

1.

Introduction:

The Nature of the Church of England

The Church's Relationship with the State and the People

The Church of England is the established church of the realm. At its head is the monarch, and it has given centuries of spiritual sustenance to a militarised and imperial state. It has a history of recruitment sermons, of bishops blessing battleships, of cathedrals packed with regimental standards and war memorials, and of military chaplains in their military uniforms, receiving their military pay.

It is still the case that every person ordained as deacon, priest or bishop in the Church of England has to affirm the faith, to which the "historic formularies" of the Church bear witness. The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are presumed to come under this heading. The declaration of any office-holder in the Church of England at the time of the First World War was far more explicit: "I assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles".¹ Amongst these is Article Thirty-Seven, "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the war".² That outwardly seems to imply no incongruity between the wars of the state and the Gospel of the Christian Church. Here is the church's, and the state's, justification for preparation for and participation in war. Of all human activities, warring appears to be almost the only one to be explicitly condoned by the founding documents of the Church of England. Government, the military and the church were seen to be so closely entwined that they formed the state's single trinity of power.

Complex maneuverings around the time of Henry VIII meant that political and ecclesiastical power (exerted by crown, parliament and Church) were intertwined, causing "a particular element of the Englishness of the Church of England" to be established.³ The theologians and divines whose work developed the self-understanding and ecclesiology of the Church of England regarded membership of church and nation as inseparable, at least in their ideal model. As Richard

Hooker (1554-1600), writing in the late sixteenth century, expressed it, "We hold that seeing that there is not any man of the Church of England but the same is also a member of the commonwealth; nor any member of the commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England".⁴ (What irony that this sentiment was not published until 1648, when religious as well as political divisions had reached such an intensity that the land was in the throes of civil war.)

After the Restoration, the monarch continued (and still continues) to be Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The Corporation Act of 1661 and Test Acts from 1673 ensured that officers of state were Church of England communicants. The Act of Uniformity, 1662, left no room for dissent from the doctrines and practices expressed in the Book of Common Prayer. Attempting to dissent from one part of the trinity of church, state and army would lead one to be barred from the other parts; e.g. a religious dissenter would be barred from public (civil or military) office. Over time, this discrimination diminished, and with it the Church of England's all-embracing aspirations. The (almost) Bloodless Revolution of 1688 and the Toleration Act that followed, the complexities of union with Presbyterian Scotland, and Roman Catholic emancipation in 1829 all reduced the legal reach and the claims of the Church of England, even if they left intact "the effortless superiority of the *beati possidentes*, those who occupy the high ground of English culture – or who used to".⁵

This Church of England, therefore, is the most unlikely institution in which to find war resistance and opposition to the military. The very presence of pacifists in the church was subversive, undermining the roots of the institution and challenging the entanglement of church and state. Dissenters can be expected to dissent, to refuse to conform, to be an awkward squad in more ways than one; but surely the role of members of the Church of England is to conform, to uphold the state and the status quo? For members of the Church of England to dare to resist war is to strike at the very heart of the English Establishment, to chip away at the complex binding of church and military which is at the core of the state. It is surprising to find a narrative of war resistance at the very heart of a church that is the most allied and aligned with the military organs of the state.

The parish system, whereby every person belongs within a Church of England parish and can call upon the parish church for particular occasional services, has reinforced most people's identification with the Church of England. For most of its existence, the Church of England has been "deeply implicated in the life of the English people",⁶ or at least of the majority who have not taken a conscious and conscientious decision to opt out, or to dissent. For many, and for many even in a post-Christian multicultural and multifaith society, membership is still

part of English identity. Some have described this as the identity of those who are religious but not necessarily Christian; those who think about God whilst refusing to be told what to think about God; or even those who don't really think much about God at all, but are content to know that others did. For centuries, "Church of England" or "C of E" was the default affiliation of anyone who had not made a deliberate choice to be otherwise.

The stories in this volume are about people with a variety of relationships to the Church of England. Some were indubitably part of the Establishment, for example a chaplain to the king. Some were immersed in Anglican faith, theology and practice, holding together both catholic and reformed traditions, fully conscious of their place within a wider Christendom. These people were Church of England to their core, being both naturally aligned with the things of Establishment and at the same time being fully at one with the Christian faith that they prayed and practised on a daily basis. In contrast, I tell of others who were, frankly, "C of E", English people who, through absorption and adoption, were Christian by aspiration and acceptance; who would not have argued with Hooker's claim but who would never have read his writings. To such people, membership of the Church of England was one of many aspects of their identity, but was not central to their self-understanding. In many ways, they were typically English.

These people, however, whether thoroughly Church of England or simply "C of E", had one thing in common: they were, perhaps against all the odds, opposed to war. At the very least, they were opposed to the war entered into by Britain in August 1914, and, in most cases, they were against all war. Theirs was not a typically English stance, and certainly not one expected of those within the established Church of England. It is precisely this incongruity, and the incomprehensibility to outsiders of the stance of Church of England pacifists, that makes that stand so important and so challenging.

Their stories are largely unknown, and are not the tales that many in the state or the church would wish to be celebrated; the individuals involved are not the kind of heroes or saints that the Establishment would revere. That is precisely why these stories have such significance. These peacemakers were subversive.

Background to Article Thirty-Seven

With the passing of the Act of Supremacy and related measures in 1534, the *ecclesia anglicana* ceased being the regional base of an international church with its headquarters in Rome. It became instead the English state's department for the religious well-being of its citizens. New definitions were needed to state, amid the turmoil of Reformation Europe, where the new Church of England stood and what its central

tenets were on the great, divisive issues of the time. Such definitions were expressed in the form of articles of religion, most of which were concerned with asserting the independence of the new institution from Rome and effecting some of the reforms that had long been called for in the Roman Church. But if the Church of England was at pains to indicate that it was no longer Roman Catholic, it was also keen to indicate that there were limits to reform and that some of the ideas prevalent in mainland Europe were beyond what could be accepted. For example, the ideas of the pacifist Anabaptists were seen as threatening. Not only was re-baptism off the agenda, so too was any suggestion of pacifism. Any statement of the new church that indicated its limits of tolerance needed to make clear that not only was there rejection of papal authority, but also rejection of such pacifist movements as those associated with Conrad Grebel (c.1498-1526), Jacob Hutter (c.1500-1536) or Menno Simons (1496-1561).

In 1552, the Church of England produced its first articles. Of these, Article Thirty-Six, "*De civilibus Magistratibus*", read, *Christianis licet, ex mandato Magistratus, arma portare, et justa bella administrare*; "It is lawful for Christians, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons and to serve in lawful wars". The purpose of the article was to assert the source and limits of power in the new order. In the magistrate's job description, this clause was the last of the issues considered, following the claim, *Leges civiles possunt Christianos propter capitalia et gravia crimina morte punier*; "The civil laws may punish Christian men with death, for heinous and grievous offences".⁷ The articles were approved in Latin in 1562, and the text was further amended by a convocation called in 1571. Royal authority was given the same year to the English text, which was not intended to be dominant, but equally authoritative. Although a clause on capital punishment failed to survive later drafts of the articles, that on the serving in lawful wars remained, albeit subject to variation and interpretation. In 1615, Article Sixty-Two of the Articles of the Church of Ireland read, "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to bear arms, and to serve in just wars". The form that found its way, as Article Thirty-Seven, into the Thirty-Nine Articles of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer read, "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars". Thus the Latin, *justa bella*, was translated in three different ways: "lawful wars" (1553); "just wars" (1615); and "the wars" (1662). The text, commented on in 1607 by Thomas Rogers (d.1616), chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, referred to "the wars". Rogers seemed to struggle to justify the item, only managing to cite Ecclesiastes 3.8, "a time for war", and Luke 3.14 and Acts 10 where soldiers were not rebuked for their profession, a double negative that is not particularly

persuasive, to suggest that war was permissible. By way of contrast he was able to cite contrary views at length, including those of Lactantius, the early Christian author, Vives, the Spanish humanist and the general stance of Anabaptists and Familists.⁸

The precise meaning of *justa bella* was open to debate. It could be argued that the word *justus* carried no moral associations and applied simply to the declaration of war by the legal authorities; this argument pointed to the definite article in the phrase “the wars” as indicating war involving the government. From this point of view, it was lawful to serve in any war the state waged, whether or not that war was “just”. However, that approach would make the use of the word *justa* superfluous, merely repeating what had been noted earlier in the article. More significantly, it ignored twelve centuries of discourse behind the phrase *bellum justum*, in which moral factors were highly significant.⁹ The word *justa* was not to be ignored, or passed over as if it was not there.

The interpretation of the phrase *bellum justum* historically belonged more to the sphere of moral theology than to jurisprudence. A late-seventeenth century commentary on Article Thirty-Seven by Bishop Beveridge limited its application to “lawful war”; i.e. “nothing less but the just defence of the Magistrate’s person, kingdom and prerogatives”.¹⁰ A war could not be deemed “just” merely by virtue of being called so by a government; the cause and conduct of the conflict had to be considered as well.

The second feature of Article Thirty-Seven of significance to future pacifists was the opening word *licet*, “it is lawful”. Some of the other articles were forceful in expressing the duty of Christians, for example *obiendum est* – “we must obey” the civil magistrate, and *debet* – every person “ought” to give liberally to the poor. This firm tone was not evident in Article Thirty-Seven, which rather reflected the usage of *liceat* in Article Thirty-Nine – a person “may” swear, and in Article Thirty-Two, “it is lawful” for clergy to marry. Thus the wearing of weapons and the serving in (just) wars was deemed “lawful”, but it was not at all suggested that it was a Christian duty. Indeed, the fact that it needed stating at all indicates a realisation that many would have assumed the contrary. It could almost be seen as the exception that proved the rule, namely that a normative Christian attitude would have been pacifist and that exceptional permission has had to be given to those who might be asked by magistrates to serve in a “just” war.

Not all future generations of Anglican pacifists were discouraged by Article Thirty-Seven. In the ordinal, clergy were required only to give general assent to the articles, not detailed assent, and in any case they themselves would not be eligible to bear arms.¹¹ No Anglican was under any doctrinal obligation to bear arms and serve in “the wars”, and even

for those who would, such service would only be lawful insofar as “the wars” were *bella justa*, with all the conditions and caveats that implied.

Article Thirty-Seven was hardly a statement of Christian pacifism; indeed it was designed to counter the same. A superficial reading of it was often used as a stick with which to beat later Anglican pacifists, particularly conscientious objectors in 1916-1918, but a deeper reading shows that it tolerated the position of Anglican pacifists and, at best, could be seen to make the pacifist position the norm from which non-pacifists would have to depart. Paul Gliddon, a conscientious objector in the First World War, summed it up as “an extraordinarily unenthusiastic way of summoning us to the colours . . . paralleled by the lukewarm assent parents sometimes give to the marriage of their daughters, ‘If she wants to marry him, we won’t stop her’ ”.¹²

The Roots of the Peace Movement

Foundations

Opposition to war in western culture has a long history, and can be traced back to classical and biblical times, both New Testament and Old. There is a strong undercurrent of nonviolence in Patristic writings in the first four centuries of the Christian era. This was summed up by the dictum of Martin of Tours (316-397), “I am the soldier of Christ: it is not lawful for me to fight”.¹³ Stories of opposition to war are found throughout the Middle Ages; from groups deemed heretical (Bogomils and Cathars), church reformers (Francis of Assisi, b. c.1181), and pioneers of the Reformation (Pierre Valdès, d.c.1206; John Wyclif, c.1330-1384; Jan Hus, burnt at the stake at Constance in 1415; Petr Chelčický, c.1390-c.1460).

A lasting consequence of the social, spiritual and political turbulence of the seventeenth century in England was the formation of the Religious Society of Friends (“Quakers”), with its developing tradition of non-aggression. Even the Church of England had its outspoken voices for peace, the most eloquent being that of the mystic William Law, whose 1761 letter, *An Humble, Earnest and Affectionate address to the Clergy*, was one of the most powerful condemnations of war in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ Law hoped that his letter would inspire the generations of the clergy who would come after him. Its impact was far-reaching: reprints were published by John Wesley and, with England at war with both France and Spain, the anti-war sections were reprinted by the dissenter Benjamin Flower of Cambridge in 1796 (and again in 1799).¹⁵ Law wrote that, in the context of nonviolence, as with all else, there was to be no distinction between individual and corporate behaviour: “Look at that which the private Christian is to do to his Neighbour, or his Enemy, and you see that very thing, which one Christian Kingdom is to do to another”.¹⁶

Thomas Clarkson and the Early Peace Society

By the end of the eighteenth century, one in six adult Englishmen were involved in the wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, conflicts with France and her allies that lasted for most of the period up to 1815.¹⁷

Even in the midst of this atmosphere of social tension, voices of dissent could be heard. Vicesimus Knox (1752-1821), Master of Tonbridge School, translated and reprinted works of Erasmus on peace. Annual fast days, instituted to encourage preaching and prayer on the wars, led some to question their validity. In a 1795 fast-day sermon, John H. Williams (c.1747-1829), Vicar of Wellsbourne, Warwickshire, denounced the concept of “a MILITARY CHRIST” in *War, the Stumbling-block of a Christian; OR, The Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword*.¹⁸

Knox and Williams did not, however, rule out defensive war, unlike J. Scott of Islington (1757-1832), whose 1796 tract, *War Inconsistent with the Doctrine and Example of Jesus Christ*, was historically significant for its title as much as its content.¹⁹ Scott’s proposition was simply “That War in every shape, is incompatible with the nature of christianity; and that no persons professing that religion, and under the full and proper influence of the temper and mind of Christ, can adopt, pursue, or plead for it”.²⁰

Amongst other anti-war sermon preachers and tract writers, the most influential figure to emerge in this era was Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), a non-practising deacon of Playford Hall, Suffolk. He was publicly known, on both sides of the Channel,²¹ for his leadership in the campaign against slavery, and was instrumental in the formation of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. This brought him into close contact not only with William Wilberforce (1759-1833)²² but also, more significantly in this context, with a number of Quakers. In 1806 he published a study on the Quakers and their beliefs, including a sympathetic critique of the Quaker peace testimony, followed by a survey of Patristic pacifism, *An essay on the doctrines and practice of the early Christians, as they relate to war*. His own description of war was “bloodshed *not unawares*, which is the scriptural definition of murder” and he asked “how can his kingdom ever come, while wars are tolerated”?²³ Clarkson’s experience of single-issue campaigning against slavery led him and others to consider launching a campaigning society for peace.

One of those influenced by Clarkson’s work on the Church Fathers was David Low Dodge (1774-1852), an opponent of the slave trade in the United States. He cited Clarkson in his 1812 volume, *War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ*. Three years later, Dodge became the founder of the New York Peace Society. At last, learning lessons from campaigners against the slave trade on both sides of the Atlantic, those who would resist war would discover the benefits of co-ordination and organisation. The modern peace movement was born. With the end of

the war in Europe, the pacifist and cross-denominational Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace (the "Peace Society") was formed in London in 1816, a year after Dodge's organisation in the United States. Membership of the Peace Society was open to persons of every denomination (which factor alone would have been challenging for many in the Church of England) "who are desirous of uniting in the promotion of Peace on earth, and good-will towards men". The object of the society was to produce and distribute tracts and other information showing that "War is inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and the true interests of mankind; and to point out the means best calculated to maintain a permanent and universal Peace, upon the basis of Christian principles".²⁴ Their first publications included reprints of works by Vicesimus Knox, J. Scott and Thomas Clarkson. Another early publication was a pacifist tract by Thomas Clarkson's brother, John (1764-1828), *The Substance of a Letter, addressed to a Clergyman of the Established Church, on the Subject of War*. In the first ten years of the Society's existence, membership rose to a peak of slightly under fifteen hundred.²⁵

There were various branches of the Peace Society ("auxiliaries") around the country, including, by 1823, women's groups in Lymington, Leeds and Guisborough.²⁶ On occasion the auxiliaries were more radical and active in campaigning than the centre. The Huddersfield auxiliary was the first to hold public meetings, starting in 1826. One chair of the London committee of the Peace Society, John Lee (1783-1866), spoke in 1840 of a petition to change Article Thirty-Seven, and urged other Anglicans to join the society.²⁷

From 1846, the peace movement in Britain gathered momentum, staging revolts against a proposed reintroduction of the militia and the revoking of the Corn Laws. There was an increased confidence that public campaigns could change Government policy. An invasion scare and the presence in Britain of the American Congregationalist, Elihu Burritt (1810-1879) added to public concern and awareness. In its first year alone, Burritt's League of Universal Brotherhood achieved around 6,000 signatories to its pacifist pledge, or 10,000 when both sides of the Atlantic were taken into account. Burritt also established Olive Leaf Circles, to enable genteel women to discuss peace issues, correspond with similar groups across Britain and other countries, and write pacific stories for children. He reported that such societies included a number of socially well-connected Anglican women.²⁸

Burritt was also responsible for promoting an international peace congress in Brussels in 1848. 130 people travelled across the Channel from Britain to attend. The success of the venture was hailed by Burritt, who called it "the inauguration of the 'Peace Movement' ", a decisive turn towards international co-operation and negotiation upon which hopes for peace would be built for the next 65 years. Soon, the

Manchester industrialist and parliamentarian Richard Cobden (1804-1865), described as the “Champion of Peace”, risked his political prestige, hard-won from a successful anti-Corn Law campaign, to become the movement’s de facto figurehead and spokesman. The period 1846-1851 was to be a high point for British peace campaigning, with a momentum not seen again for 80 years, when Dick Sheppard (1880-1937) revisited Burritt’s concept of peace pledge. There were key parliamentary debates on disarmament in both 1849 and 1851, and a series of international peace congresses in Paris (1849), Frankfurt (1850) and London (1851).²⁹

Richard Cobden

A consistent advocate of adult (male) suffrage and Corn Law repeal, Richard Cobden’s primary motivation for campaigning for peace was to ensure stable conditions for free trade. At the same time, he argued that free trade produced the mutual dependence between nations that itself promoted peace. In 1835 and 1836 he suggested that Britain should cease from all political intervention in international affairs, so that free trade could become the sole means by which nations would work for peace. Of war, he asked,

How shall a profession which withdraws from productive industry the ablest of the human race, and teaches them systematically the best modes of destroying mankind, which awards honours only in proportion to the number of victims offered at its sanguinary altar, which overturns cities, ravages farms and vineyards, uproots forests, burns the ripened harvest, which, in a word, exists but in the absence of law, order, and security – how can such a profession be favourable to commerce, which increases only with the increase of human life, whose parent is agriculture, and which perishes or flies at the approach of lawless rapine?³⁰

At a protest against the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), held at the 1842 re-launch of the Manchester auxiliary of the Peace Society, much was made of war’s negative effect on trade. Cobden was convinced that peace was a necessary pre-condition for any sustained increase in commerce.

Following the 1848 peace congress, Cobden committed himself more completely to the cause of peace. Having a petition of 200,000 signatures in support, he proposed, unsuccessfully, a parliamentary motion on disarmament and arbitration. He so immersed himself in subsequent peace congresses and Parliamentary campaigning, including a second disarmament debate in 1851, that the term “Cobdenism” entered the language in 1852/3.³¹

Despite tensions with France, the next British imperial war was with

Russia in the Crimea in 1854. Cobden's Quaker Parliamentary ally, John Bright, spoke movingly of "the Angel of Death" being abroad. Peace Society campaigning took place across the country; in Leeds, 300 people stood in the yard outside the packed hall where Cobden was speaking, unable to get in.³²

The conclusion of the war was marked by the 1856 Treaty of Paris. Protocol 23 of the treaty recommended that all future international disputes should be settled by mediation. The prospects of being able to work through legal channels for peace clearly resonated with many Anglicans. It was claimed soon afterwards that there were "more clergymen of the Church of England who sympathized with peace principles" than Dissenters.³³ The movement towards seeking international agreements was strengthened with the 1864 adoption of the Geneva Convention on the conduct of war.

The Late Nineteenth Century

At the same time as the parliamentary electoral franchise widened,³⁴ the Peace Society found it was no longer the sole channel for expression of anti-war sentiment. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, a Workman's Peace Association – later the International Arbitration League – was formed by W. Randal Cremer, a Liberal MP.³⁵ Both working class and middle class campaigners agreed that there was a need for a High Court of Nations for the resolution of international disputes. Cremer's organisation mocked the archbishops for their uncritical support of British imperial military actions in North Africa. "The Mahdi and the Archbishop are both supplicating the same deity for success, and both alike are violating reason and religion".³⁶

Realising that for some "arbitration" was a less loaded word than "peace", the Peace Society formed local International Arbitration Associations in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The move seemed to work; both William Thomson, Archbishop of York and the Dean of Ripon consented to be patrons of the first association, for Yorkshire, founded in Leeds in 1872.³⁷

Independent of the Peace Society, an International Arbitration and Peace Association for Great Britain and Ireland was founded in 1880 and drew a number of prominent Anglicans into membership, including Canon Henry Scott Holland (1847-1918), John Percival, Bishop of Hereford (1834-1918),³⁸ and Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901), who were all active in preaching international peace. Percival, one of the more prominent and consistent episcopal figures in peace circles, became a vice-president of the Peace Society in 1895,³⁹ and spoke at the 1896 Church Congress, decrying jingoism as "bastard patriotism".⁴⁰ He also addressed those assembled for the 1899 Hague Conference. Westcott's initiatives led to various ecclesiastical bodies passing

resolutions in support of arbitration,⁴¹ and the *Arbitrator* (International Arbitration League) spoke warmly of “the anti-war movement which has been lately started by some leading Anglicans and other divines”.⁴² Westcott wrote to the outstanding Austrian author of *Die Waffen Nieder!* (*Lay Down Your Arms!*), Bertha von Suttner, looking forward to the time when “natural works of peace will be found able to furnish nations with the invigorating discipline, wrought through self-sacrifice, which is now supplied by the preparation for war”.⁴³ As Bishop of Durham, Westcott was a reconciling figure in industrial disputes but not such a fervent advocate of arbitration as had been hoped; in 1894 he only agreed to sign a petition on arbitration “on the understanding that the Government does not think it inopportune”.⁴⁴ To the disappointment of many, Westcott supported the Boer War, with the sole concession being that he did insist on prayers for both sides.⁴⁵

In 1889, the movement to develop international structures to prevent war was gathering momentum. That year, not only was the Inter-Parliamentary Union formed, but also a Universal Peace Congress was held in Paris, the first of what became an almost annual tradition of peace congresses previously seen in the middle of the century. The second Universal Peace Congress was held in London in 1890, when one of the joint secretaries was Joseph Frederick Green (1855-1932), an Anglican priest who had left his clerical ministry to become Secretary of the International Arbitration and Peace Association.⁴⁶

The Peace Society instituted the fourth Sunday in Advent as an annual “Peace Sunday”, to promote peace preaching in churches across the land. Take-up was slower among Anglicans than members of the free churches, but among the most powerful preachers was Canon William Benham (1830/31-1910), who was to become an active vice-president of the Peace Society and who argued that a Europe with eight million men under arms could not be considered truly Christian.⁴⁷ Septimus Buss preached in Shoreditch on his vision of weapons being consigned to museums.⁴⁸ Despite many episcopal reservations, by 1896 Peace Sunday was marked by 277 Anglican clergy across eight dioceses.⁴⁹

The bishops, however, possibly influenced by Westcott, were slowly becoming more tolerant of moves toward international war-prevention. The July 1897 Lambeth Conference caught something of the contemporary mood.⁵⁰ It was in favour of finding a method of international arbitration to resolve disputes that might otherwise lead to war. In their encyclical, the 9 archbishops and 185 bishops claimed, in somewhat patronising tone, that “Arbitration leaves behind it a generous sense of passions restrained and justice sought for”.⁵¹ Hence they resolved to welcome more enlightened public conscience with regard to arbitration.⁵²

Pro-Boer or Anti-War?

Implicit in much early thinking about arbitration was an expectation that that model of resolving conflict would be applied to disputes within Europe, to build closer relations between European states. It was not anticipated that it would be needed for disputes between those states and their colonies, nor to settle competing claims for such colonies. William Moore Ede, Rector of Gateshead, flagged up the danger ahead when, mindful of the debacle of the Jameson Raid in South Africa, he proposed a resolution at the 1897 annual meeting of the Peace Society in Newcastle, condemning “the annexation of territory” as being the “cause of cruel and unnecessary wars . . . frequently associated with injustice to the rightful proprietors of the soil”.⁵³

Simmering disputes in South Africa came to a head at the end of 1899, with the outbreak of war between British and Dutch settlers. There had been attempts to dissuade the British Government from military action. Several bishops in the Province of South Africa had made it known that they were worried about the suffering that would result from an internal war in that country. Archbishop West Jones of Cape Town lobbied the high commissioner in an attempt to achieve a negotiated settlement. In Britain, a national memorial against the threatened war was signed by four prominent Anglican clergymen. 200 anti-war resolutions were delivered to the Colonial Office in the lead up to the war, most from Nonconformist sources.⁵⁴ Bishop Percival also wrote to the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, urging that, “In the published dispatches & the known facts of the case we can see nothing that wd justify us in going to war, or wd make a war anything but a hideous blunder and a crime.”⁵⁵

Percival’s arguments were not heeded, and the Government embarked upon a war. In its popularity and in its sidelining of opposition, it indicated a foretaste of what was to come in 1914. A long-standing opponent of British imperial policy, Wilfrid Lawson, bemoaned in Parliament the fact that the war marked a turning away from the Prince of Peace towards “the heathen Deity Mars”, a sign that Christianity was losing its influence on the people of Britain.⁵⁶ The Church of England, in particular, lost its attraction for some young people as a result of its militancy: the teenage Harry Hodgson, later to serve two years in prison as a First World War conscientious objector, left the church over its stance on the war in South Africa.⁵⁷

Members of the establishment pulled together in support of the war. One commentator remarked that “Critics of the war were a tiny, unpopular minority of the Anglican clergy in England”, and an even smaller one in South Africa, with another describing Anglican protest as an “aberration”.⁵⁸ A number of children of Anglican clergymen did oppose the war, from John Xavier Merriman, Treasurer General of the Cape, who travelled to London in an attempt to dissuade the Government from military action,

to the Irish historian Alice Stopforth Green. Emily Hobhouse (1860-1926) was Secretary of the South Africa Conciliation Committee, a group founded by Catherine (1847-1929) and Leonard Courtney (1832-1918) to press for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. The Dean of Winchester, William Stephens, who noted how “the boastful confidence not unmingled with the spirit of revenge” with which the troops embarked “met with due chastisement” in early defeats, was a member of the Conciliation Committee.⁵⁹ Stephens regarded the Jameson Raid which led to the war as “a crime and a blunder”, and felt that pre-war negotiations should have been conducted “with the utmost patience and forbearance”, instead of in the arrogant tone that led to their breakdown.⁶⁰ The vehemence of the patriotic protests that these comments provoked, exacerbated by public reaction to the high-profile, anti-war stance of his predecessor, shook Stephens, who had quickly to apologise and backtrack publicly. Only one anonymous “Hampshire Rector” dared to suggest that those who wielded such hateful epithets as “ ‘pro-Boer’, ‘unpatriotic’, ‘treacherous’ &c”. were themselves being “unloving, unchristian, un-English”.⁶¹ Within a year, even rumours that he was opposed to war were enough for a local Primitive Methodist preacher to get his windows smashed.⁶²

Any opponent of the war, for whatever political, moral or religious reason, was given the traitorous moniker, “Pro-Boer”, a term that encompassed a range of anti-war opinions and motivations. Some argued that the war was the consequence of the wrong kind of imperialism, driven by lust for power and possessions rather than by any desire for human progress. Certain opponents of the war considered that it was driven solely by the demands of capitalist exploitation, hence Keir Hardie’s response to the Anglican support for the war, that “Nowhere is Mammon more firmly seated than in the church”.⁶³ An outspoken Baptist minister, John Clifford, complained, with disgust, “John Bull will annex . . . and the churches will bless his theft!”⁶⁴ Hardie, with Lloyd George and more politically-minded Nonconformists, came together in a Stop the War Committee, which distributed millions of somewhat moralistic pamphlets at the time of the 1900 “khaki election”, demanding an immediate end to the war. Clifford, President of the National Council of (Evangelical) Free Churches (N.C.F.C.), was Stop the War President and prominent in the South Africa Conciliation Committee. Opponents of the war did try to find expression through the N.C.F.C., but theirs was a minority voice even in that forum, and once the war commenced it dwindled further. One observer commented, “It was in 1899 that the nonconformist conscience came to grief”.⁶⁵

At the end of 1900, on New Year’s Eve, Canon William Barker of Marylebone addressed five hundred people in Acton, calling the recourse to force, “a reversion to savagery and barbarism”.⁶⁶ Barker was to become a regular figure on peace platforms in the months ahead.

In September 1901, at a meeting called by the Quakers in Glasgow, Barker reported that he had never met a Christian who could say that war was sanctioned either by the teaching or the example of Christ. The saying "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword" was proven by the downfall of the empires of Babylon, Assyria, Greece and Rome, and these events were a warning for the British people to "think twice before they launched thoughtlessly into another war".⁶⁷ On the following Peace Sunday, he claimed that, "The man who was at peace with himself and at peace with God was a strong man, a valuable man, a hero", whereas the untempered were the ones who caused wars. "If a peaceful temper and a humble and gentle and manly desire for Peace were to be manifested", said Barker, "Peace would ensue".⁶⁸ Others who opposed the war included Canon William Benham and William Henry Fremantle, Dean of Ripon, who, with Charles W. Stubbs, Dean of Ely, preached in The Hague at the time of the Peace Conference of 1899,⁶⁹ principally objecting to the Boer War because it had not been offered for arbitration.⁷⁰ Fremantle was frustrated that the success of The Hague conference had been so quickly eclipsed by the development of militarism in society. He moved a Peace Society resolution deploring "the existence of the present unhappy war in South Africa". Prebendary H.W. Webb-Peploe told the Peace Society that it was the duty of the church militant to seek peace and pursue it.⁷¹ The episode was a painful reminder to the Peace Society that they were much further from influencing public affairs than they had sometimes liked to hope.

Canon Edward Lee Hicks (1843-1919), Rector of St Philip's, Salford, who was dubbed "Pro-Boer", told the Manchester Women's Peace Association that he was "prepared to question" the view that war was a necessary condition of civilisation.⁷² His anti-war sermon in Manchester Cathedral in January 1900 was published by the Manchester Transvaal Peace Committee under the title, *The Mistakes of Militarism*.⁷³ Late in the war, Hicks told the Oldham Peace Society that "people were beginning to doubt the expediency" of the conflict, and if they had known the cost at the beginning they might have tried harder to avoid it.⁷⁴

George William Kitchin (1827-1912), Dean of Durham, had been Stephens's predecessor as Dean of Winchester. In both roles he gained a reputation as an opponent of the war. Writing to the *Hampshire Chronicle*, supporting his successor's short-lived stand against the war, he asked readers what they understood by "Love your enemies". "For centuries", he said, "the Church met the hostility of a pagan and unscrupulous world and never flinched. . . . It was not till later on, when dross had mixed in, that the Church took to bad and aggressive ways". Kitchin's attention was fixed on the enthusiastic lies of those who would make war.

With what spirit do we send out our fighting men? The drunken revels which form the music hall ideals of good fellowship – the excitement of the gin palace and the London streets . . . the cries to the poor lads to avenge this or that; the greedy newspapers spreading unfounded slanders against our opponents, the insistence by which prejudice and angry ignorance have persuaded us that the enemy was but a horde of savages, who would run away at once. The whole temper of our times is so utterly anti-Christian that it appals me, when from the quietude of this home I look out upon it all, and note the intolerance with which men hate opinions opposed to the momentary enthusiasm. We know that these noisy people who let no voice but theirs be heard on platform, in pulpit, in the newspaper and will never themselves bear the brunt and pains of it, are far from being the sane mind of our English people.⁷⁵

Kitchin was duly denounced as an unpatriotic pro-Boer by a judge from the bench.⁷⁶ His anti-war reputation was cemented further in May 1900. In a Sunday sermon he rebuked the drunken celebrations of the people of Durham after receiving the news of the Relief of Mafeking. His rebuke was primarily related to the drunkenness and its manifestation on that particular day of the week, but many took it as proof of his opposition to the war.⁷⁷ Kitchin told the Darlington Peace Association that the way the pulpits of the land had gone in favour of the war was a blasphemy, and that the people of Britain would pay for what the satirist Horace had called the “follies and madneses the rulers of your people are guilty of”.⁷⁸ The National Peace Council later described Kitchin, at that time the President of the Tyneside branch of the International Arbitration and Peace Association, as “A Liberal who speaks his mind boldly and has no fear of temporary unpopularity”.⁷⁹ Kitchin, together with Canon Samuel Augustus Barnett (1844-1913), the warden of Toynbee Hall, were amongst a group of “influential and well-known leaders of thought” who signed a statement claiming there was “a special duty laid on those who disapprove of the war to express their disapproval . . .”⁸⁰

Barnett was described by Scott Holland as having “something of the Quakers’ craving for the soul’s rest in secret peace”.⁸¹ He certainly possessed their desire for peace and justice, and was probably the most outspoken of all senior Anglican clergy. Toynbee Hall was one of several university settlements set up in the nineteenth century to enable Oxford and Cambridge graduates to undertake charitable work in areas of poverty in East London.⁸² Local socialists like George Lansbury (1859-1940), were unsympathetic to the scheme, believing that the settlements did more for educated upper classes than they did for the poor.⁸³ Even accepting Lansbury’s criticism, the settlement experience often meant that the decision-makers of the future were more sympathetic to and

more easily able to communicate with those in need. Dick Sheppard was a prime example. However, in the paternalistic days of 1899, it was left to educated liberals to speak for the masses in such middle class gatherings as the annual meeting of the Peace Society which, unusually, that year included a substantial Anglican presence. William Benham, from the chair, described Christ's methods of conquering as "Not by the sword, not by fighting, but by love, by Calvary, by self-sacrifice . . . and by teaching".⁸⁴ In a speech that brought together many strands of the meaning of peace, Samuel Barnett admitted to being an unwilling spokesman for the people among whom he worked. "Would that I could claim to be the voice of East London", he said, "Would that I could claim to interpret the minds of those thousands and thousands of people who live a somewhat mysterious life east of the Bank. They have a mind, but they have not a voice to express it . . ." In this powerful and prophetic address, Barnett commended Tsar Nicholas II for calling a Universal Peace Conference at The Hague, and linked military spending with the deprivation, squalor and the brutal attitudes found in the East End of London. He had a vision of the wholeness of peace and he connected international violence with the domestic and community violence that he saw on a daily basis. There was an economic dimension to his philosophy, as he saw the people of East London impoverished and without amenities. Yet the resources to help them were withheld. Why was that, he asked?

There is no principle involved in not providing them with the means of a healthy and happy life. Why is it withheld? The expenditure, we are told, is too great. . . . The taxes could not endure it; but the taxes are used in keeping up the war instruments. Well, sires, the money that is being spent yearly in the instruments of death might be spent in keeping thousands and thousands of children alive, and in making more healthy and strong the men and women who are alive. . . . It is, therefore, sir, on the part of these people who starve and die that I protest against this great expenditure on war material, and claim that a far wiser expenditure would be in making the conditions such that the children should grow up to be men and women, and that when they do grow up they shall be healthy in body, happy in mind, home lovers, real patriots; fond of England, for England's care of them.

Barnett's most shrewd observations concerned human behaviour. He spoke of how the spirit of war in society led the rich and strong to develop excessive "masterfulness". Landlords and employers would become more contemptuous of the poor, less charitable, and demand greater subservience as a result. Barnett spoke too of his poorer neighbours in East London who were "brutalised" by national

belligerency, who enjoyed tales of horror, whose “conduct is often coarse and their manners are rough”. These people could be extremely cruel and were prone to thinking that force could right wrongs.

These people then are “brutalised”, and war, as I understand it, has always thrown a sort of halo over a character, and war has enabled people to be brutal by making them believe that they are heroes. The consequence is that whenever there is a talk about war, and when men are worshipping the heroes of war, and when they are thinking about what war is going to do, they themselves are more easily inclined to brutal pleasures, and are themselves more proud of being brutal.

In other words, implied Barnett, even the threat of violence abroad can breed violence at home.

In the name, therefore, of the people, of my neighbours, who are capable of being tender, who are capable of being considerate for the weak, who are capable of the highest pleasures of thought and feeling, who are capable, at any rate, of following the Prince of Peace, and of admiring Him, I protest against this light talk about war, which allow them to live a more degraded life than they ever meant to live.⁸⁵

Barnett continued to be an outspoken critic of war after his appointment as a Canon of Bristol. Was the spirit that drove England to war the Christian spirit, he asked? Christians had been misled before:

The spirits, for example, which roused Christians in the name of Christ to persecute the Jews, or Royalists to force their neighbours to own the divine right of Kings, or Englishmen to break the independence and compel the loyalty of Colonists.

Is, then, the present war directed by the Christian spirit? When many Christian leaders and teachers – learned and highly revered – approve the war, Christians who think differently are bound to examine their grounds and modestly offer the result for others’ consideration.

Barnett argued that belief in Christ as the Son of the Almighty must mean that “His way of meekness or forbearance is above the way of self-assertion and force”. He held that Christians “are to see something worthy of respect in every human being, because they see in every one the likeness of Christ”. Barnett argued that, “If the English people who are now approving the war were meek and charitable . . . it would be more possible to believe that a Christian spirit directs the present war. But the people are not so, and the war is their war, and the war is not Christian. Statesmen might have blundered in their diplomacy”, said Barnett, and “conspirators might have conspired and set race against

race, capitalists might have corrupted the Press; but, if the people had been Christian, there would have been no war". The fault for the war, therefore, was with Christian teachers, "who, being commissioned to teach the unity of power and love, have let the minds of the people worship the power without love".⁸⁶

The unity of power and love was far from the minds of those who ran Britain's vicious concentration camps in South Africa. Following revelations by Emily Hobhouse, Percival was shocked to discover that nearly 2,000 children had died in the brutal British-run camps. He was appalled by such a "holocaust of child life".⁸⁷ Canon Charles Gore (1853-1932), about to become Bishop of Worcester, wrote angrily to the *Times* in October 1901 to denounce concentration camp policy.

In 1904, Percival, along with W. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon,⁸⁸ attended the Thirteenth Universal Peace Congress in Boston, U.S.A.. Percival, doubtless reflecting on the South African War, criticised Christian nations for "squandering their wealth and their manhood on armies and navies". He told the Congress, "We have to learn to feel that the jingo spirit which swaggers in its pride and delights in warfare and aggression is in the main a survival of those brutal instincts that should be eliminated from every civilised and Christian life".⁸⁹ He spoke during the "scramble for Africa", a period of European imperial expansion in the continent. When the land-grab of overseas territories was exhausted, the next bloody scramble would be over Europe itself.

The End of the Beginning

Although the story of the organised peace movement in Britain and the United States is post-Napoleonic, the history of western war resistance can be traced further back to ancient, classical and biblical times. The beliefs and attitudes of those who would be caught up in opposition to the First World War were not idiosyncratic, outrageous, or unheard of, but rooted in a tradition that dates from the beginning of the Christian story. When society is caught up in the nationalistic fervour of war, the lone voice upholding the ancient rule, "You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing", is very vulnerable.⁹⁰ The story of war resistance so far indicates the existence of an extended historical community within which subsequent opponents of mass violence could find solidarity and solace. Echoes of the voices raised against war can be heard through the ages: the voices of 1914-1918 are but one part of this narrative. It is to their more immediate context of Edwardian England that we now turn.