American Church. While state department officials were

disparaging the generalissimo's integrity and administrative sagacity, and rumors were hinting at marital infidelity, loyal Methodists answered the charges promptly and vehemently. They termed the insinuations malicious and unfounded.

F. Pacifist Christians

Even before the sixteenth century there were dissenting groups like the Waldenses and the Moravian Brethren that protested against Christian collaboration in armed conflicts. Under Menno Simons, during the Reformation period, a radically Pacifist movement developed that has influenced Mennonites down to the present day. The demand for absolute separation from the world and the emphasis on the external purity of the Church has included abstinence from war making. Mennonites have usually remained aloof from all political and economic affairs which are identified with the sinfulness of the world. They will render obedience to the "government of the world" only in those things "which do not militate against the Law, will, and commandments of God."¹²¹

Quakers too have been a part of the pacifist front. For the war-like character of Cromwell's Puritanism they substituted a humanitarian outlook. They have long been admired for their sacrificial willingness to contribute for the physical relief of wartorn areas. Already after the First World War they issued a manifesto declaring "that peace can only be attained by refusing to take any part in war, for the simple and wholly sufficient reason that war by its whole nature is in opposition

¹²¹Cf. Dort Confession, XIII, Engelder, Op. Cit., p. 262.

to the message and spirit of the life and death of Jesus Christ. . . . The idea of peace . . . demands the most determined repudiation of war, unambiguously and without compromise . . ."122

Liberal theology has often been sympathetic toward Christian pacifism. Some pastors and laymen in all the major Protestant denominations have condemned war as inherently wrong. They wanted to repudiate what was an instrument of national policy. A number of them were persuaded that they could give the most effective witness by forming a "Fellowship of Reconciliation." Their monthly magazine published during the war years provides an excellent summary of the Pacifist interpretation of events.

Readers of American news releases and sensational magazine reports were horrified by revelations of Nazi and Japanese brutality. Pacifist writers, however, asseverated that war itself was the real atrocity that evoked the worst in human nature. R. Alfred Hassler¹²³ suggested that atrocity stories were generalized from occasional incidents and were exaggerated for propoganda purposes. As far as he was concerned the Anglo-American naval blockade of Europe would likewise have to be classified as an atrocity. A letter to the New York Times indicated that Red Cross delegates were allowed to visit most Japanese prison camps, and that they "found no atrocities, but reasonably good conditions, including hot baths weekly and medical attention."¹²⁴ From Peal Harbor to January 7, 1944,

¹²²In Friends and War, quoted by G. J. Heering, Op. Cit., p. 68.

¹²³"Atrocity Stories--1944", Fellowship (March, 1944).

¹²⁴February 4, 1944.

United States forces had only taken 377 Japanese prisoners.¹²⁵ Pacifist critics wondered if the Japanese were really such unrelenting fighters that they resisted capture, or were Americans indulging in vicious and unrestricted slaughter?

The advocates of reconciliation regretted that Americans were blinded by hatred from seeing the Japanese viewpoint. To the Orientals America and Britain were the symbols of oppression and imperialism. They had suffered indignity and humiliation at their hands and resented the Occidental assumption of superiority. At Versailles the English speaking nations refused to insert a declaration of racial equality into the peace treaty.¹²⁶ We refused any modification of the 5-5-3 naval ratio. So December 7, 1941 was the launching of a holy crusade for millions of Japanese. Were we not reaping the bitter harvest of the growing ill will derived from the evil seeds planted ever since Commodore Perry first forced his entrance into Tokyo Bay?

In a series of writings, the English woman, Vera Britain, contested the prudence as well as the morality of our mass bombings. She challenged the validity of the familiar argument that it would shorten the war. Should we not be chagrined when reminded that the same excuse was used by the Germans in World War I for their Schrecklichkeit (submarine warfare), and for their destructive bombing of Warsaw, Rotterdam, Belgrade, London, and Coventry? The fact is that more may be killed in one such concentrated raid than would die in weeks of ordinary fighting. Besides,

¹²⁵Cf. New York Herald-Tribune (January 29, 1944).

¹²⁶Cp. Asiatic Exclusion Laws.

most of the victims were helpless civilians, including women and children. Mass bombing is purported to induce revolt and break morale. Does it accomplish this aim or does it rather increase the will to resist?¹²⁷

Vera Britain was convinced that the argument based on revenge was equally fallacious. The popular feeling was that the Germans started it and so deserved no sympathy. But George Bernard Shaw was cynical about allied pretenses to righteousness: "The blitzing of the cities has carried war this time to such a climax of infernal atrocity that all recriminations on that score are ridiculous. The Germans will have as big a bill of atrocities against us as we against them if we take them into an impartial international court."¹²⁸ Those who clamored for pitiless vengeance forgot that some of the tactical devices and machines of destruction used against Germany were not known at the time of the raids against England. The pacifist verdict was that "retaliation in kind and worse means the reduction of ourselves to the level of our opponents whose perverted values have persuaded us to fight."¹²⁹

George L. Paine expressed some "Thoughts on the Treatment of Germany." He questioned the propriety of using the terms Nazi and German as equivalents. With more than a million Germans in concentration camps it appeared that there must have been more than token resistance to Hitler's regime. The underground movement in Germany was a constant "thorn in the flesh" to the party chieftains. Harsh treatment of

¹²⁷ Cf. Fellowship (Mar., 1944).

¹²⁸ Sunday Express (Nov. 28, 1943).

¹²⁹ Cf. Fellowship (Mar., 1944).

Germans would be a stupid policy for us to pursue. It would only provoke another war unless we were malevolent enough to require complete dismemberment, castrate the German men, or exterminate the German people. Germany could best be prevented from seeking new conquests by granting her "ready access to the markets of the world both for buying and selling, and aid her in attaining economic prosperity." It was recalled that forgiveness is a basic ingredient of the Christian faith. The late Archbishop of Canterbury had stated after the outbreak of war: "We must look forward to the renewed friendship with the German people."¹³⁰

Nels F. S. Ferre contended that the Church should always stand for reconciliation. During the intervals of peace "the Church must labor to effect such conditions as will make war unnecessary." By its message and its position the Church must pass judgment upon the outcroppings of evil in the world. By witnessing to the "purpose of God in Christ Jesus" it has an ameliorating influence. The Church dare not become enveloped in the fervor of extreme nationalism. It must act as a mediator, "pointing out continually the faults and evils on both sides as well as the good causes on both sides . . ." Healing the wounds and bitterness of war is "another concrete task of the Church."¹³¹

The V-E Day Statement issued by the National Executive Committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation pleaded for Clemency and amnesty:

". . . In the name of common sense and humanity we . . . urge the President to state publicly specific terms of settlement with Japan which will provide a worthy place for the Japanese and all

¹³⁰ Ibid. (Nov., 1944).

¹³¹ Ibid. (Feb., 1945).

other Oriental peoples in an orderly, democratic world society and on this basis to call for the immediate cessation of hostilities in the Orient."¹³²

Pacifists repeatedly registered their disapproval of our post-war treatment of the enemy. The division of Germany was denounced as cruel folly. Glenn D. Everett charged that "Starvation is our Policy." He showed how enforced boundary changes ordered by the Big Three were causing millions to go hungry. "The diet of Germany has been officially set at 1,550 calories a day, 450 calories below the minimum subsistence level of 2,000 calories set for the rest of Europe, and less than half of the average American diet of 3,300 calories."¹³³

¹³²Released May 8, 1945.

¹³³In Fellowship (March, 1946).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RELATED PROBLEMS

As we indicated already in the second chapter of our treatise we do not believe that the wars of the Old Testament can be cited as conclusive evidence for the admissibility of Christian participation in modern warfare. We no longer can speak of a nation under God which has been ordained to fight for divinely specified goals. The United States cannot pretend to be a theocracy like Israel was in the days of the Judges and the Kings.

What we can and ought to learn from the Old Testament records is that war is and has been employed as a method of moral rectification. God uses war as a punishment for national sins. When the Israelites became reprobate and apostate hostile armies were permitted to harass them until they returned to the Lord in sackcloth and ashes. Contempt for the Law of God, avarice and unrighteousness, false ambition and pride are mentioned as reasons for punitive action. (Cf. Lev. 26:56; I Kings 8:23; Amos 9:1 f; Micah 2:1 f; and Is. 1:5-6). Isaiah clearly denominates Assyria as the rod of God's anger and the staff of His indignation against Israel. Jeremiah designates Nebuchadnezzar as God's instrument for subjugating the nations of his day, including Judah. Ezediel, expressing the oracle of the Lord, insinuates that Jerusalem was overrun by the Gentiles because "they walked not in my statutes, and despised my judgments." (Cf. Ezek. 20).

Another remarkable observation that we might make regarding the Old

Testament is the lack of all glorification of war or the warriors as such. War is a grim and gory necessity which befalls man because of his incurable sinfulness. If possible it should be avoided. David, the foremost soldier of them all, was denied the honor of building the temple because his hands were stained with blood. In spite of the stern realism of the Old Testament we should remember that war is still pictured there as a dreadful calamity.

What about the teaching and example of Jesus in the New Testament? Is the Sermon on the Mount compatible with Christian participation in war? How can you love a man and fire a gun at him? These are the pacifist arguments in their most poignant form. At first glance they would seem to be irrefutable reasons for outlawing war. We would have to agree that Christ proclaimed the will of God in such a way that the barbarities of war would be altogether excluded. In the ideal state, where the agape of God held sway, conflict would be unthinkable.

But did Christ really expect such a Utopia to prevail within the confines of human history? Did He actually inculcate pacifism? We search in vain if we look for some direct pronouncement upon war. This in itself would seem strange if our Lord expected His followers to refrain from any application of force. When He came into contact with professional soldiers and officers He never required that they give up their occupation. When He submitted to death by crucifixion He endured every torture and indignity that was pressed upon Him, but this was in fulfilment of the eternal plan of salvation, and does not demand our emulation. He was content to have the Gospel of the Kingdom preached

within the framework of the existing society. He consented to the payment of taxes, aware that a large percentage of it went for the upkeep of the Roman military system.

As for the ethics Christ insisted upon in the Kingdom of God it must be remembered that this stage of perfection has not been attained, and it never will be until the Church Militant is transposed into the Church Triumphant. We are still surrounded by injustice and iniquity and must resort to compulsion to restrain evil forces. This does not exempt us from trying to keep the mandates given us—from moving in the direction of perfection as we grow toward the full stature of Christ. But no individual could succeed who would continually lend money without any return, or who would limit his conversation to "yes" and "no". No government could endure which would take literally the injunctions about not resisting evil. The French theologian, Loisy, declared: "A country where all the good people conformed to these maxims would, instead of resembling the kingdom of heaven, be the paradise of thieves and criminals."¹

The Sermon on the Mount ethic is a revelation of the pure will of God. Our moral effort, no matter what course we choose, remains imperfect. It is not necessarily true that to refuse military service is the only Christ-like position to take. As a conscientious objector we may only be sanctioning the continuance of an unjust and ungodly "status quo."

¹Cadoux, Early Christian Attitude Toward War (London: G. Allen, 1940), pp. 42-43.

On the other hand, we cannot assume that intervention by war is the best remedy. In some instances non-resistance might be the better way. Nor can we shift responsibility for our action upon the government which drafts us for service. When we make our decision we may do so under tension, willing to review the rectitude of our judgment as new events and circumstances modify or alter our attitude.

Regarding the role of American Churches in the war it should be stated that, on the whole, they displayed more self-restraint and equanimity than they did during the First World War. The pulpit was rarely used to issue the call to arms or to fan the embers of hatred. Loyalty to flag and country was stressed, but the extreme emotional outbursts that discredited the clergy in 1918 were generally avoided. None the less, the Churches did tend to follow rather than guide public opinion. When the preservation of neutrality was a popular theme many preachers supported it with sermons and public addresses. When the tide of conflict swept in most of the churchmen maintained a discreet silence or held up the war banner. A small minority continued to speak out against policies with which they disagreed. The courageous few protested against extreme abuses.

Prior to our actual embroilment in the war many members of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod were sympathetic toward the America First movement. During the thirties, when the real aims of the Nazis were little understood, there were some who frankly admired the achievements of the Hitler regime. But after December, 1941, there were few who did not join in the clamor for complete victory over the dastardly foe.

This branch of American Lutheranism was distinguished for its unequivocal support of the war effort and its almost unqualified endorsement of every government policy. On the part of the executive leadership, and most of the clergy, there seemed to be an underlying dread that the patriotism of the Church might be suspect because of the German background of its constituency. The unpleasant experiences of the First World War, when German services were rudely interrupted, and when indignities were heaped upon some of the pastors by zealous chauvinists, undoubtedly influenced the "official" attitude assumed from 1941 to 1945. One may search the church publications in vain for any critical observations on governmental decisions. In some instances this almost appeared to be "leaning over backwards" to assure Washington that Missouri Lutherans were dependable soldiers and loyal citizens. If any member expressed misgivings about fighting he was reminded of the obedience to government required by Romans 13, and perhaps "comforted" with a few quotations from Luther to show "that soldiers too can be saved."

The official attitude of the United Lutheran Church was quite similar, but allowed for a greater latitude of opinion. Individual pastors were vigorous in their dissent. A few sensed that it might be well to reconsider the application of Luther and the Confessions to participation in modern war. Conscientious objectors were not encouraged, but they were treated with sympathetic appreciation for their scruples.

The position of the Roman Church may best be characterized as opportunistic. With papal adherents in both camps they were cautious

in their declarations. Policy wavered back and forth according to the turn of events. As long as ecclesiastical interests were not molested there was no opposition to Hitler and Mussolini. American priests were in the forefront of the "stay out of war" crusade, but rallied to the colors after we became involved. Some Catholic editors tried to call a halt in the march down the road toward war, and resumed their editorial jibes at the administration as soon as peace was secured.

Pacifists were found in most of the major Protestant denominations, in addition to the sects in which pacifism is an avowed tenet of faith. Pacifists were not of an identical mind. Some refused to collaborate with the promotion of the war in any way. Others agreed to go to work camps and accept noncombat duty.

Although the author does not find the pacifist position tenable in its entirety, we do have the conviction that we can learn from the useful witness which they provided in their utter rejection of war. Their emphasis on reconciliation during the years when others were urging hatred and vengeance seemed as refreshing as a cool breeze after a scorching hot day. While the larger and long established denominations were compliant, if not servile, in their observance of government directives, the convinced pacifists withstood the pressure of mass persuasion and retained their distinctive principles. While others were cowed into silence they protested against unnecessary and revolting brutalities. When peace was declared they were among the first to offer relief supplies to war stricken areas without discrimination against the enemy.

In view of the maze of evidence to be weighed the individual

Christian may find himself in a quandary when called upon to voice his conviction concerning the late war. The conflicting judgments passed by churchmen only add to the layman's bewilderment. What valid and demonstrable conclusions can we reach? Perhaps in the nature of the case we cannot avoid a certain degree of subjectivity, and we should hasten to admit that our evaluations are not final and absolute. Only eight years have elapsed since the cessation of hostilities, and we cannot yet focus everything that transpired into its proper historical perspective. Nor is more than a particle of the testimony needed to ascertain the motives of statesmen and governments in the hands of competent historians.

But this does not imply, as has so frequently been asserted in the Lutheran Church, that since we know so little about what is taking place, we cannot be held accountable. Ignorance is a lame excuse for an uncritical submission to the status quo or a gullible conformity with prevailing opinion. Christians, and particularly the leadership of the Church, if they had used the sources of information available, and if they had seriously attempted to define the issues at stake, could have been a much more potent force in restraining evil and promoting peace. It is the hope of the present writer that a critical review of the Church's role in the last war may serve as a deterrent against a repetition of the same failings in the current crisis and in any future wartime situations.

In conducting this analysis it will be helpful if we first raise the basic question: Is war, from the Christian standpoint, ever justified?

Then, it may be instructive and clarifying, if, in retrospect, we inquire: Was the Second World War justified? Finally, we must pass our critique on American Churches and point up their shortcomings in interpreting the God-intended significance of the War to their members, and their inefficacy in sharpening the conscience of their people and calling the nation to repentance.

Most Christians would readily agree that war is deplorable. They have usually concurred with the verdict of disillusioned militarists like Napoleon who is supposed to have said: "The more I study the history of the world, the more I am convinced of the inability of brute force to create anything durable." Or, they assent to the peremptory affirmation of General Moltke: "The most victorious war is a misfortune, not only for the conquered, but for the conquerors as well." Sometimes the observation of Sir Walter Scott is echoed: "War is the only game in which both sides lose."

Most Protestant Christians would be quick to maintain that war is not a rightful means for propogating the Gospel. The religious wars of the past are decried as perversions of the teachings of Christ who said His Kingdom was not of this world, and who rebuked His disciples when in their anger they wanted to destroy an unfriendly Samaritan village with fire. St. Paul's description of our warfare is called to mind: "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds." (II Cor. 1:3-5). The Roman Church is often berated for having made conversions by the sword and for relying upon

force to uphold its favored position in areas like Spain and Latin America.

In principle many of the American clergy will insist that they are opposed to war. They recognize that war is caused by insolence, greed, and strife. It will be conceded that some wars have been downright wicked and stupid, no matter from whose side we examine them. When it comes to the actual outbreak of war, however, there have seldom been more than a few courageous voices that have ever been raised in opposition. The fact remains that the majority of clerics have always rationalized compliance with the decisions of the temporal powers.

How then is war justified? The usual argumentation follows the line of reasoning that, although war is evil, surrender to a wanton conqueror would be even worse. The government that exists is established by God and has the right to execute the evil doer. At times the "evil doer" may be a whole nation that is waging war against your nation. Unless you are in possession of unmistakable evidence to prove that your government is following the wrong course you are duty bound as a Christian citizen to rise to arms as commanded.

Under what circumstances can war be considered justifiable? The usual Lutheran response includes the following cases:

- 1) When war is necessary to preserve the life of the government, threatened by internal insurrection.
- 2) When the territory of the nation is invaded or threatened with invasion; in defense of honor.
- 3) When war is the only way in which a nation can be true to its treaty obligations, the said obligations themselves being such as a righteous government may incur.
- 4) When war is the only way in a given situation, to protect the people entrusted for protection to the government, without yielding to open wickedness.
- 5) When the highest interest of mankind is at stake, and a country

can help, even if not directly threatened.²

The present writer is of the opinion that the traditional Lutheran concept of a just war, as expressed here, and as developed earlier by men like Augustine, Luther, and Gerhard, needs to be reconsidered and modified in recognition of our changed world, the complicating problems arising from the deadly devices employed in modern warfare, and the interdependence and close proximity of the inhabitants of "one world." For instance, the problem must be realistically faced whether or not in the future any war can conceivably achieve any of the results once claimed for a "just war." Whole cities can now be reduced to ruins and entire populations can be exterminated. The cost of waging war is prohibitive. The economy of the "victor nations" after World War II was hopelessly upset, and a semblance of stability could be maintained only with American aid.

Even if we were, for the sake of further discussion, to assume the validity of the "just war" concept, could we fit our struggle against Germany and Japan into that category? Was this a just war in the traditional sense, or in any acceptable understanding of the term?

Most of the American ministers were assured of the justice of our cause by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which was pictured to them as unwarranted aggression. Whereas many had contended vigorously against our entrance into war before December 7, 1941, they changed their minds immediately when our Hawaiian outpost was endangered. Presto! we were

²Arthur F. Steinke, The Bible and War (Brooklyn: The Studio Press, 1941), p. 31.

in a war of self-defense and the "great debate" between interventionists and isolationists was abruptly ended.

But the case is not quite that simple. Those who were familiar with the history of Japanese-American relations still had their doubts. They knew that American interests in the Orient had often been selfish and imperialistic. They knew all too well the blunders in our Far Eastern policy that were at least partially responsible for the ascendancy of a fanatical militarist leadership in Japan. Since the war some noted American historians have demonstrated that the Japanese attack was not the unexpected surprise that we had been induced to believe it was, nor could it be fairly described as "unprovoked aggression." We had gradually maneuvered Japan into a position where she had no choice but to "lose face" or fight.³

Regardless of the sincerity of the leaders involved, and without impugning motives, there still can be no doubt but that the administration was guilty of duplicity during the pre-war years and afterwards. While the general population was led to believe that their government was doing everything possible to avoid war, the president and the state department were actually committed to an allied victory over Germany. They tried by every means "short of war" to insure that victory, but when these tactics failed, they deemed our entrance into the war inevitable--all of this while permitting the people to believe that we would not interfere in Europe or Asia.

³Cf. Charles A. Beard, President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943)

In terms of the "just war" idea the disturbing issue might be raised: Who took the aggressive action that caused the drift toward war? Hitler scrupulously avoided any incident that would stir up American war fever as the sinking of the Lusitania had done during the First World War. Yet we were pushed step by step into an undeclared war in the Atlantic. Almost at the outset the original neutrality bill was amended to permit "cash and carry" which in actuality meant that the allies had access to war materials which they could purchase in America while it was impossible for their enemies to take advantage of the same provision. In April, 1940 the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies was launched. A bellicose minority began to clamor for intervention. Several admirals advocated a declaration of war.⁴ An April, 1941, Fight for Freedom was organized with the Episcopal Bishop Henry N. Hobson as chairman. Their propoganda posters, such as the one showing a uniformed Nazi bludgeoning an American and shouting, "Shut up, Yank; learn to speak Nazi," were designed to scare the country into war.

It would be ridiculous to contend that the United States was an innocent bystander preserving a genuine neutrality in the conflict between the axis and allied powers from September, 1939 to December, 1941. Winston Churchill has quoted Harry Hopkins as having given him a categorical pledge of all-out American aid already in January, 1941.⁵

⁴Harry E. Yarnell (retired) on July 7 and Admiral Standley (subsequently Ambassador to the Soviet Union) on October 12.

⁵Cf. The Grand Alliance (Boston: Houghton, 1950), p. 23: "The President is determined that we shall win the war together. Make no mistake about that."

Almost unlimited subsidies of munitions and supplies were conveyed to European ports after the passage of the Lend-Lease bill in March of the same year. Meanwhile, important American and British staff talks were being conducted in Washington in an atmosphere of extreme secrecy. The principal conclusions were phrased in a way that took American participation in the war for granted.⁶ Another milestone toward war was the decision to use American naval forces to guarantee the safe delivery of cargo intended for Britain. United States warships and planes were used to search for German raiders and submarines and broadcasted their position to the British navy. The next move was a "shoot at sight" campaign against Axis submarines invoked in September. By November the president succeeded by a narrow margin in gaining Congressional approval for arming American merchant ships to send into war zones. Other measures taken by the administration during 1941 to bring about the downfall of Germany include the sending of American laborers to build a naval base in Northern Ireland, the blocking of German credits in the United States, and the occupation of Iceland by American troops. What this adds up to is a deliberate movement toward intervention on the part of the executive branch of our government. The underlying motives of our leaders in promoting this course of action cannot easily be discerned. The most charitable interpretation is that they were fully persuaded that the Berlin-Tokyo alliance was a threatening menace that had to be extirpated at any cost. The historical facts are indisputable. There can be no

⁶Cf. William H. Chamberlain, America's Second Crusade (Chicago: Regnery, 1950), p. 130.

doubt regarding our repeated and persistent violations of our professed neutrality. There was an obviously wide gap between our pretensions and our actual deeds.

A studied appraisal of our relations with Japan will show that in the Pacific too our justification of the war was not in full accord with the facts. Throughout the Sino-Japanese conflict our sympathies were with Chiang-Kai-Shek. China was granted a number of loans and declared eligible for lend-lease aid. In July, 1941 the President froze all Japanese assets in this country. This action amounted to an economic blockade of Japan which drove her to take desperate counter-measures. It certainly weakened the position of the Japanese moderates who were trying to prevent the militarist extremes from seizing control. Rather than continue truce negotiations Secretary of State Hull handed the Japanese envoys what amounted to a demand for unconditional surrender in a set of ten proposals. If Japan would have submitted it would have meant complete withdrawal from China and Indo-China. An Army Board which later investigated the Pearl Harbor attack described Hull's communication as "the document that touched the button that started the war."⁷

Journalists and historians will probably be writing interpretations of the infamous event of December 7, 1941 for many years to come. The controversy has raged long and furiously as to where the responsibility for the debacle lies. The most gracious judgment will have to assume

⁷Ibid., p. 168.

that it was the result of a lack of foresight and that we were simply caught "off guard." More severe is the conclusion reached by a number of recognized historians who aver that Pearl Harbor was the result of a behind-the-scenes attempt to maneuver the Japanese into firing the first shot.⁸

Irrespective of how we interpret the evidence this much is incontrovertible: our entrance into the war was not occasioned by a direct act of premeditated, uninstigated aggression on the part of the enemy, and ecclesiastical approval of Christian participation can scarcely be grounded on that contention.

Nor is it possible to formulate a convincing case for intervention by pointing to Nazi plans for eventual world conquest.⁹ The intimation that the Western Hemisphere was in imminent peril can be dismissed as an alarmist technique. The military potential of Germany for undertaking such an overseas expedition was fantastically exaggerated. No evidence has been uncovered in Nazi archives to prove that an invasion of North or South America was ever contemplated.

The Christian apologist who wants to justify the course of action our government pursued, and the acquiescence or sanction of the American Churches must resort to other arguments.

⁸So Charles Beard and Charles Tansill. George Morgenstern defended this thesis already in 1947. Cf. his Pearl Harbor (New York: Devin-Adair, 1947).

⁹It would be more convincing to expose the aims of our ally, Communist Russia. Cf. William Henry Chamberlain, Blueprint for World Conquest (Chicago: Regnery, 1946) and David J. Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1942 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942).

Usually the vindicator will take his stand on ideological grounds and insist that the highest interest of mankind was at stake. Even if we were not directly threatened by physical force we could not sit idly by and permit the Nazi tyranny to swallow up the free world. From the economic standpoint it was argued that "you can't do business with Hitler."¹⁰ We would have to compete with "slave labor" and our trade would be stifled. The prospect of a victorious Germany was painted in the darkest colors. If the axis powers were triumphant it would mean the blackout of freedom and the annihilation of Christianity. The idols of German nationalism and racial pride had to be destroyed.

But will this explanation really satisfy the earnest Christian inquirer? Again, we find that the case is not as cogent as it might appear, and the reasoning is fallacious. A number of vexing questions may be injected to cast doubt upon the validity of this defense for our entrance into World War II: 1) How far does the responsibility of the United States extend for preserving its way of life? Does it include all countries to which it is bound by ideological or cultural ties? Or, even those areas of the earth in which we have an economic interest? Can we be expected to go to the assistance of any and every nation that is threatened by an alien "ism?"

2) How many of the noble aims for which we purportedly fought in World War II were actually attained? Were the much-heralded "four freedoms" of the Atlantic Charter ever put into practice in the post-war

¹⁰Why we envisioned no obstacles in post-war trade relations with another totalitarian power, namely, Soviet Russia, is not at all clear.

world? What countries are enjoying "liberation" today as a result of our crusade in Europe and Asia?¹¹

3) If the defeat of Germany and Japan was essential to world security how could we consciously abet another totalitarian power that had an ideological outlook that was equally contrary to ours? How could we ally ourselves with one dictatorship in order to vanquish another? Did we not help pave the way for the spread of Russian Communism?

Looking back it is difficult to see what conceivable good was accomplished by our entrance into the war. The war began in 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. Poor, defenseless Poland should be rescued from the Nazi oppressor! Instead of the promised liberation she is now under the heel of domination from the Kremlin. What has Poland gained, the cynic asks? And we have no answer.

The only clear result of our intervention has been the emergence of the Soviet Union as a formidable world power that fills the West with dismay, while if we had preserved a "hands-off" policy it is quite possible that the two totalitarian regimes might have weakened each other. Even if we assume that Germany and Japan had come out on top we could have expected more conflicts of interest between them than within the Moscow orbit which is more centralized. Besides the Nazis and the Fascists

¹¹Cf. Bernard Iddings Bell, A Man Can Live (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 11: "Well, we defeated our enemies but in doing it we well-nigh obliterated European civilization, as well as that of most of Asia; we destroyed the sovereignty of helpless little nations and gave them over to be swallowed up by those titanic neighbors who had sworn to protect their integrity; we hopelessly dislocated the world's economy and that of every nation in both contending groups."

would never have had the propoganda resources which are at the disposal of the Communists today. They would not have had the immediately available spy ring which the Communist cells in every country can provide.

No matter how we look at the world today--geographically, politically, or morally--we would have to be blind indeed to assume that our war venture has improved it in any way. We can only conclude that one evil was crushed to facilitate the propogation of a greater evil.

In the light of all this we return to our original inquiry: Was Christian participation in the Second World War justified? The present writer finds it impossible to respond with an unqualified "yes." We would fault the American Churches for not alerting their members more fully to the deception perpetrated during the pre-war years, and for not exerting a greater influence in preserving peace. We believe that the war was only partially, if at all, a victory of righteousness over unrighteousness. We would have been obliged to view the position of the conscientious objector with considerable sympathy, although not convinced that his refusal to bear arms was the best and only Christian witness. But we could not have engaged in this war without feeling our own and the Church's complicity in the guilt. Before we were in the war his opposition to it should have been firm and unyielding. After he found himself caught in the actual war situation there would be a difference. Whether or not he contributed to the blunders that had led to war he was faced with the fact that the conflagration had erupted. Then the individual Christian might be confronted with a choice in which he cannot escape sinning. The Christian combatant could only carry out his as-

signed duties with a daily prayer for forgiveness as he realized the ambiguity of his position. He would have to freely admit in confession to his God that his country had erred in many respects. We do not believe that Christian soldiers or their churches should have prayed for unqualified American victory in the last war. Rather the Christian desire should simply have been for an end to the bloodshed, and for the establishment of a just and durable peace, ruling out selfish national interests.

Then, granted that involvement in a conflict like this may oblige the Christian to collaborate with the war effort, does it follow that he must condone whatever strategies are utilized to attain victory? A declaration of war does not abrogate or suspend the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." In wartime as in peacetime the Christian is forbidden to inflict physical injury upon his neighbor. Supposedly he is compelled to kill or wound some people in order that a greater number may be spared. Even on the battlefield he would spare human life wherever possible. He would strive to attain the objective of his military unit with a minimum of casualties on both sides. When prisoners are captured he would not browbeat them, but treat them with kindness. His example and influence would seek to prevent atrocities. When a city is seized he could not join in the rape and pillage which is the common deportment of most armies. On this point we might do well to listen to John Gerhard:

Therefore let curses, blasphemies, lusts, etc. be banished from the camps, even in the capture of cities the blood of the citizens must be spared, when victory is definitely in sight let there be no savagery against the female sex, against helpless old men, against the infants and children, let there be no rapes nor unchastity, no snatching of virgins or mothers, since the divine

law, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, knows no exception even in war.'¹²

On a larger scale the Christian should have expostulated against such ghastly brutalities as the use of saturation bombing and the dropping of the atomic bomb. It is not always easy to apply the Lutheran definition of "legitimate warfare" when applied to such a massive upheaval--to distinguish between the wrong and the rightful use of weapons. But when it was a foregone conclusion that Germany had lost the war it was nothing less than barbarous and iniquitous to send squadrons of our planes over German cities to rain destruction and convert them into burning infernos. Thousands of helpless women and children were cremated while yet alive in the seething cauldron that had been their homes. Churches and museums and public buildings were razed to the ground. Heaps of smoldering ruins were visible everywhere. The excuse tendered that these tactics would end the war sooner is hard to accept. Germany was already prostrate in the path of the invading armies before the most devastating bombings were ordered.

What did help build up the German will to resist was the unprecedented demand for "unconditional surrender." Here again was an instance in which the voice of the churches should have been heard. This was not a provision with only political and military implications. It was a degrading demand that could only violate the self-respect of a nation. It was not only foolhardy; it was immoral. This meant that the allies were unwilling to offer any peace terms to the enemy, which in the case

¹²*Loci Theologici*, edited by Preuss (Berlin: Sumtibus Gust. Schlawitz, 1866), VI, 512-13.

of Germany might have encouraged a revolt against Hitler. Instead we insisted that we would settle for nothing less than abject and humiliating surrender.¹³ How could a Christian who yearns for love and reconciliation become a party to such a policy?

Regarding the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki there have been some uneasy consciences. Measured in terms of the cruel sufferings and gruesome deaths which they caused these violent explosions were far worse than the total number of bombings and atrocities ever attributed to the enemy. Attempts to justify the nefarious action are not convincing. There is general agreement now that Japan was already defeated and on the verge of surrender. If a few American lives were spared by shortening the war several weeks that would hardly exonerate us, in the Christian evaluation, from slaughtering hundreds of thousands

Of. The Rt. Hon. Lord Hankey, Politics, Trials and Errors (Chicago: Regnery, 1950), pp. 125-126: "It embittered the war, rendered inevitable a fight to the finish, banged the door to any possibility of either side offering terms or opening up negotiations, gave the Germans and the Japanese the courage of despair, strengthened Hitler's position as Germany's 'only hope,' aided Goebbels' propaganda, and made inevitable the Normandy landing and the subsequent terribly exhausting and destructive advance through North France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Holland and Germany. The lengthening of the war enabled Stalin to occupy the whole of eastern Europe, to ring down the iron curtain and so to realize at one sweep a large instalment of his avowed aims against so-called capitalism, in which he includes social democracy. By disposing of all the more competent administrators in Germany and Japan this policy rendered treaty-making impossible after the war and retarded recovery and reconstruction, not only in Germany and Japan, but everywhere else. It may also prove to have poisoned our future relations with ex-enemy countries. Not only the enemy countries, but nearly all countries were bled white by this policy, which has left us all, except the United States of America, impoverished and in dire straits. Unfortunately also, these policies, so contrary to the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, did nothing to strengthen the moral position of the Allies."

of Japanese civilians in one truculent stroke. Even if the atomic bomb had to be used, why could it not first have been detonated on some barren wasteland or uninhabited island near Japan to convince them of the futility of further resistance? If this warning were ineffective one bomb could still have been dropped instead of two. While some non-Christians were horrified by the atomic blasts¹⁴ most Christians complacently accepted it as only another instrument of war. By this time the callous indifference to human suffering ingrained in our people by four years of war was evident in the lack of Christian sympathy for the unfortunate victims. . . . What had happened to the eyes of the Church? She preferred to look the other way and see nothing.

Anyone who wants to uphold the righteousness of our cause in the last war will also have to defend the agreements reached at Yalta and Potsdam. These conferences have been blamed for much of our post-war trouble. American sanction was given to the exploitation of German war prisoners as slave labor in Britain and France, as well as in Russia, after the termination of the war. China's sovereignty over Manchuria was virtually cancelled when Stalin was promised control over its railroads, a predominant interest in its chief port, Dairen, and a naval base at Port Arthur.¹⁵ These concessions posited Russia with a strategic pos-

¹⁴e.g. Robert Hutchins, at that time Chancellor of the University of Chicago, who said that by our decision to drop the atom bomb we forfeited any claim that we might still have to moral leadership in the world.

¹⁵In the opinion of former Ambassador William C. Bullitt "no more unnecessary, disgraceful, and potentially disastrous document has ever been signed by a President of the United States." Cf. Life (October 13, 1947). William Henry Chamberlain could not find "one positive, worth-

ition in China that assured Communist supremacy. The tragic division of Korea, and the stalemated war that has ravaged the country, may plausibly be traced to the blunders of Yalta.¹⁶

Another stigma on the allied record is the post-war betrayal of Poland. During the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland ruthless suppression was used to stamp out national consciousness. One million two hundred thousand persons were deported to Russia. Many of them were consigned to slave-labor camps. Our state department which at one time flatly rejected the proposed Soviet annexation of Polish territory as a violation of the integrity of the Atlantic Charter was finally persuaded to acquiesce. We turned our backs on Mikolajczyk and the Polish patriots. In July, 1945 our government formally recognized the Soviet-sponsored regime.

Another definitely reprehensible policy adopted to a large extent by our government was the Morgenthau Plan for the economic annihilation of Germany. Territorially East Prussia and part of Silesia were to be sliced off. France was to get the Saar and a considerable area on the left bank of the Rhine. The rest of the country was to be partitioned into North and South German states and an International Zone. The mines in the Ruhr were to be closed. Manufacturing plants were to be dismantled. Reparations were to be extracted by forced German labor outside Germany and the confiscation of German assets in all other countries.

while contribution to European revival and stability in the sordid deals of Yalta, only imperialist power politics at its worst." Op. Cit., p. 216.

¹⁶Cf. Freda Utley, The China Story (Chicago: Regnery, 1951).

There were to be controls over foreign trade and tight restrictions on capital imports. No wonder that the Morgenthau Plan was described as intending to reduce Germany to an agrarian state! It was never fully invoked, but it contributed measurably to the vindictive treatment accorded Germany. . . . Again, what had happened to the Christian conscience during this time? It was undoubtedly dulled by constant exposure to the brutalities of war. Christians should have been taking the lead in a prompt repudiation of this insane plan for retaliation.

Yet another culpable post-war action in which our government played a prominent part consisted in the anomalous Nuremberg trials. Not only actual persons suspected of "war crimes" were put on trial, but the German leaders were charged with perpetrating "crimes against humanity," a conspiracy to wage aggressive war, and responsibility for "crimes against peace." There was a widespread popular clamor for retribution. The victors set up their tribunal and confirmed the guilt which was already predetermined. Some churchmen demanded punishment for the Nazis in the name of justice. A few were dubious about the equity of the proceedings.

Many of the accusations levelled against Germany would be difficult to substantiate. Some could be used as recriminations against the victors. According to their own definition of a "war crime" the allies were far from innocent. Early in 1941 Britain invaded and garrisoned Iceland. Later, in the same year, she seized the Azores, the Canaries, and the Cape Verde Islands, all of them neutral territories at the time. In November, 1942 Britain and the United States poured troops into Algeria

and French Morocco.

Worst of all, and what makes Nuremberg an opprobrious travesty on justice, is that Soviet Russia was permitted to join in making the condemnation and in issuing the verdicts. On every count on which the Nazis were incriminated their Russian judges could have been found equally, if not more guilty. In November, 1939, without provocation, Russia had declared war on Finland. In June, 1940 the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were forced into the Soviet orbit. At the end of the war Russian armies swept into Manchuria and Korea, and converted these lands into satellite states. While German leaders were convicted for violating the borders of Poland, it was hypocritically overlooked that Russia too invaded and occupied half of the same country. With two parties having committed an act alleged to be a crime, we have the incredible spectacle of the one party being put on trial by the other.

One of the alleged crimes of the Nazis was the mass deportation of people from occupied territory, with all of the attendant evils, including maltreatment and malnutrition. But this nefarious practice is exactly what the Russians carried out. There was a mass removal of Poles from Eastern Poland to Russia. And, as a result of allied decisions, displaced persons swarmed into the West zone of Germany. As early as February, 1946 it was estimated that altogether some 17 million persons had been evicted from their homes and deprived of their property, and that between 25 and 40 million persons were without a roof over their heads.

One specific indictment of the German leaders was for the cold-

blooded murder of 11,000 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk. Upon investigation the international military tribunal passed over the accusation in silence. And there need be no conjecturing as to why the charge was not pressed. It was found that one of the nations conducting the prosecution (Russia), and not the Germans, had carried out the massacre.¹⁷

The simulation and injustice of the proceedings at Nuremberg become apparent when we are compelled to admit that for every count on which the vanquished were condemned the victors were also guilty. In the treatment of war prisoners this again held true as we reached another low point in moral turpitude. The abusive maltreatment of German war prisoners, when it became known, incited protests from various quarters. British, French, and Americans practiced sadistic cruelty. Commanding officers refused to grant medical attention to sick prisoners. In interrogation camps unconvicted suspects were left naked in unheated cells and forced to perform nauseating menial tasks. Leonard O. Mosley reported from Belsen at the time the camp was put under British guard:

The British soldiers . . . beat the S. S. guards and set them to collecting the bodies of the dead, keeping them always at the double When one of them dropped to the ground with exhaustion, he was beaten with a rifle-butt. When another stopped for a break, he was kicked until he ran again, or prodded with a bayonet, to the accompaniment of lewd shouts and laughs. When one tried to escape, or disobeyed an order, he was shot. . . . The punishment these guards got was in the best Nazi tradition, and few of them survived it.¹⁸

¹⁷For a review of the evidence Cf. Belgion, Victors' Justice (Chicago: Regnery, 1949), pp. 65-78.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 80.

Prisoners who failed to confess were severely beaten, sometimes to the point of unconsciousness. One former American, who had collaborated with the Fascists, was captured in Italy and driven insane by his tormentors before he could be put on trial.

While the high-ranking Nazis were being condemned for "crimes" of which their judges were equally guilty, and for which there was no authority and jurisdiction to be obtained from international law, American Christians were either applauding or saying nothing. Only an occasional intrepid soul had the temerity to object. There were most likely many more who felt restive, but who did not dare to speak up.

This treatise does not pretend to cover all of the criticisms that might be directed against American churches in the Second World War. Those that have been advanced should suffice for stimulating contrition and self-reproach. May the confession of our past mistakes guide us toward improvement in the future as we strive to "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" shining "as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2:15-16).

If we are searching for principles that should determine our attitude toward the state, also in wartime, we would do well to keep in mind these excerpts from the address which Bishop Berggrav of Norway delivered before the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in 1952:

1) It is a positively frightful misrepresentation of Lutheran doctrine to assert that "wild conquerors" or "despotic revolutionists" should "come into the possession of power." It is high time that such views be plainly labeled as heretical.

2) Luther knew that instances might occur where Christians would

have to refuse to obey the orders of their government. . . . When a government becomes lawless and acts with arbitrary despotism, the result is a demonic condition, that is to say, the government is god-less. To obey such a satanic government would be nothing short of sinful. Here the text, Acts 5:29 . . . applies: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

3) Luther rejected the idea that the Church as such should ever use forcible means against the government. The Church's purpose, he said, is to preach the Gospel and, in case of necessity, to suffer martyrdom. This means, on the one hand, that the Church must not organize or conduct revolutions, not even against a tyrant. But on the other hand, it also means positively that the Church has the sacred duty, come what may, fearlessly to proclaim to the unjust ruler the unvarnished truth set forth in the Gospel and the Law. The Church is no institute of edification where one is safe from all danger. In this world of despotism and injustice, the Lutheran Church will always be something dangerous or else it will cease to be a Christian Church.

4) The Church must demand the undiminished freedom to proclaim the Word of God and to exercise Christian love in the service of men. . . . The Church must not allow itself to be exploited by the state for political purposes. The Church must not become a tool of power politics. . . . The state must force nothing upon anyone, whether child or adult, that is contrary to God's clear commandments. A state which arrogates to itself the right to determine what is good and what is evil, must logically think of itself as an institute of salvation; and this is equivalent to the deification of the state. . . .¹⁹

¹⁹"State and Church Today", The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation, pp. 76-85.

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