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Beyond Comfort: German and English Military Chaplains and the Memory of the Great War, 1919–1929

How did German and English military chaplains commemorate the Great War? The established historiography broadly interprets war commemoration in the post-war period in two ways. One approach presents commemoration as a ritual of healing that soothed the bereft. The other emphasizes the political function of commemoration, interpreting it as a way of reshaping the war in collective memory to legitimize the status quo — by venerating sacrifices made for the nation, it put the nation beyond question to strengthen allegiance to the established order. Both interpretations treat the language of war commemoration as one of consolation and comfort. Military chaplains, however, espoused a more ambitious mission. For them, the purpose of war commemoration was to inculcate dissatisfaction, guilt, and discomfort. This was because they remembered the war as a contest of ideas embodied in the clash of nations, a contest that was still unsettled. Their purpose was therefore the antithesis to consolation and conventional patriotism: to mobilize the living to honour their "blood debt" to the dead through the language of agitation. They themselves had participated in a war regarded by the churches as a campaign of regeneration through blood, in which sacrifice and suffering would revitalize their nations by bringing them to repentance, piety, and social cohesion. Because they were implicated personally in that incomplete crusade, they were especially anxious to realize the mission and complete the sacrifices of the dead. Anglican ex-chaplains predominantly implored their congregations to ensure a permanent peace that had been purchased by blood, whereas German Protestants invoked a resurrected Volk reclaiming its status as a chosen people. Each articulated a politics of remembrance, one formed on the vision of a war to end all wars, the other on a vision of a war to resurrect the Reich as the Kingdom of God. While the political content of their memories was different, they shared an attitude to the function of remembrance, as a ritual to mobilize and arouse rather than console. Both groups preached that the peace was a continuation of an unfinished moral and spiritual struggle. Furthermore, while always honouring the dead, they stressed that the worth of their sacrifices was no longer guaranteed but contingent upon the conduct of living and future generations. Despite the divergences that emerged from their different confessional and national traditions, and from their respective circumstances, they shared a common moral language.

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Rising before the congregation of Malborough College chapel in May 1919, former chaplain E. C. Crosse delivered stern warnings to the assembled schoolboys. Though the war had been won, it "remains for us to reap the fruits of victory." The spoils of war were not primarily redrawn maps, dismembered territories, or "money which can be squeezed out of a beaten enemy." Instead, post-war reconstruction was about "the moral regeneration of those who have survived the war. Is England going to forget, as she is apparently anxious to do, that over 600,000 . . . of her very best have laid down their lives for her future?" He chastised an ungrateful nation that "is fed up with the war or anything to do with it." Only attention to the recent war, and the divine judgement against militarism implicit in the overthrow of "the mighty from their seats," could make peace and regeneration possible. The aspiration that the recent war remains the "war to end all wars" must entail an inner moral cleansing of the nation, as a precondition to ending conflicts abroad. Commemoration meant reaffirming the nexus between moral realignment and world peace: social regeneration was necessary for global security. Crosse feared a hollow victory that would waste the sacrifices of the dead, epitomizing the fears of returning Anglican chaplains.[1]

In Hamburg, ex-chaplain Johannes Wehrmann also tried to salvage meaning from defeat. He distilled a romantic nationalist philosophy he had formed while preaching as a chaplain on the western front and in the Ukraine. The root cause of defeat was not primarily military. Instead, it was a manifestation of a failure in the national character, a community at war that had imploded into disunity, sectional politics, and mercantile greed. Wehrmann inverted Crosse's formula of the meaning of Germany's defeat. He too called his compatriots to repent, but for defeat rather than for militarism. The judgement of the war was not an indictment of Germany's imperial ambition, but God's punishment for Germany's collapse of solidarity. By relinquishing their obligation to find inner renewal and sustain their early wartime cohesion, Germany had forsaken its divine mission to enforce God's will, and been denied victory. He lamented the failure to live up to the promise of 1914. The homeland had disintegrated "yet again into states and interests groups" while "millions of us abroad" thought

> of money and were not at all concerned about the people and about the people's unity, that this national corruption was so great that we could not make the military cutting edge — that is our guilt, that we must confess before our God.

He also denounced Germany's enemies for their "envy," which drove their concerted assault on the Fatherland, assigning them the war guilt. Above all, Wehrmann reaffirmed the unity of piety and nationalism. The Kingdom of God he identified with the Reich, Christian rebirth with the resurrection and renewal of the Volk. In an enduring struggle, repentance meant national reunification, salvation would come by rekindling 1914 solidarities.[2] Defeat and disintegration did not refute God's hand in the war, but proved the failure of Germans to answer the divine call to self-renewal. Only unity could secure God's intervening grace.

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[1] Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM) 80/22/1 (E. C. Crosse, "A Sermon Preached in Malborough College Chapel on May 25th 1919," 1).

[2] J. Wehrmann, *Die Gemeinde, die Zukunft der Völker* (Königsberg, 1919), 36–8. (My translation.)

Neither of these chaplains confined his message to comfort and consolation. Neither gave the war closure. For both, as for most of their colleagues, the war was about something more profound than its military outcome; its commemoration was about more than healing. Peace opened a new phase in their interpretations of the war, and a new chapter in a continuing spiritual struggle. This article compares how former English Anglican and German Protestant military chaplains from both sides of the front commemorated the Great War and interpreted it to the public in the post-war period. Former chaplains played a significant role in defining the memory of the Great War. They were often called to preside over commemorative occasions, and traces of their beliefs remain in published sermons, memoirs, and written meditations.

When war broke out in August 1914, church leaders and the bulk of the clergy in the established churches of both Britain and Germany endorsed their nation's war effort. Like millions of their fellow citizens, they claimed it was a legitimate war of defence, not of their own making. The anointed monarchs of their nations who were also military and imperial figureheads were also closely bound to the national churches. In Germany's case, the monarchs of each state were also the *summi episcopi* of the church, uniting episcopacy and monarchy in the person of the king. The monarchs also invested the conflict with domestic war aims. The war was being waged to defend frontiers but also as a crusade to change the social order of their nations. In the wake of the evangelical revival in Britain and the Pietist movement in Germany, the churches increasingly lamented the impact of the industrial revolution on their societies — slums, squalor, and the ascent of godless materialism. Many preached a gospel of social uplift and the restoration of values that were spiritual and collective. The war, then, did not present the interruption of a period of moral and material progress, or bourgeois innocence, but manifested a divine judgement against materialist corruption. For them, "Big ideas" powered the war as much as objectives that were territorial and diplomatic. The nation in arms, they hoped, would rediscover egalitarian and communal values and return to piety, and would be redeemed through blood. This vision of redemption by blood lay at the heart of the way they strove to commemorate the war in the decade that followed.

War commemoration attracts a growing body of historiography. Two broad interpretations dominate the field. One interpretative framework presents the communal public responses to collective trauma as a form of healing. Emphasizing therapy, comfort, and consolation as the primary objects of commemoration, are the leading examples — Catherine Moriarty's analysis of Christian iconography in war memorials, and Jay Winter's seminal study of languages and rituals of commemoration and such popular phenomena as spiritualism.[3]

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[3] C. Moriarty, "Christian Iconography and First World War Memorials," *Imperial War Museum Review* 6 (1992): 63–75, especially p. 63; J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

The reading of war commemoration as a ritual of mass bereavement stresses the momentum coming “from below” to turn the grief of individuals into a communal act. Adrian Gregory’s study of Armistice Day and Mark Connelly’s localized examination of commemorative practices in London demonstrates the importance of voluntarist and local initiatives in reconstituting community after the war, showing that the practice of public remembrance was not exclusively an elitist or official discourse but arose as much through local organizations, parishes, and veterans associations.[4]

Another approach interprets commemoration primarily as a conservative political discourse. Both Bob Bushaway and George Mosse pioneered this interpretation, Bushaway focusing on post-war Britain and Mosse on the European post-war continent. According to both, remembrance services, iconography and rituals were intended to reaffirm the legitimacy of the nation-state, conferring on nationalist allegiances a sacral force. Mosse’s work in particular was informed by a Marxist reading of civil religion as a mechanism of false consciousness. Accordingly, he argues that war commemoration as a form of civil religion deflected the masses away from the realities of war and the political order that made war possible by encouraging worship of the state. In defeated nations, he argues, commemorative rituals were especially congenial for the militant right, because they gave the memory of sacrifice a ritualized mystique that sanctified nationalist violence and in that process of sacralization prepared fertile ground for extremist revanchist politics, enabling fascism eventually to take control of the memory of the war.[5] By contrast, it was the moderate conservativism in Britain that was the beneficiary of the sacralization of the war, according to Bushaway. He depicts war memorialization in Britain as imparting a deferential ideal of citizenship and inhibiting criticism of the status quo, reinforcing deference to the existing social order and its distribution of power and wealth, while buttressing social cohesion by marginalizing dissent.[6] If war commemoration was more an instrument of legitimation that elites wielded to manipulate the masses than an authentic expression of communal grief, both Bushaway and Mosse render war commemoration as an inherently conservative process. Alex King’s more recent study of war memorials also attends to the political meanings attached to the memory of the war, but refutes the proposition that remembrance was an inherently conservative project in the British context.[7] Radical leftists as well as conservatives justified their policies and ideologies by invoking the dead, jostling to speak on behalf of the fallen as their source of political legitimacy.

The two approaches — stressing either healing or politics — are not irreconcilable. Shrines, monuments, and the rituals that structured their meaning provided a space in which individuals could grieve. At the same time, the local and national community were reconstituted as causes worthy of sacrifice. Comforting the bereft meant validating the sacrifices of its servicemen, which in turn proclaimed the worthiness of the national polity they served. Koselleck's study of French and German commemorations of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 represents a synthesis of the two approaches. Arguing for the deeply political nature of memorials, victors had the greater desire for rituals and memorials that conveyed a sense of completion and evoked the possibility of peace restored. Where the victorious Germans after 1871 celebrated unification and a completed struggle, revanchism and unsettled grievances gave the memorials of the vanquished French a more militant texture.[8] In Koselleck's study, healing and consolation were inherently political goals and were the priorities of nations that had been victors.

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[4] A. Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford: Berg, 1994); M. Connelly, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916–1939* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 2002).

[5] G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[6] B. Bushaway, “Name Upon Name: The Great War and Remembrance,” in *Myths of the English*, ed. R. Porter (London: Polity Press, 1992), 136–67.

[7] A. King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

While collective healing and affirmation of the justice of the nation's cause played important roles in the rituals of commemoration, it is argued here that for former military chaplains they were not the primary purposes of remembrance. The post-war attitudes of chaplains do not easily fit either "therapeutic" models of war commemoration, which stress healing and consolation, or interpretations that stress its politically conservative nature. Their project was different. They regarded the war as a mission not merely to defend and to conserve but to transform their nations. They hoped that the war and its drive towards community and sacrifice would redeem and cleanse the materialistic and godless modern condition that had corrupted their nations. Their attitude to war commemoration was an extension of this mission of redemptive sacrifice: the war should be commemorated to give a new expression in peacetime to the spiritual and moral struggle to transform society, a struggle that the armistice had left unfinished. The contrast with languages of consolation and conventional mourning is striking. Mourning conventionally placed structure and meaning upon trauma to give sacrifices a secure value. By contrast, ex-chaplains emphasized that the worth of wartime sacrifices was in jeopardy, because those sacrifices had not yet been vindicated and could only be justified by the post-war conduct of the living. Only the conduct of the community, consecrating everyday life, could ultimately validate the severe suffering of the battlefield. To arouse people to consecrate life in order to validate the sacrifices of the dead, a language was needed that would inculcate unease and guilt as well as comfort. Even victorious nations, as Britain was, could not create a climate where the war was everywhere remembered as a completed undertaking or a triumph that was worth its costs. Jay Winter argues that the healing power of the language of loss and consolation in the post-war period lay in its sense of closure, its capacity to enable the bereaved to live with their losses, "and perhaps to leave them behind."[9] This article argues that chaplains were animated primarily by the opposite impulse. The language of agitation was their preference.

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[8] R. Koselleck and M. Jeismann, *Der politische Totenkult: Kriegdenkmäler in der Moderne* (München: Fink, 1994), 27.

[9] J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

Viewing the war as an incomplete struggle for a redeemed community, military chaplains sought to mobilize their congregations to honour their blood-debt to the dead. They did so by appealing to the collective conscience of survivors in the post-war generation. As an extension of their frustrated hope that war would transform society, they saw their duty as keeping the war and its ghostly armies ever-present, to sting the consciences of the living into completing the incomplete mission of the dead. War memorials and remembrance services were more than occasions for mourning or consolation. Soothing the bereft and affirming their belonging to a grieving community was a ritual of consolation, yet reminding congregations of their unpaid debt to the dead was potentially discomforting. Mobilizing the living meant arousing their collective consciences. If there was consolation to be had, it was not through assuring people that mass death had been worthwhile, but that citizens through their agency and code of living could bring meaning to the war's massive losses.

The mythology of regeneration through sacrificial suffering and death had gripped clerics throughout the war. Both Anglican priests and German Protestant pastors enunciated visions of their societies healed and restored to piety, social cohesion, and virtue through suffering and devotion to duty. The redemption of the nation was initially seen as an imminent event. It was still articulated by chaplains as an ideal to pursue; however, even as the war settled into a pattern of attrition, heavy casualties and stalemate, and on the German homefront, foot shortage, material privation, and civilian conflict. Either the war would serve God's will by elevating the nation's moral and spiritual life, or the living must pursue the ideal to justify the sacrifices of the dead.[10]

The ideology of redemptive sacrifice in both its secular and religious manifestations differed significantly from conventional wartime patriotism. Instead of limiting the war to traditional, limited, and strategic objectives — preserving a continental balance of power or securing hegemony over markets or territories — it conceived the war as a crusade for absolute ideological objectives. The clergy as well as the intellectual elites of both sides, embraced the war not only as a struggle for territory and treasure, but a clash of world views. They paralleled H. G. Wells's liberal clarion cry, "We fight not to destroy a nation but a nest of evil ideas."[11] Veteran chaplain of the Anglo-Boer war, Paul Bull, insisted war was an ideological death-struggle, "War is the conflict of two Wills, to decide which set of ideas shall prevail."[12] This included exorcizing a malignant spirit from the enemy — over Prussian militarist autocracy, or over conniving British materialism. As stated by German theologian and chaplain Paul Althaus, "for the victory of what is true and good among our enemies against the mean, ugly and deceitful."[13] This was not just to exterminate the *Weltanschauung* of the enemy. War was a cosmic mission, a reckoning with the common degeneracy of the west, rather than a binary clash demanding the annihilation of armies of darkness. The transformation chaplains desired was more diffuse. The enemy was only the ultimate embodiment of universal disorders. By returning their societies to a spirit of self-sacrifice, piety, spirituality, and social cohesion, war they believed would arrest the pathologies of industrial modernity. The pietist *Christenboten* edition for soldiers evoked a two-pronged battle against sin and the enemy.[14] English churches also cherished a mythical notion of the "Spirit of 1914," a civic truce rallying parties, classes and interests to the nation.

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[10] As I have argued elsewhere, "New Jerusalems: Military Chaplains and the Ideal of Redemptive Sacrifice in the Great War" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Oxford University, 2003).

[11] H. G. Wells, "The War of the Mind," in *The War That Will End War* (New York, 1914), 97–8. See also the account of the liberal crusading rationale for war in I. C. Willis, *England's Holy War: A Study of English Liberal Idealism During the Great War* (Knopf, 1928), especially 86f.

[12] P. Bull, *Christianity and War: An Appeal to Conscientious Objectors* (London, 1918), 20.

Though English divines claimed German pastors had defected from Christ to sub-Christian war gods, they too cherished a war-driven healing of Britain's social and moral fabric, from the local parish level to Lambeth. George Edmundson's sermon in October 1914 saw God moving to divine judgement in the "constant process of mingled correction and redemption." Were not Britain's enemies "instruments in the hands of God, whose mission it was to destroy, but by destruction to renovate, to extirpate what was corrupt and diseased that more healthy conditions of moral and spiritual life might be restored?"[15] The Archbishop of Canterbury anticipated redemption two days before Britain declared war on 4 August. In a more sober sermon, he declared the gathering storm "the work of the Devil, not of God's," but nevertheless if it embroiled the nation, it would be for Britain's own good. He recalled "the poet's picture" from the Anglo-Boer war "of the careless, self-indulgent, easy-going lad 'Whose gods were luxury and chance' gaining permanent strength from the enforced self-discipline of strenuous days."[16] War had seemingly released the nation from the volatile Irish question, the clash of labour and capital and the battle over women's emancipation. War would also restore piety and humility to a profane, hedonistic, and materialist age.

Chaplains carried these apocalyptic expectations to the frontline. One, William Geare invoked the biblical cycle of God bringing nations to penitence. "The O.T. prophets tried to bring people to it by fear lest their country should be smashed up, and we in England need such a frightening in these days. Fear for our country ought to lead us to repentance."[17] As with Israel, God's covenant with Germany or Britain was not an affirmation of purity, but a continuous exaltation towards repentance. The memory of mobilization itself signalled a momentous realignment of the nation's spirit. Of the departure of leave trains, chaplain L. L. Jeeves wrote home to his parishioners that:

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[13] Cited in J. Moses, "Justifying War as the Will of God: German Theology on the Eve of the First World War," *Colloquium* 31, No. 1 (1999): 17. See also R. P. Eriksen, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, Emmanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[14] Cited in J. E. Groh, *Nineteenth Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), 584.

[15] G. Edmundson, *Sermon Preached at St. Saviour's Church, October 4* (n.p., 1914), 2–3.

[16] Archbishop Randall Davidson, Sermon August 2 1914, "The Eve of a Great War," Westminster Abbey, *The Testing of a Nation* (London, 1919), 12.

[17] W. D. Geare, *Letters of an Army Chaplain: The Rev. William Duncan Geare* (London, 1918), Letter, 14/08/1916, 28.

> The quiet order which prevailed, the complete sobriety and absence of the Bank Holiday nonsense, which might have been pardoned, made one proud to wear the uniform with such men. The sense of a real purpose in life and the stern call of duty, have produced effects . . . no subsequent peace will ever efface.[18]

Frank Barry depicted the war as the vehicle for a "new sense of values," overcoming the clash of narrow partisan interests. The summer of 1914 gave myriad signs of "moral rottenness," "paralysing commercial wars, civil violence impending," the Church "irreligious" in its sectarian divisions, wealthy classes "openly repudiated every social responsibility," people as a whole "measuring life in terms of physical prosperity and the satisfaction of rather vacant pleasures." By launching war, Germany had performed surgery that has "partly cured us." As

> we are beginning to be a different people. How best to serve the common good presents itself to the individual as the most urgent question. We have surrendered, in the first place, our individualistic way of thinking . . . We have seen the vision of our spiritual land of promise.[19]

A vocabulary of national healing appealed to lay and religious audiences alike. In nonconformist language, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, declared in September 1914 that "We have been too comfortable and too indulgent" and that "the stern hand of Fate" scourged Britain to "the high peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle of Sacrifice, pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven."[20] Chaplains invoked the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition, interpreting wars as an inner cleansing as well as a struggle against God's enemies. Military victory or regeneration were not assured.

Unlike the British with their ancient unity and established empire, German Protestants hammered out their traditions of blood sacrifice in the context of creating a new nationhood. Pastors in their folk nationalism identified imperial Germany with the Kingdom of God.[21] The spectacular triumphs against the French anti-Christ, Napoleon (1813–15), national unification under Bismarck, the Prussian triumph over France (1870–71), and the coming of war under the Kaiser were all inspired by the "biblical example of Old Testament covenant."[22] The belief that God had guided the nation's ascent to the status of major European power vindicated the view of the polity as god-ordained and the national community, home of the Reformation, God's weapon in the history of human salvation. As "God's nation," Germany defended true Christian values and punished those nations that offended them. The fusion of religion and nationalism was consummated when the Kaiser's Court Chaplain described the polity as the "Holy Protestant German Empire."[23] As German power expanded in the centre of Europe in the Wilhelmine period, the pursuit of power politics was given a theological premise. Pastors also cast war as a form of penitence. Each conflict, they preached, was preceded by a period of moral stagnation, irreligion, and indulgence. Defects within Germany were ascribed to foreign, unGerman forces. France externalized the inner demons Protestant pastors loathed. Its Papalist folly mirrored Germany's Roman Catholic menace, secular humanists represented intellectuals seduced by Enlightenment atheist egoism, and the revolutionary violence of the Paris Commune exemplified the dangers in Germany's own liberal reform movement. Though her enemies bore primary responsibility for the wars, they were visited on Germany by the divine surgeon to cleanse the nation. Prussia's defeat at the hands of Napoleon I in 1806 was invoked as a warning against unpatriotic egoism and degeneracy, alien disorders originating outside the Fatherland, contaminating the body social and the body politic. Pastor Carl Schwarz declared that the "world-historical" meaning of the Franco-Prussian war repelling "that harmful, morally-destructive, degenerating influence of France, which up to now has exerted itself like an infectious disease among our compatriots."[24]

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[18] IWM 80/22/1, L. L. Jeeves (*Letters to St. Mary's Whitechapel Parish Magazine*, n.d.).

[19] F. R. Barry, *Religion and the War* (London, 1915), 29–30.

[20] Cited in F. Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), 276.

[21] For the fusion of German nationalism with theological doctrine in the nineteenth century see Moses, "Justifying War," 3–20; W. R. Hutchinson and H. Lehmann, *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); D. R. Borg, "German National Protestantism as a Civil Religion," in *International Perspectives on Church and State*, ed. Menachem Mor (Creighton: Fordham University Press, 1993), 255–67.

[22] H. Lehmann, "'God our Old Ally' The Chosen People Theme in Late Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Century German Nationalism," in Hutchinson and Lehmann, *Chosen Divine Election*, 87.

Kaiser Wilhelm II, King of Prussia and Germany, *summus episcopus* of Prussia's Evangelical Church, high priest of Germany's hegemonic Prussian state, proclaimed on 1 August the idea of war-driven national redemption from his palace balcony.[25]

> In the battle now lying ahead of us, I see no more parties in my *Volk*. Among us there are only Germans, and if some of the parties in the course of past differences turned against me, I forgive them all. All that now matters is that we stand together like brothers, and then God will help the German sword to victory.[26]

Solidarity with the semi-authoritarian state, repudiating class conflict and partisan politics, was the purpose of war and the precondition of divine protection. The Kaiser in his personal cult was a figurehead of imperial ambition. It associated him with the promise of unity embodied in the mythical king Barbarossa, sleeping beneath the holy Kyffhäuser mountain in Thuringia, who would awaken and reinstate the Reich.[27] His royal proclamation on 4 August reveals that the war as part of a creation myth overshadowed a war to end all wars. In their sense of wounded innocence, Germany would prove worthy of an empire that had been denied them, a Germanic Kingdom that was also the

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[23] K. W. Dahm, *Pfarrer und Politik* (Köln: Dortmunder Schriften zur Sozialforschung, 1965), 167.

[24] C. Schwarz, *Predigten aus der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1869–73), 6:44–45, cited in A. J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism: German Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1986), 40.

[25] Each territorial prince was *summus episcopus* of their *Landeskirche*.

[26] "Eine neue Rede des Kaisers," *Kreuz-Zeitung*, 2 August 1914, No. 358 (Morgen), 1.

[27] E. Fehrenbach, "Images of Kaiserdom: German Attitudes to Kaiser Wilhelm II," in *Kaiser Wilhelm II New Interpretations*, ed. J. Röhl, N. Sombart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 276.

Kingdom of God. “The desire for conquest does not drive us, the inflexible will enlivens us to preserve the place, which God placed for us and all coming generations . . . I can see no more parties, I can only still see Germans!”[28] His address, with a distinctly anti-democratic twist, celebrated the restoration of fraternity and political unity, including confessional reconciliation. Inner redemption and national healing was central in the official meaning imprinted upon the war. A theologian, Adolf von Harnack, helped the Chancellor to draft it.[29] When socialists voted war credits in the *Reichstag*, it seemed to vindicate the hope that war would reverse *anomie*, the collapse of values and disintegration into factious antagonism.

German chaplains portrayed the war as a trial, a struggle that would reward the most penitent nations with victory. Preaching on divine judgement from the Epistle to the Hebrews, German chaplain Professor Walther Buder declared the war “neither good nor evil, but it is the great test of whether we are good or evil.”[30] Interpreted as a trial, “cultural Protestantism” also viewed the war as an apocalyptic event in which Germany, “the hammer of God” and agent of divine revelation, would impose God’s judgement on the world, identifying divine will and the Kingdom of God with imperial German policy.[31] The German nation was executing the world-judgement in a war that was the “tribunal of the world” (*Weltgericht*). Germany was redeeming the world through Germany’s unique *Kultur*, the pinnacle of excellence and virtue, apex of European achievement. This was Germany’s world mission (*Sendung*). These were not irreconcilable — the chosen people must prove worthy of their special status in God’s eyes. As one chaplain remarked, “Cannot peoples be called to the highest goal and yet not arrive? Yes . . . For God’s task to reach us, so must God’s will be our will.”[32] Pietists in Wuerttemburg announced that God would punish the Germans for failing to obey his commandments, or would send strength if Germans were “pious, moral, and unified.” They prayed that God would release his kingdom once more throughout the borders of imperial Germany.[33] Germany’s war sermons illustrated how the Christian notions of sin, redemption, and apocalypse had been blended into the experience of nationalism. The divine covenant was a special compact between God and the Volk, the war represented the last days before the apocalypse, the apocalypse itself the day when a new world order dawned, the clash of the Volk against her enemies as divine judgement, foreshadowing the triumphant German empire as the reign of the saints. If Germans responded to the war in a spirit of piety and penitence, the national community would be purged of internal forces that embodied alien globalist ideologies that corroded the German *Geist*, such as enlightenment liberalism, secular anticlericalism, and parliamentary democracy. The Protestant Press Agency proclaimed on 5 August 1914 that "in the storm of the people's war God, the old ally, with sacred storm sweeps out everything from Germany that is not holy, not noble, or that is ungodly and unGerman."[34]

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[28] Cited in G. Besier, *Die protestantischen Kirchen Europas im Ersten Weltkrieg: Ein Quellen und Arbeitsbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), 11.

[29] Hammer, *Deutsche Kriegstheologie 1870–1918* (Frankfurt: Koesel-Verlag, 1971), 374.

[30] W. Buder, *Gute Ritterschaft: Zwölf Feldpredigten 1914–1916* (Stuttgart, 1916), 16–17.

[31] As Vondung shows, “Deutsche Apokalypse 1914,” in *Das Wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum*, ed. K. Vondung (München: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976), 156–57.

[32] D. F. Tahusen, *Werfet euer Vetrauen nicht Weg! Predigt am 6. August 1916* (Berlin, 1916), 9.

[33] Cited in Groh, *Nineteenth Century German Protestantism*, 584.

The events of the first months of the war defined the sanctity of the belligerent's respective causes and crystallized their respective war theologies. Germany's sweeping victories in Belgium, at Tannenburg and occupation of 15,000 square miles of France witnessed to her divine mission, reflecting God's pentecostal presence in their history. Chaplain Emil Ott greeted the victories as divine epiphany, "We experience God in this war . . . The word of scripture has become a reality for us: You are the God who brings forth wonders, you have demonstrated your power among the nations."[35] To Anglican chaplains, Germany was an imperial aggressor. They therefore portrayed Britain's defence of a small neutral nation with an act of sacred duty, and the defence of Belgium lent a sacred purchase to their war effort. Douglas Winnifrith equated the campaign in Belgium "to drive back the apostles of hate" with "offering the God of love an act of worship."[36] E. J. Kennedy believed that by liberating Belgium from a nation seduced by the unholy trinity of "Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardi," Britain exhibited "the righteousness that alone exalteth a nation."[37]

September 1914 brought rival manifestos of German and British divines. German theologians portrayed their struggle as a defence of Christendom against a barbaric pincer movement of Russian hordes, British plutocrats and French revolutionaries and papists. Anglicans responded that Germany's atrocities in Louvain, such as the assault on the University Library, revealed how the German people had degenerated into barbarism.[38] Both accused the other of betraying their Anglo-German heritage of shared history, friendship, and Protestant faith. In preaching the defence of God's ethical world order clerics detected the hand of Providence. Their nations were appointed as agent of a divine mandate. Yet the quest for redemption transcended national borders, beyond the enemy as the incarnation of sin. It was biblically established that the powers God used as instruments, like Assyria, God could also cast down and replace. The chosen nation was rarely imagined to be pure. Fears of unworthiness and of hubris were a counterpoint to their chosen status. By combating a degenerate enemy, nations struggled against inner corruption.

Because they perceived the peace before the war as a *Pax Diabolica*, chaplains frequently portrayed their armies bearing the punishment and judgement against their nation's failures, the suffering of the ordinary soldier expiating the manifold sins of their societies. The soldiers of the British empire, like the substitutionary atonement of Christ, were atoning for the sins of a fallen civilization. As martyrs for peace they were ensuring war could never again occur. As Herbert Bury claimed in 1916:

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[34] "Kriegs Korrespondenz des Evangelischen Presseverbandes für Deutschland, Siegestage am 4. und 5. August" Cited in Besier, *Die protestantischen Kirchen Europas*, 35–37.

[35] E. Ott, *Religion, Krieg und Vaterland* (München, 1915), 3, cited in Hoover, *Gospel of Nationalism*, 48.

[36] D. P. Winnifrith, *The Church in the Fighting Line With General Smith-Dorrien at the Front* (London, 1915), 60–61.

[37] E. J. Kennedy, *With the Immortal Seventh Division* (London, 1916), 70–72.

[38] *Oxford Pamphlets 1914–1915: To the Christian Scholars of Europe and America* (Oxford, 1914), 15.

> Wounded by our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace upon them, by their stripes we are healed. They die that we may live . . . the wounded share the Passion of Him who in all our afflictions was Himself afflicted.

Instead of disguising the extent of the carnage at the frontline, Bury made it a virtue. "You won't mind what you have suffered and lost, will you, lads, if you have helped . . . to deliver the world from the curse of war?"[39] German clergy gave a different definition to the same assurance that sacrifices would create a greater good. Their war was part of their creation myth, a grand chapter in the birth of a chosen people into a new nationhood that had begun with the wars of liberation. "Children of the light!" preached Friedrich Almer in a field sermon on Christmas eve, 1915. "Germany's present should be Germany's future! God has let us become more and more a people" bestowing a peace "that the world cannot take."[40] Peace was identified more narrowly with the security of the German Reich against a world of conspirators.

Despite the divergences between German Protestant and English Anglican conceptions of redemptive violence, both invested the war with a heavily ideological purpose that meant the war must have a trajectory towards absolute victory. This was one reason why the prospect of a compromise peace, raised during the war and especially in December 1916 under President Wilson's mediation, or in the papal "Peace Note" of August 1917, met fierce resistance from many within both churches. Just as Anglican clergy repudiated negotiation as inimical to the unbending purpose of a holy war, the majority of Germany's Evangelical churchmen rejected any acceptance of a negotiated peace short of total Germany victory as "a rejection of God's will and proferred grace."[41] Sacred aims were absolute and unconditional, and could not be bargained away.[42]

That drive to realize the war's transnational ideological purpose continued after the war. Chaplains rededicated civilians to consecrate life in the memory of the dead, invoking the memory of the dead to galvanize the living into a Christian citizenship. The dead were idealized as Christian citizen-soldiers, sometimes as Christian martyrs. This cult of the dead emerged from popular responses and official orchestration as a liturgy in which civil and clerical leaders presided. In remembrance services, people were exhorted to translate the ideals embodied by the fallen into a civil code of living. They addressed the personal dimension of commemoration, ministering to grieving individuals. Their ministry also had a civic dimension. By identifying why fellow citizens died, why their deaths should be honoured, and how public policy should reflect reverence for the dead, they averred the legitimacy of the cause and polity that millions had died or suffered to defend, partaking in an inherently political project. Chaplains invoked the debt owed by the living to the fallen, to ensure that the sacrifices of the dead would be justified and completed.

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[39] H. Bury, *Here and There in the War Area* (London, 1916), 34.

[40] Landeskirchliches Archiv Nürnberg (hereafter LKAN) 2341, 53 (Friedrich Almer, "Weihnachten an der Front," Ansprache am Heiligen Abend, 1915).

[41] D. Borg, *The Old-Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic: A Study in Political Adjustment 1917–1927* (New England: University Press of New England, 1984), 43. For Anglican reactions see A. Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London, 1978), 226f.

[42] As argued by A. Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War* (Durham: SPCK, 1974), 220:

> For while the clergy might commend such flexibility in disputes concerning wages, boundaries, and the like, they considered compromise totally unacceptable in issues involving the eternal verities; and in the case of the Great War this meant every issue. It almost seems as though certain individuals believed an unrectified evil was like an uncorrected accounting error, only infinitely more serious. If allowed to go unpunished, it would throw the cosmic order off balance. Time and again, important Anglican figures denounced the idea of a negotiated settlement, declaring it positively sinful to bargain with the Kaiser, let alone with the likes of the sultan. Should the Allies seek to lessen their sacrifice by yielding an iota of principle, they would commit treason against God, imperil their souls, and betray those who had already fallen, an argument of tremendous power.

The post-war period also opened up a sharp divergence between their war memories. In both castes of mind, society must be remodelled around a blood-debt to the dead. Because of their different religious and national contexts, precisely what it meant to honour the fallen became very different. Anglican chaplains believed the dead must be honoured by forging a repentant and egalitarian social order that would make war impossible. The war memory of Germany's Protestant chaplains was more ethnic and less pacific, as they called people to emulate the spirit of the dead and remobilize as a Volk that may again have to wage war for its salvation.

Grief was almost universal in both nations after the war. High casualties afflicted both nations. Britain's casualties numbered approximately 750,000 killed, 2,500,000 wounded, Germany's 1,770,000 killed and 4,200,000 wounded. As well as loss, pervasive also were expectations and demands placed on the body politic — that governments must translate and reward the efforts of the war through reconstruction. Lloyd George's election phrase of 1918, "homes fit for heroes," was shorthand for the politics of transition from war to peace. This was partly the unrealized potential of the war's dramatic industrial and social transformations. The war and its voracious war economy had strengthened the state massively, calling forth unprecedented machinery of collectivist control. Social welfare, housing policy, legislative intervention, the overthrow of laissez-faire, and the paradox of improved public health in a war machine that linked hygiene with national defence — were all legacies that reformist Anglicans, their leading chaplains included, hoped could be turned to transforming the social order.[43] It was also the culmination of the idealist reading of the war, and the unfulfilled expectations of August 1914 as a crusade for a transformed society, a project that had not been concluded with the armistice. In the eyes of returning chaplains, the war's impact on governance had made these transformations possible, its sacrifices made it obligatory. Bishop Gwynne, the Deputy Chaplain-General, had proposed to

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[43] See G. J. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996), 322–33; J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London, 1985), 1–5.

Haig in March 1918 that the objectives of the war be proclaimed on a card to soldiers.

> Better homes where the children could grow up healthy and strong; better education which gave a child full opportunity for developing the faculties implanted in him by God; a fair deal for labour, giving to the worker a full life; justice for women and a resolute stand against prostitution; a discipline which keeps a man at his best and maintains holy matrimony as the ideal of family life.[44]

As ex-chaplains mourned the ravages of war, disillusionment with the post-war settlement, the continued economic deprivation and the contamination of the body politic and the moral order of society contributed to their unease as much as the death toll. Growing discontent in Britain flowed from the failure to realize Lloyd George's "land fit for heroes," where post-war Britain failed to realize the promises of wartime communal solidarity.

"The blackest day in German History" was how former chaplain Ludwig Hoppe remembered the news of Germany's defeat in his memoirs. "The horrific fate went its way into the deepest abyss, in dishonour and disgrace, in need and distress." Hindenburg had kept the army in the field, "unconquered, glorious, finest in the world — until it fell from the stab-in-the-back of the traitors."[45] Written in 1939, it propagated the memory of the war as the betrayal of an undefeated army, a myth that had been taken up and orchestrated by the Nazi regime. It corresponds well with returning chaplains' contemporary reactions in 1919. Johannes Reetz, for example, lamented in 1919 that "Germany had a deep fall. The German empire of glory has collapsed. That is bitter . . . An abyss of moral depravity has become manifest."[46]

The world of Germany's Protestant churches was turned upside down. Humiliating defeat, with one in six combatants dead, was compounded by the traumas of a punitive *Diktat* at Versailles and revolution. The Kaiser's abdication and flight, accompanied by the abdication of other princely houses, decapitated the churches by removing their royal patrons who were officially their heads. Everything they had held sacred was in disarray. Prussia had boasted the lion's share of military chaplains, who had celebrated and identified closely with the Hohenzollern dynasty. The sacred relationship of Throne and Altar was severed, God-given authority usurped. Sole guilt, fastened on Germany by the Versailles treaty, inflamed a sense of wounded innocence. The reply to Versailles issued by General Superintendents of Old-Prussian Provinces in the *Manifesto of the Protestant Supreme Consistory* (*Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat*) lamented the injustices visited on Germany.

> We have lost the world war. We have been compelled to accept unheard of, most cruel armistice conditions from arrogant enemies. Kaiser and Reich, as they had become dear and precious to us in an unparalleled history, are gone. We have been spared no bitterness and no humiliation.

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[44] Cited in H. C. Jackson, *Pastor on the Nile* (London: SPCK, 1960), 160.

[45] L. Hoppe, *Kleine Bilder aus großer Zeit: Frohe und ernste Erinnerungen* (Lichterfelde, 1939), 171–3. (My translation.)

[46] A. D. Reetz, *Predigten aus der Zeit für die Zeit* (1919), Nr. 2, 1.

The declaration diagnosed "inner discord," the culpable disunity of people, as the cause of defeat.[47] The matrix of the Weimar churches' war memory was set: war as a military struggle was primarily a trial of the nation's cohesion and capacity for self-renewal, and the wayward homelanders had invited defeat.

Thereafter, Germany's churches feared for their very existence. Before the hyperinflation of 1922–23 battered them as a social organization, the Protestant clergy accustomed to the historical patronage of princes feared the newly triumphant social democracy and its aspirations to create a parliamentary secular state. Apprehensions were especially high under the rule of People's Commissars during the turbulent period before the elections for the Constituent National Assembly. For six weeks after the revolution, the Ministry for Spiritual and Educational Affairs in Prussia fell under the dual leadership of the majority social democrat, Konrad Haenisch, a moderate who regarded religion as a private matter, and Adolf Hoffmann, the independent social democrat, whose anticlerical hostility was overt. Hoffmann was appointed Prussian Minister of Education and Public Worship in November 1918.[48] He antagonized former chaplain Reinhard Mumm, a former Nationalist Reichstag deputy, now delegate to the Weimar National Assembly and defender of religious education. In a Philippic against Hoffmann in March 1919, Mumm cried:

> He must know what he did therewith to the Christian people. Adolf Hoffmann was capable of besmirching the honour of his mother before the gathered assembly building if it was serviceable to hatred against the Christian church.

Hoffmann's appointment was one of the "indelible cultural humiliations of our fatherland."[49] Their clash reinforced the mutual alienation of the social democratic movement and the clergy. The assault on the churches' privileges and social status, especially state financial subsidies, confiscation of property, intervention in ecclesiastical affairs, the dismantling of religious education, were all dangers augmented by the feared repeat of Bolshevik persecution in Germany. These fears of a religionless democratic state had been especially sharpened since 1917, when Protestant leaders denounced social democrats, centrists, and liberal reformers, and their policies of negotiating peace, ending Prussia's hierarchical suffrage system and the secularization of education.[50] Therefore they mostly associated reformist aspirations with the revolutionary subversion of the Fatherland. Secular humanists who promoted those policies were hostile to the divinely appointed monarchical order that was overthrown, favouring church disestablishment. These tendencies were reinforced by fears of a repeat of Bolshevik anticlerical persecution, especially because their Protestant tradition cherished the patronage and protection of secular rulers.

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47. E. K. Bramsted, "The Position of the Protestant Church in Germany 1871–1933," *Journal of Religious History* 3, No. 1 (1964): 65–6.

48. See J. Wright, *"Above Parties": The Political Attitudes of the German Protestant Church Leadership 1918–1933* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 12–14.

49. R. Mumm, *Der Religionsunterricht und die Nationalversammlung: Rede des Abgeordneten D. Reinhard Mumm in der Nationalversammlung am 11 März 1919* (Berlin, 1919), 4.

50. D. R. Borg *The Old-Prussian Church and the Weimar Republic: A Study in Political Adjustment, 1917–1927* (Hanover: University Press of New England , 1984), 44–53.

To be Protestant was usually to be *Herzenmonarchisten* (monarchist at heart); to advocate social democracy was mostly regarded by the churches as antithetical to German Christianity.

But the blood of the fallen could still redeem the nation. For German chaplains, even defeat rarely dislodged the Lord of History. Bavarian Protestant, Emil Wolffhardt, had preached on the Kaiser's birthday that the German people, though not elect were the most "highly gifted" people with a "special relationship" with God, like Israel had to prove itself. Faith in the terrible struggle was God's demand.[51] The same understanding of the war as a trial of national penitence predisposed him to interpret either defeat as a judgement on Germany. Hence his acquiescence to defeat in November 1918.

> The struggle is over. The judgment is spoken. We bow to you, oh Lord of the World! We were great. You have broken us. Lord, you wish it! Lord, as it pleases you! . . . no devil can steal you, dear God, from us![52]

On *Totensonntag*, the traditional day of remembrance on the last Sunday before Advent in November, clergy were urged to bring mourners "the faith that these holy sacrifices will contribute to the resurrection of our nation."[53] With increasing urgency, chaplains would exhort survivors that national resurrection through the dead was an ideal that demanded pursuing.

In contrast, the mission of Anglican ex-chaplains was social reconstruction, not the strengthening of militant nationalism. It is significant that many English padres who were the most prolific advocates of a "New Jerusalem" war effort joined the Industrial Christian Fellowship, founded in 1919. Their leading spokesman was G. A. Studdert-Kennedy. Frank Barry, Tom Pym, Frederick Macnutt, David Railton, C. M. Chavasse, and C. S. Woodward were also members.[54] The Fellowship popularized the principles of the 1920 Lambeth report, *The Church and Social Service*, which called for "a fundamental change in the spirit and working of our economic life." Following the condemnation of the "internecine conflict of capital and labour," it advocated "the principle of co-operation in service for the common good in place of unrestricted competition for private or sectional advantage."[55]

Studdert-Kennedy emerged as the pre-eminent missioner from the trenches. Moved to alleviate poverty by his ministry at the working-class parish of Saint Paul's, Worcester, and subsequently as an Army Chaplain, he preached that the grieving community must break the struggle of history, "the tale of how the truth of Co-operation has fought the falsehood of strife and competition all down the ages."[56] Studdert-Kennedy's diagnosis in 1919 continued his critique of the industrial modernity. The war, he believed, was its logical extension of cutthroat commercial competition, "which is War with a borrowed cloak of Peace . . . the body that we wear to-day, wounded and bleeding, was born in a factory amid the roar of many wheels." Building a "new world" meant correcting the destructive forces of commercial competition that were so inimical to the ideal of fellowship. Written in 1919, Studdert-Kennedy's *Lies* emerged in a climate where apprehensions about the new social order were acute, "every one is full of plans for Reconstruction."[57] Studdert-Kennedy rejected "sloppy sentiment" that the war had "purified, uplifted, sanctified and strengthened our national character." He hoped war contained the seeds of its own elimination, destroying the class struggle that was the "real root of our national Misery," then "it may open our eyes to the Truth that all War is futile waste, and drive us to the task of national co-operation for good." The surviving war generation should reorder society out of piety to the dead.

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[51] LKAN 3209 (Emil Wolffhardt, "Königsgeburtstags-Feier im Felde Predigt über Pred. Sal. 8, 2 gehalten am 7.1.1917"), 6–7.

[52] LKAN 3209 ("Bericht des Div. Geistl. Wolffhardt über seine Tätigkeit während des Feldzuges 1914–1918"), 47.

[53] Bramsted, "Position of the Protestant Church," 65–66.

[54] G. Studdert-Kennedy, *Dog-Collar Democracy: The Industrial-Christian Fellowship 1919–1929* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 54.

[55] E. R. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770–1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 245.

[56] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Lies!* (London, 1919), 21.

> In the name of our dead comrades, can we not kill that enemy now? . . . Has not the light of the last four years been enough? I have seen it in the ruined villages, in dead men's faces and their staring eyes; I have read it in the misery of that weird wasted land of wire and lonely graves beside the Somme.[58]

Seductive pleasures of peace signified an unredeemed social order, as did the persistence of inequalities in public life, signalled in the contrast of joblessness and victory festivities in the release from war. Kennedy projected these discontents into the minds of returning soldiers. His poem "The Spirit," dedicated to "all ex-servicemen left out in the cold," shows a veteran who fought with a higher moral compass than the peacetime community, wanting "no celebrations / Nor no 'earty votes of thanks" but release from "madness," "scheming," and the "lies," "That end up in bloody murder / And the useless sacrifice."[59] The "useless sacrifice" could only be rendered valuable by realizing the soldier's unfulfilled mission. To legitimize his judgement of the war, Kennedy reinvents the soldier from an actual participant in victory celebrations into a critical outsider. Only atonement by survivors for the common sins of belligerent nations could secure a lasting peace.

> The Peace Treaty, and the League of Nations which it sets up, are by themselves . . . about as much protection against war as a wall of tissue paper against a mad bull. Prussianism is not really peculiar to Prussia; it lives in Britain too, it lives in our own souls, and there it must be killed before we can make the world safe for democracy.[60]

His interpretation of national redemption radicalized with the persistence of inequalities, unemployment, slum living, and the unalleviated misery of the working poor. Preaching at Covent Garden, he combined the apocalyptic motif with the language of secular political revolution. "The Revolution is our modern name for the Kingdom of God . . . running like fire through the veins

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57. Studdert-Kennedy, *Lies!*, 29.
58. Studdert-Kennedy, *Lies!*, 38–39.
59. G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Peace Rhymes of a Padre* (London, 1920), 14–15.
60. Studdert-Kennedy, *Lies!*, 120.

of India, it has run through Russia," a Kingdom that must be built having seen "Christ crucified in Flanders, driven, scourged and tortured through the field of war."[61] Kennedy's became the most forceful Anglican philosophy that building the Kingdom of God meant shaking society to its foundations.

The dead were omnipresent in chaplains' preaching. By summoning the ghosts of fallen soldiers to articulate their own interpretations of the war, chaplains took part in a resurgent, popular mythology of reunion and contact with the dead. They did this to disturb as well as comfort. Over time, chaplains became increasingly doubtful that the civilian world was honouring that debt. To motivate their congregations into a higher sense of civic duty, in their sermons and writing they summoned the dead as spirits bearing solemn demands, to arouse guilt and unease in survivors. Therefore, their imagined legions of dead were no longer the serene and content figures embalmed in glory and reconciled to God. They become solemn judges, urging the mourning civilians not to betray their memory. "Tubby" Clayton despaired at how quickly wartime self-sacrifice mutated into the self-gratification that the war was supposed to eliminate. After the war, Clayton worked with homeless war veterans amongst a public "which has profited itself by their action and ceased to lament their loss," fearing that the value of their deaths will be eroded. In his sermon published later in 1929, he fears the collective amnesia flowing from war-fatigue.

> As I look upon some heedless and self-pleasing lives today, I mind me of that terrible French story in which, a few years after the Crucifixion, Pilate has completely forgotten the incident of Jesus. When in the early months of 1920 I was sharing . . . some of the experiences of the homeless ex-Servicemen in London, I passed, one night as the theatre crowds were coming out, between a jewelled person and her car. There was a block ahead which halted me for a moment. Whereupon she put a hand upon my ragged trench-coat and said to me in great disdain: "Get out of my way, you're no use to us now." God forbid that anyone should imagine that incident to be typical, which truly it was not. I only quote it to reaffirm that impatience with the upshot of that great tragedy is an ill attitude.[62]

The perception rather than the factuality of this episode is revealing. Clayton turns the encounter with civilian indifference into an epiphany. It illustrates a change in emphasis: the centre of gravity and the site of redemption was no longer the battlefield, it was the world of civilians, who had the power to fulfil or destroy the redemptive mission of the dead. Only if sacrifice was remembered and emulated in rebuilding the social order could it remain meaningful. Summoning ghosts of fallen soldiers, they call from the "Valley of Affliction" for a covenant of the dead with the living to render their sacrifice worthwhile through a living civic duty. Warning against replacing an age of sacrifice with an age of indulgence,

> our work must be accomplished by you, or fall and "fail forever." . . . These are things we ask of you, as you look back and see once more from the hills, where you now stand in the morning light, our bones in the valley behind you.[63]

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[61] *The Challenge*, 21 January 1921, 834.
[62] T. B. Clayton, *Plain Tales from Flanders* (London, 1929), 144.
[63] Clayton, *Plain Tales from Flanders*, 156.

Thus they urged the living to translate the ideals of the dead into a civil code of living, recasting combatants' sacrifices into civic ideals.

German ex-chaplains also summoned the dead, but their spirits did not urge civilians to sustain world peace. In Germany, the experience of defeat and Revolution reawakened the Protestant political-religious tradition of war as a trial visited on a chosen people. The *Leitmotif* of remembrance was the rescue of God's anointed Volk, rather than mobilization to build antimilitarist culture. The war had not primarily been fought to dissipate the potential for militarism. For the war's meaning was not to make war impossible but to test the capacity of the Volk to unite, worship and believe, to demonstrate their worthiness of imperial destiny. Emil Ott summoned the dead in his tract on Christian people's renewal through war.[64] Ott exhorted the present and future generations to follow their martyred compatriots as exemplars. Imagining the fallen soldiers appealing to the living, they tell the "Young sons and daughters of the German people" that the greatest lessons are not "written in the books of your schools, but in our soul with fire and blood." During the war, Ott had idolized the dead as neo-pagan earth men, resurrecting through battle the natural state of man and the ancient piety of their race, just as their ancestors venturing into the forests to worship. This he maintains:

> To the original, direct, untainted life are you returned, to the natural life and recognition of God . . . in vain we did not fall. It was not only for great Germany, it was also for "holy Germany." That out of the old world arose a new, an empire of the welfare of all sections and classes, an empire of love instead of hate, an empire of humanity instead of slavery, an empire of the soul instead of things, an empire of faith instead of desolation. That we may consecrate you with the spirit . . . and seal you with the blood that once flowed for your salvation.

After the war, how to sustain war's revelatory, purifying, uplifting vistas becomes his new theme. The task for Germans is to translate wartime spirit into a permanent ethos of citizenship. If the war was the genesis of national renewal, if individuals were "reborn" in the experience of war that only initiated a lifelong struggle, and the survivors must continue the "soul" of the battle experience. War is no longer sufficient as a single redemptive episode. Ott's ghosts proclaim the bad faith of the non-combatants, who have not emulated their idealism, but are

> fallen away from homeland pride and honour-feeling, of brotherly help, sacrifice-sense, from sacred seriousness and from serious faith fallen away. Are you in the new affliction wildly disgusted — is it greater then than ours?[65]

Ott's ghostly dead continued to believe in the ideals for which they had enlisted, because they had died for them, while homelanders had the luxury of abandoning them. This reversed the archetypal contrast between disillusioned fighters and idealistic civilians — Ott portrays the civilians as deserting the values that the community of the front still believes in. Mourning the disintegration of survivor's values, Ott considers the impermanence of self-sacrificial idealism, which can only be preserved through self-sacrificial death. Above all, Ott's voices of the dead also arouse the consciences of survivors by demanding *anger* as a patriotic imperative.

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[64] E. Ott, *Christliche Volkserneuerung durch die Erfahrungen im Feld* (Stuttgart, 1922).
[65] Ott, *Christliche Volkserneuerung*, 3–5.

German ex-chaplains also identified a national malaise, but in defeat blamed a treacherous and immoral homeland. Unlike their Anglican counterparts, it was not the creation of a warless society that was the yardstick of redemption, but Germany's capacity to remobilize and reawaken a nationalist consciousness. Germany's inability to prosecute a war fully to victory itself indicated an unredeemed people, warranting a verdict of unworthiness before the divine tribunal. The fallibilities and errors of the German people, particularly on the home front, had undermined the war effort and squandered the chance of national renewal. The ultimate manifestation of the materialist disease was the degeneration of the faithful sailor into an unruly rebel. In the wake of mutinies in Kiel and Wilhelmshaven during November 1918, which precipitated insurrections in towns, cities, and ultimately the national capital, post-war society was collapsing into disorder and subversion. Reetz saw this inner decay spawn not in the mass death of the frontline but in the black-market and its archetypal criminals. The war, he believed, was dysgenic, replacing the best with the worst elements of citizenry. Culling the most virtuous of the nation's manhood, it transferred power and influence to exploiters in the homeland. The causal sequence was clear: usury and materialist contagion germinated in the homeland and infiltrated the front line.

> As this was our ideal part of our people drawn out into the field, our sunshine had gone and the fog and semi-darkness had come in, it was now the time of the sprouting for all quagmire plants, that needed the growth of the semi-darkness. They eventually overgrew everything . . . spread it also into the front.

The virtuous generation of youths were spent and depleted, and "German idealism and the German religiosity in these days is severed. Yes, we possessed in the people such an ideal layer; but that rests outside today in cool earth."[66]

According to Reetz, the ultimate manifestation of materialist decline was the mutineers and revolutionaries who took their place, convincing him that "Germany has not yet reached the deepest point of its decline." Current injustices sprouted from this centrifugal disintegration of values, as "our homeland war-workers and war profiteers still over the same wild dances and with splashy phrases wear away the German virtues that were physically and morally incited in the war."[67] Revolutionaries and profiteers were conflated into the same body of treachery brought about collapse of imperial Germany. In Germany, chaplains' condemnation of the state of society formed part of a moral panic that swept the country. The peculiar conjunction of conspicuous pleasure-seeking and a resurgence of political radicalism troubled legislatures and officials. The bonds of cohesion, order, and decency had been frayed by inflation, malnutrition, poverty, black-market trading, and after demobilization, crime and the spectre of venereal disease.[68] Chaplains stressed less the mechanics of transition, such as labour market adjustments and economic regulations, than the reconstitution of behavioural codes, patriarchal authority in social and family relationships, through faith in God, who had "let us see the greatest time of our people" who would bring the enemy to justice. Hovering over his critique of post-war society was the finger of blame, as Protestant clergy actively propagated the "stab-in-the-back" myth (*Dolchstoßlegende*).

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[66] A. D. Reetz, *Predigten aus der Zeit für die Zeit* (Stettin, 1919), Nr. 2, p. 4.
[67] Reetz, *Predigten aus der Zeit*, 4–6.

After the anarchic period of the German Revolution, the secular republic was wracked by hyperinflation, paramilitary violence, and political polarization. The German territorial churches united in "Alliance of German Protestant Churches," issued triennial messages to the nation, and in 1924 deplored the prevailing spirit of materialistic egoism displayed by individuals and classes in industrial conflict. A gradual shift in the rhetoric of ex-chaplains occurred, moving away from their backward-looking preoccupation with disaster as divine punishment. As well as the wartime failure imputed to civilians, they increasingly idealized the "spirit of 1914" as an established standard that could be recaptured; sermons contrasted the distance between the shame of the present and the great counterpoint, the summit of pious devotion and brotherhood reached in 1914. Retrospectively interpreted, the miracle of the "spirit of 1914" was not that it permanently achieved a moral transformation of the community, but to have shown it was possible. As they "coaxed Germans to recall the fabled moment of unity,"[69] ex-chaplains began stressing the sacred past as a totem for the future renewal of the people. Wilhelm Stählin, who in 1914 had preached unquestioning obedience to the inscrutable will of God, abandoned his former quietism and retrospectively identified in the August experience the rebirth of "a community of blood and history," wherein the Volk "perceived, sang, acted, fought, led and died jointly." It was a "people's experience" of solidarity that "has rescued more men . . . throughout the disappointment of the war years and the worse experiences of the peace years."[70] Stählin elevated this to a theological doctrine with its emphasis more in ethnic nationalism, a dormant power, instead of the fallen Wilhelmine *Machtstaat*. Accordingly, the Volk must pursue its destiny, so that ambition becomes a duty to God. "Every nation has received its special nature from God, and . . . the individual person . . . should help so that a nation fulfils its destiny on earth."[71] The natural interplay of nations legitimated conflict as one divinely sanctioned means of progress.[72]

The ideal of commemorating the dead by being militarily prepared to fight and die like them resonated more strongly for German than English ex-chaplains.

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68. See Bessel R. *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 220–54.

69. P. Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (London: Harvard University Press , 1998), 3.

70. W. Stählin, "Die völkische Bewegung und unsere Verantwortung" (1924) cited in W. Kindt, *Grundschriften Der Deutschen Jugendbewegung* (Düsseldorf, 1963), 455.

71. W. Tilgner "Volk, Nation und Vaterland im protestantischen Denken zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus (ca. 1870–1933)" in *Volk — Nation — Vaterland*, ed. H. Zilleßen (Gütersloh: Sozialwissenschaftlichen Instituts der Evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland, 1970), 162.

72. See J. Moses, "State, War, Revolution and the German Evangelical Church 1914–1918," *Journal of Religious History* 17, No. 1 (1992): 47–59.

Dr. Franz Hagemeyer portrayed a calamitous defeat as the occasion for moral triumph. War was a chapter of suffering and sacrifice that left an immortal memory of communal struggle in popular consciousness. By forgetting that iconic "spirit of 1914" in German history, civilians could still betray the memory of the dead. Franz Hagemeyer invoked Moses' appeal to "not forget."

> Not a few of us would rather not hear any more of the frightful things that we have had to endure since those days in August 1914. Indeed, these most difficult years of their life and of our nation loom like an evil dream that tortures and disturbs us, a dream that one is relieved to be able to forget. However, despite how understandable this sentiment might be in the light of the cruel consequences of the accursed peace settlement of Versailles we may not allow ourselves to be dominated and crushed by it. Woe to the nation that neglects the memories of the great epochs of its history! It eliminates itself from the ranks of those nations that still have a future. For this reason may the memory of the stupendous epoch of our German history never never fade, but rather let it be kept alive from generation to generation! And there are three things that inspire us to do this: Our gratitude to the fallen, our obligation to the future generations and our veneration before Almighty God, the ruler of history.[73]

National redemption was a continuing task. The litany of war commemoration translated the heroic qualities of martyred soldiers into a code of civic values civilians could emulate. Civilians were urged to replicate the spirit of the dead by restoring cohesion and brotherhood to their collective life. Hagemeyer rhetorically summoned the fallen soldiers to do the talking. "How urgent our people needs this self-consciousness of what our dead have to say to us!"

> They remind us of those uplifting days when Germany in its most fateful hour rose up as a man, and the sons of all the German tribes, Prussian, Bavarians, Saxons and Wuerttemburgers and the members of all estates and classes, princes' sons and peasants' sons, the educated and the factory workers fused themselves to unity by means of which our nation in arms achieved veritable miracles and for four years with unprecedented heroism was able to hold out against a world of enemies.
>
> Despite the differences in class and background, education and political outlook, they knew only one goal that inspired them to fight as one, to endure, to triumph and to die for the safety and protection of our beloved fatherland!
>
> Indeed, because the sons of all levels of society have sacrificed the greatest that a human being can offer, namely their heart's blood for the same shining goal, this day of remembrance should summon with a loud voice all those alienated and hostile sons of the same mother to reconciliation. The blood that they have together poured out for the same sacred German soil should be the mortar that firmly joins the stones of the German house that have been loosened by disunity, to become that sturdy edifice that can withstand the storms of the age and unites them to a nation of brothers, steadfast and resolute in the face of all emergencies and dangers![74]

Sacrifices remembered could bind together a fractious community. The ghostly soldiers rejoice in the miracle of unified struggle, miraculous because they had transcended regional divisions (implying interconfessional solidarity) to resist their encircling enemies. By reckoning with the dead, Germany's

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73. F. Hagemeyer, *Das du nicht vergessest! Ein Errinerungsblatt zu ehrendem Gedächtnis an unsere Gefallenen* (Halle, 1925), 3.
74. Hagemeyer, *Das du nicht vergessest!*, 5–6.

defeat could be transfigured into a spiritual rebirth. The return of the fallen to rejuvenate the Volk was a pervasive theme in the Republic. Official publications and Memorial Day, morality plays, and ghost stories were reworked with Christian resurrection and visitations of fallen soldiers. For chaplains, remobilizing was the ultimate act of remembrance. The front cover of Hagemeyer's sermon-pamphlet makes the concrete ramifications explicit: "Forget my people not the faithful dead! Forget not, what the enemy did to you! Forget not, what your God called for in your heart!" The community that is faithful to God and the memory of the dead must maintain righteous anger at the injustices it has suffered. For the defeated nation the graves of the fallen were the site of mobilization in a national and partisan as well as a socio-political sense.

It would be simplistic to assume that this kind of rhetoric was merely a strategy for comforting the speaker and congregation after a disastrous defeat. Had comfort been their only intention, chaplains would not have emphasized the continuing moral burdens on civilians to elevate their own lives. Most English ex-chaplains tried to rededicate their congregations to ideals that would bestow peace. There were exceptions, however. One ex-chaplain stated that the best way to honour the dead was being ready to fight and die like the dead, thus inverting the formula by defining remembrance as a platform for military *preparedness*. In a turgid regimental chronicle, J. O. Coop included a prologue by a British general. The story of the Division must be told to commemorate valour and "as an inspiration for those who come after, and who, in their turn, may be called upon to play the game as it was played by those who went before them."[75] Coop's chronicle implicitly endorses those sentiments by listing every minute movement, engagement, and operation possible, identifying the war in a continuum of orthodox military traditions rather than a new and frightful form of conflict. Devoid of metaphysical interpretation, the record of the regiment is a sufficient exemplar for future generations. Yet the more militant English interpretations of commemoration could not be nourished by a sense of national humiliation, as could veteran German chaplain A. Büttel. Consecrating new church bells in a field service, he contrasted the ignominy of Germany's humiliation with the heights of national community reached in 1914. Recalling the "great time," the "disgrace and shame" of Versailles could not negate "God the lord of history," nor Germany's greatness. He recited the mantra of August 1914, "I know no more parties, only Germans," affirming "we want to be a united people of brothers . . . sooner death, than to live in servitude."[76] Expunging national shame was an incomplete labour.

Militant readings of commemoration were atypical of Anglican ex-chaplains. Fallen soldiers were usually cast as martyrs for a transformed social order that would eliminate war, rather than icons of a martial spirit to be imitated. More typical was the letter of a chaplain calling for demilitarization of war commemoration in Birmingham's Hall of Memory. Ceremonial swords and other military regalia should be left out as they compromised peace, the central cause of the fallen.[77] The idea of a war fought between rival ideas as well as rival armed forces to kill the disorders that made war possible was too prevalent in their tradition of redemptive war. The doctrinaire pacifism of Dick Sheppard, briefly a chaplain and founder of the Peace Pledge Union, was not universal among returning Anglican padres, neither was his conviction that conscientious objectors were morally equivalent with the fallen. However, most padres would have applauded his conviction that the redemptive meaning of the war, and the best form of remembrance, was to erect a permanent peace through a wholesome community modelled on his own parish, Saint Martin-in-the Fields. He was less confident than on Armistice Night five years earlier in the finality of the peace. He therefore invoked the voices of the dead to define the nation's obligations as people contemplated Armistice Day. Instead of erecting monuments they would have said

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[75] J. O. Coop *The Story of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division* (Liverpool, 1919), prologue.

[76] *Die Drei Glocken von Gottorp zu Schleswig, geweiht im Feldgottesdienst vor Gottorp Sonntag Cantate, den 10. Mai 1925* (Schleswig, 1925), 3–4.

> let our death be the end of war . . . If you must have a memorial do something that will enable our boys and girls to grow up with a fair chance of a decenter and more noble life . . . greater opportunities for learning the art of living . . . clear an open space that they may play games and fill their minds with healthy things.[78]

His aspirations for the meaning of Armistice Day as a lesson in peace were typical of his colleagues.

Formally constituted in 1919, the Weimar Republic could not enlist real allegiance from the bulk of Germany's Protestant clergy. Through indices such as the high membership of the orthodox nationalist *Evangelischer Bund*, Dahm estimates that eighty per cent of the clergy sympathized with anti-republican opinion.[79] In their eyes, it was imposed by traitors in an unjust settlement. That the tainted Weimar Republic would collapse was assumed, as prelude to resurrection of the Volk. Liberal or revolutionary interpretations of the war were marginal amongst Germany's former chaplains. Several former chaplains, however, formed part of a dissident and peripheral minority in the Protestant church as religious socialists. Paul Tillich retrospectively attributed his conversion to religious socialism to the first weeks of the war, when exposure to the class divisions of the nation revealed the stature of the church as "an unquestioned ally of the ruling groups."[80] Tillich sought to amalgamate social revolution with the Christian gospels, aspiring to unite Christian belief with the aspirations of the working class, with "a line running forward" of socialist progress alongside with a "line running upward" of religious salvation. The war might deliver Christianity's third great stride, ushering in "a third period of Christianity beyond Catholicism and Protestantism," as the "meaning of the 'turning of the world' which the world war and the revolution have brought us?" he asked in 1919.[81] The war created a kairos, a critical moment pregnant with possibility. Paul Piechowski, once a nationalist advocate of war loans, became a pacifist "in the fire of the Flanders battle, in the infinite agony of the experiences at that time and of the discrepancy between war and Christianity."[82] As the war was generated by contrasts in "great capitalist economic interests," he celebrated the proletariat's rebellions in 1918, "struggled against the old class-state," and "it must, that was its right and its duty." War gives birth to class consciousness. German man witnessed the anachronistic contradiction of a Christian church and a power state enslaved to capitalist interests. Rejoicing in the rebellions of the German army, he claimed a new man arose in the trenches, committed not to sinful killing but to the peaceful creation of work.[83] Both believed the church should realign itself with the aspirations of the proletariat instead of being the handmaiden of the imperial state. For both Tillich and Piechowski, it was the encounter with class, as well as the trauma of conditions at the front, which altered their perceptions of the war. They were far more marginal and beleaguered than the English chaplains who were the impatient agitators of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, an organization that enjoyed the support of bishops. Where the bonds of post-war social cohesion for Anglicans were social medicines underpinned by faith, for Germans the bonds were renewed nationalism.

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[77] Letter, *Birmingham Post*, 4 July 1925, cited in A. King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 207.

[78] H. R. L. Sheppard, "The World Need," *St. Martin's Review*, November 1926, cited in Sheppard, *The Best of Dick Sheppard* (New York: Harper, 1951), 9–10.

[79] K. W. Dahm *Pfarrer und Politik* (Köln: Dortmunder Schriften zur Sozialforschung, 1965), 9.

[80] P. Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (London: Scribner, 1967), 12.

Commemoration in Britain performed an integrative function, allowing for and often reconciling diverse readings of the war and subsuming them under a shared solidarity around the ideal aspirations of the dead. It was more consensual than the bitterly fragmented approach to commemoration in Weimar Germany, and there was a greater tolerance over competing readings of the war, largely because the cause of a permanent peace held broad appeal. Former chaplains and secular humanists could agree that the ultimate repayment of sacrifice was to forge a culture that prevented another war. In a public meeting at Westminster Hall on Armistice Night, 1921, it was possible for Studdert-Kennedy and Canon H. R. L. Sheppard to differ over the worthiness of the nations' losses. Studdert-Kennedy asserted that the war had not been for honour, for freedom, for victory. "Freedom from what? From the fear of militarism? And of war? They have not gained that, for never were we spending half so much as we are spending now in armaments." He confessed his disillusionment. He had believed "some good" might come out of it, "but I cannot see anything . . . It has been an absolute, an utter, and complete disaster," a realization that obliged him to make an "act of penitence and an open confession to God that I did not rise high enough."[84] The nation must turn to reconciliation and brotherhood. Sheppard hoped that "no mother who had lost a son or wife her husband would go home with the impression as he feared they might that those lives had been given in vain."[85] In his thanksgiving to the Cenotaph, war had illuminated its own futility, thereby giving meaning to the sacrifices.

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[81] Cited in P. Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, trans. F. Sherman (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), vii–viii.

[82] U. Peter, "*Der Bund der religiösen Sozialisten in Berlin von 1919 bis 1933*" (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 426. (My translation.)

[83] P. Piechowski, *Die Kirchliche Lage der Gegenwart* (Berlin-Neukölln, 1922), 1.

[84] *Guardian*, 18 November 1921, 834.

> It was your death that taught me how wicked force is. It was your death that has made me thirst and long for brotherhood and peace . . . It wanted that terrible welter of blood to teach me and others what the horror of war really can be. By your death you have taught us, as nothing else could have taught us, that the world must live in peace and brotherhood.[86]

Differing over whether the war had established a permanent peace, they were ultimately dedicated to the same ideal. Peace was an ocean that most Anglican war theologies flowed into.

In the German context, denying the war redemptive meaning as Studdert-Kennedy had done would have been far more inflammatory, the peaceful co-existence of two different memories less likely. After pastor Günther Dehn denounced *völkisch* theology and called for a commitment of German Protestants to ecumenical peace he was blacklisted from a university teaching position.[87] When Reich President Friedrich Ebert announced in 1924 the objective of building a national memorial, it provoked an extended debate over its form and location. The beleaguered Weimar Republic had a crippling absence of social unity, unable to find a common public language or set of symbols projecting a basic consensus regarding the war's meaning.[88] Because Germans divided profoundly over the legitimacy of the Republic that the defeat had spawned, they were less tolerant of rival memories of the war. Germany's fractured and divisive climate pitted ex-chaplains against secular reformers, Nationalist Protestants against the marginal religious socialists.

Britain's Tomb of the Unknown Warrior also enshrined a padre's quest to reorder society in memory of the dead. David Railton's brainchild, it was interred in Westminster Abbey on Armistice Day 1920, to enable mourners to venerate a symbol of the missing dead. Draped in the Union Jack as an emblem, which united spiritual and national allegiances, buried by King George V, its founder hoped it would do more than comfort the bereft, or anchor a modern war in the medieval past. Railton intended the monument to preserve memory of service and to ensure that their deaths helped to sacralize a hedonistic, profane, and materialist society. This would have resonated with chaplains, often unable at the front to give a conventional Christian burial. The Shrine was more than an icon of mourning, a place of prayer "for all those who took part in the Great War, for all those who still suffer from its effects." Railton urged visitors to pray

> also that you may be given wisdom and strength to help in building up the Kingdom of God upon earth. Then this Unknown Warrior's grave will become no mere "emotional

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[85] *Morning Post*, 12 November 1921, 8. Cited in A. Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 34.

[86] *Guardian*, 18 November 1921, 834.

[87] Tilgner, "Volk, Nation," 168–69.

[88] W. G. Natter, *Literature at War, 1914–1940: Representing the "Time of Greatness" in Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 26.

> anchorage" but a shrine of the child of God, who is a representative of all who fell in the Great War, known or unknown, and a shrine of the ideal soldier of Christ.[89]

Beyond the catharsis of communal grief, the tomb was meant to incarnate its founders' ideal of a classless society. The unknown warrior embodied an equality in military death that should be replicated in the social order, for "No one knows the Unknown Warrior's rank, his wealth, his education or his history. Class values become vanity here."[90] To a priest who had ministered to the slums of Liverpool, this was no empty platitude. Intended to monumentalize his aspiration to a new social order, its ritualized creation was also a glittering royalist spectacle. In a panoply of thick symbolism, the King scattered earth from France onto the coffin, replete with a Crusader's Sword, and the tomb was studded with inscriptions proclaiming the burial of an ordinary soldier amongst kings. The Unknown Warrior combined Railton's own British nationalism with his conception of the war as an egalitarian Christian mission.

Preaching before that same tomb in 1923, Tom Pym warned that commemoration was "little more than a sentimental indulgence unless we go back tonight determined to live in the spirit in which the fallen have died." Pym continued his wartime leitmotif that failure to consecrate civilian existence would cheapen sacrifices. At the Memorial Service for Trinity Men on 2 November 1919, he reflected on the "fiery trail the memory of the dead brings across our lives," inferring that "Citizenship demands of us the same qualities essentially as the comradeship of arms."[91] The intervening years heightened his anxiety and the recession of society into destructive materialism dishonoured the dead and bereaved. The monument was "more than a memorial." To "go on living our own lives simply for ourselves" would be "disloyal." He then recalled an oath he made to a dying soldier who

> asked me if I thought his pain was doing anyone any good or if when he was gone and thousands with him there would ever come a time when men would not have to die as he was dying, or suffer what he was suffering . . . I pledged him my own word . . . that those for whom he died would try to make the world a better place.[92]

Similarly, in 1917 Edward Woods had anticipated the waste of youthful sacrifice and articulated a duty not merely to commemorate but to transform society in an ecumenical, global sense as the most meaningful act of remembrance. Insisting public law must replace armed might as the arbiter of conflict, change must be driven by

> the thought of our debt to the dead . . . the one utterly intolerable thought is that these millions should have died in vain. Those myriads of graves on all the Fronts should . . . hold us steadfast to our highest idealism and the one true objective of a new world of brotherhood and good will.[93]

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[89] D. Raillton and A. Twining, *What to Remember About Westminster Abbey* (London: SPCK, 1931), 93.

[90] *Our Empire* (1931), 7:8.

[91] D. Pym, *Tom Pym: A Portrait* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1952), 59–60.

[92] Pym, *Tom Pym*, 72–73.

[93] E. S. Woods, "The Great Adventure," in *The Church in the Furnace*, *Essays by Seventeen Temporary Church of England Chaplains on Active Service in France and Flanders*, ed. F. B. Macnutt (London, 1917), 436–37.

Like Pym, Woods attempted to project unease and discontent in his congregation, to translate his personal sense of guilt into collective consciousness. Preaching on Easter Sunday two years later, Woods meditated on a society that might fail to reconcile with God. He asserted that society's duty to the dead was not to realize the celestial paradise but "Jerusalem on earth," transforming an inhumane and atomized materialism into a new corporate, pious and dutiful order. The engine driving these duties was mourning. Caught in a prison-house "which is war's birthplace and home,"

> We must find the way out, and in this generation too: what else did our men die for in these terrible years? God forgive us for the shortness of our memories. Again and again I have stood by the graves of our men in France, and as I stood there it came to me with a force that hurt, that we who survive are men and utterly committed to the task of breaking down the prison doors of an enslaved world.[94]

Victory over Germany becomes almost an irrelevance. Only the force of obligations to lost youth, worked out in "industry and commerce, in all the complex web of social relationships" could break society out of the modern cycle of conflict and future war. Thus the message and vocabulary of war commemoration was often the antithesis of consolation: the living must be roused through discomfort. To ensure the recent war remained the last war, the war to end all wars, it remained necessary to attack the pathologies in industrial modernity, attributed by chaplains to war. The fallen soldier-martyrs were the totems for the assault on those war-breeding disorders. To classify that social criticism as "conservative" is a gross oversimplification. Their desired Kingdom harnessed an imagined pre-industrial code of piety and community with an egalitarian, collectivist social order. They did not want to return to a feudal or pre-industrial past, even though they yearned for its stability.

The language of agitation was adopted by chaplains along the spectrum of clerical opinion. A turbulent priest and former chaplain, John Groser, gave a more radical inflection to the war's memory. Most Anglicans interpreted the war as a parable for the futility of class struggle. Groser took up the class struggle. Only a headlong assault on the bastions of privilege and poverty could ensure the worth of war sacrifices. He became a spokesman for the Catholic Crusade, which pledged to "break up the present world and make a new, in the power of the Outlaw of Galilee" and whose manifesto denounced economic deprivation as "a monstrous betrayal of the promises and the hopes which had sustained so many through the years of war, and which alone seemed to make the sacrifices of the war meaningful." The banners of the movement dedicated the Crusade to God and "The Workers Commonwealth." Groser espoused a spirituality of incarnation "seriously worked out in a new social order is the only salvation," symbolized when he allowed his processions to bear both a cross and a red flag. Groser's formation in a slum parish at Newcastle had undergirded his commitment to industrial and political rebellion, an obligation the war ministry sharpened.[95]

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94. E. S. Woods, "The Living Christ," *The Challenge*, 9 April 1920, 363.
95. K. Brill, *John Groser: East London Priest* (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1971),14.

After the central themes of remembrance were established in the years after the armistice, the passage of time increased the unease of military chaplains. The sites of commemoration became places of dissatisfaction. For Frederick Macnutt, Armistice Day became more a guilty reckoning than a day of solemn reverence. It "points its accusing finger at its multitude of cross-crowned graves" to warn that repentance to God was the only way "out of the chaos through which the world is blindly stumbling."[96] The perception of civilian indifference towards the sites of mourning frustrated German ex-chaplain and poet Fritz Philippi. During the war he had characterized the German army as "the crucified humanity," assuring them that their sacrifices constantly re-enacted Christ's crucifixion, achieving the "German redemption."[97] A decade after he gave sacrifice a christological resonance, however, the redemption is incomplete, their holy Calvaries deprived of a dignity that their sacramental donation deserves.

> Leaves, severed with noble decency from their maternal branch,
> should not, without dignity,
> have to seek their place of rest upon the asphalt.
>
> On the occasion of the sublime act of their death
> they dressed up as if for a feast day,
> kneeling towards the altar of the earth/Earth, to receive, willing to display humility,
> the sacrament of sacrificial death.
>
> Whose fault is it that amidst the filth of the street,
> beneath the rolling wheels and steps of men, the pious simplicity is desecrated,
> until the broom scrapingly brushes the trash
> into the mass grave of the gutter?[98]

Philippi depicts a disjuncture between the purity of sacrifice and the banality of the post-war world. Soldiers are described with references to nature, while the contempt towards their deaths is described with images from modern urban life. Their sacramental deaths are profaned and ignored, the irreverent city surroundings jarring with the pious spirit of their deaths. Chaplains could agonize over civilian indifference in everyday life, as well as cataclysmic upheaval.

By now, redemption through memory of the dead meant different things to Anglican and German Protestant chaplains. For the Germans, it meant sustaining the Germanic virtues of piety, community, and duty in allegiance to what the toppled monarchist imperial order, the "Holy Protestant German Empire," represented. This meant regrouping around nationalism as a sacred organizing principle, in militant resistance to the atheistic and revolutionary materialism rampant in the November Revolution and the birth of the Weimar Republic. The Great War in this respect bore a continuity with the wars of the nineteenth century. Retributive justice against the enemy and self-correction were necessary parts of national redemption — a maligned people would rise again, as after 1806 against Napoleon, to reverse the chastising punishment of defeat and prove worthy of reclaiming their "chosen people" status. Anglicans also exhorted civilians to embody the spirit of the fallen, but the struggle against materialism entailed reordering the entire basis of economic and social life to make war impossible. This was often defined as supplanting predatory individualist competition with a collectivist ethos founded on fellowship and the abolition of privilege, the redistribution of wealth and property. All chaplains revered the cult of the dead. But in their rejection of militarism and affinity with secular social reform movements, Anglican chaplains evolved an incarnational war theology at odds with the ethos of their Protestant German counterparts.

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[96] F. B. Macnutt, *From Chaos to God* (London: James Clarke, 1929), 69–70.

[97] F. Philippi, *An der Front: Feldpredigten* (Weisbaden, 1916), 9.

[98] "Massengrab" (1928) in *Fritz Philippi als religiöser Dichter*, ed. W. Knevels (Leipzig: Klein, 1929), 96.

Why these differences? Are the immediate circumstances of defeat and punishment by the Allied powers sufficient to explain why German ex-chaplains under similar circumstances also have interpreted national redemption as remobilization and revenge? Or were there peculiarities of German Protestantism that also formed their responses? Several caveats should be observed. In their debates over the Versailles settlement, English Anglicans had also demonstrated a capacity for recrimination. Vindictive calls for punishment were made by ordinary churchgoers in 1919, one calling for humiliation the symbols of German pride, the Brandenburg Gate and the Niederwald monument, should be smashed and cast into the Rhine,[99] while Bishop Moule had called for Germany to suffer "retributory pains."[100] The Archbishop of Canterbury himself received letters urging him "to see to it that we insist upon reprisals, swift, bloody and unrelenting. Let gutters run with German blood. Let us smash to pulp the German old men, women and children."[101] Had Germany been victorious, it is likely that its settlement would dismember Britain's colonial empire, fostering a memory of humiliation and a politics of revanchism within the Church of England, especially as it was the church most attached to empire. And as Kosseleck has shown in the context of the defeated French in 1871, all cultures in defeat, underpinned by their religious institutions, are capable of revanchism. And as the discussion above has shown, Lutheran and Anglican war theologies shared a basic vision of what a redeemed nation would look like: pious, dutiful, cohesive, and organic.

However, revanchist tendencies of German Protestant clergy also had more extensive roots in pre-war political-religious thought. Redemptive war was defined not primarily as bringing permanent peace, but in defending Kultur, nation-building, and coming to repentance as a chosen people. Eliminating war was subordinate to the sacred struggle for Reich. Walther Buder had preached that through war "Germany would be born into a new world stature."[102] Rather than a "war to end all wars," Germany's Great War would be remembered as part of an incomplete series of wars waged to empower people, than the more differentiated Anglican war sermons. War would be the appointed means of establishing nation and extirpating foreign influences, especially when, unlike Britain, they had not fulfilled their imperial destiny or secured their nationhood in the vulnerable heart of Europe.

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[99] Marrin, *The Last Crusade*, 234.
[100] Wilkinson, *Church of England*, 264.
[101] *London Times*, 22 June 1917.
[102] W. Buder, *In Gottes Heerdienst — Fünfzehn Feldpredigten 1917/18* (Stuttgart, 1918), 20.

Anglican clergy and chaplains could embrace social reform without compromising their political-religious allegiances. Having exacted reparations and the German admission of war-guilt, another war was not necessary to their moral regeneration. Whereas German chaplains came from a clergy that addressed the social question far more from opposition and competition with socialist movements. For them, the belief that the spirit of wartime sacrifice must be translated into the abolition of class or universal peace was far more politically subversive. Unlike in England, the Protestant Church's very existence was seen to be threatened by the same political forces that were demanding liberal or socialist reform. When Dr. Ostertag, a former chaplain, in 1921 called for "holy intolerance of atheism, materialism and Bolshevism," he did not have in mind the redistribution of property or the dismantling of militarism, nor dialogue with the social democrats.[103] Unrepentant, the French occupation of the Ruhr and the exaction of crippling reparations, "the brutality of the enemies" evoked defiant declarations that "the German idea never would be demolished."[104] Evangelical politics was alienated from extreme and moderate forms of social democracy and aligned with the conservative nationalists, the DNVP (German National People's Party) whose platform demanded the preservation of German Christianity. In the Protestant mindset, those who advocated social democracy and antimilitarist reform were often also regarded as republican interlopers, indeed illegitimate usurpers of the consecrated monarchy.[105] To commemorate the war as a site of mobilization and nationalist reawakening was to assert the illegitimacy of the republican experiment and sinful revolution. The identity and mission of the nationalist Lutheran state church was intimately bound to the authoritarian, illiberal Prussian monarchy and its coalition of supporting interests in the upper bourgeoisie, nobility, and military. National renewal meant overcoming class antagonism through faith in Fatherland.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the political differences between the churches in their commemoration should not obscure the fundamental commonalities, both with respect to how they saw the role of war commemoration and with respect to the kind of society they wanted the memory of the war to inspire. Instead of viewing the war as a finite military struggle, in the post-war period former chaplains attempted to mobilize the living to continue the struggle. While the political content of their attitudes differed, the attitudes of former military chaplains to the role and function of war commemoration was strikingly similar. This suggests an alternative possibility about the purposes and motives that drove war commemoration more generally. The language of war remembrance was not just a language of consolation which ministered to a nation in collective grief. Implicit in the message of healing is the assurance that the ordeal is over and its price was worth paying. Chaplains' memories bear the hallmarks of unease, not comfort, of a struggle they believed had not finished with the armistice of November 1918. Accordingly, instead of seeking to heal the wounds and close the book, military chaplains tried to keep the wounds open and fresh, because only then could the post-war community be motivated to continue the struggle for national salvation that the war had represented. Remembrance was a continuation of the struggle by other means.

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[103] H. Ostertag, "Charakter und Toleranz," in *Jahrbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Landeskirche Bayerns* (Rothenburg, 1921–22), 51.

[104] H. Ostertag, "Staats-Idealismus," *Jahrbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Landeskirche Bayerns* (Rothenburg, 1925/26), 80.

[105] Wright, "*Above Parties*," 12.

As their testimonies demonstrate, the end of hostilities did not terminate chaplains' search for meaning in the war experience, or the quest for national redemption through violence. They continued to believe their societies were not wholly redeemed, despite the colossal price paid in blood. Studdert-Kennedy couched his eventually nihilistic reading of the war in terms of public penance, repenting for his false belief in regenerative sacrifice. This demonstrated how inextricably personal was his investment in the value of the sacrifices he had urged combatants and their families to make. Most of his fellow chaplains could not disown the value of the war. Redemption through war was not just a matter of perception. For chaplains complicit in mass death, it was an *imperative* to uphold the ideal. To disown the redemptive meaning of sacrifice was to cheapen that sacrifice. Implicated in mass death as parts of the war machine, in a war, which purported to herald a regenerated world, chaplains rarely abandoned the ideal, even if that defied their perceptions of the nature of the war. German chaplains likewise were absorbed in recasting the soldier's martyrdom as a platform for future regeneration, signalling their own need to retrieve value from defeat. The fact of the war's occurrence, and the chaplains' complicity in that bloody transaction, generated its own need for retrospective justification.

Though Lutheran and Anglican chaplains had different views of the politics of the war, they were united by a common attitude to the function of war commemoration. Anglican ex-chaplains avowed that the sacrifices of the dead must be vindicated by ensuring that their defeat of Prussian militarism would be followed by a permanent peace. German Protestants called their compatriots to overcome defeat and reclaim Germany's rightful place as guardians of heroic idealism and as God's chosen people. Mourning the collapse of the "Holy Protestant German Empire," their quest was to reclaim the spirit of national community that supposedly arose in 1914. But both groups commonly implored their audience to honour their blood-debt to the dead, whose sacrifices were supposed to have brought the blessings of regeneration through sacrifice. Because they feared that only the survivors of war could ensure that the dead had achieved something with their sacrifices, they preached to afflict as well as comfort their congregations. The peace became as problematic as the war.

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