

## FOREWORD

by Robert Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury

It is notoriously difficult for today's historians to write about war in their own century without bias, haste or nostalgia. Yet Alan Wilkinson has managed admirably to do so. His account of the churches' role is persuasive, yet never polemical; detailed yet never dull; evocative yet never sentimental.

It will encourage readers 'to move away from the encapsulated and often idealized world of "church history" to the study of "the church in history"'. For beneath the historical cameos (including the sectarian Liverpool of my own childhood), and the personalities, minds, and movements which the author so vividly describes, are embedded some vital messages.

One is the strength and continuity of Christian determination to ensure that, as one of my predecessors Randall Davidson put it, 'God helping us, there shall be no "next time"'. A second is the unassailable fact that war itself is no longer what, in 1916, a Nonconformist minister could call 'a stupendous interlude . . . a tragic episode, separable from the main currents of human experience'. Instead it is now part of an apocalypse which demands no less than a global response from Christians everywhere.

Finally, for our British churches, today's dissent – like yesterday's – can have its creative edge blunted so easily by worldliness, respectability and *Realpolitik*. Such a message, like the book itself, is sobering, stirring and timely.

Robert Cantuar  
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