The Roman Catholic Church in Britain
during the First World War:
A Study in Political Leadership

by

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.
Abstract

Title: “The Roman Catholic Church in Britain during the First World War: A Study in Political Leadership”.

The political influence of British Catholics in First World War Britain has been a neglected aspect of British history. Although some recent studies of Catholicism in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century have included some consideration of the 1914-1918 period, they have mostly concentrated on the wider issue of Catholics and politics in British society and have only touched on the First World War very briefly. This thesis aims to address this deficiency by focusing precisely on the political role played by leading Roman Catholics in Britain during the conflict.

The thesis concentrates on leading Catholic clergy, laymen, and the British Catholic press. It demonstrates that the majority of leading Catholics were guided by an excessive nationalism which had two consequences. Firstly, British Catholics supported the war effort and the British government almost unquestioningly. Secondly, most leading Catholics failed to give their full support to the Pope and repudiated his efforts to facilitate a negotiated peace. In addition, this ultra-patriotism on the part of the majority drowned the voices of the few moderate British Catholics who were critical of British intervention in the war. The thesis also reveals how Catholics reacted to various major political milestones during the war.

The thesis is based upon research into a wide array of primary material located in archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland. It depends heavily on the private correspondence of the Catholic hierarchy and leading Catholic politicians and publicists. In addition, it includes a survey of the Catholic press of the period, since it manifested the relationship between the leading Catholic clergy and laity, and the rest of British society.
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University Library; the Brynmor Jones Library, Hull University; Brotherton Library, Leeds University; Edinburgh University Library; National Archives of Scotland; St. Andrews University Library; Trinity College Dublin; National Library of Ireland; the staff at the Public Record Office, Kew Gardens; House of Lords Record Office; and Warwickshire Record Office.

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## Abbreviations

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<td>AAL</td>
<td>Archdiocesan Archives of Liverpool</td>
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<td>AAW</td>
<td>Archdiocesan Archives of Westminster</td>
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<td>ASJ</td>
<td>Archives of the British Province of the Society of Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bod. Lib.</td>
<td>Bodleian College Library, Oxford University, Mss. Collection</td>
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<td>C.B.N.</td>
<td>Catholic Book Notes</td>
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<td>C.O.</td>
<td>Conscientious Objector</td>
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<td>C.S.G.</td>
<td>Catholic Social Guild</td>
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<td>C.T.S.</td>
<td>Catholic Truth Society</td>
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<td>C.U.G.B.</td>
<td>Catholic Union of Great Britain</td>
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<td>DAN</td>
<td>Diocesan Archives of Northampton</td>
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<td>I.L.P.</td>
<td>Independent Labour Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.N.S.</td>
<td>League of Nations Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>N-C.F.</td>
<td>No-Conscription Fellowship</td>
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<td>NLI</td>
<td>National Library of Ireland</td>
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<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
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<td>P.R.O.</td>
<td>Public Record Office</td>
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<td>S.R.S.</td>
<td>Scottish Reformation Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.D.C.</td>
<td>Union of Democratic Control</td>
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<td>U.I.L.</td>
<td>United Irish League</td>
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Introduction

The Church in any age is supposed to be the conscience of society, and is expected to act as a moderating force in time of war. Yet when the bugle called in 1914, the Christian Churches in Britain eagerly rallied to answer the call. The Roman Catholic Church, in common with most of the other Christian denominations, supported Britain’s intervention in the European war. Catholics of all classes, with a few exceptions, accepted that Britain’s military effort was made in a just cause. Taking this view as a starting point, this thesis will concentrate particularly on leading lay and ecclesiastic Roman Catholics of the period 1914-1918. Although the clergy played a significant role in leading the Church and framing its policies, the early twentieth-century British Catholic Church, as A. Hastings has argued, “was led to a remarkable extent in its wider, more secular life, by the laity, not the clergy.” Thus, while the clergy’s role in guiding and instructing the Church in Britain in the period of the First World War was critical, it would be misleading to underestimate the influence of prominent laymen in that period as well.

This dissertation aims to fill a historical gap in British histories of the First World War period. The central objective of this thesis is to investigate the reactions and responses of leading British Catholics to various political issues arising from the war. It will also undertake to explore the role of Catholicism as a political force in British society in that vital period. One of its aims is to show how the leadership of a specific religious group in Britain, whose religious loyalties were committed to a “foreign power”, at times influenced, or was influenced by, the events and issues of the day. An

integral part of the study, therefore, will be an investigation of the impact of Vatican policies on British Catholics and British politics. It has been stated recently that the attitude of Catholics in Britain to war in the period 1914 to 1918 was “uncomplicated and raises few problems for the historian.” That there were a number of diverse and complicated problems with which the Catholic leadership had to deal – conscription, peace initiatives, and the Irish Question – will be shown in this study. It provides an opportunity to assess the role of the Catholic leadership in British politics and to show that although Catholics were united in many respects, they were as divided politically as other Britons. This division was buttressed by the influence of outside forces, such as the policies pursued by the Holy See and disturbances in Ireland.

Before proceeding, some clarification of the terms to be employed is appropriate. Throughout the thesis the term “Catholic” will be used in lieu of “Roman Catholic” for the sake of simplicity and convenience. The expression “the Catholic Church” here conveys the Church of Rome – its doctrine, its worship, and its institutions, including the Papacy. Other “Catholic” denominations, such as the Anglo-Catholics, were noteworthy at the time. Indeed, a section of the Protestant clergy considered themselves as belonging to a “Catholic” Church, by which was implied the one universal Church not exclusively in communion with Rome. But this looser usage of the term Catholic is not employed here. “Catholic leadership” refers to the Roman Catholic Church hierarchies,

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3 For a definitive work on Anglo-Catholics in Britain see W. S. F. Pickering, Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity, (London: Routledge, 1989). The Anglo-Catholics were an influential group within the Church of England who maintained its “Catholic” as opposed to its “Protestant” character.
4 See for example Archbishop William Temple’s Our Need of a Catholic Church in the Papers for War Time series, (London: Oxford University Press, 1915). See particularly pp. 17-19. Archbishop Temple became the Anglican Bishop of Manchester in 1921 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942. At the time that he wrote Our Need of a Catholic Church, he was Rector of St James, Piccadilly.
Catholic politicians in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and other prominent Catholic lay publicists in Britain. The thesis will examine the views of the hierarchies, that is, the two cardinals, the archbishops and bishops, but in addition, the views of prominent priests will also be considered. For example, Fr. Bernard Vaughan was a significant priest whose lectures and sermons were widely attended and were clearly influential. But, at the peak of the hierarchy, Cardinal Bourne, of course, was a figure of national importance and, in the eyes of many, represented Catholic opinion in a definitive sense. Laymen included those politicians who belonged to the Church of Rome sitting in parliament. But among prominent lay people, on the one hand, there were those whose Catholicism was merely incidental, and, on the other hand, those who made it a central part of their public lives. Those for whom their Catholicism appears to have been incidental included politicians such as Sir Mark Sykes and Lord Denbigh. Although they were devout Catholics, they emphasised their Catholicism only on rare occasions. Others, however, were more comfortable in identifying themselves as spokespersons of Roman Catholicism, and their religion loomed much larger in their public actions and statements. An example was Hilaire Belloc, the champion of British Catholicism who defended the Roman institution as the only true and catholic Church.

The geographic boundaries of the thesis also require clarification. “Britain”, of course, is made up of England, Wales, and Scotland. However, the bulk of the material for this study focuses primarily on prominent English Catholics and does not set out to offer a comparable survey of the attitudes of the Scottish, Welsh or Irish hierarchies and

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5 It is worth noting that the Roman Catholic hierarchies in England and Wales, and Scotland were separate and independent of each other in official terms in the period under study.

6 The two cardinals were Francis Bourne and Francis Gasquet. These two key personalities are introduced in chapter 1.
lay people. But the adjective “British”, as opposed to “English”, has been chosen because several Catholic newspapers and periodicals were read throughout Britain, and some were produced in Scotland. In addition, some of the leading Catholics in this study were Scottish or Irish either in birth or residency. Thus, “Britain” is conventionally used as the universally recognised shorthand instead of “England”.

From the Reformation until the nineteenth century, Catholics in Britain were, for the greater part of that period, a persecuted minority. Under the penal laws enacted chiefly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholics’ freedom of worship and right to hold public office had been restricted. Some of these restrictions were not revoked until well into the nineteenth century. Under Elizabeth I’s reign, the process of identifying Catholicism with England’s internal as well as external enemies was established, and this legacy was to plague Catholics in the ensuing centuries. In the Elizabethan period, Catholics came more and more to be considered treasonous subjects and were increasingly associated with domestic and foreign conspiracies to re-establish Catholicism. With the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, seeking refuge in England in 1568, there was a constant fear among Protestants that she would be the centre of plots and intrigues by English Catholics. In addition to the alleged internal subversive propensities of Catholics, Protestant distrust of Catholicism was buttressed by the external political and military enterprises of foreign Catholic powers against Britain. These included such

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8 These fears appeared to have been confirmed when the Northern Rebellion took place after Mary’s arrival in England and the discovery of a plot to assassinate Elizabeth with Mary’s approval in 1586. Thus, Catholics were transformed into “potential enemies of the realm: traitors within.” S. Brigden, New Worlds,
provocations as the papal bull *Regnans in excelsis*, issued by Pope Pius V in 1570, excommunicating the “heretic queen”, and the attempted invasion of England by the Spanish Armada in 1588. As a result, Catholicism was henceforward associated with antagonistic foreign powers and anti-Catholicism became an ingrained feature of British culture.

This popular anti-Catholicism had been on display throughout the period up to, and to a lesser degree beyond, the Gordon Riots of 1780. The record of anti-Catholicism and anti-Catholic laws can be traced through the Gunpowder Plot, the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. After the revolution, a Catholic could not ascend the throne, and those who refused to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance were forbidden to keep arms and ammunition or to vote in parliamentary elections. In 1696, Catholics were prohibited from becoming barristers, attorneys or solicitors. This inherent anti-Catholicism and mistrust of Catholics was displayed once again during the Gordon Riots, after Protestants rioted against the Relief Act which had been granted to Catholics in 1778. This mistrust had become part of the anti-Catholic culture in Britain and it was considered by the typical eighteenth-century Briton that to be truly patriotic was to be Protestant.

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9 E. I. Watkin claimed that the bull was “a disaster, probably the most serious blow inflicted on English Catholicism between the Reformation and the present day. It identified Catholic allegiance to the Papacy with a disloyalty to the sovereign which the vast majority of the English Catholics did not entertain. Protestants saw it and have seen it ever since as a declaration by the Holy See that a loyal Roman Catholic cannot also be a loyal Englishman.” E. I. Watkin, *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 28.

10 This was preceded by an earlier landing of a Spanish force in Ireland in 1579 and the promise to deliver Ireland from Protestant England. The Spanish force was defeated by the English. E. R. Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England from the Elizabethan Settlement to the Second Vatican Council*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 18.

By the early nineteenth century, Catholics were increasingly agitating for reform. However, in their campaign for Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s, they faced formidable opposition from Protestants from both within and without the government. Those Protestants who opposed Catholic Emancipation did so because they had doubts about the papists’ ultimate political and national loyalties. According to J. D. Holmes, their opposition sprang from their objections to the Catholics’ foreign faith and belief.\textsuperscript{12} A large number of MPs shared these popular prejudices about Catholicism. Holmes believes that Catholic Emancipation came about in the last analysis as a result of Irish political pressure exerted on the British government. The British Catholics, Holmes contends, unlike the Irish Catholics, were unable to apply such pressure.\textsuperscript{13} This is not to suggest that British Catholics did not contribute to Catholic Emancipation. One way they contributed was by educating public opinion. In any case Emancipation, which loosened some restrictions on Catholics and acceded to Catholics as well as Nonconformists certain liberties, was granted in 1829.\textsuperscript{14}

Nevertheless, some Protestant antagonism towards the adherents of the Church of Rome in Britain continued throughout the nineteenth century. One historian suggests that there were two vital reasons for this. Firstly, there was growing rivalry with Catholic France – Britain’s traditional enemy – in the era of the New Imperialism. Another major reason, more imposing than the first, was the long-running controversy over Home Rule for Ireland. Irish Catholics were “feared and despised.” Some British Protestants, of


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 28.

course, maintained their suspicion of the Irish religion as hollow, medieval and superstitious.\textsuperscript{15} Other European Catholic nations, as well as the Papacy, were derided and ridiculed. Catholic countries such as Italy and Spain were looked upon as being corrupted by the Catholic Church. Despite this antagonism, in 1850 the Pope restored the Catholic hierarchy to England and Wales. This provoked immense nationwide protest against “popery”. Anti-Catholic sentiments once again reached a high pitch. It was thought by many that Rome was attempting to coerce England back into the Roman fold.\textsuperscript{16} The hierarchy was not restored in Scotland until 1878. From the Reformation until the mid-seventeenth century, Catholicism in that country had decreased to the point of extinction. By 1878, the year the hierarchy was restored, 9 per cent of the population in Scotland was Catholic.\textsuperscript{17}

As late as 1908, a degree of religious intolerance in Britain was still discernible, though to a much less significant extent than in the previous century. An episode which illustrated the persistence and the widespread nature of popular anti-Catholic feeling at the time was the reaction to the Eucharistic procession in that year. The government was brought under severe pressure from ultra-Protestant groups. They demanded that the procession should be prevented from taking place because it was unconstitutional. After much negotiation between the Catholic leadership and the government, the procession


\textsuperscript{17} C. Johnson, \textit{Scottish Catholic Secular Clergy, 1879-1989}, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1991). See the Forward by the Rev. Mark Dilworth, p. vii. This figure had almost doubled to 16 per cent by the 1960s.
was allowed to proceed on two conditions: that the Host would not be carried, and vestments would be toned down.\textsuperscript{18}

In light of this long record of anti-papery, and its recrudescence in 1908, it is not surprising that British Catholics in the early years of the twentieth century were eager to demonstrate their patriotism to their country in moments of national crisis. Despite the liberal-ultramontane struggle among a section of the Catholic body in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as S. Fielding notes,\textsuperscript{19} “the Hierarchy used every opportunity to emphasize the Church’s patriotic English character.”\textsuperscript{20} To begin with one obvious example from the Great War, Cardinal Bourne was one of only two Catholic prelates\textsuperscript{21} to visit the troops at the front in France. This effusive show of Catholic solidarity and “patriotism” was one way of refuting Protestant accusations that the Church was a threatening and disloyal alien force within Britain. The fear of provoking popular demonstrations of anti-papery also helps to explain the pattern, which has been noted by R. Dowden, of the Catholic Church in Britain not speaking out on political issues. The reason for its silence, he has suggested, is because “Its principal aim has been to win acceptance in what…used to be, a somewhat hostile environment.”\textsuperscript{22}

It is easy to relate British Catholic patriotism during the war to this desire to gain acceptance in the wider community. But in their eagerness to manifest their loyalty,


\textsuperscript{21} The other one was Archbishop Clune of Perth, Australia.
British Catholics often crossed the threshold that separates a true and thoughtful patriotism from mere nationalism in the excited atmosphere of war. This merits some explanation. Patriotism is usually, and inaccurately, used synonymously with nationalism to denote love for one’s country and a willingness to offer any sacrifice, including one’s own life, for that country. However, patriotism ought to be distinguished from nationalism. As L. L. Snyder, the expert scholar on nationalism, has pointed out, while nationalism is inseparable from the idea of power “and takes on a quality of aggression”, patriotism “is by nature culturally and militarily defensive.”

As history, particularly in the twentieth century, has shown, when nations are at war, the language of aggressive nationalism and other-race hatred all too easily gains intellectual hegemony and masquerades as patriotism.

But even if we concede that the extreme utterances of certain Britons during the war were within the bounds of patriotism as conventionally understood, that patriotism was not a reasoned, well-thought-out creed, but rather an inherited and an instinctive one. Most of the British people viewed patriotism as an unquestioning loyalty to their government whose foremost aim was to win this war that had been “thrust” upon Britain. Within that context, “patriotism” became a revered sentiment, placed on a par with martyrdom and the very highest virtue. Those few who questioned the wisdom and true intentions of Britain’s entry into the war were condemned as unpatriotic and earned the contempt of their countrymen. However, if patriotism is to be defined by the bonds of a common language, culture, history, and the ideals of liberty and fellowship of peoples,

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22 R. Dowden, Northern Ireland and the Catholic Church in Britain, (Abbots Langley, [1975]), p. 23.
then those who questioned the motives of, and refused to fight for, their country were no less patriotic than those who sacrificed their lives. For those who refused to fight believed that they were contributing a still higher service to their country and to the assertion of justice and liberty which would shape the nation according to a still greater good. Thus, the term “patriotism” has to be qualified throughout this study not only because conscientious objectors could also be patriotic, but because nationalists, chauvinists, imperialists, and so on described themselves, and have so often been lumped together, under the category of “patriots”.

Within the teaching of the Catholic Church, patriotism is presented as a duty for the citizen. The logic behind this claim is that each person is compelled to live in society and has, therefore, to contribute positively to that society’s growth and development. Thus, “To live humanly is to live in community; and to live morally, as a creature under God, is to love that community of which one forms a part.”

Disobeying or criticising that community, however, does not make the citizen’s love any less genuine and may indeed express the patriot’s deepest love for his/her fatherland. In the First World War, however, patriotism was rarely understood clearly and strictly in this way. Adherents to the Roman Church understood – or ought to have understood – patriotism in both a Catholic and a national sense. This was explained by thoughtful Catholic commentators at the time. For example, Bernard Holland published a challenging article on patriotism in April 1918 in the Dublin Review. Holland argued that because the Churches in Protestant countries such as England, Scotland, and Germany had become national Churches during the processes of the Reformation, they had become “departments of the

As a result, any competition between two varieties of patriotism did not arise for Protestants. But for British Catholics, a conflict emerged between Catholic and national patriotism after the Reformation because Catholics felt that, when it came to spiritual matters, they belonged first to the Church. Thus, British Catholics were in a unique position in that they had two “patrias”: the country and race in which they were actually born, and the visible Catholic Church which transcends national boundaries and races. Catholics had to discharge their duty to both “patrias”. In his essay, Holland concluded that while there was no doubt that British Catholics had discharged their national patriotism in the war, they had to fulfill their Catholic patriotism also by supporting Benedict XV. “Unless we, and Catholics in other countries concerned, take this line, not trying to explain away or place our own glosses upon the words of the Pope, is there any meaning left in the patriotism and unity of the Catholic Church?”

Despite such warnings, and believing that the war gave it a chance to prove its absolute loyalty and “patriotism” to the secular nation state, the Catholic leadership in Britain focussed overwhelmingly on the first “patria”, and was absolutely pre-occupied in promoting vigorous support for the national effort during the conflict. The catastrophe of war gave the Church a new drive which renewed its energy. There were two reasons for this: (1) during the trial of a vast war with terrible casualties, a religious revival is naturally stimulated and World War I, at least at its initial stages, was thought to have been no exception; and (2) the European War created closer connections between Britain and other Catholic countries on the continent. In addition, prominent Catholic prelates,

26 Ibid., p. 222.
such as Francis Cardinal Bourne, were frequently consulted on diplomatic issues. Consequently British Catholics slowly gained more acceptance and tolerance.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, in political terms, British Catholics were still in a precarious position. Even though Catholics were adherents of one of the largest organisations in the world, some Catholic historians have argued that between the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850 and the early twentieth century, Catholics had no special significance in politics in Britain. The latest work examining the political influence of Catholics in England, D. Quinn’s *Patronage and Piety*, is a revisionist study of the impact of Catholics on politics between 1850 and 1900. Quinn rejects the argument of other historians that this period was a triumphant and glorious era for English Catholics. Especially in politics, Quinn asserts, Catholic Liberals and Conservatives were politically redundant because both groups sought to press their particular claims on their respective parties, without achieving anything of importance to Catholics. Furthermore, remarking on their political maladroitness, Quinn expresses the opinion that “Catholics lived in a world where political common sense was a rare visitor, and a generally unwelcome one.” Consequently, his study stresses that patronage and careerism were of more significance to Catholic politicians than their religious interests or the interests of their fellow Catholics. In his view, there was little that was assertively Catholic about politicians who happened to be Catholic in mainstream English politics in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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29 Ibid., p. xiv.
Admittedly, there was considerable political disunity in the Catholic community and a lack of primary religious affiliation in the self-identity of many Catholics. However, in making his point, Quinn may have overlooked a key issue. Perhaps it was simply not considered good political tactics for British Catholics to identify themselves exclusively as working for Catholic interests; that is, political practitioners considered that it would be counter-productive for Catholics to pursue their interests apart from existing mainstream politics. Demonstrating this kind of overt “tribal” loyalty was not judged to be practical politics. Instead, Catholics in politics estimated that they had a greater chance of achieving their objectives if they participated through the main political parties, but with Catholicism animating their politics in the background. This certainly was the outlook of Catholic politicians during the war of 1914-1918. An example that demonstrates this precisely is that of W. A. S. Hewins, the Catholic Conservative member for Hereford City. Hewins did not present himself in public as a politician driven by his Catholic faith. But on 19 June 1915, Hewins wrote in his diary that he looked at all his political problems through the lens of his Catholicism, and decided upon his own stance toward the war, especially, as a Catholic.  

Although it cannot be said for certain that all Catholics involved in politics reacted as Hewins did, the pattern evident in Hewins’ case does seem to have been quite common – no overt Catholic dogmatism in public, but a quiet insistence in private that Catholicism informed the political outlook.

Religion, of course, played a role in the crisis of the Great War in shaping the response of people to the extraordinary slaughter that was taking place. For example, there was a significant rise in Church attendance for a time. There were influences on

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30 Ibid., p. 71.
31 Hewins Diaries, 19 June 1915, Hewins Papers, Sheffield University Library, Special Collections.
contemporary theology and liturgy; for example, Anglicans were permitted to pray for the dead.\textsuperscript{32} What is more, the Catholic Church in Britain is considered to have emerged strengthened and its reputation enhanced from the conflict. This was believed to have resulted in part from the bravery and dedication of Catholic chaplains during the war, and their influence in turn, it has been argued, lay behind the significant number of conversions to the Catholic faith after the war.\textsuperscript{33} Such speculations suggest the need for just such careful examination of the role of the Catholic Church in Britain during the war years as is presented here.

Yet, it is surprising that only two major studies have been produced on the Christian Churches in Britain during the war, both focusing upon the Church of England, and surprising also that no major study has been conducted on Catholicism specifically.\textsuperscript{34} The works on the Church of England, by A. Marrin\textsuperscript{35} and A. Wilkinson,\textsuperscript{36} were both published in the 1970s. The two studies are not as similar as one might expect. Although they both cover some of the same ground, their overall themes are different. For example, Marrin devotes more space to the state of the Church of England before the war and to English attitudes to German thought. In contrast, Wilkinson concentrates more on the pastoral and theological implications of widespread bereavement and the impact the war had on ecumenism. Another noteworthy study, a dissertation by S. P. Mews, surveys the


\textsuperscript{33} In 1911 and 1912, for example, there were 3,609 and 6,511 converts respectively. Conversions had increased to 12,621 in 1920 and 11,621 in 1921. S. Gilley, “The Years of Equipoise, 1892-1943”, in V. A. McClelland and M. Hodgetts (eds.), \textit{From Without the Flaminian Gate: 150 Years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales, 1850-2000}, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), p. 40.

\textsuperscript{34} The much cited work, by T. Johnstone & J. Hagerty, \textit{The Cross on the Sword: Catholic Chaplains in the Forces}, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), is about Catholic chaplains but not in World War I exclusively.

Church of England and, to a smaller extent, the Nonconformists during the conflagration.  However, no other notable work has yet been published on any other denomination during the war. This is a pity, for it would be desirable to find out how each significant denomination reacted to, and was affected by the conflict. For example, the Quakers generally refused to fight in the war and the Salvation Army steadfastly refused to preach hatred against the Germans. Nonconformists, on the other hand, were supposed to be apostles of peace; but once the war commenced they made a complete volte-face.

Numerous books have been written on the Catholic Church in Britain between the Reformation and the twentieth century. However, very few dedicate more than a few pages to the Catholic Church’s position during the First World War. Those that do so often mention the war only peripherally as part of the wider issues confronting Catholicism in Britain. Some do not mention it at all. G. I. T. Machin, for instance, assigns only a few pages to the Churches in the war in his momentous book, Politics and the Churches in Great Britain. He expresses the guarded opinion that the war’s effect on religion is somewhat difficult to assess. In Machin’s judgement, the Churches simply abandoned the Gospel of Peace in order to support their own countries in the conflict.

Historians who have concentrated on Catholicism have also paid scant attention to the

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38 Admittedly, A. Wilkinson has dedicated the first part of Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900-1945, (London: SCM Press, 1986) to the Free Churches in Britain in the First World War but he covers the wider period up the end of the Second World War. In addition, A. J. Hoover, in God, Germany, and Britain in the Great War: A Study in Clerical Nationalism, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), concentrates on the Great War, but his coverage of the subject is limited because, for the most part, he focuses on the utterances of the clergy of different Protestant denominations in Germany and Britain.
war period. Although D. Mathew, in Catholicism in England, published in 1936, included a chapter entitled “1910-1918”, he devoted only one paragraph to the war. That paragraph offered, as might be expected, only a very swift assessment and argued, somewhat misleadingly, that the war did not have any significant effect on the position of Catholics in England.41 G. A. Beck’s The English Catholics, which was published in 1950 to commemorate one hundred years of the restoration of the hierarchy, also considered Catholicism in the Great War only as part of the wider context. Biographies of leading Catholics form a significant part of the relevant historiography, but they have their limitations. Key figures such as Pope Benedict XV and Cardinal Bourne have attracted biographers. Pope Benedict XV’s latest biography, J. F. Pollard’s The Unknown Pope, was published in 1999 and is a sympathetic account of Benedict’s efforts to attain peace and the antipathy this brought him from both sides of belligerents. However, although this study examines the relationship between the Vatican and Britain at certain intervals, it is not concerned chiefly with this relationship but rather with Benedict’s policies during the war. A two volume biography of Bourne was published during the Second World War but it has certain drawbacks. Although it is the only available account of the Cardinal’s life, it suffers from being an outdated and, as S. Gilley describes it, an “unctuous and over-defensive” biography.42

Of late, more scholarly attention has been given to the Catholic Church in World War I43 and to British Catholicism especially.44 In the latter stages of the preparation of

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41 D. Mathew, op. cit., p. 252.
42 S. Gilley, “The Years of Equipoise”, p. 34.
43 At the time of writing, a thesis is being produced by Glenn Calderwood of King’s College London. It will consider the political role of the Catholic Church in Canada and Australia in the years 1914-1918.
this thesis, two new and important works, one a study by Kester Aspden and the other an article by Michael Snape, appeared. Aspden explores the Catholic hierarchy and politics in England between 1903 and 1963. Even though Aspden’s account examines the topic from a political perspective, he confines his study to the English and Welsh hierarchy, as opposed to the hierarchies in Great Britain as a whole. His research is mainly restricted to the prelates and does not include an examination of the overall role played by prominent laymen. Furthermore, with the exception of the Irish conscription crisis of 1918, he does not address the chief political issues arising from the war nor examine the effect they had on British Catholics. He himself acknowledges that he has “not discussed at any great length the Church’s attitudes and involvement in the First World War, other than emphasizing the wholehearted support they gave to the nation’s cause.” Hence, the Pope’s Peace Note, a milestone in the politics of the war, is given only a passing reference. Of particular interest also is Michael Snape’s very recent article, entitled “British Catholicism and the British Army in the First World War”. As part of the background to the topic, Snape acknowledges that there was an established tradition of patriotism and loyalty among British Catholics, demonstrated in their military involvement in Britain’s wars throughout the nineteenth century. Although the article is a study of British Catholicism in the army, Snape analyses the problems of Ireland and Pope Benedict XV’s impartiality, the difficulties these presented to British Catholics and how they responded to them. Snape, however, dedicates the larger portion of his article to

44 A similar study is also being compiled on another important aspect of the topic. The dissertation, by Katherine Finlay of Oxford University, will focus on the devotion and religious practice of British Catholic soldiers and chaplains.
Catholic soldiers and chaplains in the British army and to an examination of a significant contemporary work, *Catholic Soldiers*, which was a survey compiled by the Jesuit Charles Plater, and focussed upon the faith of the Catholic soldier in the war. This thesis will address in greater depth many of the issues that Snape only touches upon, such as British Catholic views on Belgium, Ireland, conscription, the Pope’s neutrality, and the conflicting dual loyalties of British Catholics.

At the commencement of the great conflagration, which coincided with his election, Pope Benedict XV, while reminding Catholics in the belligerent nations of their duty of obedience towards their respective governments, advised them to remain moderate and work for peace.\(^48\) His call went largely unheeded. Catholics in the various belligerent nations worked zealously to support their countries’ causes. In Britain, Catholic churchmen threw their wholehearted support – material as well as moral – behind the war effort, while in the trenches Catholic laymen slaughtered their co-religionists. The Catholics were particularly eager to lend their unstinting assistance to their King and country. A key factor at work was their consciousness that, as Catholics, they had for many generations been denigrated as “papists”; that is, it had long been insinuated that they owed their primary allegiance to the Pope in Rome rather than to their King. Hence, as if eager to deflect this looming accusation, a significant number of the Catholic clergy, in common with their Anglican counterparts,\(^49\) climbed their pulpits to offer an enthusiastic and uncritical support for the war, and even used their influence to boost recruiting. Lay persons, with the exception of a very few, also threw their whole

\(^{48}\) See, for example, the *Osservatore Romano*’s report in *The Tablet*, 24 Oct. 1914, p. 575.
weight behind the war effort. Catholics believed that their country was fighting for a just cause and that God was on the Allies’ side.

But, of course, British Catholics did not simply renounce their devotion to the Supreme Head of the Roman Church. While demonstrating loyalty to the Crown, the Catholic leadership also wished to maintain, at least in public, an allegiance to the Vicar of Christ and his ideals of peace and reconciliation. To a great extent they were unsuccessful in the latter because the notion of peace that British Catholics were willing to support diverged dramatically from that of the Pope. The longer the war dragged on, the more most British Catholics maintained that a victorious peace would be the only satisfactory resolution of the war. The Holy See, however, quite deliberately and explicitly promoted a negotiated peace, a peace which would produce neither victor nor vanquished, but rather a peace between equals. In view of these differences, it has long been recognised that a large number of British Catholics were not sympathetic to their spiritual leader’s notion of peace. Writing in the 1930s, D. Mathew conceded that the stance of Pope Benedict XV in favour of a negotiated peace had “met with an imperfect sympathy in some Catholic circles.”

In E. I. Watkin’s history of English Catholicism, published in the 1950s, he offered the case of Bishop Burton of Clifton. As Watkin noted, when “a handful” of priests and laymen attempted to popularise the Pope’s ideal of a negotiated peace, Bishop Burton condemned their endeavours. These political differences between British Catholics and the Holy See notwithstanding, prominent Catholics in Britain did retain a qualified loyalty to the Pope. When, for example, the

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49 Arthur Winnington-Ingram, the Anglican Bishop of London, for example, secured the recruitment of 10,000 men in one meeting. S. P. Mews, op. cit., p. 23.
50 D. Mathew, op. cit., p. 252.
secular press and Protestant partisans reviled the Pope for his strict policy of impartiality, British Catholics defended their spiritual leader with the utmost vehemence.

Still more controversially, Benedict persisted in urging the belligerents to resolve their differences by peaceful negotiation instead of armed conflict. His diplomatic effort to end the war in August 1917 put the Pope on the front page of the world’s press. British Catholics, as well as non-Catholics, and even the British government, had to confront this aspect of Papal diplomacy. The Holy See, in turn, was also influenced by certain political policies of the British government. For example, the Asquith government felt compelled to send a diplomatic mission to the Holy See in late 1914. This renewal of diplomatic relations with the Vatican was primarily for the benefit of the British government since it could put forward its viewpoint regarding the war to the Holy See while also seeking its assistance in managing the seemingly intractable problem of Ireland. Nevertheless, the diplomatic mission proved to be significant not only for diplomats in London and Rome but for the British public also – Catholic as well as Protestant. Hence, the relationship between the Holy See on the one hand, and the British government and people, on the other, was a complicated one that needs assessing.

Furthermore, Catholics in Britain were in a more difficult, indeed delicate, situation than their fellow Protestants when it came to balancing their loyalty to church and state. Unlike the Church of England, the Catholic Church in Britain was not, strictly speaking, an established institution. Conflict between church and state goes back at least to the eleventh century, when Pope Gregory VII asserted the independence of the Church from lay control. By the twentieth century, the Catholic Church in Britain stood apart

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51 E. I. Watkin, op. cit., p. 221. Here he is probably alluding to the Guild of the Pope’s Peace which contained priests as well as laymen.
from temporal authority and, to a greater extent, the state did not interfere in the spiritual sphere of the Church. At times, however, the state might encroach on areas – such as education – where the Church had been paramount. In time of war, in particular, the line between temporal affairs and moral principles may be blurred and conflict may arise between church and state. In the crisis of the First World War, the vast majority of Catholics in Britain decided to submit morally and politically to the state. I. Machin reminds us that the actions of a temporal government may infringe on religious conscience. If that happens, then “a conscientious church member might feel compelled to put loyalty to conviction before submission to the state.” \(^{52}\) Such a conflict rarely arose for most British Catholics in the period of 1914-1918 because the vast majority did not question the motives of their government. The Church, Catholic and Protestant, assented to the state’s nationalism and its justification of war. For some dissenting Christians, the war did not meet the Church’s conditions for the just war theory. \(^{53}\) Yet leading British Catholics steadfastly maintained that their cause was just and that God was on the Allies’ side. Some believed that they were fighting a barbaric force that longed to destroy Christendom. The irony is that most Germans were also convinced that their government’s position was one of righteousness, and that they were fighting a defensive war for their very survival. It seemed that in a country at war, the Church – the one institution that was supposed to offer moral strength and support – had little distinctively novel and Catholic to say on the cataclysm.


\(^{53}\) An example is A. Marrin, op. cit., p. 167.
Although, as we shall see, the Catholic community was not unanimous in its support for the war, exhaustive research in Catholic journals, newspapers and archives reveals very few individuals who dissented. A minute number of Catholic laymen were pacifists. They were among a minority of Catholics who refused to join the chauvinistic cries to annihilate the enemy. But pacifists of all creeds, with the exception of the Quakers, became the victims of a society that was increasingly intolerant of dissenters. Even their Catholic brethren accused Catholic pacifists of disloyalty. Everyone who did not support the war was suspected of disloyalty and treachery.

Some remarks on the research materials accessed for this thesis are appropriate at the outset. The primary material at the heart of this thesis includes archival correspondence, the Catholic press, autobiographies, memoirs and books that were written by Catholic as well as non-Catholic individuals who were involved in the war. A wide-ranging examination of archival material has been an integral part of the research for this thesis. The private papers of influential Catholic ecclesiastics as well as laymen have been consulted. Cardinal Bourne’s papers have been of central importance, because it was he who dealt with the government on behalf of the Catholic hierarchy and represented Catholic interests. In addition, the papers of other prelates, Gasquet, Logue, Whiteside, Maguire, Smith, Amigo, Keating, Burton, Brindle, Dunn, and Casartelli, have been utilised. In researching other papers, particularly those of prominent Catholic laymen, I have unearthed material that has never been used before. Examples include letters in the files of W. A. S. Hewins, Wilfrid Ward, and Stanley Morison. The Stanley Morison papers, in particular, had not been long acquired by Cambridge University...
Library and were not yet properly catalogued when I examined them in 2001. Crucial material on the Guild of the Pope’s Peace and Catholic dissenters who opposed the war was extracted from them. In addition to archival sources, the Parliamentary Debates of the House of Commons and House of Lords were useful in providing examples of the political outlook of prominent Catholic laymen.

Examination of the Catholic press during the war period has also been a valuable component of the thesis for a number of reasons. As well as recording the reaction of Catholic opinion to momentous political events, the Catholic press also gives an indication of the ideas and events that united and divided Catholics. Since British Catholics were not politically congruent, certain organs of the Catholic press represented, more or less, the political tendencies of certain sections of the Catholic body. The Tablet and the Catholic Herald serve to illustrate the point. Whereas The Tablet represented Catholic Conservative opinion, the Catholic Herald represented that of Catholic Liberals, which included most of the Irish Catholics in Britain. Thus, in a debate on Home Rule, one would take it for granted that the attitude of The Tablet would reflect the Conservative policy of opposing the granting of Home Rule to Ireland while the Catholic Herald would support it. When both newspapers had a united voice on a certain policy, it could be deduced that in all likelihood, the majority of Catholic Conservatives and Liberals agreed on that policy.

In addition, the Catholic press was often the only source of information by which non-Catholics could gain some insight into Catholic attitudes, whether political or theological. What Catholics wrote, therefore, was deemed to be a reflection of the policy and the view of the Church, and so Catholics were judged by what they wrote. If crude
and indiscreet statements were made in the press, those non-Catholics who read Catholic newspapers accepted them as constituting authentic Catholic opinion. While there was undoubtedly an element of self-censorship in the Catholic press, there was also debate on the major issues produced by the war. Thus, at the very least, an examination of the Catholic press can still show what Catholics as well as non-Catholics were reading and in what way, if at all, they were being influenced with regard to the great controversies arising from the war.

The autobiographies and memoirs of Catholics as well as non-Catholics have also been used extensively in this thesis. Sir James Rennell Rodd, for instance, was the British ambassador to the Quirinal. Although he was not Catholic, his *Social and Diplomatic Memoirs* gave a glimpse into Vatican politics by an outside observer. In addition, pamphlets and booklets that were produced by Catholic societies such as the Catholic Social Guild and the Catholic Truth Society are indispensable to this kind of study. Non-Catholic societies, such as the Society of SS. Peter and Paul, also published pamphlets on the Catholic Church. A key document, *No Small Stir*, written by an Anglican under the pseudonym “Diplomaticus” and a vindication of Benedict’s stance in the war, was published by that society.

The structure of the thesis can be swiftly sketched here. Chapter one sets in perspective the Catholic Church in Britain in the years preceding the war. It examines in particular the formal resumption of British diplomatic relations with the Holy See after the war started. Chapter two explores the clergy’s nationalism and its initial attitude to the war up to the end of 1915. Chapter three explores the attitudes of prominent Catholic
laymen and the Catholic press to the war, and demonstrates the extent to which they were
different to other Britons, up to late 1915. Conscription, conscientious objection and
pacifism are examined in chapter four. The Catholic Church in Britain did not speak out
against conscription; indeed, it condemned Catholic conscientious objectors and pacifists.
Divided loyalties is the theme of chapter five. It explores the perplexing difficulties
experienced by some Catholics in Britain in reconciling their sense of obligation to two
rulers: the temporal ruler – the King – and the spiritual ruler – the Pope. Chapter six
concentrates on Benedict’s efforts to attain a negotiated peace and the response of British
Catholics to such efforts. Special attention is given to the Papal Peace Note of August
1917, which the chief belligerents rejected, and to subsequent controversies. It was my
intention to confine this study to Catholicism in Britain. The Irish Catholic Church is, of
course, another story and deserves a study of its own. However, a reference to Ireland
was inevitable because of the critical importance of the Easter Uprising of 1916 and the
conscription crisis of 1918. Chapter seven, therefore, is devoted to the political events
arising from the crisis in Ireland and the reactions of British Roman Catholics to them.
Chapter eight investigates the British Catholic reaction to the enmity of Catholic Austria
and the response to President Woodrow Wilson’s ideals of national self-determination
and a league of nations – two ideals that Catholics were divided over.

In comparing the position of the Catholic Church in the Great War with its
position in other wars, one begins to appreciate the predicament in which the Church in
Britain was placed. For instance, in the final stages of the completion of this thesis, the
world finds itself on the brink of war arising from a prolonged crisis over the
disarmament of Iraq. Yet, fierce public debate has been dominating international politics
regarding the moral justification of a war on Iraq for months. In debating the
requirements for a just war, some commentators, religious and secular, use language
remarkably reminiscent of that used almost a century ago.\textsuperscript{54} The Christian Churches have
had ample time to prepare themselves and articulate their policies. Most of them are
opposed to the war, and some Catholic and Protestant religious leaders have even issued
combined statements in condemnation of the impending war, in order to emphasise the
full force of their moral authority.\textsuperscript{55} Even the Pope has had time to send emissaries to
Washington and Baghdad, and to meet the leaders of various countries and organisations
involved to try to resolve the crisis peacefully.\textsuperscript{56} In 1914, the Churches had a mere seven
days – between Austria-Hungary’s declaration of war on Serbia and Britain joining the
struggle – in which to refine their stance and meet the moral challenges thrown up by the
greatest war the world had ever seen. They were scarcely prepared to meet the
catastrophe.

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\footnote{54 President George W. Bush, for instance, remarked in his speeches that the attack upon Iraq was for securing the future of the “civilised world”. For one such example, see the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 28 Feb. 2003, p. 1.}
\footnote{55 In February 2003, Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a joint statement against the prospect of war on Iraq. For their statement, see \textit{The Tablet}, 1 Mar. 2003, p. 34.}
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Chapter 1

The Catholic Church in
Britain in 1914: Perspectives

The Roman Catholic Church in Britain had emerged as a dynamic force after Catholic restrictions were mitigated in the nineteenth century. By the time the tempest engulfed Europe in 1914, the Church could claim a high rate of conversions and the Catholic hierarchy’s relationship with the government was relatively harmonious. For the first time since 1890, when the death of Cardinal John Henry Newman deprived English Catholicism of its most famous intellect, British Catholics could pride themselves in again having two cardinals: Cardinal Francis A. Bourne and Cardinal Francis A. Gasquet. The authoritative head of the Catholic hierarchy was Cardinal Bourne, the “British” primate. The Catholic body contributed some of the leading British thinkers. Hilaire Belloc was probably one of the most outstanding, but he was by no means a lone figure. Others included Wilfrid Ward, Rev. Robert Hugh Benson, and Baron Friedrich von Hügel. This chapter will attempt a brief outline of the position of the Catholic Church in Britain up to the end of 1914, when the British Mission was established at the Vatican.

By the time Europe was propelled into the maelstrom in July 1914, it was becoming clear that the established Church was waning as a religious force in Britain. Church attendance was in a steep decline and large numbers were abandoning their religion. The trend had started in the nineteenth century and continued throughout the
twentieth century, with ephemeral “revivals”.¹ During that same period, on the other hand, British Roman Catholicism continued to show signs of dynamism. This has been attributed to mixed marriages and a steady flow of immigration, particularly from Ireland.² S. Gilley infers that as “Protestant nationalism ha[d] faded” through the twentieth century, the Catholic Church became the largest English Church if measured by its number of worshippers.³

Statistically, Catholics were not an inconsiderable minority in Britain. It has been estimated that by mid-1913, the populations of England and Wales amounted to approximately 36,574,000; Scotland’s was approximately 4,728,000.⁴ The Catholic Directory showed that England and Wales contained 2,100,446 Catholics in that year while in Scotland there were an estimated 518,969. The British Empire contained a total of 13,386,565 Catholics out of a population of approximately 417,148,000.⁵ Thus, whereas in 1780 Catholics in the whole of Britain accounted for less than 1 per cent, by 1913 they had increased to more than 5 per cent in England and Wales; in Scotland they

¹ One such interval, for example, was supposedly during the First World War. With the adversities of war, people flocked back to the churches and it was thought that the war would lead to a religious revival. With the termination of the war, however, the religious decline continued. For the decline in religiosity in the Church of England in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see A. Marrin, op. cit., p. 27ff. See also R. Lloyd, The Church of England, 1900-1965, (London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 72ff. M. Moynihan, in God on Our Side: The British Padres in World War I, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1983), contends that Britain emerged more religious from the fires of the war than when she entered it (p. 17). R. Currie, A. Gilbert & L. Horsley in Churches and Churchgoers: Pattern of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) have argued that the opposite took place during the war years. They have claimed that between the years 1913-1919, church membership declined more than immediately before and immediately after the war (p. 113).
had escalated to almost 11 per cent. By the last year of the war, the number of Catholics in England and Wales had actually decreased to 1,890,018. In Scotland it remained steady at an estimated 546,000. The decrease in England and Wales, as has been suggested by Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, may have been because church attendance became disrupted during the war, but it does not explain why such disruption did not occur in Scotland. Alternatively, it may be an indication of the absolute commitment of Catholics in laying down their lives for their country.

At the outbreak of war, there were thirty-three Catholics in the House of Lords. Among those were the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Denbigh, and Lord Braye. The House of Commons contained ten British Catholic MPs. They included Lord N. Chrichton-Stuart, T. P. O’Connor, Mark Sykes, and Lord Edmund Talbot. None of them, however, was a member of the Liberal government. There had not been a Catholic in the Liberal Cabinet since the retirement of Lord Ripon, who was Lord Privy Seal in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman’s ministry from 1905 to 1908. But that is not to say that there were no other influential Catholics in government circles. William George Tyrrell, for example, was Sir Edward Grey’s private secretary between 1907 and 1915; and Eric Drummond was private secretary to H. H. Asquith in 1912-1915, to Sir Edward Grey in 1915-1916, and to Arthur Balfour in 1916-1918.

At the same time, the Catholic hierarchy had undergone some changes since the restoration in 1850. When the Pope restored the hierarchy in England and Wales, he

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\[6\] R. Currie et. al., op. cit., pp. 113-115.

appointed twelve bishops with full territorial dioceses. The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster had primatial authority over them.\(^8\) In Scotland, St. Andrews and Edinburgh were made a single metropolitan see with four suffragans. Glasgow was established as an archbishopric. While the structure of Scottish dioceses remained unchanged until the outbreak of the Great War, England and Wales had undergone a number of alterations. In 1911, Pope Pius X increased the number of provinces in England and Wales from one to three. Besides Westminster, the two new provinces were Birmingham and Liverpool. Thus, in 1914, the province of Westminster consisted of the archiepiscopal see of Westminster and the four suffragan sees of Northampton, Nottingham, Portsmouth, and Southwark. The province of Birmingham consisted of the archiepiscopal see of Birmingham and the five suffragan sees of Clifton, Newport, Plymouth, Shrewsbury, and Menevia in Wales. The archiepiscopal see of Liverpool with its four suffragan sees of Hexham and Newcastle, Leeds, Middlesborough, and Salford comprised the province of Liverpool.\(^9\) A fourth province, that of Cardiff, was added in February 1916. On 22 March 1917, a new diocese for Essex was erected whereupon it received the name of Brentwood.

Catholics in these dioceses and throughout Britain were composed of three groups: (1) old Catholics, (2) Catholic immigrants and (3) converts.

(1) Old Catholics had survived in Britain since the Reformation. They included such gentry families as the Towneleys of Burnley and the Welds of Lulworth, and aristocratic families such as the Howards of Arundel.\(^10\) They were a very small minority who belonged mainly to the nobility. The majority of them were wealthy but they seemed

\(^9\) Catholic Directory-1915, p. 47.
detached and uninterested in political life. There were a few exceptions, such as Henry FitzAlan Howard, the 15th Duke of Norfolk, and Rudolph Fielding, the 9th Earl of Denbigh. The old Catholics who were politically involved generally affiliated themselves with the Tory party. As a result, their views often clashed with other Catholics who were not of the same class and whose political affiliations were dissimilar. For example, on the death of the Duke of Norfolk in February 1917, the strongly pro-Liberal London Catholic Herald heaped insults and denunciations on the deceased Duke. In its excoriation, the Herald emphasised his enmity to Ireland and Home Rule. It accused him of being one of the small party of “Die-hards” who opposed Home Rule and supported “coercion and Unionism”.12

(2) The vast majority of Catholic immigrants were Irish. French immigrants had flocked to Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to escape persecution after the French Revolution and many of them remained and settled there. Cardinal Gasquet, for example, was the son of a French migrant. For the most part, however, by 1914, Catholic immigrants in Britain were overwhelmingly Irish. After the potato famine, a great number of Irish crossed the Channel into England, Wales and Scotland. In 1820, there were approximately 250,000 Irishmen in Britain. By 1840, this number had increased to 375,000 and by 1860, it had rocketed to 800,000.13 The great majority of

11 For a brief memoir of the Duke, see Henry FitzAlan Howard, Fifteenth Duke of Norfolk, ([London]: Oxford University Press, 1917). It was compiled by his wife, Gwendolen Howard, Duchess of Norfolk, after his death in 1917.
12 London Catholic Herald, 17 Feb. 1917, p. 4. Unlike the severe tone of the Catholic Herald, not all Catholic newspapers who abhorred the Tories deprecated the Duke’s politics upon his death. For example, the Glasgow Observer, which was also strongly anti-Conservative and pro-Irish, showed a little more restraint. It exhibited some respect for the dead Duke. It described his Catholicism as sincere and pious and asserted that he tendered his unqualified assistance to the Catholic body. Although it referred to his Tory politics, it affirmed his right to adhere to any political party he desired, as it was the right of every Catholic to follow any line of politics. Glasgow Observer, 17 Feb. 1917, p. 3.
13 R. Currie et. al., op. cit., p. 49.
them were from the lower classes and worked in hard manual positions for relatively low wages. Without the arrival of these Irish migrants, it is unlikely that the Catholic Church would have developed a close relationship with the working class. Moreover, it was this group which helped transform the British Catholic community from a small, obscure body, into a large and significant minority. Consequently, some historians attribute the resuscitation of the Catholic Church in Britain as an institution to the substantial number of Irish immigrants.14

(3) Converts were the smallest of the three groups. Strictly speaking, converts cannot be labeled as a group since they were not a homogeneous body. Nevertheless, they had much influence, particularly in the nineteenth century. The Oxford Movement15 contributed a significant number of those reputable converts. Some of the most eminent members to be received into the Catholic Church included William George Ward16 in September 1845, followed by John Newman in October 1845 and Henry Manning in April 1851. Newman and Manning became arguably the most influential of the nineteenth century converts in British Catholicism. Conversion through marriage was also an important aspect because the Church generally forbade a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic. Thus, almost all non-Catholics who wished to marry a Catholic adopted the Catholic faith first. The conversion of eminent Protestants, continued into the twentieth

14 For example, Coman, op. cit., has specified that “The Irish poor played a major part in the expansion of Roman Catholic parishes and missions throughout their areas of settlement” (p. 10). M. J. Hickman concurs with Coman in Religion, Class and Identity, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), p. 103.
century. Indeed, at the start of the war, eminent Catholics included a considerable number of converts. Fr. Robert Hugh Benson, for example, the son of Edward Benson, who was Archbishop of Canterbury, went over to Rome in 1903. He found in Catholicism what he searched for and could not find in Anglicanism: “a sense of united conviction, a world-policy, a faith in ultimate triumph.”17 In 1912, the monks of Caldey and the nuns of St. Bride of Malling Abbey, both Anglican communities, converted en masse. In its issue of 8 August, 1914, the Catholic Herald reported that sixty individual Anglican clergy had been received into the Catholic Church since 1910.18 In the years 1913-1914 alone, prominent converts included Eric Gill, Christopher Dawson, and W. A. S. Hewins.19 Furthermore, conversions did not cease, but continued unabated during the course of the war. For example, in his Spiritual Aeneid, Ronald A. Knox revealed that by the summer of 1915, his closest friends and students were converting to Roman Catholicism. In that time, E. R. Hicks, son of Edward Hicks, the Bishop of Lincoln, wrote to him from Gallipoli telling him of his decision to convert. Knox was in no position to offer him any advice other than generalities, namely, to follow his conscience.20 On 28 May 1915, Guy

18 Catholic Herald, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 4.
19 Gill and his wife were received on 22 February 1913, which was his thirty-first birthday. That he considered his conversion as the most important event of his life is shown by the fact that he ended his Autobiography, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940) with it. He looked upon the rest of his life as a postscript (p. 192). Dawson submitted to the Catholic faith on 5 January 1914, He later established himself as an authority in the history of religion. See C. Scott, A Historian and his World: A Life of Christopher Dawson, 1889-1970, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1984). Hewins converted on 4 September 1914. J. H. Pollen to W. A. S. Hewins, 3 Sep. 1914, Hewins 57/216, Hewins Papers. His wife and son were not received until 1917.
Lawrence, his closest friend, wrote to him that he had been received into the Catholic Church and “C” was soon to follow. He invited Ronald to join him.  

These three groups of individuals formed one of three vital components that established the Church in Britain as a whole entity. Such an entity derived its dynamism from individuals as well as organs and organisations. The dominant British Catholic individual was Cardinal Bourne. Catholics did not have a daily newspaper but they had a number of weeklies as well as a few monthlies. Promoting and furthering Catholic interests were a number of highly active organisations. Each of these elements requires some elaboration.

Cardinal Bourne was the British Catholic primate and he dealt with the government regularly regarding Catholic political issues. The son of a convert, he was born in Clapham, South London, on 23 March 1861. He attended St. Cuthbert’s College at Ushaw until 1874. Thereafter, he was sent to St. Edmund’s College, Ware, where he read philosophy. In 1880, he went to St. Thomas’ seminary where he started his theological studies. He then went to continue his training in Paris, and there he was ordained deacon in 1883. After spending a few months at the University of Louvain, he returned to Clapham and was ordained priest on 11 June 1884. On 9 April 1897, he succeeded to the see of Southwark in South London. Six years later, aged forty-two and the youngest bishop on the bench, he was transferred to the archdiocese of Westminster to succeed Cardinal Herbert Vaughan. He became the fourth archbishop of Westminster and was enthroned in December 1903. He remained there until his death in January 1935. His duties as the leader of British Catholics brought him into constant contact with the

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government. Although in 1911 Birmingham and Liverpool were formed as provinces, the Archbishop of Westminster retained special privileges. It was decided, for example, that Westminster should represent the Catholic hierarchy when dealing with the government, and so Bourne became the main prelate to deal officially with civil authorities on behalf of the Catholic episcopacy. A few weeks later, in December 1911, the red hat was bestowed upon him.22

A brief glimpse into the personality of the Cardinal reveals what type of character he was. Although he left very few personal papers behind, an impression of his temperament can be constructed from other accounts. It is known, for example, that he was detached and formal in his relationships, and it has been suggested that he had “a colourless personality.”23 It is also clear that, unlike his predecessors, he was not a scholar. Apart from his pastoral letters and a few pamphlets, he published only one work: *Ecclesiastical Training*, which appeared in 1926. Writing five years after his death, E. Oldmeadow revealed very little of the inner man. He depicted him as a man without intellectual accomplishment; according to Oldmeadow, he was neither an orator nor a man of letters.24 He did, however, compensate for his lack of scholarly intellect by his excellent administrative skills. He displayed no particular eccentricities, and in politics appeared to be neither a conservative nor a progressive. He resisted Liberal assaults on Catholic schools in the Edwardian period, when it was being argued that denominational schools were unnecessary. He “was always dignified, never irresponsible.”25 Oldmeadow referred to him as the “Quiet Cardinal” and he was subsequently labeled the “Silent

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Cardinal”. His reticence was not to the detriment of Catholics, but rather to their benefit. The fact that he only spoke when there was a need to speak stood him and the Catholic Church in Britain in good stead. During his tenure at Westminster, he developed a harmonious relationship with the government. This proved to be of immense value to British Catholics during the war.

Cardinal Bourne’s reservation in tackling the modernist crisis in the decade preceding the First World War is characteristic of the “Silent Cardinal”. He tried to avoid trouble on the issue and seemed unenthusiastic in pursuing the modernist suppression. In 1909, after George Tyrrell’s death, Bourne informed the Cardinal Secretary of State that there were few modernists in Britain and that their influence was negligible. This was a gross understatement, for Tyrrell’s books continued to be widely circulated even after his death. Because Bourne did not clamp down more vigorously on the modernist movement, he was accused in 1911 of being sympathetic towards modernists. It was alleged that he was in favour of “freer discussion and investigation of Biblical subjects and Christian antiquities.” As a consequence, it has been proposed that this was the reason it took so long for him to be elevated to the cardinalate. In light of this, it is ironic that Oldmeadow ignored completely the modernist crisis in his biography of Bourne and never once mentioned the name of Tyrrell.

24 E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., I, p. xi.
26 For instance, see E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., I, p. ix.
27 G. Wheeler, op. cit., p. 175.
28 When, for example, Fr. George Tyrrell, the foremost British modernist at the time, published Lex Orandi at the end of 1903, Bourne objected to the chapter in which the virgin birth was discussed. However, when Tyrrell offered to answer the Cardinal’s objections in a preface rather than change the text, Bourne withdrew his objection. See N. Sagovsky, “On God’s Side”: A Life of George Tyrrell, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 171-172.
30 Quoted in note 4, ibid., p. 232.
It is worth stressing at the outset of this study, however, that Bourne’s relationship with the rest of the Catholic hierarchy was not always harmonious and that he was certainly accused of being a “despot”. This was clearly apparent during the war. Although great issues were naturally thrown up by the conflict and preoccupied the Catholic hierarchy, it should not be imagined that they squeezed all others out of consideration. There were some serious internal divisions among British Catholics during the war years on other issues. For instance, Cardinal Bourne and the rest of the hierarchy were at loggerheads over various bureaucratic matters. One of these, which caused bitter division behind the scenes, was a proposal for the creation of new dioceses. During the war, Bourne intensified his effort to create new dioceses. This put him at odds with other bishops, particularly Bishop Amigo of Southwark, because any new dioceses were to be carved out of existing ones. The other bishops protested against the division of dioceses because, they argued, “strong” dioceses were preferable to “many” dioceses. Furthermore, they maintained, if England was to be converted – still a cherished ideal – then missions, not dioceses, should be multiplied. The bishops feared that the division of the existing dioceses would leave them all weak and impoverished. By March 1917, disagreement between Bourne and the rest of the hierarchy had reached a climax and the bishops felt obliged to organise a meeting at Oscott College, Birmingham, while Bourne was on a prolonged visit to Rome. In a telegram that was sent to Benedict XV regarding the meeting, the assembled bishops expressed their conviction that the sub-division of dioceses would be counterproductive to the Catholic Church in England and Wales. They appealed to the Pope “not to allow even the first step to be taken in such an

31 D. A. Bellenger and S. Fletcher, op. cit., p. 150.
undertaking….” When news of the meeting reached Rome, Bourne penned a strong protest to Archbishop Ilsley of Birmingham, who had presided over the meeting. Bourne reminded Ilsley that no one was entitled to call a meeting of the hierarchy without his knowledge and consent. “With great reluctance”, Bourne asserted, “I write this formal protest against what has taken place, lest a precedent should be established.” But the hierarchy was not appeased and at one stage, Bishop Casartelli of Salford complained to Gasquet: “The fact is we are living under an autocracy….” An indication of the extent of increasing antagonism between Bourne and the hierarchy can be discerned in a shockingly defiant letter that was signed in April 1917 by three out of Westminster’s four suffragans – including the bishops of Northampton, Nottingham and Portsmouth, but excluding the bishop of Southwark. The letter stated: “we feel bound to repudiate formally what we recognise as an uncanonical attempt on your Eminence’s part to limit our freedom of action and to control the expression of our united voice.”

Even though disagreement over the division of dioceses caused intense dispute and defiance between Bourne and the bishops, it was but one, albeit the most significant, of a number of issues over which they clashed. Another vexed issue which caused much strife between Bourne and the bishops was the appointment of commissioned chaplains to the forces. Bourne carried out negotiations with the government and became solely

32 Open Letter from the Bishops to Bourne, n.d., S1, VII, B/5, Whiteside Papers, Archdiocesan Archives of Liverpool (hereafter cited as AAL).
33 Acta of the Bishops’ Meeting at Oscott College, 15 Mar. 1917, G.03.03, Corresp. Re Division of Dioceses, 1916-21, Dunn Papers, Diocesan Archives of Nottingham.
34 Cardinal Bourne to the Archbishop of Birmingham, 22 Mar. 1917, S2, V, A/73, Whiteside Papers.
35 “Autocracy” was used frequently in bishops’ correspondences to describe Bourne’s authority. The letter from Bishop Casartelli to Cardinal Gasquet concerned Fisher’s Education Bill of 1917, in which Casartelli complained that in a meeting of 25 September 1917, Bourne would not allow the bishops to issue a pronouncement condemning the bill. Bishop Casartelli to Cardinal Gasquet, 10 Nov. 1917, File 889, Gasquet Papers, Downside Abbey Archives.
36 Bishop Amigo to Cardinal Gasquet, 12 Apr. 1917, Envelope 917A, Gasquet Papers.
responsible for appointing chaplains. Other bishops were dissatisfied with this arrangement and pressed Rome to appoint a Chaplain General to deal with the commissioning of chaplains. As early as August 1914, some bishops complained against what they saw as Bourne’s excessive powers in the faculty of chaplains.\footnote{See for example the letter from Bishop Aneas Chisolm to Archbishop James Smith, 17 Aug. 1914, ED6/24, Smith Papers, Scottish Catholic Archives, where Chisolm complained that Bourne had no power to give faculties to the chaplains.} An undated memorandum, probably produced in 1917 in Rome, savagely condemned Bourne’s intransigence and his unwillingness to give way on the issue. The memorandum claimed that there were numerous problems with the appointment of chaplains, yet Bourne “lives in a fool’s paradise, thinking that everything is going beautifully.”\footnote{Notes on “Rapport sur l’organisation etc.”, n.d. [1917], File 968, Gasquet Papers.} Moreover, Bishop Amigo complained to Cardinal Gasquet that it was not efficient to allow Cardinal Bourne to commission chaplains because he could not grant sufficient time for the administration of his diocese. He could not deal with both effectively.\footnote{Amigo to Gasquet, 10 Dec. 1916, envelope marked “From Gasquet’s Papers”, Gasquet Papers. Earlier Bourne had contended that if the appointment of chaplains was taken out of his hands, it would not be carried out more successfully and this might create serious consequences. Bourne to Gasquet, 7 May 1916, envelope marked “From Gasquet’s Papers”, Gasquet Papers.} Bourne stubbornly refused to concede any ground on the issue and he became persona non grata even in the Vatican. By the end of December 1916, when Bourne was in Rome, the authorities in the Vatican were reportedly getting tired of his insistence on the question of the commissioning of chaplains.\footnote{Gasquet to Amigo, 31 Dec. 1916, File 3805, VII.A.3.f, Gasquet Papers.} On Bourne’s return to England in March 1917, Gasquet told Amigo that the Roman authorities were “very glad to see him depart.”\footnote{Gasquet to Amigo, 31 Dec. 1916, File 3805, VII.A.3.f, Gasquet Papers.} In the end Bourne was forced to concede under pressure and Rev. William Keatinge was appointed first Episcopus Castrensis in 1917. It is worth keeping in mind, therefore, that the relationship between Bourne and his brother bishops in the war years was at times very tense.
There were other outstanding Catholics in Britain at the time, although in terms of influence, none were of Bourne’s stature. One of the most renowned laymen was Joseph Hilaire Belloc. Born in France in July 1870, his father was French and his mother English. When his father died in 1872, his mother took him and his young sister to London. When he was ten years old, he went to Cardinal Newman’s Oratory School at Birmingham. At the age of twenty-one, he joined the French army for two years as a conscript. His experience there was to prove of great value to his lectures and articles in the war of 1914. In 1893, he decided to commence his studies at Oxford University. He married three years later in California and returned with his wife to England. He was naturalised as a British citizen and this enabled him to stand as the Liberal candidate for the seat of Salford in 1906. He was elected and remained in parliament for the next five years. During his parliamentary years, Belloc tried to expose the hypocrisy of the political parties and this set him offside with some of his own Liberal colleagues. Although he held the seat in the first election of 1910, he declined to stand again in the second election and left parliament. Just before the war started, he was dealt a shattering blow with the death of his wife in 1914 – a blow from which he never fully recovered.

Belloc defended the Catholic faith with zeal and upheld the assertion that the Roman Catholic Church was the one true Church. Furthermore, he emphasised his faith even when there was a great deal at stake. One instance in which this was demonstrated was when he first started campaigning for the seat of Salford in 1905. His first meeting was held in the school of St. John’s Catholic Cathedral. Prior to the meeting, the clergy of

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41 Gasquet to Amigo, 22 Mar. 1917, File 3805, VII.A.3.f, Gasquet Papers.
the cathedral warned him that the religious question was very sensitive; he should refrain from mentioning it. But as soon as he rose to address his audience, he said:

Gentlemen, I am a Catholic. As far as possible, I go to Mass every day. This [taking a rosary out of his pocket] is a rosary. As far as possible, I kneel down and tell these beads every day. If you reject me on account of my religion, I shall thank God that He has spared me the indignity of being your representative.

After an astonished silence, there was a tremendous applause among the audience. As it was, he was elected by a majority of 852 votes.

Catholic organs consisted of the weekly newspapers as well as monthly and quarterly journals. The foremost Catholic weekly, published in London, was *The Tablet*. Its first issue appeared in May 1840. Its editor in 1914 was John George Snead-Cox. He became editor in 1884 and retained that position until 1920 – the longest serving in the paper’s history. Under his editorship, its position was consolidated and it became a first-class periodical. But because of his Conservative leanings, the paper was antagonistic to the Irish cause and overtly nationalistic in tone. By 1914, it had become the mouthpiece of old Catholics and waged a constant war against Anglicans. Another major newspaper in the stable of the Catholic popular press was the *Catholic Times*. It was published in London and its first issue was in 1859. Its founders were Irish and it was established with the full support of the British hierarchy. It seemed to have had constant financial difficulties. It was overtly political and covered Irish affairs with insight. In contrast to the partisan political preoccupations of these Catholic papers, *The Universe* concentrated more on religious issues. *The Universe* was first printed in London in December 1860 to combat Protestant vilification and calumnies against the Pope and

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43 R. Speaight, ibid., p. 204.
Italian clergy.\textsuperscript{46} It had a steady circulation, but it faced financial problems particularly during the war. By 1917, its circulation was perilously low but it was not allowed to go under and was revived soon after.\textsuperscript{47} The \textit{London Catholic Herald} was almost the opposite. It was founded in 1884 by Charles Diamond, an Anglo-Irish Catholic journalist. He had emigrated from Ireland and settled among Irish immigrants in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His paper was a militant organ which concentrated more on politics than on religion. It espoused the Irish cause while it vehemently opposed the Conservatives and Unionists. Diamond also helped a group of Irish migrants found the \textit{Glasgow Observer} in Scotland in 1887. In 1894, he acquired the \textit{Observer} and determined its policy on Irish affairs. In light of his achievements, O. D. Edwards, writing in 1978, described him as the greatest single influence on Scottish Catholic journalism in the past one hundred years.\textsuperscript{48}

There were a number of Catholic journals, but two stood above the rest: the \textit{Dublin Review} and \textit{The Month}. The first issue of the \textit{Dublin Review} appeared in May 1836 as a rival to the Whig \textit{Edinburgh} and Tory \textit{Quarterly}. Despite its name, the Catholic quarterly was published in London. In 1906, Wilfrid Ward became its editor and he retained this post until 1915, when he retired because of ill health. While he was in the editor’s chair, the \textit{Dublin} saw its most distinguished period. Under his editorship, a wide range of subjects were covered, from culture and theology to science. The opinions of both sides of the political spectrum were permitted to be heard. Contributors to the journal included Conservatives and Liberals, Home Rulers and Unionists.\textsuperscript{49} \textit{The Month}, an intellectual Jesuit periodical, was first published in London almost thirty years later, in

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 507.
1864. It maintained a tradition of quality and was less political and more theological than the Dublin Review. Its editor in 1914 was the Jesuit Fr. Joseph Keating. He acquired this position in 1912 and held it until March 1939. Under him, a distinguished period of the journal was inaugurated. He himself contributed numerous articles, many of them dealing with the Irish Question on which he had the expertise to write.50

Catholic organisations were also a significant aspect of British Catholicism. Societies and guilds had been created over many years with different aims and purposes. While some of them were social in nature, others were political. Those that existed to promote Catholic social interest included the Catholic Education Council and the Catholic Social Guild (C.S.G.). The Catholic Education Council was founded “as a central body for all Catholic Primary and Secondary Education purposes.” The bishops of Britain formed the Council in 1905, and its chairman was the Duke of Norfolk. It was recognised by the government as the official representative body for British Catholics in matters of Catholic education. It was composed of ninety-five members; roughly one half were clergy and the other half laymen.51 The C.S.G. was also established with the object of promoting Catholic social purposes. Its task was “to make known in Britain the Catholic principles applicable to the social and economic problems of the twentieth century.”52 The Guild was inaugurated in Manchester by the Jesuit Fr. Charles Dominic Plater in 1909. Its headquarters were in Oxford at the Catholic Workers College, the present Plater College. It was probably not a coincidence that Fr. Plater proclaimed the Guild’s inception in Manchester; for in Manchester and Liverpool was a large

49 J. J. Dwyer, op. cit., p. 479.
50 Ibid., pp. 499-500.
concentration of working-class Catholics. From its formative years, the C.S.G. developed into an educational movement, teaching the working man and providing cheap pamphlets.

Other societies were created with the sole purpose of contributing to, and disseminating knowledge of the Catholic religion. One such organisation was the Catholic Truth Society. The author of the Society was James Britten, a lay convert who established it in 1884. He was later assisted by Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, who was then Bishop of Salford. The Society’s president in 1914 was Cardinal Bourne. Its objectives were to distribute cheap educational and devotional works among British Catholics and to assist the poor and uneducated to better understand their Catholic religion. It was also to promote the circulation of cheap and popular Catholic literature. Furthermore, it aimed to present Protestants with information regarding Catholic faith and practice. Its monthly journal was Catholic Book Notes.

The sole purpose of some of the Catholic organisations that existed in 1914 was to achieve a specific political goal. Take the Catholic Union of Great Britain as an example. The birth of the Union on 10 April 1871 came about as a direct result of the seizure of the Papal states in 1870 by the Italian government. Its aim was to defend the Pope and foster Catholic interests, particularly in Great Britain. The Union consisted solely of laymen, but it was sanctioned and blessed by the British episcopacy at its inception.

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53 Catholic Directory-1914, p. 783.


consistently followed the guidance and utterances of the Supreme Pontiff and supported the motif that “the autonomy of the Pope is a first principle of European politics.” A large majority of the lay leadership maintained membership of the Catholic Union. When the European War broke out, its secretary was W. S. Lilly and the Duke of Norfolk its president.

Moreover, most dioceses contained local associations that assisted Catholics on a diocesan level. One of the most distinct was the Salford Catholic Federation. Louis Charles Casartelli, Bishop of Salford, formed the Catholic Federation in 1906 for the defence and promotion of Catholic interests; viz., to mobilise Catholic opinion against the education proposals of the Liberal government.\(^{57}\) It was stated that the Federation “has knitted together Catholic forces scattered throughout the Diocese, and in so doing has created a consciousness of strength….”\(^{58}\) It did not flinch in its attitude to Catholic questions and this helped it formulate a definite working policy for Catholics. It also brought pressure on those bodies that were likely to do harm to Catholic interests. Its organ was the monthly *Catholic Federationist*, which published Bishop Casartelli’s opening message in every issue. The journal was purely religious, and it defended the Pope and the working class.

Although they all represented the same religious body, one should not conceive of the various groups of the Catholic body in Britain as having been united in a completely harmonious relationship. Far from it. When an issue that was beneficial to the interests of one group but detrimental to another arose, they would oppose each other in a bitter

\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 47.

conflict. One incident should suffice in illustrating this point. In 1908, Winston Churchill, a Liberal, found himself defending his seat of Manchester North West against a Conservative. A branch of the United Irish League (U.I.L.) existed in Manchester because there was a strong concentration of Irish in the city. The League co-existed with the Catholic Federation. The Irish had supported the Liberals since Gladstone and they welcomed their 1906 election victory; it seemed to bring the realisation of Home Rule one step closer. In 1908, the U.I.L. on the one hand, recommended the Irish vote for Churchill. The Catholic Federation, on the other hand, preferred his Conservative opponent on the basis of his stance on the question of Catholic schools – the Federation was not satisfied with Churchill’s position on the issue. After a short campaign, Churchill was defeated by a small majority. He blamed his defeat on the defection of the Irish Catholic vote. The U.I.L. deprecated the Federation’s course of action and accused it of offering advice that ran counter to that of the League’s. The Federation was attacked for having divided the Catholic forces. There was still no compromise between the Federation and the League prior to the world war.⁵⁹

In spite of the internal struggles that every large organisation faces in times of stress, the Catholic Church in Britain was in a reasonably satisfactory state throughout the First World War. It enjoyed relatively stable relations with the secular authorities. In contrast with the experience of the established Church of England, the government never attempted to meddle with the internal affairs of the Catholic Church, which was counted among the denominations that “dissented” from the established state religion. For

⁵⁸ Almanac for the Diocese of Salford-1914, Acta Salfordiensia, v. 2.21, Casartelli Papers, Diocesan Archives of Salford.
instance, Catholic bishops were appointed without interference from the government. The intercourse of the hierarchy with the Vatican was unimpeded in any way and there was no attempt to censor Papal allocutions and documents. Furthermore, the clergy were nominated to or removed from Missions only by their superiors, who were not subject to any outside influence, but to the instructions of canon law.  

This situation of relative calm surrounding the British Catholic Church at the outbreak of World War I might be contrasted with the situation facing the Pope himself in Rome. Pope Pius X deplored the calamity of war and was greatly afflicted by the prospect of seeing Europe descend into the cauldron of slaughter. He went so far as to declare: “How gladly would I give my life to avert this scourge.” Sure enough, a fortnight after the struggle between the mighty nations began, he fell gravely ill. The saintly Pope breathed his last on 20 August 1914, after developing bronchial catarrh, and the Catholic world was left without a shepherd at a critical time. Rennell Rodd, the British ambassador to the Quirinal, proclaimed that the Pope was “The first eminent victim” of the war. Cardinal Bourne confirmed Rodd’s contention. Speaking on 3 October 1914, Bourne claimed that Pius’ death was undoubtedly hastened by the terrible events in Europe. Bourne said that the Pope could not bear to see French and German

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59 For full details of the incident, see J. Dunleavy, “Faith or Fatherland: The Conflict between Catholic Action and Irish Nationalism before the First World War”, *Irish Studies in Britain*, no. 14, (Spring/Summer 1989), pp. 15-16. I am grateful to Dr. Dunleavy for providing me with the article.

60 Such prerogatives were constantly pointed out by Catholics during the war to illustrate that they had no reason to be disloyal to their country. One example is the pastoral letter of Bishop Frederick William Keating, Advent 1916, Fv.1(d), Keating Papers, Diocesan Archives of Northampton (hereafter cited as DAN).


eclesiastical students, whom he had recently blessed, return to their native countries to fight each other.  

Whether the war killed Pius X will never be known. But immediately upon his death, a controversy between Catholics and Protestants flared in Britain. This was to be the harbinger of many other controversies while the war continued, and against which Catholics had to fight. The episode involved the *Church Times*, the official newspaper of the Church of England, publishing a vindictive article on the late Pope on the very next day after his death. *The Month* replied to this leading article with a fierce criticism of the *Church Times*. Fr. Herbert Thurston S.J., the author of the article in *The Month*, branded the vindictiveness which ran through the whole article in the Anglican paper as “indescribable”. He compared the *Church Times*’ outburst to that of a German newspaper mounting an attack on all things British. But, he believed, “even a German Chauvinist newspaper would show more respect for the decencies of life than does the leader writer of the *Church Times.*”  

He was careful not to offend the Anglican leadership as a whole in his onslaught. He emphasised that Catholics in no way believed the paper’s attitude represented that of High Churchmen in the Church of England. The effect of this blistering article was to induce Lord Halifax, the leading Anglo-Catholic layman at the time, to send a letter to the *Church Times*. In his letter, Lord Halifax chastised the maliciousness of the *Church Times*’ article. He wrote that whatever the faults of Pius’ Pontificate, they should be put aside till a later period. He pointed out that “in the presence of death the virtues and sanctity of the late Pope are the facts which overshadow

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63 E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., (1944), II, p. 103.  
64 H. T[hurston], “Critical and Historical Notes: The ‘Church Times’ and Pope Pius X”, *The Month*, 124, (Sep. 1914), p. 298.  
65 Ibid., p. 299.
all others, and…should be alone emphasized.”

As soon as Pope Pius X died, preparations to choose his successor got under way. Cardinals throughout the world traveled to the Eternal City. The belligerent atmosphere in Europe could not but affect the conclave. Before the gathering of cardinals convened, Germany issued a letter to every cardinal, except those who represented the countries that were at war with Germany. The letter blamed the war wholly on Russia, maintaining that she was the enemy of Catholicism. It urged the cardinals to encourage Catholics to oppose this enemy of the Church, “with whom it was deplorable that Catholic states like France and Belgium should be in alliance.” In this way, each country tried to influence the conclave to her advantage. If a sympathetic pope were elected, that country would have gained the support of the greatest moral authority in the world.

Two of the cardinals that assembled to elect the next pope were British: Cardinal Gasquet, who had only received the Red Hat in May 1914, and Cardinal Bourne. Speaking about the conclave afterwards, the latter painted a peaceful picture of the gathering. He said: “I had in the Conclave a wonderful spectacle of the Church. The world is at war; and yet here were gathered together representatives of all nations, in absolute peace and concord.” He went on to say that although each cardinal had his own “strong national feelings”, none of them “made allusion to the war.” But such a picture may not be totally accurate. Europe was engulfed by a raging fire; national feelings were running high; various governments were exerting pressure on the cardinals to elect

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66 Lord Halifax’s letter to the Church Times is enclosed in a letter from Lord Halifax to Fr. Herbert Thurston, 23 Aug. 1914, 39/3/4/5/2, Thurston Papers, Archives of the British Province of the Society of Jesus (hereafter cited as ASJ).
67 Sir James Rennell Rodd, op. cit., p. 214.
certain candidates. J. F. Pollard may be closer to the truth in his assertion that the cultural, economic and political issues that triggered the war “in the secular world could not be prevented from affecting the Church as well.”\textsuperscript{70} Furthermore, the situation in the international arena was not the sole factor that influenced the conclave. The modernist crisis was not forgotten, and its stifled roar was still echoing. Hence, the conclave was divided between those who supported integralism and those who favoured a slackening in Catholic liberalism.\textsuperscript{71}

Despite the difficulties they faced, the cardinals elected Giacomo Della Chiesa, the Cardinal Archbishop of Bologna, to be the next pope on 3 September 1914. He adopted the name Benedict XV. Della Chiesa was a student of Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, who had been the Secretary of State to Pope Leo XIII. Della Chiesa had been a cardinal for less than four months before his election as pope. His essential training had been in diplomacy and this made him well qualified to cope with the war. Although his elevation to the Pontificate was met with surprise because he had been little known, the Italian civil authorities were satisfied with his selection.\textsuperscript{72} His physical appearance was somewhat distorted and consequently, he has been described as “the least physically impressive of twentieth-century Popes.”\textsuperscript{73} The left-hand side of his body was slightly more raised than the right-hand side and he appeared to be stoop-shouldered. He was of small stature and had a frail body. But despite his outward physical appearance, he had an

\textsuperscript{68} Quoted in E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., II, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p. 104.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 61. A. R. Vidler has given a detailed background of the modernist movement and its effect within the Catholic Church in \textit{The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church: Its Origins and Outcome}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934).
\textsuperscript{72} Confidential report from R. Rodd to E. Grey, 3 Sep. 1914, F.O. 371/2006/376, Italy Files (Political), Public Record Office (hereafter cited as P.R.O.).
indomitable spirit and a heart that overflowed with compassion. He was an expert in jurisprudence, and an accomplished diplomat. And so Benedict XV found himself at the helm of a ship that had to be manoeuvred through a raging sea.

It remains to clarify the relationship between the Papacy and the British government in 1914. When Pope Benedict XV ascended the throne of Peter, the British government had no representatives at the Vatican. Indeed, among the Allies, only Belgium and Russia were represented. But the Belgian minister was old and detached and the Russian minister had no real influence, since Orthodox Russia was always distrusted in Vatican circles. Conversely, the Central Powers were solidly represented. In November 1914, Rennell Rodd wrote to Sir Edward Grey apropos of the enemy ministers to the Holy See: Prince Schönberg, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, was conspicuous and had prestige; Herr von Mühlberg, the Prussian minister, was highly competent and experienced, and “active in promoting the interests of his government”; the Bavarian representative, Baron de Ritter, was greatly respected by the ecclesiastics because of his devoutness.74 In the absence of French and British ministers, it became clear that the Central Powers’ ambassadors practically occupied the stage. They had complete control in the propaganda field and had thoroughly permeated clerical circles. What is more, if they were not successful in influencing the Pope himself, they had substantial impact on the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Italian clerical press. Again, Rodd warned Grey that enemy representatives were lavishing hospitality on the clergy and thereby gaining their

sympathies. “The influence thus acquired is a weapon not to be despised, and Italy is still sufficiently Catholic in the mass for the results to be considerable.”

Any defence to counter German propaganda at the Vatican was embodied in Cardinal Gasquet. Almost alone, with the assistance only of his secretary Fr. Philip Langdon, he tried to combat German and Austrian propaganda. He was invaluable to the cause of the Allies. Fifteen years later, J. D. Gregory, the secretary of Sir Henry Howard, paid tribute to Gasquet and Langdon, who were the front-line soldiers in the battle. Gasquet often had audiences with the Holy Father, and placed the Allies’ point of view before him. He alone stood in the face of the Central Powers’ diplomatic onslaught when they seemed invincible. His direct approach to the Pope was inestimable because access to His Holiness was very difficult. In that respect, Gasquet’s presence was opportune because if he could influence Benedict he could be formidable. He knew his duty. It was “to uphold the Allied Cause against great odds as truthfully and agreeably as possible. It was not only a duty to his country but to his Pope.” In addition, Shane Leslie, Gasquet’s official biographer, insisted that privately, the Pope accepted what the “solitary Englishman” adduced. At the same time, Cardinal Gasquet received encouragement from his Catholic brethren back home. For example, Cardinal Bourne sent him a letter warning him against German misrepresentation and chicanery. According to Bourne, there were a lot of false claims fabricated about England’s role in

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79 Ibid., p. 219.
the crisis which were simply not true. Still, the Cardinal was in a desperate situation. In November, he reproached the Foreign Office, telling Grey that it was “absurd” not to consign a British envoy to the Vatican. He warned that Germany and Austria had been preparing the groundwork for the past two years: “Prussia doesn’t leave things to chance and had a good deal of the wisdom of the serpent.” Rodd also pressed his government to send a diplomatic agent to the Vatican in order to represent the millions of Catholic subjects in the Empire. The government finally complied with these exigent counsels in December 1914.

As soon as the war erupted, the British government knew that expedience dictated that it must not ignore the moral power of the Holy See. It had a number of good reasons in favour of sending a diplomatic envoy to the Vatican. First and foremost, it needed to counteract the influence and propaganda of the enemy. As Sir A. Randall argued, it would have been detrimental to the Allies if German propaganda was not rebutted. The Germans had undoubtedly been seeking to persuade the Pope that an Allied victory would be unfavourable to the Church. “Protestant Britain, atheist and faithless France, and above all Orthodox Russia … were set over against a devoted Austria-Hungary and a largely Catholic German Empire.” Another reason was the moral authority of the Pope. The side that was seen to possess the moral right possessed a weapon arguably more powerful than the most impressive army in Europe. Even though the Pope had no potent military force, his moral authority could well tip the scale if a British minister could

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80 Cardinal Bourne to Cardinal Gasquet, 29 Sep. 1914, Folder 889, envelope marked “Westminster”, Gasquet Papers, Downside Abbey Archives.
81 Quoted in S. Leslie, op. cit., p. 214.
82 J. R. Rodd., op. cit., p. 214.
convince him of Britain’s just cause.\textsuperscript{84} Furthermore, a legation at the Holy See would be of immense benefit to Britain because it could gain a substantial amount of data at this “sounding-board of the world.”\textsuperscript{85} Not only ecclesiastical, but also political information poured into the Vatican from the nuncios, bishops and missionaries all over the world. Besides gaining the moral support of neutral European Catholic states, a legation might also counter Irish influence in various parts of the world, including the U.S., Canada and Australia.\textsuperscript{86} All these vital reasons, coupled with the insistent appeals of Rodd and Gasquet, convinced the government of the necessity of appointing an envoy to the Holy See.

In order to dispatch a representative to the Holy City, the British Foreign Office needed a pretext. The election of Pope Benedict XV provided them with the opportunity to embark on the diplomatic initiative \textit{vis-à-vis} the Vatican. The envoy was to extend the government’s congratulations to Pope Benedict. The Foreign Office set to work immediately to try and organise the Mission, as it became known. On 4 November 1914, Eric Drummond wrote a letter to the Duke of Norfolk informing him that Asquith and Grey had agreed to send a Mission to the Vatican. He asked him to write to Cardinal Merry del Val,\textsuperscript{87} telling him of the proposal and to enquire whether the Mission would be acceptable. Drummond emphasised that this should be kept confidential as the Vatican may refuse the Mission. If this were known, it would be an embarrassment to the British government. Drummond also requested the Duke to “say to the Cardinal that you are

\textsuperscript{85} A. Rhodes, op. cit., p. 167.
\textsuperscript{86} Sir A. Randall, op. cit., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{87} Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val was the Secretary of State to Pope Pius X. He had a Spanish father and an English mother. In October 1914, the new Pope named him Secretary of the Holy Office. For his biography, see F. A. Forbes, \textit{Rafael, Cardinal Merry del Val}, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932).
writing to him personally as you know him so well” [my emphasis]. This was the first instance where the government used Catholic individuals to promote its objectives during the war. A second letter was sent to the Duke of Norfolk two days later explaining that he was the only appropriate channel of communication through which the proposals could be sent. Of course, the patriotic Duke was delighted to serve his country. He immediately wrote a letter to Merry del Val telling him that the object of the Mission was to “offer for the just consideration of the Holy See such information as we deem it right should be known, and also the views which animate our policy in these anxious days.”

He also drafted a letter to Cardinal Gasquet to which the Cardinal replied that the Mission would be a brilliant idea. Once the Vatican had consented to receiving the Mission, Grey summoned the Italian ambassador in Britain, Guglielmo Imperiali. He apprised him of Britain’s decision to assign a diplomatic representative to the Holy See. He also assured him that the Mission would only last for the duration of the war so as not to raise fears among the Italian government regarding the Roman Question. Thus, in December 1914, more than three centuries after friendly relations were severed, Britain re-established diplomatic ties with the Vatican.

Sir Henry Howard, a Catholic diplomat, was chosen to head the Mission. He was named Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. At the time, everyone was satisfied with this choice of Henry Howard, although in 1917 the Foreign Office showed qualms about appointing a Catholic. In a memorandum produced in that year, it was

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88 E. Drummond to Duke of Norfolk, 4 Nov. 1914, c593, 15th Duke of Norfolk Papers, Arundel Castle Archives.
89 Drummond to Duke of Norfolk, 6 Nov. 1914, c593, 15th Duke of Norfolk Papers.
91 F. A. Gasquet to Duke of Norfolk, 15 Nov. 1914, c593, 15th Duke of Norfolk Papers.
92 W. A. Renzi, op. cit., p. 498.
suggested that it would be best not to select a Catholic in the future. While it should be someone important, the memorandum advised, “he should not be filled with an unreasoning awe of the Pope.” In any case, Howard’s purposeful mission was twofold: firstly, he was to congratulate Benedict XV on his election; secondly, he was entrusted by Grey with the task of presenting to the Holy Father the motives which compelled Britain to enter the conflict. Once the Mission reached the Vatican and formalities were exchanged, visits were paid to each of the twenty-eight cardinals resident in Rome. Thereafter, the Mission proceeded at once to explain Britain’s position and justify her stance.

The moment the British Mission was established at the Papal Court, Protestant individuals and organisations throughout Britain voiced their opposition. The files of the Foreign Office show that it received a myriad of petitions from such groups as the Protestant Alliance, the Loyal Orange Institutions, and the United Protestant League. The press manifested its hostility to the Mission by scathingly attacking the Pope and alleging that he was pro-German. Letters deploiring British representation at the Vatican began flowing into the Foreign Office as early as 2 December. On that date, Henry Fowler, the private secretary of the Protestant Alliance, wrote a strong letter of protest to Grey. He castigated the government for aiding in the re-establishment of the Pope’s temporal power. The reply came back that even the Italian government admitted that missions to the Pope did not run counter to the Law of Guarantees. Fowler persisted in his chastisement. He sent another letter to Grey on behalf of the Alliance. He stated that the

93 Quoted in A. Rhodes, op. cit., p. 169.
94 R. A. Graham, op. cit., p. 77.
95 For the letters of protest sent to the Foreign Office, see the files F.O. 371/2007 and F.O. 371/2371.
Papacy had never been the friend of England and that it was contrary to constitutional law to establish any diplomatic connection with the Vatican. The Alliance registered its “solemn protest in the hope that such a calamitous error may be reconsidered and cancelled” [emphasis in original]. 98 The London Council of the United Protestant Societies also pointed out that the constitution specifically forbade any relations with the Vatican. 99 Some groups bypassed the government and appealed to the highest authority. The Protestant Truth Society wrote directly to the King. J. A. Kensit, the secretary of the Society, and M. R. Coles, the president, implored King George to reconsider the appointment of the Mission. 100 To all the people and groups that were antagonistic to the sending of a delegation to the Vatican, the government gave the same response: “the British Minister to the Holy See was performing a necessary and useful service in the nation’s interest.” 101

As well as facing disaffection at home, the government had also to deal with displeasure from Britain’s anti-clerical ally. The French government had ruptured relations with the Vatican in 1905. 102 It objected strongly as soon as it found out that its British counterpart was sending a Mission to the Eternal City. 103 Nevertheless, Rodd urged Grey to attempt to induce the French to send a representative to the Vatican. He explained to him that the British Mission had been extremely valuable. Rodd confidently declared that if France sent one too, “we should between us carry everything before

100 J. A. Kensit and M. R. Coles to King George V, [23 Dec. 1914], F.O. 371/2371/189.
us.”  

And so, after its initial opposition to the British Mission, the French government vindicated the British government’s decision by stationing an ‘unofficial’ envoy, M. Loiseau, to the Vatican in Rome. A few weeks after the arrival of the British Mission, J. D. Gregory confirmed the latter’s usefulness. Gregory drafted a report in which he outlined its efficacy. He paid tribute to the wisdom of sending the Mission, particularly as it was causing extreme annoyance to the Germans and Austrians.

It seems, therefore, that in 1914, the Catholic Church’s position in Britain was such that it could make a difference to events taking place. Although representing a small minority, the Catholic leadership, both episcopal and lay, was well equipped intellectually and politically to take a stance regarding the war which was sure to have an effect. What was not clear, however, was whether that effect would be positive or negative; it was not clear whether the guardian of the message of peace would use its authority in an attempt to extinguish the conflagration. From the earliest signs, however, it was soon clear that the Catholic Church in Britain had no such intentions.


Chapter 2

The Clergy and the War:
The Triumph of Nationalism, 1914-1915

Stand ready, therefore, with truth as a belt tight round your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace.

Eph. 6:14-15.

The wanton crimes and cruelties of the Germans...clamour for vengeance and just retribution. Every stone of the road from Louvain to Rheims cries out for revenge. A thousand thousand tongues exclaim, revenge for the perfidy; revenge for cruelty; revenge for sacrilege; revenge for murder; and never while love is true and valour lives in Europe shall the cry go unheeded.

Fr. H. C. Day, S.J.

In time of war, it is not surprising if a nation is gripped by nationalist sentiments. However, it might be expected that at least the clergy, the guardians of the Gospel of peace, would raise their voice against excesses. But once the war engulfed Europe in 1914, most of the British clergy cast aside the message of peace and attired themselves in the raiment of the nationalist flag-waver. Like their Anglican counterparts, Catholic ecclesiastics abandoned their vocations as messengers of peace in favour of supporting the state. Those who initially resisted the impulse to join the outcry in favour of the destruction of the enemy were later swept up by the tide of nationalism. By 1915, there were very few eminent Roman Catholic churchmen who had kept their wits and logic. Not only was the war considered by many Catholic clerics a crusade to liberate little Catholic Belgium, but also to destroy heathen Prussia. Among the British denominations,

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the Catholic clergy’s enthusiastic support for the war was only exceeded by the fervour of their Anglican brethren.

In order to get some insight into the context of the Catholic clergy’s support for the war, it is useful to review first the position of the established Church in Britain. This is necessary because the Church of England, along with the Church of Scotland and the Nonconformists, were the most influential of the Christian denominations. Hence, they clearly had a significant effect on British society as a whole, of which the Catholic Church was a part. Although it is probable that the overwhelmingly Protestant environment affected Catholic ecclesiastics, of course they retained the distinct Catholic character.

On Britain’s entry into the war, the majority of the Anglican clergy adopted an attitude of total acceptance. The Anglican clergymen were imbued with the idea that Britain was the chosen agent of a divine power with the task of upholding righteousness. They were convinced that the war was thrust upon Great Britain and that she was fighting for a just cause. It was, therefore, her moral duty to right the wrong that had been committed by Germany. Arthur Winnington-Ingram, the ultra-patriotic Bishop of London, maintained this emphasis on the British people’s commitment to moral righteousness. In one of his sermons early in the war he said: “We are on the side of the New Testament which respects the weak, and honours treaties, and dies for its friends, and looks upon war as a regrettable necessity.”

Initially, not every clergyman within the Church of England supported the war. There were a few who dissented. Bishop Edward Hicks of Lincoln, one of the better
known dissenters, told his congregation on 3 August 1914 that to rush into the war “without reason would tempt Providence.”\(^3\) He confided to his diary his conviction that the war could have been avoided had Britain not joined the Triple Entente. As late as 16 August he wrote: “I preached on the War – but a Peace Sermon.”\(^4\) But he gradually began justifying Britain’s involvement on the grounds that she was forced to fight. Like Bishop Hicks, the Bishop of Chelmsford was also sceptical at the outset of war. He stressed that God was the Father of the Germans as well as the British and that Christ had bled on the Cross to atone for the sins of both peoples. However, the Bishop soon abandoned any public expression of his reservations. By June 1915, he was to be found urging his clergy to encourage men fit for military service to join the army.\(^5\)

Some lesser clergy were also horrified at the intensity of the conflagration. Accordingly, while his countrymen sang and waved flags, Ronald A. Knox, who was still practicing his Anglican ministry, “stood back aghast at the gross dislocation in the moral order.”\(^6\) He tried to persuade his friends at Oxford not to go to combat, but to remain and finish their degrees. But they did not heed his advice. Caught in the flame of ultra-patriotism, they rushed to enlist.\(^7\) Others, like Dr. Edward Lyttelton, the headmaster of Eton, were coerced into abandoning their moderate stance by the frenzy of a belligerent public. Rev. Lyttelton preached a sermon in 1915 on the theme of “love your enemy”. He beseeched his listeners to promote and implement their Christian beliefs if they were to act as true Christians. A public uproar ensued, with many commentators accusing

\(^2\) A. J. Hoover, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
\(^3\) A. Marrin, op. cit., p. 76.
\(^4\) G. Neville, op. cit., p. 88.
\(^6\) E. Waugh, op. cit., p. 131.
Lyttelton of making statements that would aid the Germans. This reaction compelled him to retract the theme of his sermon. Instead, he expressed his belief that the German spirit was “an utterly dangerous and abominable thing” that had to be extirpated.  

Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, refrained from extreme patriotic oratory at the outbreak of war. He took a more sensible position. When he was harangued by some to be more direct in praying for victory, he replied: “we should abstain from identifying ourselves with the Divine Will to such an extent as to claim that God is simply on our side….” Although he did not actively oppose the war, he was hesitant to give it his outright support. On 4 September 1914, he was invited by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee to give a talk in a recruitment promotion called an “Appeal for Recruits from Religious Leaders”. Even though the Archbishop did not wish to refuse any help he could give, he made his contribution reluctantly on this occasion.

Davidson’s reluctance to declare openly his support for the war notwithstanding, the vast majority of Anglican churchmen ardently espoused their country’s cause. They called for the destruction of Germany and tried to justify their stance by citing the Bible. Some went so far as to set aside the Christian principles of “do not kill” and “love your enemy”. One example is provided by a sermon that was delivered by Bishop Winnington-Ingram in 1915. In it he encouraged all British men to go forth and kill Germans: “to kill the good as well as the bad; to kill the young men as well as the old.”

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9 Quoted in G. K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury*, 2 vols., (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), II, p. 736. All references are from the 1938 edition, where both volumes were published together in one volume.
10 Ibid., pp. 739-740.
11 Quoted in M. Moynihan, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
Gwatkin, a conservative Anglican minister, was adamant that Germany had to be completely annihilated. She was to be “utterly crushed” and spared nothing.  

The problem with preaching such radical sermons was that it was somewhat difficult to support them with real evidence from the New Testament. Consequently, individual clerics were innovative and selected certain texts to give the message of Jesus a suitable interpretation. This was part of a pattern of biblical exegesis used by both Catholics and Protestants to justify their nationalism. They went so far as to affirm that Jesus himself was a nationalist. Their adventurous hermeneutics focussed upon a number of key passages from the Gospels. When, for instance, Jesus met a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, He told her that salvation comes from the Jews and not the Samaritans (John 4:22). On another occasion, when a Phoenician woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter, He told His disciples that He was sent to save the lost sheep of Israel only (Matt. 15:24). The clearest demonstration of His patriotism, according to the clergy, was the agony He suffered over His rejection by His own people. “If he had been a bland ‘citizen of the world,’” as A. J. Hoover explains the clergy’s argument, “he could have easily shrugged it off.” But the Son of God was, in the clergy’s minds, undoubtedly a nationalist. Even so, how was the Sermon on the Mount to be overcome? It was explained that in the Sermon, such precepts as “Resist not evil” and “Turn the other cheek” were only meant to apply on a personal level. Accordingly, the majority of

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14 Ibid.
individual Anglican ecclesiastics reasoned that the Sermon excluded any application to the action of a nation.\textsuperscript{15}

Most of the clergy found it easier to cite the Old Testament to prove that God himself was a masculine deity who caused war to accomplish His plans in the world. Charles Gore, the Anglo-Catholic Bishop of Oxford, produced a booklet in 1915 to prove that ultra-patriotism in the Bible was rampant. He concentrated particularly on the Old Testament and alluded to the Books of Samuel as an example of Israelite nationalism. Since the kings constantly waged wars, Gore concluded that: “to love our own people, and to hate the rival people, seems to be inevitable.”\textsuperscript{16}

The Church of England’s support for the war is understandable; for although it claimed to be Christ’s representative on earth, its allegiance was also demanded by the state. As a national institution, therefore, it felt obliged to complement the state in its spiritual sphere. In contrast, the Catholic Church in Britain was part of an international organisation and it would have been possible for its clergy to remain neutral, albeit with difficulty, it must be admitted, had they chosen to do so. However, their extreme nationalist “pitch” was almost as shrill as the Anglican clergy’s. Not all Catholic churchmen supported the war blindly at its outset. But as the months dragged by, there were very few clergymen who were not swayed by the soaring passions of the moment.

A few days before Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, some of the leading Catholic prelates condemned war in unequivocal terms. In a sermon on

\textsuperscript{15} C. E. Bailey, op. cit., p. 211.
August 2, Louis Charles Casartelli, the Bishop of Salford,\textsuperscript{17} denounced all nations for acting in a way contrary to civilisation. He proclaimed that if they started a general war, they would be guilty of spilling innocent blood. Nevertheless, he hoped that Britain would remain aloof from a general war – “the friend of all and the enemy of none.” He ordered special prayers to be recited for peace and made the “unusual if not altogether unprecedented” gesture of kneeling down before the altar and reciting the prayer himself.\textsuperscript{18} By August 3, Bishop Casartelli wrote in his diary, in a tone of great distress, that everybody was concerned with “this awful universal war” which was “threatening to involve us here.”\textsuperscript{19} Even after Britain declared war, he exhorted his clergy to encourage their flocks to pray for the swift restoration of peace.\textsuperscript{20}

Some of the clergy deplored the war because they realised the massive amount of material as well as personal damage it would cause. Shortly after Britain had entered the struggle, Archbishop Thomas Whiteside of Liverpool\textsuperscript{21} addressed a letter to his clergy. Although he expressed confidence in the justice of the cause of Britain, he emphasised that this did not guarantee victory. He noted that there would be a horrendous loss of life, no matter what the outcome of the conflict. He suggested that “There can only be one common desire, therefore, namely, that the war should speedily end.” He urged his clergy to turn their thoughts and prayers to God and beg Him for the speedy return of peace.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Bishop Casartelli was born in Manchester in November 1852. He was educated at Ushaw College and Louvain University. Cardinal Vaughan ordained him priest in 1876. He was consecrated bishop of Salford in 1903 and remained there until his death in January 1925.
\textsuperscript{18} Newspaper clipping, Casartelli Diaries, 1-2 Aug. 1914, Casartelli Papers.
\textsuperscript{19} Casartelli Diaries, 3 Aug. 1914, Casartelli Papers.
\textsuperscript{20} Special Prayers, (Ad Clerum), 5 Aug. 1914, Acta Salfordiensia, v. 2.21, Casartelli Papers.
\textsuperscript{21} Thomas Whiteside was born on 17 April 1858. At the age of 16 he entered Ushaw College and in May 1885 he was ordained a priest. He was consecrated bishop of Liverpool in 1894 and became its first archbishop when it was elevated to a province in 1911. For a biographical sketch, see E. K. Bennett, Archbishop Whiteside, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1926).
\textsuperscript{22} Letter to the clergy, 13 Aug. 1914, S1, VII, C/2, Whiteside Papers.
Fr. Henry Birt, too, recognised the horror of war and complained that the British people did not appreciate the carnage it would wreak. On 26 August, he wrote to W. A. S. Hewins, a prominent Conservative and advocate of Tariff Reform, that people did not understand what war meant. He ominously hinted that: “Those of us who have seen it, however, know; and our knowledge is nothing to what the reality will be.”

Those initial moderates were a small minority whose voices were drowned amidst the overwhelming majority of the Catholic clergy’s loud clamour for battle. From the first days of British entry into the war, Cardinal Bourne led the “patriotic” clergy. Indeed, Bourne’s nationalism could be traced back to the years prior to 1914. A few years before the onset of the European war, he had written a pamphlet for the Duty and Discipline Movement. In his pamphlet, *The Paramount Need of Training in Youth*, he advocated the physical training of young men. He proposed that the hours set aside at schools for sports and games be used to train boys to attain a degree of military efficiency by the time they reached manhood. Those who refused to undergo such discipline, Bourne suggested, should be forced to train “under stern military conditions”, until they achieved a high level of self-discipline. Thereby, there would be no shortage of fighting men in case Britain was attacked.

By setting out his views in this pamphlet, the Archbishop of Westminster publicly subscribed to the policy of the advocates of military service at the time. In the decade prior to the First World War, a heated national debate was raging between the opponents and exponents of the adoption of universal military training for the nation’s manhood.

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The flaws of the British military had been shown to be most acute during the Boer War. On its conclusion, the efficiency of the country’s military strength began to be questioned in certain circles. In February 1902, the National Service League was founded and it became the main pressure group agitating for conscription in peacetime. In the next few years, it demanded at least mandatory training for men aged 18 to 22.\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{National Service Journal}, published by the League, recommended in July 1906 a system of military training in the schools. The journal insisted that universal training must become part of the education system. It urged the training of every boy and girl in order to foster love of their country. “[G]ive them a sound physical development, and a sense of discipline by orderly and methodic movements carried out at the word of command. Encourage rifle shooting at school and subsequently….”\textsuperscript{26} Those who favoured military service argued that if a major war took place and the British army had to fight overseas, as it did in the South African war, Britain would be vulnerable to invasion unless the nation could turn to a much larger potential army. She therefore needed a civilian army to defend her in case of invasion. Those who opposed military service countered that the navy could defend the homeland against any invasion attempt.\textsuperscript{27} The campaign intensified in the years directly preceding the war and the League boasted the support of the Archbishop of Westminster, Anglican bishops, Dominion bishops and leading Free Churchmen.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} Whereas most of the previous historiography has concentrated on the League’s “threat of invasion” argument, some of the recent historians have pointed to the social benefits that were emphasised by the League. See, for example, M. Hendley, ““Help Us to Secure a Strong, Healthy, Prosperous and Peaceful Britain’: The Social Arguments of the Campaign for Compulsory Military Service in Britain, 1899-1914”, \textit{Canadian Journal of History}, 30(2), (Aug. 1995): 261-289.
\textsuperscript{28} D. Hayes, op. cit., p. 49.
In lending his support to the movement pushing for universal military training in peace time, Bourne had placed himself in a unique position which was bound to have an effect on his response to the actual outbreak of war. Some other religious leaders had taken a pacifist stance prior to the conflict and some had rejected all war as unjustifiable. Once hostilities commenced, however, they were compelled to renounce their pacifism. Not so Cardinal Bourne. Because of his pre-war position, he could subsequently manifest his nationalism without embarrassment.

Bourne lost no time in rallying his flock to the spiritual aid of the British Empire. No sooner had war been declared than he delivered an address to his diocese. Instead of petitioning his flock to offer prayers for the speedy return of peace throughout Europe, as Pope Pius X had requested, Bourne was content to ask them to pray for the Empire. He called on them to approach God’s altar humbly. Their prayers were “to draw down upon our country and its rulers, and upon the whole Empire, the Blessing of God without which all armies are without avail.” A few weeks into the conflict, in an article in The Standard, the Cardinal criticised the few Christian dissenters who had declared that the just war was impossible for Christians and emphatically supported Britain’s military effort. He also associated himself with the Allies’ cause in 1915. The Tablet of 7 August of that year contained the texts of the Pope’s Exhortation to the belligerents and Bourne’s letter to the clergy on the first anniversary of the war. The two documents were in stark contrast with each other. While the Pope exhorted the warring nations to resolve the conflict by mediation, Bourne ordered his clergy to dedicate Masses so that the Allies

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29 See, for example, S. Koss, op. cit., p. 127.
30 A. Ross, Pope Pius X, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1915), p. 20. As early as August 2, Pius X published a letter in which he charged the whole Catholic world, “more especially the clergy”, to offer God their supplication so that peace in Europe would be restored.
might attain a “speedy victory”. He desired his people to brace themselves for a life of prayer and self-sacrifice and to pray for those who were “fighting in our cause.”

Furthermore, in December 1915 he reinforced his faith in final victory. In an interview with the Corriere d’Italia in Rome, he said the Allies’ strength was increasing daily and cited England as an example. At the outbreak of hostilities, he said, England had 200,000 men under arms whereas by the time of the interview, she had 3,000,000. He calculated that “This stupendous effort proves her firm intention to fight to a finish.”

The other English cardinal was also full of vigour for the fight that was being waged by Britain. However, Cardinal Gasquet was waging his own battle in Rome. As a cardinal in curia, Gasquet was in a unique position to defend British interests. His task was fraught with difficulties, however, as the vast majority of his brother cardinals were sympathetic to the Central Powers. In a letter written in September 1914, he complained that clerical papers in Italy constantly misrepresented Britain’s attitude and believed every German untruth. But he did his best “to put the fear of God” into those clerics who supported Germany and he privately expressed the fear that he was becoming “warlike”. Furthermore, he tried to bring German atrocities to the attention of the new Pope, Benedict XV, and to elicit some sort of condemnation from him. After the Lusitania was sunk by a German submarine in May 1915, Gasquet drafted a letter imploring the Pope to condemn clearly and unhesitatingly German outrages against innocent victims. In the letter, he observed that the “calculated wholesale murder” of victims on the Lusitania was not denounced strongly enough by the Osservatore

31 Quoted in The Tablet, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 204.
33 Quoted in The Tablet, 7 Aug. 1915, p. 189.
Romano. He appealed to Benedict XV, warning that if wrongs were allowed to pass, it would do irreversible harm to Catholic morals.\(^{36}\) Evidence, or rather the lack of it, suggests that Gasquet did not press the Pontiff to reproach the Allies when they committed acts of war that caught up civilians – such as Russian treatment of Catholics in Galicia,\(^ {37}\) or the imposition of the economic blockade by Britain against Germany in March 1915. Of course, to secure a condemnation of Germany from the Pope would have benefited the Allied cause significantly.

Catholic ecclesiastics in Britain emulated the two cardinals’ radical patriotism. One of the most committed adherents to the British cause among Catholic clerics at the outset was Robert Hugh Benson. Rev. Benson was obsessed with the concept of national honour. During the early days, when Britain seemed on the verge of staying out of the conflict, he insisted upon intervention because the nation’s honour was at stake.\(^ {38}\) As soon as Britain entered the war, Benson applied to serve as an army chaplain, even though he was terrified of being sent to the front. However, he was all the more willing to go because he associated the conflict with Armageddon. He saw it as the final battle between Satan’s forces and the heavenly hosts which, according to the Book of Revelations, was to be contested on earth. Hugh commented: “It’s extremely like Armageddon, and why shouldn’t the Kaiser be Anti-Christ? Besides, there’s an eclipse of

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\(^{35}\) Gasquet to Hewins, 20 Sep. 1914, Hewins 57/225, Hewins Papers.

\(^{36}\) [Gasquet] to Pope Benedict XV, [May 1915], File 875, Gasquet Papers. Of course, the Pope could not condemn the Lusitania sinking because the Germans claimed that it was an armed cruise liner that was secretly carrying weapons and Canadian troops bound for the Western Front. This assertion was denied by America and Britain. See D. Ramsay, Lusitania: Saga and Myth, (Rochester, Kent: Chatham Publishing, 2001), pp. 169-173.

\(^{37}\) After the Russians invaded Galicia in late 1914, for example, they arrested Count Andrew Szeptycki, the Archbishop of Lemberg. He was imprisoned along with many other Ruthenian clergy and teachers. The Harvest, May 1916, p. 83.

On the very next day after the eclipse, Hugh received a letter in which the death of Pope Pius was announced. His brother Edward wrote, somewhat sarcastically, that “It was all Armageddoner than ever.” In any case, he was found unfit to serve as a military chaplain. He decided, therefore, that he would contribute to the war effort at home. He worked vigorously, writing letters of encouragement and urging his friends to enlist and do their part for their King and country. At one instance he told a young man: “Renounce your will to God…with the express contemplation of having to go to be killed. It sounds a brutal thing to say, but I am sure it is the only thing to do.” Although at the beginning such utterances were the exception rather than the rule among the clergy, they became much more frequent as the war dragged on.

Another Catholic contemporary who matched Benson’s chauvinism was Fr. Bernard Vaughan. He was the brother of Cardinal Herbert Vaughan and an accomplished Jesuit who was a formidable and popular preacher. A few months after the commencement of war, he published What of Today?, in which he castigated Germany’s obsession with dominance. The book is worth examining as an example of the kind of powerful rhetoric which planted the seed of “patriotism” in the fertile soil of people’s hearts at the beginning of the struggle. In the first pages of the book, Vaughan denounced the extremism of Nietzsche and Bernhardi as militarists, and of Tolstoy and Ramsay

40 Ibid., p. 277.
43 Cardinal Herbert Vaughan was Bourne’s predecessor. He was Archbishop of Westminster from 1892 until his death in 1903. See his authoritative biography by J. G. Snead-Cox, The Life of Cardinal Vaughan, 2 vols., (London: Herbert and Daniel, 1910).
MacDonald as determined pacifists. He expressed his own intention to be reasonable and his desire to take the middle path in this debate.\textsuperscript{44} Having established that, however, he immediately proceeded to vindicate Britain’s position in the European crisis in the strongest terms. He asserted that she was not merely fighting for Empire or possessions, but for her “plighted word” and “national honour”.\textsuperscript{45} It may be argued that Vaughan’s instinctive nationalism and spirited defence of the righteousness of his nation’s cause is not so very far removed from Bernhardi’s ultra-nationalism.\textsuperscript{46} But, from the outset, Vaughan condemned the German war party and claimed that to remain silent would mean partaking in the other’s sin, which was the sin of a coward. Hence, he explained, if he “did not denounce publicly the anti-Christian utterances of the German war party I should have to write myself down a coward.”\textsuperscript{47} His chauvinistic writing resembled more a military general addressing his troops before a battle than a man of religion directing himself to a Christian nation. For example, he wrote of the British: “We are armed and up to fight an organised power whose religion is might and whose ideal is ‘Germany, …the War Lord of the World.’”\textsuperscript{48}

The nationalism of the clergy on the home front was complemented by stories of the dedication and heroism of their fellow Catholics on the military front. By December 1914, 87 Catholic priests and 127 nuns had been awarded the Legion of Honour by the

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. xv.
\textsuperscript{46} In 1912, General Friederich von Bernhardi published his \textit{Deutschland und der Nächste Krieg}. In it he advanced the idea of attaining German greatness by the elimination of France as a great power, the foundation of a European federation, and Germany’s development as a world power by the acquisition of colonies. His book was translated into English in 1914 as \textit{Germany and the Next War}, (London: Edward Arnold, 1914).
\textsuperscript{47} B. Vaughan, op. cit., p. xx.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 11.
French government for their services in the field.\textsuperscript{49} Examples of the bravery of Catholic chaplains abounded. One such story involved Abbé Lamy. He was wounded by five bullets, and was unable to walk. But he persisted in helping severely wounded soldiers by crawling around and giving them extreme unction.\textsuperscript{50}

Nevertheless, the clergy’s nationalist sentiments were contrary to the attitude of, and were not encouraged by, the Holy See. Indeed, soon after Benedict XV’s election as pope, the \textit{Osservatore Romano}, the official Vatican newspaper, published an article which represented the new Pope’s views. The report in the \textit{Osservatore} expressed the desire that all Catholics should act in unison embracing the policy of impartiality adopted by the Holy See. It particularly stressed the role of priests as peacemakers:

\begin{quote}
  it is the special duty of priests, who should never forget, even in the most terrible times of war, to place above all sentiments the general interests of the Church and of humanity, remembering always that they are the ministers of Him Who in His Passion had no words of bitterness or hatred for His murderers.
\end{quote}

The article implored them to remember this in their ministry of preaching and to use only words of charity and peace. It concluded by appealing to “the moderation and charity of all Catholics, and \textit{especially of priests}” [my emphasis], and implored all to join their hands together and work for the interests of peace.\textsuperscript{51} However, the Holy See could only offer guidance to the universal flock. Of course, the Pope could not actually coerce other bishops on the matter of the war, because they were not seen to be defying the Pope on traditional matters of faith and morals. He could not, therefore, compel the clergy to follow his advice and adopt his own policy of impartiality toward the conflict.

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\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{51} The report in the \textit{Osservatore Romano} was reproduced in \textit{The Tablet}, 24 Oct. 1914, p. 575. See also Rennell Rodd to Edward Grey, 8 Oct. 1914, F.O. 371/2009/103, Italy Files (Political), P.R.O.
\end{flushleft}
For a number of reasons the *Osservatore*’s message was simply ignored. The chief reason was undoubtedly because of the emotional response of British Catholics to the violation of Belgian neutrality. Germany invaded Belgium on 3 August 1914, and thereby violated her guaranteed neutrality, which was pledged by, among other nations, Britain and Prussia in 1830. The pledge was endorsed in 1870, when Germany assured London that she would not, “under any pretext whatever”, 52 violate Belgian independence. In August 1914, Germany ignored her own promise, thus giving Britain the necessary pretext – so critics claimed – to enter the war. As soon as German troops touched Belgian soil, the British Catholic clergy justified the defence of Belgium in innumerable sermons. To offer just one example from many, Fr. Vincent McNabb, a renowned Dominican preacher, placed his “tongue and pen” at the service of the nation he described as “Europe’s ewe-lamb”. 53 He explained that he did not mobilise his pen in defence of the Allies – they were quite capable of defending themselves – but rather in defence of the violated peaceful little nation. 54 He became the champion of Belgium and her refugees, and defended them in every major newspaper, in numerous addresses and public meetings. F. Valentine, in his biography of McNabb, asserted that “No Britisher could have fought more loyally in the cause of justice.” 55 In the face of the Belgian disaster, Bishop Casartelli’s early opposition to the war also dissolved. His consolation was his conviction that the British government had striven unceasingly to prevent war. It was inevitable, he contended, that she was drawn in to defend the cause of justice. He felt

54 Ibid., p. ix.
pride at the certainty that Britain had unsheathed her sword in defence of gallant little Catholic Belgium. As a result he prompted Catholics to take up their full share of responsibility in the campaign which their country had undertaken.  

The passage of the German army through Belgium was met with rigid resistance. Belgian opposition to the German onslaught delayed the invasion. This bought crucial time for the British Expeditionary Force to be rushed across the English Channel to the defence of France. The heroic sacrifice of the Belgians was highly praised by the British. The British public considered that Belgium had sacrificed herself on the altar of freedom to save the civilised world. As a loyal Catholic nation, Belgium was the pride of British Catholics. Cardinal Gasquet said as much in an article he contributed to the *Dublin Review*. He praised Belgium’s stance, arguing that in her agony, she had vindicated the Catholic principle that might was not right. She had shown that every unjust war was a violation of Christian morals. Fr. McNabb saw Belgium’s resistance in a different light. In a sermon delivered in Hereford, he affirmed that Belgium acted as the faithful watchdog that refused to betray Britain. The British, likewise, “must die rather than betray it.” He called upon the British people to arise to the defence of the battered nation. He reminded British men that “ingratitude has never been a vice of your fathers” and urged them to rouse “to as noble and holy a war on behalf of your own freedom and the freedom of the faithful watch-hound that is bleeding from death blows aimed at you.”

He argued that Belgium fought for Britain’s defence and so her tribulation must be

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56 *Catholic Federationist*, Sep. 1914, p. 2.
Britain’s tribulation; her suffering Britain’s suffering. Such passionate rhetoric could not but have inflamed the emotions of his listeners.

The German Emperor, in particular, was subjected to a barrage of castigation. He was compared to a monster whose hunger for power was insatiable. A man without a soul, he trod on weaker people without any compassion. Fr. Francis Caus of Leicester referred to him as a Pharisee. In a sermon in August 1914, Caus preached about the braggadocio of the Pharisee who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed with pride and such a vice, Caus said, could be applied to the Kaiser. But Wilhelm’s vices, he asserted, were far worse. His pride, haughtiness, ambition, and the breaking of treaties which his forefathers had pledged were only some of the iniquities that tainted the Kaiser. Furthermore, Vincent McNabb held the German Emperor directly responsible for the havoc that the German army was wreaking in Belgium. In an open letter to the Kaiser, McNabb charged him with worshipping the glory of the state since he had “no God worth adoring.” He concluded his letter by determining Wilhem’s fate: “Kaiser…I pity you, and will pity you, conquered or conqueror; for if conquered, you are likely to lose your kingdom, and if conqueror, you are likely to lose your soul.” In another open letter, he went even further, calling on the German people to judge their ruler who had disgraced and dishonoured them. McNabb, a man of religion, opined that if they were to judge with justice, they would pass “a sentence of death.”

Tales of atrocities and wholesale destruction of Belgian towns and villages inflamed the clergy’s hatred for Germany and the Kaiser. As Belgian refugees streamed

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59 Ibid., p. 12.
60 The Tablet, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 250.
61 V. McNabb, op. cit., p. 28.
62 Ibid., p. 32.
into Britain, they brought with them horrific stories of savagery perpetrated by the German army. This, in fact, caused national excitement when the Lord Bryce Committee into Belgian atrocities reported its findings in May 1915.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 52-53.} These eyewitness accounts, coupled with the destruction of the University of Louvain, hardened Catholic attitudes towards the German invaders. After the fall of Louvain and the burning of its ancient university library, Casartelli’s previously moderate stance hardened somewhat. He had spent his younger days studying at the University of Louvain and had a special affection towards it. When news of its destruction reached him on 29 August, he wrote in his diary: “The most awful news yet received from the war: The German barbarians have destroyed Louvain and all its buildings….\footnote{Casartelli Diaries, 29 Aug. 1914, Casartelli Papers.}”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 52-53.} He contributed an article to the \textit{Catholic Times} which was reproduced by \textit{The Harvest}, a diocesan periodical published by the Salford Catholic Protection and Rescue Society. The article, “The Tragedy of Louvain”, pitied the Germans, the perpetrators of such inhumanity. Casartelli mourned the loss of Louvain but, even then, refused to pursue a vendetta against the German invaders. Instead of retaliation, he left their judgement “to a tribunal that, in the long run, never errs: the tribunal of History.”\footnote{The Harvest, Oct. 1914, p. 247.} Even the Pope was reported to have expressed disbelief at the extent of German barbarism. \textit{The Times} of 22 September noted that when the Pope heard of the destruction of Rheims Cathedral, he said that it was not possible for the civilised world to be plunged back to the time of Attila the Hun.\footnote{The Times, 22 Sep. 1914, p. 10.}
The plight of Belgium became the focal point of a campaign by the hierarchy to rally British Catholics behind the war effort. The campaign further heightened the clergy’s extravagant support for the war and grandiloquent oratory. McNabb must surely have aroused the passions of his congregation when he preached that Belgium was a mud-trampled pearl “under the feet of swine.” It would be fateful to Britain, he warned, if she did not curse those who disregarded culture, justice, freedom and loyalty, which were the very sanctity of life. Casartelli went even further. By October 1914, the destruction of Louvain, combined with the growing refugee problem and stories of German atrocities, had hardened his formerly moderate attitude. He compared Belgium’s adversity with that of Job’s. He pointed to the crimes that had been committed against the small pious Catholic nation and exhorted Catholics not to falter in their support for the war. He also ordered his clergy to offer Masses in all the churches of the diocese on Sunday, November 15, for Belgium and for King Albert and his family.

Part of the campaign involved accommodating the influx of Belgian refugees and collecting funds for Belgium. The entire Catholic hierarchy actively involved itself in these activities. In August 1914, the Belgian Relief Fund was initiated and the Catholics were immediately asked to contribute. Princess Henrietta of Belgium begged James A. Smith, the Archbishop of Edinburgh and St. Andrews, to make a collection in the churches for the Fund. In her letter, the princess appealed to Catholic generosity, remarking: “I know how the Catholics of Great-Britain are generous and sympathetic for

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71 Archbishop Smith was born in Edinburgh in October 1841. He was ordained a priest in 1866 and consecrated bishop of Dunkeld in 1890. In 1900, he was elevated to the archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh.
Catholic Belgium.72 Archbishop Smith complied with her request and devoted another collection to the Belgians in February 1915.73 The Fund was supported by Robert Hugh Benson. He sent a letter to Charles Sarolea, the Belgian consul in Edinburgh and editor of *Everyman*, congratulating him on the Belgian Relief Fund and praising Belgium’s heroism and gallantry. Benson had lost none of his patriotic zeal. He asserted that Belgium had saved Europe, and that Britain would be severely shamed if she did not repay Belgium for her generosity.74 The primate of the British Catholics himself was involved in the repayment of that generosity. For example, when a book dedicated to King Albert was being produced, Bourne contributed to it willingly. In October 1914, the *Daily Telegraph* came up with the idea of composing the book, to be called *King Albert’s Book*, in honour of Belgium and as a device for raising money for the Belgian Relief Fund. Hall Caine, of the *Telegraph*, enquired as to whether Bourne could provide them with a page, a line, a sentence – anything would have been welcome.75 Bourne willingly contributed to the book and therefore identified himself with the Belgian cause.

Fundraising was not the only way in which the clergy helped the Belgians. In October, Fr. Bernard Vaughan announced the publication of a Flemish newspaper – *De stem uit Belgie, L’Echo de Belgique* – a weekly journal for those refugees who could not read English. He appealed to the British public for support.76 Those who could, also mobilised their pen to promote propaganda. Thus, when Fr. William Barry, the notable theologian and Doctor of Divinity, was asked by Sarolea whether he could write an

74 Robert Hugh Benson to Charles Sarolea, 14 Sep. 1914, Sar.coll.5, Charles Sarolea Papers, Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library.
75 Hall Caine to Bourne, 14 Oct. 1914, Bo.5/42e, Bourne Papers, Archdiocesan Archives of Westminster (hereafter cited as AAW).
76 His appeal was made in *The Times*, 23 Oct. 1914, p. 7.
article on a Belgian topic, he immediately consented. He wrote an article titled “The Kaiser Tempts Belgium” which was supposed to appear in Everyman but does not seem to have been published. It outlined the fiendishness of Germany’s ultimatum to Belgium and the latter’s heroic defiance. As he indicated in his autobiography, Barry went on to do everything in his power politically on behalf of the oppressed minority nationalities.

One clear embodiment of Belgian defiance was Cardinal Désiré Mercier, Archbishop of Malines and Belgian primate. In the British clergy’s eyes, his vigorous and steadfast opposition to the German authorities epitomised the very soul of Belgian nationhood. On his return from the conclave that elected Benedict XV in September 1914, he made a brief stopover in London. His aim was to elicit support for the multitudes of Belgian refugees arriving in Britain. In London, he was accorded a hero’s reception. On 13 September, the Duke of Norfolk accompanied him to Buckingham Palace where he met the King and Queen. On Christmas Day, 1914, he issued his highly acclaimed pastoral letter, “Patriotism and Endurance”. J. A. Gade, Mercier’s biographer, referred to it as “one of the greatest documents of the World War.” In his letter, Mercier declared that it was the duty of Belgians to remain faithful to their king and his government. He rejected German rule as “illegitimate” and therefore asserted that the German governors deserved neither loyalty nor respect from the Belgian people.

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78 The article is found in Sar.coll.131, Sarolea Papers.
81 The Times, 14 Sep. 1914, p. 3.
83 Ibid., p. 144.
spite of strict German prohibition, the letter secretly permeated the whole country and was read from the pulpit of every church.

The British Catholic hierarchy received Mercier’s pastoral letter with admiration and hope. Here was a lone prince of the Church fearlessly standing up to the mightiest power in Europe. His courage and patriotism were unsurpassed. On 9 January 1915, Casartelli read in the French original “the really magnificent Pastoral of Cardinal Mercier, which all the world is talking about.” He subsequently encouraged his clergy to read the “admirable letter” to their people. Mercier’s utterances were seen as a continued source of courage and defiance. In 1917, for example, in his preface to The Voice of Belgium, Bourne asserted that God had chosen the Belgian primate to lead his country in her time of tribulation. The Almighty had given Mercier “sound principles and inflexible courage…to uphold the steadfastness of the clergy, [and] to protect the defenceless.” His pastoral letters and allocutions, Bourne contended, had done more than any other supporter of the cause to defy and break German power in Belgium. It may have been that Mercier’s words had accomplished more than a whole army could have.

The German invasion of Belgium and the atrocities carried out there convinced the British that they were fighting a barbaric power. The Churches were presented with a dilemma: whether or not they should proclaim a crusade against an enemy which was, for the most part, imbued with barbaric Prussianism. If they did so, it would imply that all

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84 For a recent assessment of the relationship between Mercier and the German authorities, and for the reaction to his pastoral from the German point of view, see chapter 2 of part II in R. Boudens, Two Cardinals: John Henry Newman, Désiré Joseph Mercier, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995).
85 Casartelli Dairies, 9 Jan. 1915, Casartelli Papers.
the good was on their side while all the evil was on the other.\textsuperscript{88} If, on the other hand, as pacifists and Tolstoyans had long maintained, the Gospel of Love and forgiveness was at the center of the Christian message, then no endorsement of a military campaign as Christian should be given. Catholic prelates, as we have seen, swiftly made their choice for a crusade against Prussianism. In so doing, some were to twist the words of Jesus to such an extent as to make them unrecognisable – or so critics could assert. Germany became generally regarded as a pagan nation which was out to destroy Christianity. The unifying idea that the Allies were fighting for Christianity was reiterated in numerous sermons. Vaughan stressed this in late 1914, when he published \textit{What of Today?} in defence of the Allies. In it, he condemned Germany and emphasised the religious nature of the war. He echoed the thoughts of the majority of the clergy when he proclaimed that the war was against barbarism and the sword. It was the Christian ideal versus Nietzschean brutality.\textsuperscript{89} Not only were the British fighting Prussian brute force, according to Vaughan, but they also represented the elements of peace and love. He maintained that British soldiers were engaging in an enterprise holier than that of the Crusaders. They were “fighting for Christ’s Christianity, and every soldier of the Allies who falls in battle is a martyr of religion.”\textsuperscript{90}

At the same time, the German clergy were preaching similar sermons about the justice of Germany’s cause. They defended their nationalism and claimed they were fighting a war of defence against an enemy who had long wished to annihilate their

\textsuperscript{89} B. Vaughan, op. cit., pp. 103-104.
\textsuperscript{90} Quoted in \textit{The Universe}, 9 Oct. 1914, p. 3.
However, not realising – or ignoring – German preaching, Bourne adopted the very same themes when he visited the Western Front in early 1915. Speaking to Catholic soldiers, he told them that they were fighting not only for their King and country, but also for the European civilisation and against the barbarous principles of the anti-Christians.  

While denouncing German “paganism”, leading British Catholics also asserted that Prussian militarism had become the curse of Germany. Frederick William Keating, Bishop of Northampton, likened the impact of German militarism to that of a person who loses his moral restraint. Far from being a blessing, his wealth, intellect, physical strength, and intelligence become a curse. And so it was with Germany. She was a great nation, but when she abandoned the Church, the Bible, and Christ, she turned to her greatness and made a god out of it. Naturally, the clergy denied that in the process of demolishing German militarism, the British might have to adopt more and more elements of the very thing they were trying to destroy. Paradoxically, William Barry expressed the clergy’s views when he declared: “We fight, but the ‘militarism’ of Prussia has not touched us.”

Moreover, a few Catholic ecclesiastics believed that the war was the final push to achieve Protestant hegemony in Europe. Those who accepted that the war was for European Catholicism sustained their argument by concentrating on several important points. According to this school of thought, the mind of Europe was still essentially

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91 A. J. Hoover, op. cit., p. 87.
93 Bishop Keating was born in Birmingham in 1859. He was ordained in 1882 and appointed bishop of Northampton in 1907. In 1921, he was transferred to Liverpool where he became second archbishop. He died in February 1928.
94 Sermon given at Wisbech, 1914, S7, III, A/109, Keating Papers, AAL.
Catholic. For example, as the war continued, Abbot Hugh Edmund Ford of Downside Abbey,\(^96\) wrote to Wilfrid Ward that the war was “the last effort of Protestantism to dominate Europe.”\(^97\) Similarly, Joseph Keating, the editor of *The Month*, conceded that although Catholicism had not succeeded in preventing war before the Reformation, it had reduced its horrors. After the schism in the Church, however, Protestantism did not unite in itself and failed to unite its adherents. It had, therefore, “destroyed, not only the common canons of belief, but also the common standard of morality.”\(^98\) As a result, Keating contended, Germany was able to conquer the non-Catholic mind of Britain and other Protestant nations. Those outside the protective fold of Catholicism were invaded and corrupted by Luther’s alleged repudiation of authority and tradition.\(^99\) Thus, Lutheranism was seen as the chief culprit in finally attempting to uproot the remainder of Catholic Europe.

This view was compounded by the belief that the allegedly Protestant German soldiers’ atrocities in Belgium were carried out because Belgium was a Catholic nation. This accusation was outlined in a booklet that was published in London by an anonymous author, known only as “A Catholic”. He insisted that Germany had treated the Belgians all the harsher because they were of the Roman faith. The evidence for this was derived from the claim that an overwhelming number of atrocities committed were against religious persons and sites. In almost all the towns they passed, the author maintained, the Germans arrested or shot priests and other religious people. Churches were desecrated

\(^{96}\) Ford was abbot of Downside between 1894 and 1906, after which he resigned because of ill-health. For a short biographical outline, see Abbot Butler’s “Hugh Edmund Ford”, *Downside Review*, 49, (1931), pp. 1-21.
\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 50.
and defiled and the Host was trampled underfoot. Evidence was also cited to counter claims that such atrocities were in retaliation against Belgian priests who were aiding resistance to the enemy. An enquiry by a German Jesuit established that such claims were false. This German Jesuit, Fr. Bernhard Duhr, could only conclude that the reason slanders against the Belgian priesthood were given credit was because of “the subconscious dislike of the Catholic clergy” by many German Protestants. The author of the booklet concluded that no Catholic could possibly desire the triumph of Prussia; “it would be desiring the victory of a State whose very foundations are Lutheran, whose very being is anti-Catholic.”

Poland, too, seemed to share Belgium’s fate as a violated Catholic victim, although she did not receive as much attention as the latter. Her occupation, first by Russia and then by Germany, buttressed the belief of that section of the clergy who maintained that the war was being fought for the very survival of Catholic Europe. Cardinal Bourne expressed sympathy with the plight of Poland. In an address given in July 1915, he pointed out that Catholics were accustomed to concentrating on Belgium’s adversity. But the affliction of Poland, he declared, was much worse than that of Belgium. Poland was “harried and harrowed over and over again by the passing through

101 Quoted in ibid., p. 18. For more information on Duhr’s brochure, see J. Horne and and A. Kramer, op. cit., pp. 276-277.
102 Ibid., p. 21. His basic contention was confirmed in some minds in 1918 when the German government attempted to utilize a number of Catholic churches in Belgium for Protestant use. This evoked a protest from the Catholic hierarchy in Belgium. See Cardinal D. J. Mercier, Cardinal Mercier’s Own Story, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920), pp. 434-436.
of hostile forces.”\textsuperscript{103} He supported Poland’s immediate autonomy. At the same time, the Cardinal “grieved deeply” at Britain having to fight Catholic Austria.\textsuperscript{104}

But the argument that the conflict was a struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism was an over-simplified one. Despite even \textit{The Times} conceding on one occasion that the war might be seen as “a conflict between the Catholic ideal and the Protestant” at the beginning of the war,\textsuperscript{105} in reality religion was not a critical factor in the alliances that developed. As Fr. Adrian Fortescue (1874-1923), the Doctor of Divinity, accurately explained, Catholic Austria was allied to Protestant Germany and Muslim Turkey. At the same time, Orthodox Russia and Protestant Britain were fighting alongside Catholic France and Belgium. While many in France and Belgium might see the invasion by Germany as an attack on their Catholicism, Austria considered Russia as the main enemy of Catholics. This was reinforced by Russia’s harsh treatment of Catholics after she occupied Galicia.\textsuperscript{106} Fortescue was objective enough to concede that an Allied victory would give Russia control of Catholic Galicia and Poland. However, he did not believe that this would spell disaster for Catholics in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{107} Nevertheless, those Catholic clergy who believed they were fighting for the Catholic ideal conveniently ignored these uncomfortable facts and insisted that it was in essence a Catholic crusade.

Such a crusade needed the overwhelming support of the British people in order to overcome so-called heathen Prussia. Catholics had to play their part and it was up to their

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{The Times}, 3 July 1915, p. 6. Nevertheless, as M. Snape explains, “Germany was widely depicted by the Catholic clergy and press in Great Britain as the neo-pagan, Protestant despoiler of Catholic Belgium, Poland and France.” M. Snape, op. cit., p. 320.

\textsuperscript{104} E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., II, p. 110.


churchmen to convince them that Britain was fighting for a just cause. It was constantly accentuated that Britain had been drawn into the war against her will. She was pursuing her sworn obligation to uphold the rights of the weak and the oppressed – a crusade. Ecclesiastics continuously portrayed Christianity as being the middle path between the two extremes of pacifism and militarism. They explained that pacifists were wrong in their total opposition to war and reminded them that God had sanctioned war between nations in the old law. Militarists, too, erred because they viewed war as a means of advancing their nation’s culture. The Church, however, the argument continued, taught that a nation had the right to defend itself against aggression; even to go on the offensive if certain conditions were satisfied.

It would be opportune to offer here an explanation of these conditions, which constituted the just war theory. Saint Augustine was the first Christian to formulate the idea that a war could be just. Saint Thomas Aquinas later developed such a theory. He established three conditions that had to be met in order for a war to be just. The first condition was that it must be waged by a legitimate figure of authority – for example, a king. Thus a private individual had no right to wage war. The second condition stipulated that a war must be fought for a just cause – that is, the attacked are being punished for a misdeed. The third condition required the necessity of a rightful intention. The belligerents, therefore, must be determined to advance good and avoid evil. A war would be just only in so far as all three conditions are met. Francisco de Vittoria, the Spanish theologian, added a fourth condition in the sixteenth century. This stated that a

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107 Ibid., p. 3.
108 See, for example, Casartelli’s pastoral, The Terrible Year: An Advent Pastoral, 22 Nov. 1914, Acta Salfordiensia, v. 2.22, Casartelli Papers.
war should be waged by “proper means”, which meant that it had to be carried on humanely.

It could be argued that World War I did not meet these criteria to be styled a just war. It was a total war. As A. Marrin has suggested, a total war is incompatible with the theory of a just war for one obvious reason. If the enemy uses methods in the war that fail to discriminate between combatants and civilians, the belligerent with justice on its side must either retaliate by using the same immoral methods, or else accept the loss of innocent lives. Both sides thus employ methods which are contrary to the concepts of a just war; both Britain and Germany resorted to such methods of “total war” in the First World War. But this view was not so clear-cut to Catholic prelates in Britain as they endeavoured to assure the nation that justice was on their side.

Britain’s entry into the war, therefore, was justified on the basis that she had met all the necessary conditions to render her cause just. The righteousness of Britain’s cause was included in prayer books. In October 1914, for example, prior to his death, Hugh Benson published his *Vexilla Regis*, a book of prayers and devotions to all those affected by the war on the Allied side. In the preface, he explained that since he believed that England was fighting for justice, he did not fail to include prayers for soldiers and sailors as well as for outright victory.

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The justice of Britain’s cause being established, the clergy could then call upon the nation’s Catholic manhood to join the colours. Priests unashamedly addressed war meetings and, far from being preachers of peace, they metamorphosed into recruiting agents. One such avid pseudo-recruiter was Bernard Vaughan. One of the stirring speeches he delivered was in September 1914 at a meeting in Knaresborough, Yorkshire. In his speech, he told his listeners that if he could, he would mount every war platform in the Empire in order to rally his countrymen to enlist. He called upon every man capable of bearing arms to reply to Lord Kitchener’s appeal “in the name of truth, justice, freedom, and of God, England, and the Empire.”\textsuperscript{114} Vaughan was not alone. Some of the chief figures in the Catholic hierarchy also issued recruitment appeals. In December 1914, Bishop John Hedley of Newport\textsuperscript{115} entreated all patriots to enlist to strengthen Britain’s military force. To entice them, he preached that patriotism was a virtue, “having its roots in the great cardinal virtue of justice.”\textsuperscript{116} In addition, John Maguire, the Archbishop of Glasgow,\textsuperscript{117} made a number of appeals to Catholics in his diocese throughout 1915. His first appeal was made in conjunction with his coadjutor in the form of a pastoral letter. They conveyed their belief that godlessness was rampant in Germany and argued that her influence had spread throughout the world. They therefore enjoined their community to throw themselves “heart and soul into the new Crusade of Christianity against Paganism.” Young men were urged to join and families were

\textsuperscript{114} Quoted in \textit{The Tablet}, 12 Sep. 1914, p. 377.
\textsuperscript{115} Bishop Hedley was born in April 1837 in Northumberland. He took his Benedictine habit in 1854 and was ordained eight years later. He became editor of the \textit{Dublin Review} between 1879 and 1884. He was consecrated bishop of Newport and Menevia in 1881, but upon the division of the diocese in 1898, he was entitled bishop of Newport. He died in November 1915 in Cardiff.
\textsuperscript{116} Quoted in the \textit{Catholic Herald}, 5 Dec. 1914, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{117} Archbishop Maguire was born in Glasgow in September 1851 and became its archbishop in 1902. He was educated in Stonyhurst College and Glasgow University and was also a Doctor of Divinity. He died in October 1920.
encouraged to send their loved ones. Maguire’s appeal was renewed in July. He once more addressed a call to arms to the young men of his diocese. *The Universe* commented: “The document is a most striking appeal, and will possibly be quoted in future generations as an example of the patriotic lead of the Catholic clergy in the nation’s present need.”

His third appeal ominously warned that if the remaining young men wavered, the long arm of conscription would sooner or later seize them. It would deprive them of their liberty and would make them “not the willing helpers of the State in time of danger, but slaves in peace and in war.”

It appears that the second appeal of Archbishop Maguire did not achieve the intended result. For he received a letter from a Fr. Gerald Stock, in which the latter expounded a plan to explore the possibility of raising an exclusively Catholic battalion in Glasgow. Such a battalion, Stock explained, would appeal directly to the Catholic population and the men would be assured of being amply supplied with chaplains.

Stock wrote to the Archbishop a second letter, deprecating the situation Catholic recruits were in. He revealed that those Catholics who were enlisting in the army had no choice but to join a Scottish Protestant regiment and stressed that there was a demand for Catholic regiments. He argued that “it is admitted that a great number of our young men are hanging back, simply because they do not want to be absorbed into some existing, and probably Protestant, regiment” [emphasis in original]. It is not clear how Maguire reacted to the proposal, but the letters illustrate the great lengths the Catholic hierarchy went to in order to elicit maximum sacrifice from the Catholic manhood.

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119 *The Universe*, 16 July 1915, p. 5.
120 Quoted in ibid., 12 Nov. 1915, p. 1.
Amidst this growing tempest, whose elements were nationalism and recruitment, the faint whisper of clerical equanimity could still be perceived. The handful of Catholic clergy who had retained their composure after the initial stages of the war was dwindling. But a diminutive number continued to hold out against the wave of nationalism sweeping the nation. The Jesuits in particular, with the exception of a few like Bernard Vaughan, were notable for their restraint throughout the war. One of the most prominent moderate figures among the Catholic clergy was the Jesuit Charles Dominic Plater, who “was not swept either by nationalist frenzy or tearful remorse.”

From the outset, he refused to be fired by the hysterical militarism surrounding him. He appreciated the “incomparable opportunity” presented by the unique conditions of the war. For the first time, men were available in huge numbers and they were thirsty for spiritual teaching. He was ready to answer their questions and dissipate their doubts. Presently, he started a scheme whereby he entered into correspondence with soldiers. This developed into a means of giving basic religious instructions to soldiers who had but the vaguest idea about their faith.

The odd plea for a more cautious response to the war could still be detected in late 1914 and even into 1915. Sydney F. Smith was another eminent Jesuit who voiced his moderation in defiance of the hate and animosity. He wrote regularly in The Month.
calling on his countrymen to forgive the Germans. In December 1914, he suggested to his readers that there were still good, humane Germans. He reminded Catholics that incidents such as Louvain could raise passion and inflame hatred. But that did not mean that there were no good souls among the enemy. Smith explained that Catholics should reflect on episodes that demonstrated that “on either side there are men engaged who share in the same sentiments of religion, of humanity, and brotherhood.”

To illustrate his point, he gave accounts of some incidents on the front where the goodness of German soldiers manifested itself. For example, he related the story of an incident in November 1914 when French troops stumbled upon five German soldiers who were kneeling around two candles and praying. The Germans explained that they had lost their way and had neither food nor drink. They were saying their final prayers. To their relief, the French treated them as prisoners of war.

Smith concluded by affirming that although there were merciless spirits, there were also kindly ones which conjured happy memories from the past. These memories, he advised, ought to be nurtured if the people of Europe were ever to extinguish the flames of hatred.

Smith wrote another noteworthy article in December 1915 in which he exonerated the people in enemy countries from any blame for starting the war. He indicated that the vast majority of people in the enemy camp, unlike some of the population in the Allied countries, were “good, earnest, conscientious Christians.” He pointed out that they, at least, lent their ears to the Holy See when the Pope exhorted them to work towards ending the catastrophe.

The British, he continued, ridiculed the Pope and endlessly repeated the claim that they were fighting for their existence. Should they be defeated,

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128 Ibid., pp. 628-629.
they would lose their homes and freedom. But if they won, they would destroy the homes
and freedom of the enemy. Why, he asked, should the Allies wish to retaliate thus? The
enemy’s “homes are as sweet to them as ours are sweet to us.” Here was one individual
who was calling on the truly spiritual people to begin forgiving the Germans and showing
mercy to them, rather than simply vowing to fight on until the Allies had destroyed them.
But such statements were rare among the clergy, who warmly endorsed the fight as a
 crusade to wipe out the worship of military might.

Not only was the war considered a crusade, but there was also a popular and
universal perception among the clergy that it was a scourge sent by God. They argued
that God, being almighty, could derive good out of evil. The war, therefore, was allowed
in order to cleanse the soul of humanity which was rampant with evil. Catholic bishops
concentrated on that theme in particular. The Bishop of Menevia, Francis Mostyn, was
one of the first members of the hierarchy to advocate the moral lesson behind the war. He
insisted that the war was forced upon Britain, “but war, be it just or unjust, is permitted
by God as a punishment for our sins.” Britons need not be surprised, he continued, that
they were being punished on account of forgetting God and breaking His
commandments. Mostyn’s fellow countryman, Bishop Hedley, dedicated part of his
1914 Advent pastoral to the same issue. He lamented that the war was “sent upon the
earth as a chastisement.” The innocent were suffering with the guilty. It was intended that
while the guilty were awakened to their sins, the innocent were purified all the more.

130 Ibid., pp. 232-233.
131 Francis Mostyn was born in August 1860. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1884 and became Vicar
Apostolic of Wales in 1895. He became bishop of Menevia in 1898 and remained there until his transfer to
Cardiff in 1921 where he was consecrated archbishop.
He repeated his lamentation in his Lenten pastoral of 1915, calling on his people to pray and go to Mass to atone for their sins. He warned that if God allowed war and other adversities to afflict men, it was because “such visitations are rendered necessary” by their sins. Others of the hierarchy construed the war as a punishment for the iniquity of Britain’s enemy. But that was not to say that Britain herself was unblemished. Archbishop Whiteside, for example, proposed that the Almighty was “doubtless using the arms of our country and of its allies for the punishment of the sins of those who are opposed to us.” But he was quick to allude to the enormity of the British people’s sins as well, and to the need for the wholehearted acceptance of Jesus’ teachings as a means of rejecting sin. By 1915, it was acknowledged among the highest Catholic authorities in Britain that the slaughter in Europe was a call to both penitence and reform on a national as well as an individual level.

Similarly, the entire bench of German Catholic bishops delivered a joint Advent pastoral in 1914, indicting Germany’s moral deterioration. In their pastoral, the German bishops admitted that in them the war had “laid bare heavy guilt.” They blamed themselves for the degeneration of religion in their nation. They admitted that religion endured openly “shameful degrading treatment, depreciation, [and] contempt” and it was entirely their fault; for they showed weakness and cowardice in the face of growing disdain of religion. The result was, the pastoral continued, that God’s commandments were being inculcated within mankind once more by fire and sword. The German bishops’ pastoral seems to have satisfied Casartelli, for he quoted a large part of it in his

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134 Ibid., p. 362.
Lenten pastoral of 1915. He reasoned that the German episcopacy had uttered from their own lips the share of their country in the prevalent moral evils. However, he warned that Germany was not alone. Britain also shared in the descent into moral decadence and was being punished for it.\textsuperscript{138} It is noteworthy that the German bishops issued a \textit{joint} pastoral condemning Germany’s immorality. The British Catholic episcopacy consistently delivered individual pastorals on the moral evil in Britain. However, they never emulated their German counterparts in collectively issuing a joint pastoral and speaking with one unwavering, resolute, and authoritative voice on the great moral issues raised by the war.

While most blamed the war on the lack of faith and growing moral corruption, a very small minority singled out certain sections of society for the increase in immorality. One case in point was the redoubtable Bernard Vaughan. Although he was convinced that neglect of religion had caused the war, he assigned the blame for this to the upper class and the working class. They brought down the wrath of God, he contended, in their neglect to observe Sunday as a holy day, and with the proliferation of their vices.\textsuperscript{139} At the same time, he absolved Catholics from any responsibility because Catholics were obliged to attend Mass on Sundays. It was with them a “sacred duty.”\textsuperscript{140} Hence, it can be deduced that he placed most of the blame on non-Catholics in the above two social classes.

On the whole, Catholic ecclesiastics were optimistic that the hardships arising out of the conflict were producing a spiritual renewal in the nation. One aspect that looked particularly promising was the reestablishment of the soldiers’ faith in God. Cardinal

\textsuperscript{137} The 1914 Advent pastoral of the German bishops was quoted in Casartelli’s “Lent and the World War: A Lenten Pastoral Letter”, 6 Feb. 1915, \textit{Acta Salfordiensia}, v. 2.22, Casartelli Papers.\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Ibid.}\textsuperscript{139} B. Vaughan, op. cit., pp. 94-96.
Bourne alluded to the revival of faith among soldiers in one of his pastorals. He intimated that young men were aware that their life on earth was but one stage in their being; that those “who seemed careless, frivolous, selfish, self-indulgent – sinful, too, perhaps – have in thousands risen to a new consciousness of the real sense and purpose of their lives.” The bloodshed had shown them that there was a greater life than this one.\textsuperscript{141}

Vaughan, who confirmed that many a wounded soldier had told him of the piety of the men, corroborated Bourne’s testimony. He was assured by troops as well as officers that when under fire, men who thought they were incapable of any orison said their prayers.\textsuperscript{142}

The religious revival was expected to continue after the cessation of hostilities. This is shown in Vaughan’s reply to a socialist who wrote to him from New York, asking him whether the Catholic Church would not be “down and out” after the war. The reply was characteristic of Vaughan’s oratory. He wrote back:

Dear ‘Comrade’, the Catholic Church can never be ‘down and out.’ For two thousand years she has driven through stress and storm, and has delivered the goods all the time. With Peter at the helm she defies torpedoes, mine-fields, and bombs….\textit{When the war is done, and the Allies have won, she is going to carry more passengers than ever} to the right landing stage. Shall I book your passage? [my emphasis].\textsuperscript{143}

Of course, Britain was not the only nation upon which the war was having a spiritual effect. The clergy constantly cited France, too, as experiencing something of a religious revival. The French Republic, the irreligious braggart, as she was depicted, had sought to blot out God between 1904 and 1907. The Republic had tried to close down Catholic Schools, shut seminaries, and efface the very word “God” from schoolbooks. She had proudly thrown religion out the door and slammed it shut. But in his monthly message in the \textit{Catholic Federationist}, the Bishop of Salford impressed upon his readers

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p. 96.
\textsuperscript{141} Pastoral Letter (166, no. 5), 1915, Bourne Pastorals, 1905-1935, Set I, Bourne Papers.
\textsuperscript{142} B. Vaughan, op. cit., p. 93.
that the war was chastening France. She was undergoing spiritual healing, especially in the army. Thus, if the armed conflict could turn wickedness into goodness, he concluded, it was not wholly evil.144

Although Catholic clerics averred that everywhere the carnage was producing a religious revival, one question was everywhere being asked. Was not the failure of Christianity the cause of such carnage in the first place? Many people, religious as well as secular, proffered the explanation that Christianity had failed in its ultimate aim of spreading and implementing the message of peace.145 For many critics of Christianity, the war was concrete proof of its failure. For example, Joseph McCabe, a prominent critic of Catholicism, put forward this argument in a study in 1915. He argued that most of the clergy were smugly content to conclude that Germany had plunged Europe into the catastrophe – that it had nothing to do with the inadequacy of Christianity. Others went much further, he maintained, by insisting that the Allies were fighting for moral idealism and that millions of men were making the ultimate sacrifice for this everyday. According to McCabe, clerics heartlessly praised this sacrifice as the triumph of Christianity.146 He himself, however, rebuked the clergy for their naïve views and rejected the theory that the war was a consequence of man’s unrelenting sin. He placed the blame squarely on the

144 *Catholic Federationist*, Nov. 1914, p. 1.
145 Two examples are outlined in S. F. S[mith], “Is the War a Failure for Christianity?”, *The Month*, 127, (Feb. 1916).
146 J. McCabe, *The War and the Churches*, (London: Watts, 1915), p. 49. McCabe was born a Catholic in 1867. He attended a Roman Catholic elementary school and was ordained priest in 1890. Since his novitiate, however, he entertained doubts about the validity of the Christian faith and was unable to continue. In February 1896, he left the Catholic Church and began lecturing and writing against his earlier beliefs. He came to believe that the Catholic Church was the enemy of the people and denounced it unequivocally. His biographical details are provided in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1951-1960, pp. 661-662.
Christian Churches themselves for failing to foster sufficient Christian solidarity as might have prevented the butchery that was drowning Europe with blood.\footnote{Ibid., p. 14.}

For their part, the Catholic clergy repudiated such criticisms. Although it was at times painful for churchmen to constantly hear that Christianity had foundered, they implored their flocks to attend the sacrifice of Mass daily and trust in God’s wisdom.\footnote{See, for example, Bishop John Cuthbert Hedley’s Letter to the Clergy, 23 Sep. 1915, Folder 1915-1916/104, Burton Papers, Diocesan Archives of Clifton.}

Bernard Vaughan was one of many ecclesiastics – Catholic as well as Protestant\footnote{For an example of Protestant clergy who defended Christianity against the claim that it had failed see F. R. Barry, Religion and the War, (London: Methuen, 1915). Barry was a Protestant Minister who argued that Christianity had been abandoned for centuries (pp. 4-5).} – who vehemently defended Christianity. He reminded his readers in November 1915 that Christianity did not fail, but rather the Hague Convention had failed; that diplomacy and socialism had failed; and that they had all failed because they lacked Christianity. He hit the nail on the head when he affirmed that Christianity could not be said to have failed “because it has never been tried.”\footnote{Catholic Herald, 13 Nov. 1915, p. 12. Two Hague conferences were held before the war: one in 1899 and the other in 1907. The reason Vaughan and other Catholic clergy considered them a failure was...}

By the end of 1915, the overwhelming majority of Catholic ecclesiastics had chosen to adopt the state’s course, preaching nationalism and instilling an ardour to fight. They did not heed Pope Benedict’s call, which emphasised the special duty of priests, and the need to promote peace and charity at that time. Instead, they called on the gentle Prince of Peace to aid the nation’s avenging warriors. There were three chief factors at work in contributing to the Catholic clergy’s descent into an uncritical “patriotism”.

Firstly, the impact of the violation of Belgian neutrality and the atrocities committed...
there by Germany. Secondly, the idea that the war was a crusade against a Germany which was permeated by Prussian paganism. These two points are linked because German atrocities were considered a result of her godlessness. The third reason was more theological. The hermeneutical portrayal most favoured was that of a God who was seen as a Deity angry at the immorality the world had descended into. Hence, the Catholic clergy believed that the war was a spiritual purifier and that the sacrifice of the people would appease the Deity’s wrath. The clergy’s nationalistic utterances, especially their depiction of Britain’s war as a “religious crusade”, may seem anachronistic. But these sermons reflected the consensus of those in positions of power and privilege in wartime Britain, that the nation had to be preserved at whatever cost. In their excitement, the clergy abandoned their vocation of preaching universal love and, although they pointed to the vices that the British people had fallen into, they concentrated on extolling the virtues of their own nation as against the “paganism” of their enemy. The ultra-patriotic response of the British Catholic clergy indicates how thoroughly the governing circles of the Church had been integrated into the existing state. In addition, it shows how steeped they were in the values and instincts of the British governing class.

because they had excluded the Holy See and were not, therefore, morally endorsed by the Church. One of many critical examples of the 1907 Hague Convention is found in F. Cuthbert, op. cit., p. 82.
Chapter 3

Prominent Catholic Laymen,
the Catholic Press and the War:
Initial Reactions

Some of my best friends are dead and maimed, many must follow
– yet each death gives life to the nation, each wound vigour to the
State.

Sir Mark Sykes, late 1914.¹

The initial stages of the war were greeted by prominent Catholic laymen and the Catholic
press with as much vigorous nationalism as the clergy. Like the clergy, the laity and the
press appeared to believe Germany to be an atheistic power bent on wiping out
Christianity and violating the rights of small nations. They saw the destruction of
Belgium as a clear manifestation of this. Furthermore, the issue of Poland was given
wider publicity by the Catholic laity and the press than by the Catholic clergy. The laity
and the press were also more actively and openly involved in the leading domestic
political issues of the day, such as the formation of the Coalition government in May
1915. Although the overwhelming majority of the laity were solidly behind the war
effort, there was a very small minority who opposed the government’s entry into the war.
As the conflict continued, the number of dissenters decreased, but a tiny minority still
persisted in challenging their fellow Catholics’ determined support for the war. This
chapter aims to review the reaction of prominent Catholic laymen and the Catholic press
to the war during the first fourteen months of the war, that is from August 1914 to
October 1915. It focuses in particular on the reaction of Catholic laymen and opinion-

makers to the atrocities of the German army in Belgium. These atrocities, alleged and real, were crucial in the formation of Catholic attitudes. As a result, the Catholic body declared their unequivocal support for Britain’s cause and some Catholic laymen propounded the argument that the Entente’s struggle against the German foe was a struggle animated by a Catholic spirit. Thus, Italian intervention in the war in May 1915 was clearly favoured by these Catholic enthusiasts for war. However, the Vatican’s public campaign to keep Italy neutral was the cause of deep embarrassment, and British Catholics were notably silent when the Italian declaration of war actually came.

In the days immediately before Britain was drawn into the conflagration, prominent Catholic laymen debated the merits and hazards of Britain’s intervention in the looming war. While some argued that if Britain intervened militarily on the side of France there would be a chance of localising the conflict, others were adamant that a European war was going to break out no matter what action Britain took. A few examples must suffice to indicate typical reactions. As early as 29 July 1914, W. A. S. Hewins, who was shortly to be received into the Catholic Church, affirmed that vacillation on the part of the government would be fatal. He recorded in his diary his evolving judgement that the only chance of containing the war was for Britain to announce her determination to throw in her weight swiftly and decisively on the side of France. Catholic Conservatives were not so sure that, if war did break out, the Liberal government could conduct the war effectively. Even though Hewins objected to the Asquith government

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2 William Albert Samuel Hewins was born in May 1865 and was educated at Pembroke College, Oxford. In 1895, he organised and directed the London School of Economics. In 1903, he accepted Joseph Chamberlain’s invitation to become secretary of the Tariff Commission, and held that post until 1917. He was elected Conservative member for Hereford City in March 1912 in a by-election.
remaining in office if Britain entered the war, he was pragmatic enough to acknowledge that there would be no change of government. Even so, he complained that it was “ill-fitted to conduct a war.”³ Some other prominent Catholics did not immediately agree with Hewins. In early August, in common with the bulk of the Liberal press, the Manchester Guardian declared that Britain must honourably abstain from joining the war. C. E. Montague, a Catholic journalist (although of no great fervour) who worked for the Guardian, shared this view, at least for a short period.⁴ Other Catholics of Liberal convictions, such as Hilaire Belloc, differed from that opinion. On the outbreak of war, Belloc insisted that even had Britain declared her intention earlier, the conflagration would not have been prevented,⁵ and he supported the government’s decision to enter the war on the side of the Entente.

No sooner had Britain declared war on Germany, than prominent Catholic laymen, with the exception of a very few, offered their unconditional support for the British Empire. Montague, who only a few days before had preferred that Britain should remain aloof from the fighting, became convinced that his country had to see the war through. She could not now shrink from performing her sacred duty.⁶ Prominent members of the Catholic laity did not fail to place their services before their government. Sir Mark Sykes, the Catholic member for Central Hull, wrote to Winston Churchill

⁴ O. Elton, C. E. Montague: A Memoir, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), p. 101. Charles Edward Montague’s father, Francis Montague, was an ex-Irish Catholic priest who renounced his vows and left the priesthood when he became disenchanted with the doctrines he was teaching. He married Rosa McCabe, also an Irish Catholic. Charles was born in 1867 at Ealing. In 1890, he joined the Manchester Guardian, and remained there for the rest of his life except during the war. His Catholicism appeared to be incidental, rather than central to his political outlook.
placing all his knowledge “of local tendencies and possibilities” at his disposal. But the War Office declined to use his expertise for the moment and so he was stuck with his Territorial Battalion in Newcastle. Meanwhile, Hewins informed General Rawlinson that he was anxious to offer his assistance to the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee should they need it. His offer was duly accepted. His influence within the Conservative party increased, and by January 1915 he was attached to the Unionist Business Committee.

Catholics, in common with large numbers of British men, rushed to enlist in the armed forces. Voluntary enlistment reached its zenith in the first few months of the war. By the end of September 1914, 750,000 men had joined the colours. That month, however, recruitment reached its peak and began to decrease thereafter. There are no precise figures to show the proportion of recruits for each denomination but it seems that Catholics had no less enthusiasm for enlistment than their fellow countrymen. A number of examples of prominent Catholics would indicate that they responded in a traditionally “patriotic” manner. Young and old were eager to demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown as British citizens and to right the wrong that had been committed by Germany. The young Christopher Dawson, who was then still unknown but who became the foremost

7 R. Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 175. Because Sykes was born as an only child into an unhappy marriage, Adelson contends, his two dearest companions in his adolescence were travel and religion. “In Roman Catholicism, he could feel close to his mother, while in Eastern travel there was kinship with his father” (pp. 50-51). In June 1911, Sykes stood as a Conservative for the constituency of Central Hull where he campaigned as a Unionist. He was elected over Sir Robert Aske, his Liberal opponent, by 278 votes.
8 In 1911, Sykes became Lieutenant-Colonel for a Territorial Battalion in the 5th Yorkshire Regiment.
10 The Unionist Business Committee was formed on 27 January 1915 with Walter Long as its Chairman. For the Unionist Business Committee, the war was an opportunity for achieving self-sufficiency and developing the resources of the nation and the Empire. See W. A. S. Hewins, op. cit., II, p. 11 ff.
Catholic historian in the 1930s, was eager to enlist with the army. However, due to his myopia, his weak chest, and his poor physique, he was rejected for military service and assigned to administrative work. According to C. Scott, Dawson had dreaded administrative office work more than the trenches but he was extremely “patriotic”.\(^{12}\) His nationalism must have provided him with the fortitude necessary to take up the rather more mundane domestic tasks. Nor was he the only one to be rejected by the military authorities. Hilaire Belloc went to see General Macdonough at the War Office and applied for a commission. But Macdonough refused to accept him. Belloc persisted in his attempts and after much vacillation by the authorities, his application was rejected. By October, he was becoming frustrated at his failure to get accepted. On 8 October, he informed his friend Maurice Baring that “they have not yet let me go to the War and I am correspondingly peevish.”\(^{13}\) Like Belloc, Montague was also keen to volunteer for the military. Although he experienced some obstacles because of his age – he was then forty-seven – he was finally accepted as a private in December through devious ways. It was said that he had dyed his grey hair yellow. Once he was accepted, he “went in with a will, in the plain spirit of patriotism.”\(^{14}\)

Leading Catholics who could not volunteer for the military offered their service in another equally important way: they sought to publicise the justice of Britain’s engagement in the cataclysm. Most of them simply placed the sole blame on the enemy


and argued that Britain’s position was rendered untenable by Germany’s invasion of Belgium. This was the underlying theme of a speech delivered by Lord Denbigh, the 9th Earl of Denbigh, a few days after Britain’s entry into the war. In his address to the people of Warwickshire, Denbigh averred that Britain could never have remained neutral. He maintained that the position suddenly changed when Germany attacked France and Belgium. This threatened Britain’s position because peace could never be secured if the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp were in the hands of a great continental power.\(^\text{15}\) Wilfrid Ward,\(^\text{16}\) the editor of the \textit{Dublin Review}, also professed himself certain that the war was unmistakably Germany’s fault. He argued that whereas Germany had been preparing for the war for the past ten years, Britain had a determined and dedicated peace party. Even British enthusiasts for the Empire, he claimed, had never promoted war.\(^\text{17}\) Montague sought to justify Britain’s position in another way. He felt that the actions of the British government were righteous and that Britain’s involvement was essential for victory. He strongly believed that Germany was the enemy of civilisation and that only one of the two warring parties could prevail.\(^\text{18}\) Baron Friedrich von Hügel,\(^\text{19}\) the British-based Catholic theologian, essentially shared this view. At the beginning of the struggle, von Hügel addressed a letter to Alfred Loisy, the French modernist, telling him that his heart

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\(^{14}\) O. Elton, op. cit., p. 106.  
\(^{15}\) Press cutting from the \textit{Midland Daily Telegraph}, 10 Aug. 1914, CR2017/F221/6, Fielding Papers, Warwickshire Record Office.  
\(^{16}\) Born in January 1856, Ward was raised in an ultramontane environment. He became editor of the \textit{Dublin Review} in 1906 and in 1912 he published his monumental \textit{Life of Cardinal Newman}, which comprised some 1300 pages. He died in April 1916.  
\(^{19}\) Although Baron von Hügel had lived in England since his marriage in 1873, he was not naturalized until after the outbreak of war.
was with the Allies and against the abhorred Prussian militarists. He wholeheartedly accepted Britain’s moral position.\textsuperscript{20}

The national Catholic press, like the laity, reared its nationalistic head when Britain entered the maelstrom. One of the most chauvinistic of the Catholic organs was The Tablet, under the editorship of John George Snead-Cox. In its first issue after Britain had declared war, The Tablet assured its readers that Britain went into the fight secure in the knowledge that she was “striking for the noblest of all causes – for the sake of human faithfulness, for the sanctity of treaties and of trust between nations.”\textsuperscript{21} Although the Catholic Times was initially a little less nationalistic, it soon equalled The Tablet’s ultrapatriotism. In its first issue after the outbreak of hostilities, it refused to point the finger at anyone for starting the war. It merely commented that the war was a terrible crime and warned that whoever was responsible for it was “the most miserable of men.”\textsuperscript{22} By the second week of the war, however, it had hardened its tone somewhat. It declared that Britain was involved in a life or death struggle against a power that believed in its own strength only and manifestly aimed at European hegemony. The Catholic organ placed sole responsibility for the war on Germany. It claimed that, from the German point of view, peace could only be attained when she could enforce her will onto other powers.\textsuperscript{23}

The Catholic Herald showed more restraint, taking a more spiritual approach. Referring to the slaughter, it implored the British people to unite and found it astonishing “after nearly two thousand years of Christian civilisation that we should be eye-witnesses of

\textsuperscript{21} The Tablet, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{22} Catholic Times, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 14 Aug. 1914, p. 5.
such a prodigy.”\textsuperscript{24} The \textit{Catholic Herald} was not willing to speculate on who was responsible for the war, but it observed that one thing was certain: Britain had to brace herself for the extreme sacrifice, and had to be generous in her charity toward those who were less fortunate than herself.\textsuperscript{25}

As with the Catholic clergy, Belgium figured largely in shaping the Catholic laity’s conception of the enemy. This was apparent in Wilfrid Ward’s early booklet, \textit{England and the Present War}, in which the problem of Belgium eclipsed all other issues raised by the war. In this booklet, Ward reminded his countrymen that Belgium, as a neutral country, was forbidden to make alliances. She had to rely on the integrity and good faith of the three great powers – France, Britain and Germany – to keep their word in upholding her neutrality.\textsuperscript{26} Ward observed that not only did Germany attack Belgium without provocation, but also that German soldiers employed the most horrific methods in order to subjugate her inhabitants. Ward also published an article in the \textit{Dublin Review} entitled “The Conduct of the German Soldiery” which explored the theme of atrocities. In this, he conceded that not all stories about German cruelties in Belgium were true, but asserted that this did not mean that German brutalities were not taking place.\textsuperscript{27} It was true, he admitted, that in some villages and towns, instructions not to fire on the German soldiers were often transgressed. But in retaliation, Ward emphasised, German troops had acted with ferocity, slaughtering the innocent and the guilty without trial. The reason for this was “to terrorize people by ‘frightful examples.’”\textsuperscript{28} Cecil Chesterton\textsuperscript{29} endorsed

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Catholic Herald}, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 8.  
\textsuperscript{26} W. Ward, \textit{England and the Present War}, p. 8.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, pp. 37-38.  
\textsuperscript{29} Cecil Chesterton, the brother of G. K. Chesterton, converted to Catholicism in 1913. He joined the British colours in 1916 and served as a private in the Highland Light Infantry. He died in December 1918.
Ward’s theme. He argued also that the Germans had implemented their campaign of terror intentionally so that they would terrify the Belgian people into submission. Their aim, he maintained, was to reach and occupy France as swiftly as possible. But Belgium was an obstacle; and to conquer the whole of Belgium by a military campaign would delay their plans considerably. Hence, Chesterton explained, Belgium had to experience a reign of terror so intense as to horrify her into submission.30 This terror campaign in Belgium by the Germans served only to harden British Catholic attitudes towards the enemy.

More importantly, from the early months of 1915, some of the key bodies representing Catholic opinion in the political arena ensured that the Catholic view was brought to the attention of the political world. At least one Catholic organisation felt it necessary to convey its indignation on behalf of English Catholics at the abominations committed by the Germans. In its annual general meeting of June 1915, the Catholic Union of Great Britain (C.U.G.B.) passed a resolution condemning German actions. It was resolved:

That the Catholic Union of Great Britain expresses its horror and indignation at the sacrilegious way in which many of the Belgian and French churches have been treated by the German soldiers, and also at the terrible cruelties inflicted upon many priests, religious and a large section of the civilian population.

The C.U.G.B. considered it its duty, as the central body representing English Catholics, to protest formally and most strongly against such depredations.31 Although the protest did not have any effect on the way Germany conducted her war thenceforth of course, it

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shows the extent of unanimity among the Catholic laity in both sympathising with Belgium and in exhibiting its “patriotism” to the whole country.

As with the Catholic clergy, the Catholic laity also looked upon Belgium as the little Catholic kingdom that had saved Britain and Europe from the Prussian beast. Catholic laymen and the Catholic press eulogised Belgium’s stance for liberty and civilisation, and, of course, Catholicism and piety. Cecil Chesterton wrapped his laudation in passionate language. He proudly related the tale that when the Germans approached Liége and ordered its surrender, they were answered with a “thunder of its guns.” He affirmed that this was the answer of civilisation. “Tiny Belgium” was standing alone at that moment and was not afraid of facing that immense aggression. She “felt her kinship with Europe, answered for Europe, and placed Europe forever in her debt.” The Catholic press showed even more pride in Catholic Belgium’s defiance, and expressed immense gratitude for her inspirational stand. The *Glasgow Observer* congratulated the “little Catholic Kingdom” and lamented that the rest of the war might bring her much suffering. But the *Observer* consoled the Belgian people, proclaiming that they “have stood for liberty and patriotism at the dawn of one of the stormiest days of European history.” The *Observer* did not omit to remind Europe of the debt she owed Belgium. Nor did it forget to point out that as Belgium was a Catholic country – “the only country in the world having an expressly ‘Catholic’ Government” – Catholics could well express pride in their co-religionists. *The Universe* urged the importance of recognising that

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32 C. Chesterton, op. cit., p. 166.
33 *Glasgow observer*, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
34 Ibid, p. 9. Belgium had had a Catholic government since 1884 when the Catholic party came to power and remained there until 1914, to the detriment of the Liberals. During the war, Liberals and Socialists were brought into the government, which was led by Charles de Broqueville, but the Catholic party still retained a large majority in both Chambers of the Legislature. See F. E. Huggett, *Modern Belgium*,
while Britain was fighting for Belgium, Belgium had fought for the preservation of the British Empire. The Catholic organ was careful to remind the British public of the consequences that would have befallen their country had Belgium not resisted. It conjectured that in all probability, the French army would have been defeated and Paris fallen before Britain could act. The British were, therefore, under an immense obligation to the Belgian people. Underlying this constant allusion to Belgium’s heroic resistance was an implicit reminder that in fact it was Catholicism which was responsible for saving Europe and the British Empire specifically.

The resistance of Belgium was bound to have severe consequences for that unhappy country. The destruction of Louvain in late August 1914 drew condemnation from the whole of British society. *The Times*, for example, castigated strongly the destruction of “the peaceful and historic old city of Louvain, the Oxford of Belgium.” *The Times*, Louvain was “the most celebrated seat of learning in the Low Countries”.

But to the Catholic body, Louvain represented much more than a “celebrated seat of learning”. It was ingrained with a Catholic past that embodied Catholic learning and culture. Thus, the Catholic body, and the Catholic press in particular, issued venomous denunciations of such acts of vandalism. The *Catholic Herald*, which had shown some moderation at the outbreak of war, abandoned its formerly temperate position. It called the event an “unforgivable crime” and condemned the razing to the ground of Louvain as a loss to the whole world and to Catholics in particular. *The Universe* of 4 September dedicated its front-page article to the destruction of Louvain. The article commenced with

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36 *The Times*, 29 Aug. 1914, p. 9
the dramatic phrase: “Louvain is dead!” It lamented the loss of a rich history and heritage and noted that only the German “barbarians” could carry out such a flagrant act. The Germans, it said, demonstrated their brutality by outdoing the Goths, Vandals, and Mohammedans in their evil.\textsuperscript{38}

As the magnitude of the damage wreaked upon Belgium and the hardships faced by her inhabitants came to light, British Catholics contributed generously to alleviate Belgian suffering. Their contributions included generous donations to charitable funds as well as the accommodation of refugees. The Duke of Norfolk, for example, donated one thousand pounds to the Belgian Relief Fund.\textsuperscript{39} Meanwhile, places throughout Britain were being prepared for the Belgian refugees. Thus, in September 1914 the Belgian Catholic Relief Committee of Glasgow was taking every precaution in case Belgian refugee children were directed to them. St. Mary’s Industrial School was prepared to accommodate them.\textsuperscript{40} Some Catholics had conceived of more grandiose plans. Hilaire Belloc proposed to Charles Sarolea that the Allied governments should extricate Belgium from her tribulation with a large cash grant. It was not good enough, Belloc stipulated, for the governments to grant Belgium a loan equivalent to the amount taken by the German invaders. It would be “infinitely better for the Allied Governments to make a grant, not a loan,” to one of the committees that were raising money for Belgium. Such a policy, in his opinion, would prove that Prussia’s methods of infamy had failed. It would also

\textsuperscript{37} Catholic Herald, 5 Sep. 1914, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{38} The Universe, 4 Sep. 1914, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{39} [Count de] Lalaing to Duke of Norfolk, c525, 15\textsuperscript{th} Duke of Norfolk Papers.
\textsuperscript{40} David Muller to Canon Ritchie, 21 Sep. 1914, GC 46/39, Maguire Papers. The Catholic Herald of 21 May 1915 estimated that around 50,000 Belgian refugees had arrived in Britain by that time. F. E. Huggett, op. cit., claimed that as many as 100,000 made their way across the channel and refugee camps were set up at Earl’s Court and Edmonton to accommodate some of them (p. 67).
ensure that “Belgium shall live until vengeance is taken.”\textsuperscript{41} The press forewent such proposals and concentrated on publicising the plight of the Belgians. Once \textit{King Albert’s Book} was completed, for example, it was reviewed and publicised in Catholic newspapers.\textsuperscript{42}

Cardinal Mercier aroused the same admiration among prominent British Catholic laymen as he did among the clergy. His pastoral letter of December 1914, “Patriotism and Endurance”, as noted previously, impressed British circles that were normally impervious to Catholic influences. But it was particularly esteemed by Catholics. On its publication, Wilfrid Ward devoted an article to the prelate’s pastoral. He deemed it of a poetic standard above normal literature, and felt that it had the power of a grief too deep to be uttered. Hence, it imparted strength to anyone who read it.\textsuperscript{43} Ward affirmed that the pastoral “will stand out for generations as a monument of Christian patience and courage, of Christianity in action….”\textsuperscript{44} Certain chauvinistic Catholics also used the pastoral to stimulate support for the war. On 27 January 1915, Lord Edmund Talbot sent a letter to Archbishop James Smith of St Andrews and Edinburgh suggesting that it was of paramount importance to make every possible effort to drive home the immense value of Mercier’s pastoral to the British people. Moreover, he urged, “it \textit{should be made use of to stimulate an interest in recruiting}” [my emphasis]. On 12 February, Talbot wrote again and enclosed an abbreviated copy of Mercier’s pastoral, noting that he did so with Bourne’s permission. He suggested that copies should be distributed at all diocesan churches free of charge. Talbot further proposed that a parcel containing copies of the

\textsuperscript{41} Hilaire Belloc to Sarolea, 12 Sep. 1914, Sar.coll.3, Sarolea Papers.
\textsuperscript{42} See, for example, the \textit{Catholic Times}, 18 Dec. 1914, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p. 226.
abbreviated version should be sent to each elementary school with an attached cover note. The note must state that the parcel was “Sent by request of the Archbishop”, and that a copy of the pastoral was to be given to each boy and girl.45 Such a request reflected the British Catholics’ eagerness to cooperate with their government in order that the war might be prosecuted more effectively, and a vision of the war as a crusade against barbarism might be carefully fostered.

After the initial shock of the brutal invasion of Belgium, British Catholics became as convinced as other Britons of the injustice of the enemy’s cause. If Germany’s cause was unjust, they reasoned, then she must be stripped of her power and never be allowed to inflict such horror on the world again. Cecil Chesterton’s solution to the German problem was radical. He submitted that what was required was the complete abolition of Prussia as a state. She would be forbidden to arm and would be isolated from the rest of civilisation. In addition, Alsace-Lorraine would be handed over to France, and Poland could be resurrected as an independent kingdom and given Silesia. Austria would become the major power and could be “the focal point for a Catholic South German nation.”46 Thus, in this early stage of the war there was a notable lack of condemnation of Austria by prominent British Catholic laymen and the charges of barbarism that were so often attributed to Germany were seldom applied to her.47 The attitude of the Catholic press implied the confirmation of Chesterton’s proposals. The Catholic Herald of 14 November 1914 contained a lengthy article on the terrible consequences that would take place if Germany won the war. It warned those who were not alarmed at the prospect of a

47 Austria will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 8.
German triumph to consider what had happened on the continent in the previous three months. The article, however, appeared to be merely for propaganda purposes in order to startle men into enlisting.

Portraying Germany’s cause as manifestly unjust of course placed righteousness on Britain’s side and so served to encourage more British men into action. Further, it dispelled notions among neutral Catholic countries that Britain was also guilty of fomenting war. Catholic laymen, therefore, went to great pains to make public their conviction that Britain’s struggle was in a just cause. As the winter of 1914 approached, a public manifesto was prepared in which British Catholics as a body were to affirm their belief that the British were engaged in a just war. This manifesto, prepared by Wilfrid Ward in November 1914, was circulated to leading Catholics for signature. It stated that:

It is my firm belief that the British Government did its utmost to avoid a European War, and was absolutely sincere in its desire to maintain peace with Germany. I am further satisfied that we are bound in honour to take up arms in defence of a small State to which our word was repeatedly pledged, and that the war in which we are engaged is consequently a just one which we could not have avoided without grave dereliction of duty.

The publication of the manifesto is highly important for two reasons. Firstly, the manifesto made very significant claims about the origins of the war, amounting to a wholesale acceptance of the British government’s case for intervention in the European conflict, on the grounds of the pledge to defend Belgian neutrality. Secondly, the accuracy of the claims made in the manifesto was accepted by the majority of the British signatories without question. Consequently, this shows the extent that British Catholics went to in order to prove their loyalty, a loyalty which had been questioned even in the late nineteenth century.

48 Catholic Herald, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 4.
49 Statement by W. Ward signed by Catholics of U.K., Ms. 38347, IV, (i)5, Ward Papers, Manuscripts Collection, St. Andrews University Library.
Once Ward had completed the final draft of the statement, he transmitted a copy of it to dozens of the leading Catholics throughout Britain, both clergy and lay persons, and to prelates in Ireland. He requested that the recipients sign it and return it to him. Most of those who received a copy avidly signed it and returned it with comments. Archbishop Edward Ilsley\textsuperscript{50} of Birmingham was most anxious to sign it and hoped people would read it. Bishop Casartelli firmly believed that Britain desired peace and that the war could not have been avoided after Belgium’s invasion. Some prelates assisted Ward, suggesting the names of other sympathetic clergy. For example, Thomas Dunn, who was to be consecrated bishop of Nottingham in 1916, signed the statement and advised Ward to approach the provost of the metropolitan chapter also.\textsuperscript{51}

In contrast to the British prelates, the Irish hierarchy showed considerable hesitancy – if not outright opposition – to supporting the statement. This may have been due more to tense British-Irish relations at the outbreak of war, which almost led to civil war, than to their positions as Catholics.\textsuperscript{52} In any case, at the time the statement was written, Cardinal Michael Logue,\textsuperscript{53} the Irish primate, refused to sign it on the basis that it was not entirely true. He took exception to the stress on Belgium as the sole cause of British intervention. He explained that in his view, even if Germany had respected Belgian neutrality, the United Kingdom could not have stood by while France was being crushed. Moreover, he pointed out that the manifesto would do more harm than good by

\textsuperscript{50} Archbishop Ilsley was born in May 1838. He was archbishop of Birmingham from 1911 to 1921 when he retired. He died in 1926.
\textsuperscript{51} All these replies are found in Ms. 38347, IV, (i)1, Ward Papers.
\textsuperscript{52} For British-Irish relations during the war, see chapter 7 below.
\textsuperscript{53} Micheal Logue was born in co. Donegal, Ireland, in October 1840. In 1857, he entered Maynooth College to study for the priesthood. He was ordained priest in 1866 and elected bishop of Raphoe in 1879. By 1887, Logue was elevated to the archbishopric of Armagh and was created cardinal in 1893. He remained primate of Ireland until his death in 1924. For a short biography, see Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930, pp. 516-517.
alienating the remnants of pro-Allied Catholic opinion in neutral countries, such as Spain, and even in the Rhineland of Germany. Although the Cardinal was sympathetic to Belgium, he felt that his principal duty was to Catholic interests all over Europe and so had to decline signing an inevitably divisive and partisan manifesto. 54 William Walsh, the Archbishop of Dublin, shared Logue’s objections. Walsh regretted that he could not sign the declaration because it contained statements the truth of which he could not know, or could not believe were true. As for the attitude of the British government in the July-August crisis, he felt puzzled at the departure of the Radical Lord John Morley from the Cabinet in protest to British intervention. “Anyhow,” Walsh added, “it hinders me from having any ‘firm conviction’ upon certain aspects of the case.” 56

As far as can be discovered, only one British Catholic, and a highly eminent one at that, appears to have disapproved of Ward’s statement. The irony is that the Duke of Norfolk was discontented with the statement not because it was ultra-patriotic, but because for him it was not patriotic enough. He could not attach his signature because he did not accept that Britain’s entry into the war should have been based only on the fact that Belgian neutrality had been violated. He had long believed that Britain was honourably obliged to go to France’s rescue if ever Germany attacked the latter, even though no binding treaty of alliance existed between them. He could not but conceive that, even had Belgian neutrality been respected, Britain would not have betrayed French

54 Sir John Ross to Ward, [Dec. 1914], Ms. 38347, VII, 256/2(b), Ward Papers.
55 Archbishop Walsh was born in Dublin in January 1841. He was educated at the Catholic University of Ireland and St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth. In 1881, he was appointed president of Maynooth College and was consecrated archbishop of Dublin in 1885. In 1908, he became the first chancellor of the National University of Ireland.
56 Archbishop William Walsh to Ward, 13 Dec. 1914, Ms. 38347, IV, (i)1, Ward Papers.
trust by remaining on the sideline. To have stayed out would have been madness; more so because Britain would have had to fight Germany single-handedly later on.\(^5^7\)

Despite the omission of the above weighty names, the final statement contained a formidable number of leading Catholics. The prelates included the names of Bourne, Gasquet, the archbishops of Birmingham and Liverpool, and all the Catholic bishops of Great Britain. Laymen included the Catholic peers as well as the entire body of British Catholic MPs. Many of the prominent publicists also signed it. Among them were Belloc, James Britten, the secretary of the Catholic Truth Society, Cecil Chesterton, Lister Drummond, chairman of the Catholic Federation, W. S. Lilly, and J. C. Snead-Cox. This statement offered a unified, explicit and unequivocal assurance to the world of the loyalty of British Catholics and their deep convictions regarding the justice of Britain’s cause. Ward said as much in *England and the Present War*. He asserted that British Catholics were as convinced as other Britons “that this is a just war dictated by our duty to Belgium and necessary in the interests of civilisation.”\(^5^8\)

It was Wilfrid Ward’s task to redress the false impressions among Catholics in neutral nations that Britain was guilty of the war. Once he had acquired the signatures of most of the leading Catholics in the kingdom for his manifesto, he planned to write a detailed explanation to accompany it, and to circulate both in those countries. He hoped to put forward the British case on the causes of the war and evidence of Britain’s efforts towards peace. As he explained, such a record would be strengthened if it were demonstrated that Catholics in Britain were firmly convinced of Britain’s righteousness.\(^5^9\)

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\(^5^7\) Duke of Norfolk to Ward, 27 Nov. 1914, Ms. 38347, VII, 222(a), Ward Papers.


\(^5^9\) Printed letter from Wilfrid Ward to Catholics, 22 Dec. 1914, DDSY(2)/1/28, Sykes Papers, Hull University Library Archives.
A copy of the manifesto, privately printed, survives in Ward’s papers. The Manifesto appears not to have been published in the British newspaper press. It may have been circulated to leading Catholics and certainly the signatories. Ward did succeed in gaining publicity for the manifesto in the neutral press as he had planned. He circulated it to British embassies and consulates abroad. In any case, the manifesto remains a remarkable example of the strength of nationalistic opinion in British Catholic circles.

But even this manifesto was not without its critics. For as the *Glasgow Observer* indicated, as long as Russia was seen to be persecuting Catholics and enslaving Galicia, neutral Catholic opinion would be swung against the Allies. This was natural, the *Observer* calculated, since they saw the French and British press condemning German atrocities in Belgium wholeheartedly, yet uttering not a word against Russia.

Undoubtedly, such exercises as Wilfrid Ward’s manifesto reflected majority Catholic opinion accurately enough. However, a small number of prominent Catholic individuals dissented, including E. I. Watkin, Stanley Morison, and most notably, Francis Meynell. Around the time that Ward’s statement was produced, Meynell wrote a blistering article entitled “The War’s a Crime” in *The Herald*, where he had been manager since 1913. The article was in response to Edmund Gosse, who had written an

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60 On 4 December 1914, Lord Hardinge, the British ambassador to Spain, reported that he could publish Ward’s pamphlet in Conservative newspapers in Spain. By May 1915, Hardinge reported to Ward that he had distributed 10,000 copies of his pamphlet. Lord Hardinge to Lady Barrett, 4 Dec. 1914; Hardinge to Ward, 25 May 1915, Ms. 38347, VII, 127(b), Ward Papers. Ward seemed to have had less success in America, where he sent his pamphlet to Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador to the U.S. Although Spring-Rice found the pamphlet to be “admirable”, he advised Ward that he could not circulate the pamphlet. “The reason is the suspicion with which anything coming from conservative English Catholics is regarded here especially among the Irish.” Cecil Spring-Rice to Ward, 25 Mar. 1915, Ms. 38347, VII, 276/4, Ward Papers.


62 Francis Meynell was the son of Wilfrid and Alice Meynell. His father was the manager of Burns & Oates and his mother the famous poet. After leaving Trinity College in 1909 without a degree, he worked for his father’s firm. He leaned towards left-wing politics and became a communist after World War I. Specialising in book design, he founded the Nonesuch Press in 1923.
extravagantly chauvinistic article in the *Edinburgh Review*, on the redemptive effects of the war. In his article, Gosse included a remark that the “red stream of blood is the Condy’s Fluid, the sovereign disinfectant” for the British.\(^6^3\) This “reptilious doctrine” outraged Meynell, who proceeded at once to dissect such a positive view of the slaughter that was taking place. He deplored the horrors that were materializing on the battlefield, the blood clotting the land and the corpses choking the rivers. He chided Gosse, whom he accused of being invigorated by the rivers of blood.\(^6^4\)

Francis Meynell was not content to rebuke Gosse only, but extended his attack to the British clergy and politicians. He chastised the clergy for sanctioning killing by the soldier and ventured to advise them “to turn to [their] master for guidance.” He argued: “This war, and every other war, was in the mind of Christ when He uttered His almost humorous paradox, ‘The meek shall inherit the earth.’” He then turned to the exposition of the political fallacy of the war. Like the Duke of Norfolk, Meynell believed that Belgium was Britain’s excuse for entering the fight. But unlike the Duke, who considered Britain’s honour at risk if she stayed out, Meynell insisted that Britain’s honour was sacrificed in compounding the horror, through her intervention. He stressed the pointlessness of an intervention based on an alliance system, created by handfuls of diplomats, and inevitably subject to change in the future. He wrote:

> We have sacrificed our honour, our principles, our loved ones, our very God; that at the end Sir Edward Grey and the Kaiser may kiss one another, on a mountain of corpses, and (who knows?) conclude an armed alliance against Russia.

He argued that Germany was not alone to blame for unleashing the war, for Britain’s secret foreign policy had always been to isolate Germany on the continent. He maintained


\(^{64}\) “The War’s a Crime”, *The Herald*, 19 Dec. 1914, newspaper cutting, Box XXIV, P II, 13, Morison Papers, Manuscripts Department, Cambridge University Library.
that the politicians, diplomatists and political capitalists were responsible for the war and that they should fight their own wars. Significantly, he rejected the idea that this was a noble war to end all wars; for Meynell, the European war-makers were hacking “Lady Peace…to pieces with the sword of War.”

This last idea is significant because Meynell was not alone among Catholic laymen, even those supporting the war, to reject the Wellsian formula that the war would end all wars. In contrast to many leading Liberal and Fabian idealists who justified and promoted the war as a crusade to completely abolish militarism, there were a number of “realists” who saw the struggle in a clearer light. Mark Sykes was one such person. He was not so optimistic about the war being fought to end all wars. While supporting the war, he frankly recognised that the war would not end armed conflicts and the world would not be ruled by negotiation. However, he was hopeful that out of the Great War, future generations “will be able to meet great occasions and crises with larger, more just views.”

In addition to Meynell, there were some Catholic organs that were willing to show, if not opposition to the war, then at least moderation towards the enemy. An instance of this is shown in the Westminster Cathedral Chronicle, which was edited by Mgr. Canon Howlett. In its December 1914 issue, the Chronicle contained an article entitled “Shall We Let the Kaiser Spoil Our Christmas?” The author reminded his readers that the war had to be carried on with clean hearts and souls; that although it was forced upon them, they need not feel hate towards their enemies. He intimated that it was

65 Ibid.
67 Quoted in S. Leslie, Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters, pp. 235-236.
“wrong and unworthy” even to hate the man at the other end of the bayonet. People may hate Kaiserism, Prussian militarism, the destruction of Rheims and Louvain, but “hating the sin does not mean hating the sinner.” Amidst the fulminating temper of the times, this was another Catholic voice restraining the extreme nationalistic wave that was enveloping the nation.

The religious factor was exploited by those promoting the view that justice was on the side of the Allies. A growing number of Catholic laymen came to believe that the war was a religious struggle, even if they did not always agree on the kind of religion against which they were fighting. Von Hügel, for instance, believed that the fight was against fundamental Protestantism. His friend Loisy could not justify the war within a Christian perspective. Hügel, on the other hand, believed that the war fitted in “a grandiose ideology of fundamental Catholicism versus fundamental Protestantism which led to Prussianism.” He was so persuaded on this point that he inevitably became critical of the Pope’s neutrality. At the same time, Cecil Chesterton considered the fight was against the new “religion” of Prussian militarism. He declared that “it is that religion which Europe, if it is to save itself, must first defeat and then destroy.” Belloc’s opinion varied still more from the above two arguments. In his judgement, the Entente was fighting against a form of atheism, Prussian atheism. He explained that “The fundamental characteristic of Atheism is not the formal denial of a God; it is the denial of or indifference to the Divine effect in mankind.” In a way, the differences in these varied views present the difficulty in analysing the official British Catholic position through the

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68 “Shall We Let the Kaiser Spoil Our Christmas?”, Dec. 1914, Westminster Cathedral Chronicle (p. 310), AAW.
69 M. de la Bedoyere, op. cit., p. 281.
70 C. Chesterton, op. cit., p. 5.
representation of the laity because it was not a unified and coherent group as the clergy was.

Nevertheless, here it would be appropriate to explore in greater detail how Hilaire Belloc, one of the most well known of British Catholics, viewed the conflict. During the war, Belloc worked for a weekly journal called *Land and Water*. The journal was launched in August 1914 by Murray Allison, the former advertisement manager for *The Times*, as a private venture, and it reported on various aspects of the war. On 9 September 1914, Allison approached Belloc and requested that he contribute a weekly article to the journal. Belloc consented and thereafter wrote weekly articles that were read with ardour throughout the war. His articles offered in-depth commentaries on all military theatres and described strategies and plans of attack.\(^72\) Besides gaining the pinnacle of his fame through these informative articles, he also travelled to the Western Front a number of times and was therefore able to investigate the war at close quarters. Thus, he gained a unique insight into how the war was being fought.

As an expert who obviously understood the austerity of the front, it may be surprising to find that he continually stressed the necessity of fighting in the awful hardships of the trenches. Throughout the four years of slaughter, Belloc maintained that “‘Prussianism’ was an evil which would destroy Catholic Europe.”\(^73\) For this reason, he upheld the notion that the hardship of the soldiers was not only necessary, but also glorifying for those who faced such adversity in order to defend Catholic civilisation. For the Catholic civilisation that Belloc beheld was clashing with pagan barbarism. This “was to be welcomed only in so far as England, quite by accident, found herself fighting on the

\(^{71}\) Quoted in the *Catholic Times*, 21 Aug. 1914, p. 3.
side of Catholic civilisation.”74 He insisted that Catholicism, which represented European civilisation, was being challenged by the “Protestant-atheist” state of Prussia.75 Belloc never wavered from this. Indeed, in 1921 he published a major study, *Europe and the Faith*, in which he offered a religious explanation of the origins of the war, stressing the evil effects of the Reformation in Germany.76

In view of Prussia’s blatant challenge to civilised Europe, Belloc increasingly saw Poland as the critical test of the war. Speaking at the sixtieth celebration of the Birmingham Catholic Reunion in January 1915, Belloc explained that Poland was the “vital Catholic nation” which would eventually decide the balance in Eastern Europe.77 Thus, he became convinced that whatever the outcome of the war, the necessary result must be the revival of Poland.78 That is not to say that he believed Germany could attain

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74 Ibid, p. 226.
75 J. P. Corrin, op. cit., p. 68.
76 H. Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, (London: Constable, 1920). From the opening pages, Belloc stressed that “The Faith is Europe and Europe is the Faith.” He argued that the Roman Empire had been transformed by the Catholic Church from within and made Europe what it was; that without the Catholic Church as a unifying force, Europe would perish, as the war had proved. This was essential to understanding why the war had occurred. The chief reason for the war, he suggested, was Prussia. Prussia arose because it was “a neglected area” which was not cultivated either by the East or by the West. Consequently, it was fertile ground for “weeds” to grow. Prussia already contained the weeds but “could not extend until the West [was] weakened through schism. It had to wait until the battle of the Reformation died down.” Once it did, the “weeds” overran half of Europe and challenged civilisation (pp. 9-12). In other words, the Reformation had weakened the Catholic Church and this led to the rise of Prussia. For this reason, Belloc saw the war as a clash between this new form of barbarism that emerged in the wake of the Reformation, and the bulwark that opposed it, “the old Christian rock.” But his thesis that the Catholic Church made Europe and that without it Europe would disintegrate was subject to numerous criticisms. Among them was J. W. Poynter, *Hilaire Belloc Keeps the Bridge*, (London: Watts & Co., 1929). Even some of his fellow Catholics felt uneasy at his forceful hypothesis. They thought Belloc’s onslaught was exaggerated and could even be dangerous, since it might lead to additional restraints for Catholics. See, for example, E. and R. Jebb, *Testimony to Hilaire Belloc*, (London: Methuen and Co., 1956), p. 74.
77 *Catholic Herald*, 23 Jan. 1915, p. 1. He maintained this view in World War II. In an article he wrote to *The Weekly Review* on 4 January 1940, he stressed the argument that Catholic Poland was the test for the survival of Western civilisation. In the article, entitled “The Test is Poland”, he wrote: “A free and sufficiently independent Polish state is the condition of civilized Western influence in Central Europe. It is the necessary counterbalance to the Prussian spirit.” He warned that the governing elite needed to realise Poland’s critical importance. H. Belloc, *One Thing and Another*, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1955), p. 206.
78 Belloc to Ward, 9 Aug. 1914, Ms. 38347, VII, 26, Ward Papers.
victory, for as early as January 1915, he accurately predicted that the Hohenzollerns would not survive the war.\footnote{R. Speaight (ed.), \textit{Letters from Hilaire Belloc}, p. 67.}

The Catholic Press also tried to publicise the plight of Poland. Catholic newspapers, for example, were delighted when, a few weeks into the war, Russia declared that she would restore Poland’s independence on the conclusion of war.\footnote{The announcement was made on 7 August 1914 by Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army. Although the proclamation had limited effect in Poland, the British} The Catholic Press in particular, never missing an opportunity to promote Ireland’s cause, commented that Russia’s promise would be especially welcome among the Irish, “for Poland has been [Ireland’s] companion in martyrdom from foreign oppression.” The \textit{Catholic Herald} went on to condemn Prussian and Russian treatment of the Poles, but praised Austria for her noteworthy rule. It proudly attributed the lack of persecution of Poles under Austrian rule to their common faith.\footnote{This Catholic organ at least, found that the example of Austria and Poland illustrated the solidarity of Catholicism, which could override national and political barriers abroad.} The Catholic Press was aware that Catholicism could be less of a unifying force in politics at home. This is demonstrated in a minor episode that occurred in early February 1915. As late as that time, certain Protestants were still protesting against the dispatch of the British Mission to the Vatican and against the government’s explanation that, among other things, the Mission would convey the government’s congratulations to the new Pope. On 4 February, after Grey had assured the House of Commons that the Mission was only temporary, Ronald McNeill, a conservative Unionist who belonged to the group known as the “die-hards”, interjected. He put three questions to Grey: whether...
it was “in accordance with recent precedent for an accredited representative of the British Crown to be sent to the Vatican”; whether it was customary to congratulate a head of any other Christian denomination upon his appointment to high office; and whether an exception was apparently being made in the case of Benedict XV’s recent election to the headship of the Catholic Church.\footnote{82} As the Chief Whip of the Unionist party, Edmund Talbot had privately made clear his opposition to these questions being put and, according to the \textit{Irish News}, walked out in protest before the questions were asked. The \textit{Irish News} ridiculed McNeill and other Ulster-based Protestant Unionists for their bigotry and had nothing but praise for Talbot. It commended him on his action and referred to him as a “devout, sincere, almost aggressive Catholic.”\footnote{83}

This generous praise was in stark contrast to the \textit{Catholic Herald}’s view of Talbot’s action. Although it expressed indignation at McNeill’s question, the \textit{Catholic Herald} was more indignant that Lord Talbot did not reply to him. The \textit{Herald} attacked Talbot in the most scathing terms and accused him of never undertaking to defend Catholicism against bigoted attacks from his own Tory party. It pressed its criticism by indicting him for not turning “a hair when his Party backed with all its might a campaign with ‘No Rome Rule’ for its rallying cry.” The newspaper accused him of sitting dumb “in the burrows of Ulster Unionism” while “the most sacred beliefs of his religion were mocked and reviled.” It expected him not only to answer the insults to his Church and its head by a public protest, but to resign from his position also.\footnote{84} This is one clear instance

\footnote{81} Catholic Herald, 22 Aug. 1914, p. 2. 
\footnote{82} House of Commons Debates, vol. 69, col. 121. 
\footnote{84} Catholic Herald, 13 Feb. 1915, p. 2.
where it is palpable that political divisions among British Catholics could not be
submerged by their allegiance to the Roman Church.

Such political divisions, less grave but very real, also existed between Catholic
Liberal newspapers and the Conservative press, particularly that of Lord Northcliffe.85
The Catholic press was not detached from the war of words that occasionally took place
between popular organs loyal to the various political parties, especially in the trying times
of war. From the early stages of the war, popular Catholic newspapers that supported the
Liberals defended the government against the vilification of the Tory press. The Catholic
Herald, in particular, constantly accused the Tories of undermining the government. On
28 November 1914, it charged the Tory press with “doing its best to calumniate and
injure the government in all directions in the hope of gaining some Party advantage at a
near date.”86 In May 1915, Lord Northcliffe started criticising the government for the
ammunition crisis and blamed Lord Kitchener, who at this time was at the zenith of his
popularity, for the shortage of high explosive shells. On 21 May, Northcliffe wrote in the
Daily Mail that the British army was debilitated because of the shortage of shells, which
was a result of the incompetence of Kitchener.87 This brazen attack on one of the most
highly regarded figures in the country unleashed a hurricane in Britain. But the Catholic
Herald had been bitterly attacking Northcliffe and his press in its weekly columns long
before that. Three weeks before, it had deprecated the hurtful campaign that was being

85 Alfred Harmsworth was raised to the peerage in 1905 as Baron Northcliffe. By 1915, his Tory press
comprised the Evening News, Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, and The Times. For his definitive biography, see R.
Northcliffe Diary, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931); J. L. Thompson, Politicians, the Press, &
Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe & the Great War, 1914-1919, (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press,
86 Catholic Herald, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 2.
87 R. M. Wilson, Lord Northcliffe: A Study, (London: Ernest Benn, 1927), pp. 231-233. See also J. L.
Thompson, op. cit., chapter 3.
conducted against the government and individual ministers. The Harmsworth press was accused of attempting to bring down the Asquith Cabinet.\textsuperscript{88} The \textit{Herald} pursued its campaign against Northcliffe and charged him with doing the work of Germany for her: “If Lord Northcliffe were receiving a subsidy from the German Emperor he could not do pro-German work more thoroughly in the press than he is doing it through his various publications at the present moment.”\textsuperscript{89}

The political differences among Catholics in supporting either the Liberal government or the Conservative opposition created tension in Catholic lay opinion which boiled to the surface frequently. When sensational political events erupted, such as the formation of a coalition government in May 1915, Catholics were found on both sides of the fence. The formation of the Coalition was immensely controversial, as leading Conservatives now took a number of front-bench posts, although H. H. Asquith retained the Prime Ministership and Edward Grey remained Foreign Secretary. The controversy was strengthened by Asquith’s decision to resolve the crisis occasioned by the Northcliffe-driven “shell scandal” and the resignation of Lord Fisher, the First Lord of the Admiralty, by requiring all his ministers to resign. He then reconstructed the government without properly discussing the issues with his Liberal Cabinet.\textsuperscript{90} The end of an exclusively Liberal government and the creation of the Coalition was a landmark in Liberal history because the party never recovered thereafter.

\textsuperscript{88} Catholic Herald, 1 May 1915, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 8 May 1915, p. 2.
This momentous political milestone in First World War Britain drew comments from both Catholic Conservatives as well as the Catholic Liberal press. Conservative laymen such as Hewins were pleased that the mismanagement of the war by the Liberals, as they saw it, would finally be checked by the inclusion of opposition representatives. As early as September 1914, Hewins predicted that a coalition might have to be established. He predicted that “The progress of the war will lead to some new and strange combination.”

Although he was satisfied with the reconstruction of the Cabinet in May 1915, he hoped that he would not be asked to join the Coalition since Asquith was still at the top. He also noted dryly that the ministry was constituted of “low Churchmen, Presbyterians, Nonconformists of various kinds, Jews, and men of no religion, but no Catholic, no High Churchmen.” He complained in his diary that although there were 14,000,000 Catholics in the Empire, there was not one Catholic in the government. By 28 May, however, he was assuaged by the appointment of two Catholics: James Hope as Treasurer of the Household and Lord Talbot as Chief Whip.

The Catholic Conservative press agreed with the notion that the government had not been conducting the war effectively. The chief Catholic Conservative organ, *The Tablet*, seemed satisfied that the “Liberal Government [had] disappeared.” It blamed the government’s downfall on its misconduct of the war. The incompetence of the Liberals, according to *The Tablet*, had even led the government’s own supporters to despondency. In any case, the organ declared itself content with the composition of the Coalition, which

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92 Hewins Diaries, 26 May 1915, Hewins Papers.
93 Hewins Diaries, 28 May 1915, Hewins Papers.
implies that it did not object to Edward Carson’s inclusion in the new ministry.

Furthermore, it declared that “the new Government has the whole country at its back.” 95

Of course, it was scarcely the case that the whole country approved of the liquidation of the wholly Liberal Cabinet and the composition of the Coalition. Not surprisingly, the Catholic Liberal press reacted quite differently to the debacle of the Liberal Cabinet compared with *The Tablet*. The *Catholic Herald*, a long-standing supporter of the Liberal government, deplored strongly the reshuffle and called attention to the inclusion in the new government of men such as Walter Long, Lord Lansdowne, and Bonar Law, notorious opponents of Irish Home Rule. 96 In its issue of 12 June, it pressed its criticism of the Tories. It accused them of accepting positions in the Cabinet in return for remaining silent on the war. This “‘sharing of responsibility’ in return for place and emolument, is perhaps the most brazen trading upon patriotism that the world has ever seen.” 97

The *Catholic Times* was embittered by the downfall of the government and its replacement by the Coalition. But unlike the *Catholic Herald*, this Catholic weekly concentrated its attack on Lord Northcliffe and his Harmsworth press, which was widely credited with destroying the Liberal Cabinet. The *Catholic Times* joined the chorus of Liberal dailies in asserting that Northcliffe was more perilous to Britain than Germany herself. The *Catholic Times* stated that “the man was beyond defence” but extended its blame to the government who was not firm with Northcliffe and who allowed him to browbeat and frighten it into decisions. 98 It depicted the Tory press mogul as the

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95 Ibid.
96 *Catholic Herald*, 29 May 1915, p. 2.
97 Ibid., 12 June 1915, p. 2.
98 *Catholic Times*, 28 May 1915, p. 3.
uncrowned king, declaring that although King George reigned, Northcliffe ruled. The
*Catholic Times* seemed convinced that he had succeeded in creating the Coalition and that he had the power to bring about its downfall when he desired. In addition to this, the paper was singularly astounded by the appointment of Carson as Attorney General in the new government.\(^9^9\) The *Catholic Times* maintained its criticism of the new ministry well into 1916. As late as 25 February 1916, it was still expressing regret at the formation of the Coalition and its continuance. It complained that the incorporation of Tories into the government had created “slackness rather than briskness.” Since the previous May, blunders had taken place on various fields of operation and no one was held responsible.\(^1^0^0\)

It was not only the Catholic press that became involved in contests with adversaries from the opposite side of the political spectrum. Prominent Catholic laymen were also occasionally embroiled in political controversy arising from the war. One case in point concerned Hilaire Belloc, who had been closely aligned with Liberalism. In November 1915, he announced that he would henceforth refuse to allow the Harmsworth press to quote from his articles in *Land and Water*. Because of his refusal, he earned the indignation of that section of the press, where his war articles were ridiculed as offering inaccurate information. Soon after, *Everyman* magazine also accused Belloc of inaccuracies. Some insight into the ferocity of this controversy is given in Belloc’s letter of complaint to the editor of *Everyman*. In the letter, he defended himself against the accusation that he had given inaccurate information about the war. He pointed out that *Everyman* had extracted its information on the controversy directly from the *Daily Mail*,

\(^9^9\) Ibid., p. 4.
\(^1^0^0\) Ibid., 25 Feb. 1916, p. 3.
one of Northcliffe’s most sensational ultra-patriotic newspapers. He regretted that a respectable organ such as *Everyman* was following the example of the Harmsworth press, adding:

> I can both excuse and afford to despise the attacks of the Harmsworth Press. I can excuse it because I have long been, and I remain, actively opposed to the effect of that Press upon opinion. I believe it to be base and disastrous…. It defends itself as best as it may, and I shall certainly never waste a moment’s time in replying to it in the gutter province of its own columns. I can afford to despise it because Harmsworth has not yet found any competent military writer who will debase himself by writing such absurdities.\(^1^0^1\)

Belloc continued to attack Lord Northcliffe in the *New Witness*.\(^1^0^2\) He singled him out as a menace to the war effort because, among other things, he had attacked the government over the supply of munitions and attempted to taint Lord Kitchener’s reputation.\(^1^0^3\)

The *Catholic Herald* took it upon itself to defend Belloc against the obloquy of the Harmsworth press. It charged that press with longing to injure Belloc because he increased the sale of another paper with his outstanding articles. But Northcliffe’s attack, the *Herald* claimed, would only make Belloc more popular and “will be another nail in the coffin of Harmsworth infamy.”\(^1^0^4\)

Catholic laymen from the other side of the political spectrum were not dissuaded from offering equally critical views of the Liberals. As early as September 1914, Hewins wrote that the Liberals would start agitating to end the war as soon as the Germans were cleared from France and Belgium. This would be done because, in his opinion, “every day that the war continues makes the maintenance of Liberal policy more impossible.”\(^1^0^5\) He himself was in favour of waging the war through until a decision was reached by force of arms. Just a few weeks before the formation of the Coalition, he wrote that the

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\(^1^0^1\) Belloc to Editor of *Everyman* [Charles Sarolea], 14 Nov. 1915, Sar.coll.3, Sarolea Papers.
\(^1^0^2\) The *New Witness* was founded by Belloc as the *Eye-Witness* in 1911. In 1912, Cecil Chesterton succeeded Belloc as editor.
\(^1^0^4\) *Catholic Herald*, 11 Sep. 1915, p. 2.
war must be fought to a successful end, even if it meant the reconstruction of the Liberal ministry. He noted that “The present people are impossible.”\textsuperscript{106}

Despite these apparent differences that separated Catholic political opinion, the majority of British Catholic laymen were in close accord in their judgement of the conflict and supportive of the government’s determination to prosecute the war through to victory. This became all the more evident when horrendous methods of warfare, as seen from British eyes, were employed by an enemy that was increasingly looked upon as ruthless. An acute instance of this was the torpedoing of the \textit{Lusitania} in May 1915. Like the rest of the British public, both Catholic Conservatives and Liberals expressed outrage. Upon learning of the \textit{Lusitania}'s sinking, and the lives that perished with it, Hewins commented in his diary on May 10: “The general feeling resulting from the \textit{Lusitania} murder is that no vestige of excuse for associating success with present German methods must be left in the mind of any German.” The German Empire, he added, had to be broken even if that meant the waging of a long war and tremendous sacrifice.\textsuperscript{107}

The same determination that was displayed by Hewins was manifest in the \textit{Catholic Herald} a few days later. The \textit{Herald} labeled the sinking of the \textit{Lusitania} as an “unforgivable crime” which demonstrated Germany’s savagery. It argued that after such a barbarous crime, justice could only be attained by hanging the Kaiser.\textsuperscript{108} In the following week, the \textit{Herald} included an article on the notable preacher and writer, Fr.

\textsuperscript{105} Quoted in W. A. S. Hewins, op. cit., II, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p. 30. Between 1903 and 1917, Hewins was secretary of the Tariff Commission, a body of industrialists and economists who tried to formulate a policy of safeguarding British industry by advocating protectionism as opposed to free trade. They also encouraged the economic unity of the Empire. When the war started, it was evident that the whole economic situation had changed and that the Tariff Commission had to adapt to these changes. In 1916, Hewins proposed that the British Empire should unite in complete economic co-operation with the Allies in a policy directed against Germany.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
Basil Maturin, who had been among the 1,200 people who had drowned with the liner. The article revealed how Maturin had heroically given absolutions and saved a large number of lives until the ship sank. He could have saved himself but chose to save others instead. Fr. Maturin’s story was emphasised by the *Herald* to highlight the spirit of dedication and commitment that constituted the Catholic character.

This character of devotion and duty was constantly evinced by certain prominent Catholic laymen. W. A. S. Hewins, for example, illustrates the self-image of many Catholics in high positions, who believed themselves to be fulfilling their secular duties, with their religion as an illuminating guide. Hewins recognised the nature of the struggle in which Britain was involved and the difficult role he had to play in it. He claimed to be fully conscious that there was in his duty something more important than personal success or ambition, and that he had to “think of all problems as a Catholic, with entire objectivity.” In June 1915, he pointed out that although this was easier said than done, “I feel more and more everyday how impossible it is to accomplish without the full and careful discharge of my religious duties.” He professed himself to be aided in making difficult decisions by the comforting sacraments of confession and communion. In March 1916 he reflected that “Without the Catholic religion I should have been completely broken and lost during the last 12 months.”

Nevertheless, like other Catholic Conservatives, Hewins was an uncompromising imperialist who desired the maintenance of the British Empire. In an interview with the *Morning Post* in December 1914, he defended his conception of the British Empire as one including subject peoples and states. He argued that such states could reach their

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109 Ibid., 22 May 1915, p. 5.
highest development through unity as they were doing on the battlefield. The war had consolidated, rather than divided, different parts of the Empire.\textsuperscript{112} He believed that Catholics played an immense role in this consolidation, which had saved the Empire from the German onslaught, and he expressed pride in the high proportion of Catholic recruitment.\textsuperscript{113} Similarly, Hewins undertook to defend the British Empire to an international Catholic audience; he wrote a personal letter to Cardinal Gasquet in late 1915, contrasting the allegedly oppressive pattern of German imperialism with the beneficent British Empire. The Cardinal replied approvingly, arguing that if the war proved anything, it was that people could not be governed against their will and emphasising the need for Christian principles in governing states.\textsuperscript{114}

These principles were far from the minds of Italian statesmen when Italy entered the war on the side of the Allies in May 1915. Italy had been a member of the Triple Alliance for the previous thirty-two years; but when war broke out, she chose to remain neutral. Soon after, Antonio Salandra, the Italian Prime Minister, and Sidney Sonnino, the Foreign Minister, attempted to reach a deal with Austria whereby the latter would surrender Trieste and Trentino in return for the continuance of Italian neutrality. At the same time, negotiations were taking place with the Entente to secure conditions by which Italy would intervene on their side. As soon as the Vatican found out about Italian negotiations to enter the war, Pope Benedict endeavoured to persuade Austria to cede a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Hewins Diaries, 3 Mar. 1916, Hewins Papers.}
\bibitem{Press cutting from the \textit{Morning Post}, 18 Dec. 1914, Hewins 34/152, Hewins Papers.}
\bibitem{Hewins Diaries, 27 May 1915, Hewins Papers. Of an estimated 2,619,415 Catholics in Britain in 1914, it has been roughly calculated by M. Snape that at least 400,000 Catholics, including Irish Catholics, served in an army of 4,836,700 men from England, Scotland and Wales during the war. That is, approximately 8.27\% of the army from England, Scotland and Wales was Catholic. M. Snape, op. cit., p. 325.}
\bibitem{Gasquet to Hewins, 24 Oct. 1915, Hewins 58/166, Hewins Papers.}
\end{thebibliography}
significant part of territory to Italy in order to buy her continued neutrality. Italian intervention was not in the interest of the Vatican. One obvious reason was that the Pope opposed an extension of the military front believing that it would prolong the conflict. Another reason was the ambiguous position of the Vatican as the “guest” of the Italian kingdom. If Italy abandoned her neutrality, the Vatican would be obliged to dismiss those diplomats accredited to the Holy See by Germany and Austria and would become diplomatically isolated from the Central Powers. In addition, the Holy See favoured the preservation of Austria, the only Catholic great power left in Europe. Furthermore, at the end of hostilities, Italy’s intervention would most likely afford her a place at the peace conference while the Holy See would be excluded.¹¹⁵

These were adequate reasons for Benedict XV to attempt to induce Austria to meet sufficiently Italy’s demands to maintain her neutrality. The Allies naturally deprecated the Vatican’s attempt to prevent Italy from joining the war against the Central Powers. When, in March 1915, the Papacy realised that Italy’s entry into the war was virtually assured, the Curia redoubled its effort to preserve Italy’s neutrality. By mid-May, Italy’s intervention was a fait accompli and relations between the Vatican and the Entente had become severely strained. J. D. Gregory, the secretary to the British Mission, wrote to Eric Drummond, who was among the very scant number of Catholics in the Foreign Office, asking permission to counter the Vatican’s partisan diplomacy – even to withdraw the Mission if necessary.¹¹⁶ But before any action could be taken, the Italian

¹¹⁶ W. A. Renzi, op. cit., p. 506.
government declared war on Austria on 23 May, according to the provisions of the secret Treaty of London as endorsed by the Allies in April 1915.

Italy’s alignment with the Entente provoked mixed reactions among British Catholics. Here was another Catholic country, containing the seat of the Catholic Church, that had entered the foray against Germany and Austria-Hungary. What was more, as Gregory reported to Drummond, Italian Catholics had rallied to the cause and were “falling over each other in their endeavours to be patriotic.” Even the Corriere d’Italia, which had been sympathetic to the Central Powers during the period of Italian neutrality, had turned Anglophile and Francophile.\(^{117}\) Although one would expect British Catholics to enthuse over the entry of another leading Catholic nation into the war on the Allied side, in fact they kept an embarrassing silence. They knew full well that the Vatican had expended much energy in trying to keep Italy neutral. The Dublin Review, for example, which normally wrote on issues of political interest to Catholics, remained mute on Italy, as did the Catholic clergy. Some of the very few prominent British Catholic laymen who did comment, questioned the motives behind Italy’s belligerency. Baron von Hügel, for example, was not enthusiastic about Italy’s entry into the war because her motives appeared to be in contrast to those of Britain. He believed that Italy had joined the Allies because of her anti-Austrian, rather than her anti-Prussian, sentiments. In any case, according to von Hügel, Italy was clearly more interested in acquiring new territories than in fighting for the rights of small nations.\(^{118}\)

Catholic newspapers expressed gladness and relief that Italy had chosen to enter the war but, with the exception of the Catholic Herald, they, too, did not mention the fact

\(^{117}\) J. D. Gregory to E. Drummond, 6 June 1915, F.O. 800/67/244, Grey Mss., P.R.O.
\(^{118}\) M. de la Bedoyere, op. cit., p. 284.
that this was a clear rebuff for the Vatican. *The Tablet* commented that the refusal of Italy to join her allies at the beginning of war proved that Germany was waging a war of aggression. Furthermore, *The Tablet* argued, Italy could never have agreed to the option of accepting the territory that Austria had offered her. If Italy had accepted the surrender of Trieste and Trentino, she would lose them once again if the Central Powers were to emerge victorious. The King of Italy realised this when he questioned the Austrian ambassador about what guarantee there would be to secure the proposed concessions permanently. The reply came back that the guarantee would be “the word of honour of the German State.” *The Tablet* asserted that “The same word of honour had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium.”\(^{119}\) It also suggested that Italy’s intervention would shorten, rather than lengthen, the war.\(^{120}\)

The *Catholic Times*, although reporting on the efforts to keep Italy neutral, concentrated solely on Italian and German efforts and completely omitted Vatican complicity. The Catholic weekly stressed rather the German attempts to exert great diplomatic pressure on her ally to concede enough territory to keep Italy neutral. At the same time, it asserted that “never were the arts of German diplomacy employed more eagerly or with greater trepidation than they have been to exercise pressure on Italy.”\(^{121}\) Not a word was included on the similar diplomacy that was also used by the Holy See.

The *Catholic Times* also emphasised the enhanced religious significance that Italy lent to the conflict by throwing in her lot with the Allies. For, according to the *Catholic Times*, one of the major reasons that contributed to Italy’s decision for belligerency was the profound ill-treatment of Belgium by Germany. This had created immense

\(^{119}\) *The Tablet*, 22 May 1915, p. 652.

\(^{120}\) Ibid.

\(^{121}\) Ibid.
indignation among Italian Catholics and caused increased antagonism between the two countries. The Catholic Times solemnly declared that when “the Italians take the field it will be with the conviction that they are engaging in a struggle for the defence of Christian civilisation.”

The Catholic Herald was rather more willing to acknowledge the Vatican’s diplomatic engagement to keep Italy neutral, and to explain and even excuse it. In its editorial, it warned that although the Vatican’s preference for Italian neutrality was contended in the British press, Catholics should be careful and accept such statements only with great caution. The Herald stated that it would not be surprised if the Vatican had used its influence in an effort to retain Italy’s neutrality. Even though British Catholics favoured Italian intervention, they must recognise that this might not be in the best interests of the Holy See. The Herald was even willing to offer this startling confession: “we cannot expect that our views as subjects of the British Empire with regard to the Italian intervention must necessarily be the views of the Vatican.”

Furthermore, the Herald appeared ready to acknowledge pressures that may have affected the Pope’s judgement, pointing out that there were other elements in Italy that opposed intervention, so that the Holy See was not alone. The Herald admitted that it would not be in the best interest of the Vatican if the Allies won the war, considering that Republican France was the rebellious daughter of the Church while schismatic Russia persecuted Catholics in Poland and Galicia. Thus, the Pope might be entirely justified, the paper asserted, if he favoured an Austrian victory over Russia.

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121 Catholic Times, 21 May 1915, p. 3.
122 Ibid.
123 Catholic Herald, 22 May 1915, p. 2.
This did not mean that the Catholic Herald was totally confident in the policy pursued by the Vatican. In the final analysis, the paper remained loyal to the “patriotic” outlook. It reaffirmed British Catholics’ belief that a victory for the Central Powers was an impossibility. But it expressed anxiety lest the Pope and his entourage commit themselves to a policy that might bring them into open conflict with either one of the sides involved in the war. It warned the Holy See that “a false step in one direction or another may involve the Church in the most terrible disasters.” Moreover, the Herald was even willing to concede that the Holy See was capable of such error, because history showed that Vatican politics were not always conducted with wisdom and prudence.\textsuperscript{124} Thus, the Catholic Herald, while trying to undertake a defence of the Vatican’s politics regarding Italian neutrality, also expressed fear that such a policy would prove harmful to the Church.

A number of points deserve special emphasis in this examination of the initial reaction of prominent Catholic laymen and the Catholic press to the First World War between August 1914 and late 1915. It appears that their reaction to the outbreak of war was not in any sense unique. British Catholics at that time held conventional views which were not easily distinguished from other British Liberals and Conservatives. What was peculiarly Catholic about their reaction was their special emphasis on the Catholicity of Belgium and Poland as oppressed but heroic nations. This buttressed the religious factor in the war, as Catholics detected it. This in turn led to that remarkable effort on the part of Wilfrid Ward to create a manifesto, endorsed by the vast majority of prominent Catholic laymen and the Catholic press to the First World War...
Catholics, which would stand as a testament to the overwhelming strength of pro-war opinion among British Catholics.

In fact, the British Catholic laity and the press did not react in any significantly different way from other Britons in regards to the political factor. In large measure, Catholics adopted positions similar to those of their fellow countrymen in response to the momentous political events at that time. The political truce that was established at the beginning of the war between the Liberals and Conservatives applied to Catholics also. Soon, however, this fragile political truce disintegrated. Hence, the Catholic response to the fall of the Liberal government in May 1915 was as divided as that of other politically active Britons. While Catholic Liberals vilified the Conservatives and their supporters, Catholic Conservatives longed for the abolition of the purely Liberal government. Their domestic politics were, nevertheless, overshadowed by the policies of the Vatican, particularly its policy towards Italian neutrality, which was so obviously contrary to that of the British government. British Catholic opinion seems to have been at variance with that of the Vatican. The turning point came when Catholics in Britain came face to face with a clear decision by the Pope regarding Italy’s entry into the war. By turning a blind eye, they maintained the pretence that a gap between them and their Pontiff did not exist.
Chapter 4

Catholicism, Conscription and Conscientious Objection

Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat.

1 Cor. 4:12-13.

There is more freedom in imprisonment for conscience and liberty than in enforced military service; if die violently we must, then better so to die against war and slavery than for war and slavery.

E. I. Watkin, The Crime of Conscription.¹

After sixteen months of retaining the voluntary system for military service, the Asquith government finally implemented conscription in January 1916. With the advent of conscription, further problems arose for Catholics in Britain. The state demanded that seminarians and the clergy be eligible for conscription like other civilians. To the Catholic Church this was unacceptable because the clergy was forbidden to shed blood. Thus, it was up to the Catholic hierarchy to negotiate with the government for a solution that was acceptable to both parties. The situation was complicated by the fact that the official position of the British Catholic Church in Britain was decidedly in opposition to pacifism and conscientious objection during the war. This, in turn, did not prevent a small number of Catholics from declaring their absolute convictions against the slaughter that was taking place. This small minority of Catholic conscientious objectors was a potential embarrassment to the Catholic body; leading Catholics denounced the troublesome dissenters and tried to distance themselves from them.
Agitation for the introduction of wartime conscription began soon after the war started, but the Liberal government resisted pressure to implement compulsory military service. On 20 April 1915, Lloyd George was asked in the House of Commons whether the government was satisfied with the rate of volunteering recruitment. He replied that Lord Kitchener was gratified with the country’s response to the appeal for voluntary enlistment. Yet nine months later, conscription was implemented. When, towards the end of 1915, voluntary recruitment was judged insufficient to satisfy the demand for men, conscriptionists intensified their campaign for compulsory military service. Asquith, however, was reluctant to take such an unprecedented step without the overwhelming support of the country. He decided to assuage the growing agitation for conscription by appointing Lord Derby as Director of Recruiting on 5 October 1915. Derby’s task was to conduct a survey of the country’s manpower by seeking attestation from every man between the ages of eighteen and forty-one. The significance of the Derby Scheme, as the plan became known, was to demonstrate that every possibility had been exhausted in order to obtain the necessary number of men under the voluntary system before resorting to conscription. This, it was argued, might make conscription more palatable to the people.

Of course, the Derby scheme failed. In his memoirs, Lloyd George estimated that out of a total of 2,179,231 single men who attested and had not enlisted before 23 October 1915, only 343,386 could finally be recruited into the army. This was the setting for Asquith’s decision to introduce the first conscription measure on 5 January

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1 (London: James Clark, 1939), p. 16.
3 D. Hayes, op. cit., p. 194. For a detailed study of conscription in Britain in 1916, see chapters 7 and 8 in R. J. Q. Adams and P. P. Poirier, op. cit.
1916.\textsuperscript{5} The first Military Service Bill was to apply to single men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one. It exempted ordained ministers from all Christian Churches, munition workers, and the physically unfit and included provisions for those who objected to fighting on grounds of conscience. The bill generated fierce and prolonged debate in the House of Commons and saw some of Asquith’s closest supporters oppose the measure.\textsuperscript{6} The Military Service (No. 2) Bill became law on 27 January. In April, after a secret House of Commons session, Asquith introduced a second Military Service Bill, in which conscription was extended to married men between eighteen and forty-one.\textsuperscript{7} Naturally, the single men were to be called up before the married in the second bill.

Although most of the Roman Catholic leadership in Britain announced their support for compulsory military service once it was implemented, Catholics appear to have had no role in the noisy campaign in favour of its introduction. On the contrary, it is clear that the majority of Catholics opposed conscription between August 1914 and late 1915. Indeed, some publicly maintained their preference for the voluntary system even after the implementation of conscription in 1916. In the early months of the war, the advantages of a voluntary system were defended by some organs of the Catholic press. The \textit{Catholic Herald} was antagonistic to conscription and its advocates from the outset. It applauded Asquith’s announcement in November 1914 that the government did not intend to implement conscription. The \textit{Herald} stated that his iteration “will finally

\textsuperscript{6} For the debate on the Military Service Bill, see \textit{House of Commons Debates}, vol. 77, cols. 949-1074.
\textsuperscript{7} J. Williams, op. cit., p. 113.
dissipate the conscription scare.8 In January 1915, it carried another article in defence of the voluntary system and castigated the Harmsworth press for pushing for the introduction of conscription. The Herald contended that if the Harmsworth papers had their way, conscription would be introduced shortly. Fortunately, it reassured its readers, their propaganda would not have much effect on the rest of the more level-headed country.9 The resolute stance of the Catholic Herald was buttressed by that of The Universe. In April 1915, The Universe answered French queries as to the reason Britain did not introduce conscription. It announced that mandatory service was unnecessary because there was sufficient enlistment in Great Britain to fill the ranks. Besides, the voluntary system made better fighters because those heroes were born, not “made”.10 Such explanations suggest that it may have been felt that there would be no moral glory in the sacrifices of British men if military service was mandatory.

Not only the press, but eminent Catholics also expressed confidence in the success of voluntary recruitment. In an address given at Longton on 22 April 1915, Bishop William Keating praised the voluntary system as having served the British Empire successfully. He asserted that voluntary recruitment would not be strained if people continued to offer themselves in a spirit of self-sacrifice.11 The success of the voluntary system was also on Belloc’s mind when he wrote to Maurice Baring on 9 November 1914, arguing that Britain was able to get all the men she could possibly want by a voluntary system that was properly implemented. “To talk of conscription in a country organised as England is,” he added, “and untouched as to her soil, is to have

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8 Catholic Herald, 28 Nov. 1914, p. 8.
9 Ibid., 30 Jan. 1915, p. 4.
10 The Universe, 30 Apr. 1915, p. 3.
11 Catholic Times, 30 Apr. 1915, p. 3.
quite lost grip of reality.”¹² Unlike the majority of other Catholics, however, Belloc continued to hold on to such beliefs after conscription was introduced in January 1916. As a matter of fact, privately he opposed conscription all the more vehemently in 1916 because he believed that Asquith had been obliged to introduce compulsory military service under pressure from Lord Northcliffe.¹³

Like Belloc, the Catholic Times dismissed the need for compulsion before it was applied and continued to speak against it after it had become a reality. In early June 1915, in common with other secular newspapers that advocated the voluntary system, the Catholic Times condemned the “treacherous” Northcliffe for agitating for conscription. It went on to reject the need for it and claimed that the public did not support compulsory military service, because the voluntary system was obtaining the necessary quota for the army.¹⁴ In September, the Catholic Times was confident enough to predict that agitation for conscription would collapse in the next few weeks. It went so far as to warn that with compulsion would come revolution.¹⁵ Even as the Derby Scheme was being conducted, the Catholic Times was still upholding the voluntary system. It wrote intransigently: “A victory for the voluntary system of recruiting in the British Empire is scarcely of less importance than the victory over Germany and her allies.”¹⁶ As late as 31 December, it was still stubbornly expressing confidence in averting conscription by the success of the Derby Scheme. When the Military Service Bill was introduced, the Catholic weekly carried a scathing attack on conscriptionists in the Cabinet who, it claimed, had enforced

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¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Catholic Times, 4 June 1915, p. 3.
¹⁵ Ibid., 24 Sep. 1915, p. 3.
¹⁶ Ibid., 26 Nov. 1915, p. 3.
their views on the government. If conscription was carried out, “it will mark the greatest defeat suffered by this country since the war began.”

The Catholic press and leadership’s aversion to conscription before 1916 did not mean that there was no support for it among Catholics. Catholic supporters of compulsion, in small numbers, had raised their voices as soon as the first battles were launched. But these were exceptional. For example, Fr. A. T. McGrath, rector of St. Mary’s church, Radcliffe, wrote a letter to a Manchester newspaper in August 1914 in which he emphasised the importance of applying conscription. He argued that it was important to maintain Britain’s military strength in her time of trial. If the conscripts were needed, they would be called up; if they were not ultimately needed, then, in any case they would have received self-discipline to aid them in their careers. This was temperate in comparison with Bishop Hedley’s warning to those Catholics who defied conscription. In his Advent pastoral of 1914, Hedley explained the citizen’s duty during the conflict. If conscription was implemented, he affirmed, all those affected by the law were bound to obey it. If a man did not do his duty, he was violating “the cardinal precept of justice, and is, to a greater or lesser degree, guilty in the sight of God,” Hedley announced. Hedley’s warning conveyed two messages simultaneously: the first was his support for conscription, and the second was a warning that the Catholic citizen had a duty to obey the state. However, only a handful of Catholics appear to have joined the campaign of agitation in favour of conscription before 1916.

But with conscription looming large on the horizon, a new difficulty arose with the Derby Scheme for the Catholic Church in Britain. In carrying out his recruiting
scheme, Lord Derby also appealed to the clergy, among others, for combatant services. This was problematic because in the Catholic tradition it was forbidden for the clergy to shed blood. St. Thomas Aquinas forbade the clergy from serving in the military for two reasons: the first reason is that it would be inconsistent for the clergy to pursue violent actions and maintain the required peacefulness to contemplate and praise God; the second reason is that it would be inconsistent for the clergy to shed blood and serve at the altar of God. He advised that it would be more appropriate for the clergy to shed their own blood for Christ. They were permitted to tender non-combatant services to the army but to be combatants themselves was incompatible with their vocation as preachers of peace. In 1917, the Code of Canon Law, which was promulgated by Benedict XV on May 27, reinforced this, requiring quite specifically that clerics not volunteer for combatant military service.

Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had already refused to allow the Anglican clergy to become combatants before conscription was implemented. He argued a strong case, insisting that their task in their parishes was just as important as the soldiers’ task on the field. At the same time, Bourne supported this position, suggesting that, if the clergy must be conscripted, then at least they should be conscripted as chaplains and not as combatants. He also noted that if priests were conscripted, the

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19 Quoted in J. A. Wilson, op. cit., p. 361.
21 Despite all this, the French government conscripted some 25,000 priests as soldiers and officers into the army. By its secular laws, France did not exempt priests from military service. This in fact was thought to have strengthened, rather than weakened, the Catholic religion in France because the soldier-priests had a reputation for devotion and bravery. That French soldier-priests were admired by British Catholics is illustrated by the glowing description of them in an article by an anonymous author, “Religion in the French Army”, Dublin Review, 157, (Oct. 1915), pp. 295, 303-308. See also A. Becker, War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1998), p. 33.
22 G. K. A. Bell, op. cit., p. 764.
Germans would seize the initiative to launch a propaganda campaign against Britain in Spain. Thus, the threat of conscripting Catholic clergy roused the Catholic hierarchy into action. In October 1915, Bishop Casartelli of Salford wrote to Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool telling him that many priests were receiving letters from Lord Derby enquiring why they were not enlisting. Casartelli seemed alarmed at the prospect of compulsory military service for priests and considered it “highly objectionable” and dangerous. He asked Whiteside what action he was going to take against it.

But Cardinal Bourne was already taking the necessary action to secure the exemption of the clergy. On 26 October, he had an interview with Lord Derby in which he suggested the exemption of priests and theological students who were in their immediate preparation for the priesthood. Nevertheless, the clergy was still being hounded by the recruiting agents in November 1915. On the 24th of that month, Bourne wrote an angry letter to Lord Derby complaining that a lot of annoyance was being caused among the clergy “by the over eagerness and, in some cases, positive rudeness of the recruiting canvassers.” He requested that instructions should be issued to leave the clergy in peace before serious discontent arose. Lord Derby apologised for the treatment of the clergy and promised to put the issue before the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee.

Following intense negotiations with the government in January 1916, the Archbishop of Westminster was also able to secure the exemption of seminarians who

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23 Memo [by Bourne], undated, untitled, Bo.5/27b, Bourne Papers. It is not clear whether this memorandum was prepared in response to the 1916 conscription bill or that of April 1918. It seems likely that it was prepared before the first Military Service Bill.
25 Notes made by Bourne, [Nov.] 1915, Bo.5/27b, Bourne Papers.
26 Bourne to Lord Derby, 24 Nov. 1915; Derby to Bourne, 26 Nov. 1915, Bo.5/27b, Bourne Papers.
were in their final two years of study. The details of this concession were finally worked out in February – after the Act was passed. There were two categories of seminarians who were eligible for absolute exemption. The first were students who had entered their professional studies, that is, at least Scholastic Philosophy, and were in immediate preparation for Holy Orders. The second were those who had been accepted as members of a recognised religious order or institute and were carrying out religious, educational, or charitable work that would suffer if they were to be withdrawn.\(^{27}\) After collecting the names of all those seeking complete exemption under these two categories, it was found that there were 170 seminarians under the first category and 400 under the second. As Bourne pointed out to Walter Long, the Conservative minister who was president of the Local Government Board, “the total number for whom complete exemption is asked is not very large. On the other hand, the refusal of such exception would seriously jeopardize important religious, educational and charitable works.”\(^ {28}\) Although Bourne could not obtain total exemption for younger ecclesiastical students, they could still secure partial exemption under the Military Service Act. It is interesting to note that the exemption for seminarians was engineered after the Act was passed through special negotiations behind the scenes. It would not be unreasonable if a historian here pauses to ask whether it was an unwritten element in the contract between the government and the Church that the hierarchy would not formally criticise conscription if the government treated them generously. If that was so, then the Catholic clergy, and especially Bourne, honoured their end of the bargain. The Catholic hierarchy did indeed adopt a neutral

\(^{27}\) Instructions Report by Bourne, 26 Jan. 1916, Bo.5/27a, Bourne Papers.

\(^{28}\) Bourne to W. Long, 23 Jan. 1916, Bo.5/27a, Bourne papers.
position on conscription – perhaps in return for being granted exemptions beyond the terms of the Act.

A year after this arrangement had been settled with the civil authorities, the government once again demanded the conscription of seminarians. This time, however, the threat loomed larger because Cardinal Bourne was on a prolonged visit to Rome in the winter of 1916-17. In his absence, he had left Mgr. Manuel Bidwell, the auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, in charge. In February 1917, Bourne wrote to Archbishop Whiteside from Rome telling him that he was in constant correspondence with Bidwell and that “the Army Council has backed us staunchly against the recruiting element.” Bourne also assured Whiteside that he had written a personal letter to David Lloyd George, who had replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in December 1916. He instructed Whiteside that in case a crisis arose the three archbishops should meet.29 Nevertheless, in Bourne’s absence, the one Catholic prelate who had proven to be influential with the government, the chances of securing the exemption of seminarians a second time looked bleak. By March 1917, Archbishop Ilseley of Birmingham was deeply concerned and wrote gloomily to Bishop Keating: “Personally I am afraid our ecclesiastical students are doomed.”30 Bishop Casartelli complained that the government was depleting classes of ecclesiastical students. Although students had been called up in the previous year, the net was being drawn tighter in the first few months of 1917.31 In March, however, an arrangement for continuing limited exemption was agreed upon by the War Office. It was proposed that all secular students over eighteen would be called up, but the Army

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29 Bourne to Whiteside, 16 Feb. 1917, S2, V, A/72, Whiteside Papers.
30 Archbishop Ilseley to Bishop Keating, 5 Mar. 1917, Fv.1(h), Keating Papers, DAN.
Council was prepared to permit students to continue in their studies provided they became available to serve as army chaplains before the year was finished.\textsuperscript{32} Again, this evidence provides another instance of activity on the part of the clergy to secure exemption. Yet, on the wider issue of conscription they offered very little leadership.

Before the year was out, however, the Catholic Church in Britain witnessed a powerful new advocate openly opposing general conscription. On 28 September 1917, more than a month after the release of the Papal Peace Note, Cardinal Gasparri wrote a letter to Lloyd George in support of the Note and highlighting the Pope’s clear opposition to conscription. Gasparri’s letter, which was publicly released shortly after it was sent, denounced conscription as the “cause of innumerable evils.” He explained how the Pope intended to achieve permanent peace by the reciprocal disarmament of the nations. He repeated Benedict XV’s assertion that there was only one practical method of attaining disarmament, namely, “that the civilised nations…should agree upon the simultaneous and mutual abolition of compulsory military service….” Under the Pope’s plan, a tribunal of arbitration would need to be created to decide international controversies and the imposition of sanctions should be agreed against any nation that might attempt to re-impose conscription. The letter cited Britain and the U.S. as examples of the fact that “voluntary military service amply suffices to provide the contingent required for the maintenance of public order but does not furnish the enormous armies demanded by modern warfare.” Once conscription was suppressed, the letter continued, reciprocal

\textsuperscript{32} Mgr. Bidwell to Bishop Keating, 3 Mar. 1917, Fv.1(h), Keating Papers, DAN.
disarmament would follow automatically, accompanied by a lasting peace and the
restoration “of the exhausted finances of the various states.”

It appears, however, that such recommendations were not to Lloyd George’s taste. The proposals were given little attention and no support by the Foreign Office. According to D. Hayes, even the Catholic hierarchy did not receive the proposals with much enthusiasm. As for the Catholic laity, Hayes observed, “the action of their spiritual Head
cut across all the national emotions and prejudices of the time.” The Universe was
probably one of the very few Catholic sources that supported Gasparri’s letter. On 9
November, it reported that it found the Cardinal’s proposals “invaluable for the
instruction of public opinion.” Gasparri’s constructive recommendations, it commented,
aspired to restore and secure the world’s civilisation and abolish the “Nation in Arms.”
In addition, the Guild of the Pope’s Peace produced a pamphlet entitled “The Pope’s
Plan for the Destruction of Militarism”, in which it supported Benedict’s precept for the
abolition of conscription. The pamphlet argued that militarism could only be eliminated
through general disarmament and the eradication of conscription, emphasising that
Britain must first adopt the idea herself and make it one of her principle war aims.
But there is nothing in the papers of leading Catholic individuals to suggest that they reacted
positively to this initiative from their spiritual leader. In addition to the Papal Peace Note,
the letter from Gasparri made it absolutely plain where the Pope stood; he opposed
conscription in principle. Yet there were no pastoral letters, interviews or speeches in

33 Cardinal Pietro Gasparri to Lloyd George, 28 Sep. 1917, F.O. 371/3084/17, The War Files (Political),
P.R.O. The Letter was also cited by H. W. Flannery (ed.), Pattern for Peace: Catholic Statements on
34 D. Hayes, op. cit., p. 283.
35 The Universe, 9 Nov. 1917, p. 1.
36 For the formation and ideas of the Guild of the Pope’s Peace, see chapter 6.
support from the Catholic hierarchy at this decisive moment when the Pope’s contribution to plans for the abolition of militarism was made known. The gulf between the Papacy and Catholic leaders in Britain seem to have been absolutely plain.

The spectre of conscription was not, therefore, dissipated and the danger of recruiting the clergy returned in the spring of 1918. The German Spring Offensive of 21 March 1918 breached the Allies’ lines and by 5 April they had penetrated the British lines as far as St. Quentin. By 9 April, they had completely breached the British defences south of Ypres. The British were in dire need of manpower. It was then, on April 11, that Field-Marshal Douglas Haig issued his Order of the Day, famously proclaiming: “With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.”

The desperation of the situation prompted the government to introduce the new Man Power Bill. It raised the military age to fifty and included non-combatant military service for the clergy. Archbishop Davidson, in contrast to his stance on the previous occasion, now favoured the inclusion of the clergy in the bill.

The Catholic hierarchy, led by Bourne, on the other hand, maintained their opposition to clerical military service. On April 8, while the bill was still being composed, Cardinal Bourne had a meeting with Lloyd George. The Cardinal told him that it was up to the bishops to decide the number of priests who could be released for work. The Prime Minister assented and Bourne was asked to write to him after the annual meeting of the bishops, which was to be held the next day. After the meeting on April 9, Bourne wrote to the Prime Minister: “The Bishops desire me to say that…the heads of

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39 G. K. A. Bell, op. cit., p. 887.
40 Annual Meeting of the Bishops, 9 Apr. 1918, S1, VII, B/1, Whiteside Papers.
denominations, and they alone, should determine what clergy can be released for non-combatant service without detriment to the religious and spiritual needs of the people.”

In other words, the hierarchy, and not the government, would decide on the number of priests that could be released for non-combatant service. But when the bill was introduced the next day, the conscription of ministers of religion was included within its clauses. This prompted Bourne to send a letter to General Booth, who appears to have had responsibilities in this area, protesting that “Any further withdrawal [of priests] would lead to grave dislocation of the spiritual and religious services of the nation.”

Before the bill became law on April 18, the government decided to abandon its plans for conscripting the clergy. It found that, after allowing for a sufficient number of the clergy for the religious service of the country, it would not acquire a large increase of manpower from the ranks of the clergy.

Beyond the impact of conscription on the clergy, it remains for this chapter to examine the Catholic response to the wider issues raised by the conscription of civilians. From the autumn of 1915, there was growing public opposition to the introduction of compulsory military service. The No-Conscription Fellowship (N-C.F.), which had been formed in late 1914 to oppose the implementation of conscription, issued its first manifesto in September 1915. This rallying cry was signed by the Chairman, Clifford Allen, and the Honorary Secretary, Fenner Brockway. These two were eventually

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41 Bourne to Lloyd George, 9 Apr. 1918, Bo.5/27b, Bourne Papers.
42 Bourne to General Booth, 14 Apr. 1918, Bo.5/27b, Bourne Papers. In a statement to The Times on 25 April, Bourne pointed out that whereas 24 out of 1,100 Anglican clergy in London were serving as military chaplains, among the Catholic clergy it was 52 out of 300 (p. 2).
43 D. Hayes, op. cit., p. 308.
imprisoned for long periods during the war for their opposition to the Military Service Act and their refusal to undertake even non-combatant service under its terms. Francis Meynell, the most prominent Catholic in this movement, also joined the Fellowship at its inception and was made chairman of the London branch.\(^{45}\) He had already joined the Union of Democratic Control (U.D.C.)\(^{46}\) soon after it was founded by E. D. Morel, C. P. Trevelyan, Norman Angell and Ramsay MacDonald at the commencement of war. Meynell was among the few Catholics who joined the influential peace movement during the First World War in Britain and thereby declared themselves to be convinced pacifists.

Such pacifists, of course, argued that war was not compatible with Christianity. They insisted that war contradicted Christian principles and that if true Christians genuinely believed in Jesus’ message of peace, then they must renounce war. War required a Christian to kill, and this in turn formed a spirit diametrically in contrast to Christian love. As A. J. Hoover has pointed out, “War and love are two masters that no man can serve at the same time.”\(^{47}\) As far as can be determined, there seems to have been only one prominent Catholic who, while personally disavowing pacifism, was nevertheless willing to defend the doctrine of pacifism as a sincere, authentic conviction. Fr. Joseph Keating, the editor of The Month, certainly rejected the common social-darwinist outlook that regarded war as natural and inevitable. In January 1915, he stressed that such an outlook was not Christian although it was frequently upheld by Christians. Keating expressed amazement that even Catholic writers advocated such a

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\(^{45}\) F. Meynell, op. cit., p. 89.


\(^{47}\) A. J. Hoover, op. cit., p. 104.
belief on the grounds that some of Jesus’ utterances appeared to accept the inevitability of conflict. Keating maintained that “War will cease if a sufficient number of people combine in thinking that it should cease.” But at another place, Keating elaborated his argument that this did not mean that pacifism itself was feasible. He argued that this was not a perfect world where everyone followed the teaching of Jesus. In a fallen world, therefore, pacifism could lead to the disintegration of society. For if a domestic criminal may not be resisted and self-defence was unlawful, then how could one defend others? If this policy was pursued, according to Keating, criminal nations and individuals would wreak havoc and the world would descend into a state of lawlessness.

Keating’s tolerance and moderation towards pacifism was not shared by many other leading Catholics who were not pacifists themselves. In spite of the activity of the Catholic hierarchy in seeking exemption from conscription for their own seminarians, no guidance or support was offered to Catholic citizens who challenged the state’s presumed right to compel vast numbers of ordinary men into military action. The minority of Catholics who joined the peace movement were swimming against the strong current of the rest of Catholic opinion. The pro-war clergy denounced pacifism, even suggesting it was unchristian, and were very hesitant to accept the pacifists’ assertion that in essence Jesus endorsed the principle of non-resistance in his preaching. They developed the familiar hypothesis that, in his teachings, Jesus sometimes offered a counsel of perfection and did not intend that we should take all his sermons literally. In using this argument,

48 These utterances included: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:51) and “You are going to hear the noise of battles close by and the news of battles far away…. Countries will fight each other and kingdoms will attack one another” (Matt. 24:6-7; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:10).
49 J. K[eating], “Into the Way of Peace”, p. 52.
the clergy were drawing upon a long tradition, dating back to the Catholic reaction towards various pacifist sects associated with the Anabaptists from 1525 onwards. In view of this, it is not surprising that George Burton, the Bishop of Clifton, condemned the pacifists in November 1915 as “peacemongers” who did not understand Christianity. He accused them of desiring peace at any price, even at the cost of sacrificing the well being of their country. “This was not Christianity”, he announced. “We want no peace cranks; away with the peacemongers.”

Other ecclesiastics attempted to refute the pacifists’ central belief that life was the greatest good and nothing justified the taking of it. If this could indeed be refuted, then a mortal blow could be struck at pacifist conviction. In 1916, Fr. Adrian Fortescue attempted to disprove that life was the pinnacle of value. If life was so precious that nothing could compensate its loss, Fortescue claimed, only then would the pacifists be right. But since life was not the most precious good, the pacifists must be wrong. To support his argument, he gave the life of the religious martyr as an example. “No Christian could deny that the religious martyr does right, [and] is worthy of praise, when he gives his life for his faith. This shows that human life is not the supreme good.”

Even Christ, Fortescue contended, did not consider death the ultimate evil or life the

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51 The Anabaptists took the Sermon on the Mount literally. They refused to occupy any government office, to judge, or to rule; because to do this, they reasoned, one “would be forced to behave carnally, to wage war and to kill, whereas Christ on the contrary commanded him to behave spiritually.” They also refused the temporal authorities’ demand for military service. H-J. Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 98. Their subsequent persecution by Catholics for these beliefs as well as their practice of adult baptism is described in chapter 6 in Goertz. For another example of their persecution by Catholics see G. Strauss, “The Religious Policies of Dukes Wilhelm and Ludwig of Bavaria in the First Decade of the Protestant Era”, *Church History*, 28, (Dec. 1959), pp. 366-370.

52 George Ambrose Burton, the Doctor of Divinity, was born in Hull, England, in 1852. He attended Ratcliffe College and the English College in Rome. In 1902, he was consecrated bishop of Clifton where he remained until his death in 1931.


supreme good. By saying “Greater love than this no man has, that he should lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13), Jesus also proved that he did not consider life to be the ultimate good. And if human life was not the ultimate good, then the pacifist was necessarily wrong.

Nor did the Catholic clergy denounce the Christian pacifists alone. The left-wing radicals and socialists as a whole were continuously condemned for their “unpatriotic” activities and for allegedly weakening the national war effort through their agitation to end the conflict. In one of his frequent articles to *Nineteenth Century*, for example, William Barry castigated the so-called “Liberals” and “friends of humanity”, by which he meant the various radicals grouped under the banner of the U.D.C and the I.L.P. He expressed his conviction that, if the Allies lost the war, then these “peacemongers” would be to blame. They had unceasingly undermined the people’s “patriotism” since war broke out; they had weakened Britain’s national spirit and resolve by defending German policy and blaming the Allies for the war. Barry went on to charge “those peacemongers” with having “done all they could to whitewash the Teuton criminal and to break our nerve.”

In addition to the clergy, several politically prominent Catholic laymen also did their utmost to discredit the peace movement, insisting that its proposals for ending the war by negotiation would be unfavourable to the Allies and would make impossible a “just and lasting peace”. While some dismissed the pacifists as an insignificant minority, others condemned them in the strongest terms as German sympathizers. Hilaire Belloc was one of those who preferred to dismiss them. In his preface to Cecil Chesterton’s *The Perils of Peace*, Belloc regarded those with pacifist tendencies as “numerically quite

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55 Ibid., p. 9.
insignificant and utterly out of tune” with the masses.\textsuperscript{58} Shortly, however, he contradicted himself by stating that the “perverted fool who cannot reconcile justice with charity (for he has no creed), has indeed an influence in our society quite out of proportion to his numbers.” He mistakenly attributed this influence to the pacifists’ alleged aristocratic position in society. Because they belonged to the wealthier classes of society, Belloc claimed, the pacifists wielded more power and were protected by the politicians.\textsuperscript{59} In fact, a large percentage of the pacifists were from the ranks of the middle class, while others were prominent in the labour movement.\textsuperscript{60}

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Cardinal Bourne shared Belloc’s initial basic contention that the pacifists were an insignificant minority who were simply out of tune with the rest of society. Although the rest of the Catholic hierarchy deplored the supposedly baleful influence of the peace movement, Bourne’s lack of any condemnation of pacifists and conscientious objectors during the war was conspicuous. In dismissing them as a minority without influence, it was almost as if he considered them incapable of doing any real harm. In his interview with the \textit{Corriere d’Italia} in early 1917, the Cardinal merely alluded to the pacifists as people who lived “in the world of metaphysics.” He assured the \textit{Corriere} that they had no following either in British society or in parliament and that the British Catholic was in complete solidarity with the government.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 916.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 28.
In contrast to Belloc, other leading Catholic laymen castigated the pacifists strongly and accused them of aiding Germany to the detriment of the Allies. One of the most vociferous opponents of pacifism was Cecil Chesterton. He blamed the rise of Prussian militarism on the strengthening of pacifism across Europe in the late nineteenth century. To him, pacifism was not only unchivalrous, but also “intensely unchristian.”

In Chesterton’s opinion, pacifism was a variant of atheism; that is, it had a materialistic basis and, as he insisted “its ultimate appeal is always to dogmas of materialism.” He was not deterred by any evidence which could be presented to the contrary; he rejected the Tolstoyan argument that non-resistance under some circumstances and conditions is a duty that was constantly and undeniably taught by Jesus. Quite the opposite. In his determination to expose pacifism, he attacked the founders of the U.D.C., Ramsay MacDonald, Charles Trevelyan, Norman Angell, E. D. Morel and Arthur Ponsonby, and accused them of fomenting dissent in order to attain a peace that was favourable to Germany. He indicted the U.D.C. leaders as clearly pro-German. Never moderate in his judgements, he criticised Angell’s *The Great Illusion* as an “absurd book” with a mixture of “silly truisms and pestilentially false morals.”

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64 C. Chesterton, *The Prussian Hath Said in His Heart*, pp. 196-199. In September 1914, he wrote to Sarolea that MacDonald, Morel and Angell were hatching a conspiracy “to make a dishonourable peace at the expense of both England and Belgium.” C. Chesterton to Sarolea, 17 Sep. 1914, Sar.coll.10, Sarolea Papers.
Some Catholic organs supported this position and blamed pacifist organisations for hindering conscription and the war effort. One particularly vehement organ was the Catholic Federationist. In its issue of January 1916, just before the onset of conscription, the Federationist criticised the N-C.F. for its opposition to compulsory military service. Its basic argument was that “conscription is a term that belongs essentially to conditions of peace, and all the arguments against conscription are arguments against compulsory military service during times of peace.” In its excoriation, the Catholic Federationist exclaimed that the members of the N-C.F. were “not even men.” They would not defend their womenfolk in times of peace or war.66

After conscription became law, many pacifists became conscientious objectors in refusing military service of any kind. The Military Service Act contained a conscience clause that recognised moral as well as religious objections to the war. It has been suggested that many wavering Liberal Party MPs who had initially been opposed to conscription were reassured by the inclusion of such a clause.67 Nevertheless, the insertion of the conscience clause appears to have been overtly a matter of political judgement on the part of the government rather than a sign of its respect for the moral stance of pacifists.68

The existence of a conscience clause in the Military Service Act did not necessarily mean that the rest of British society accepted conscientious objectors (C.O.s).

66 Catholic Federationist, Jan. 1916, p. 4.
67 T. C. Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 81-82. In July 1917, Philip Kerr, the private secretary of Lloyd George, wrote that it was a mistake for the government to have included the absolute exemption clause in the Military Service Act. It would have sufficed, in his opinion, to have granted alternative service. See memorandum on The ‘Absolutist’ Conscientious Objectors, 5 July 1917, GD40/17/528, Lothian Papers, National Archives of Scotland.
In fact, they were looked upon with much undisguised contempt.\textsuperscript{69} A psychologist’s analysis appearing in the Conservative periodical \textit{Nineteenth Century} in October 1917, for example, labeled absolute C.O.s, that is, those C.O.s who refused to carry out even non-combatant services, as “unstable”.\textsuperscript{70} Most Christian denominations opposed and rejected them. On 4 May 1916, Charles Gore, the Anglican Bishop of Oxford, denounced the creed and principles of conscientious objectors in the House of Lords. He said: “I am…profoundly out of sympathy with those persons…that is to say, I am not at all in agreement with their principles.”\textsuperscript{71} Save for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Gore’s statement expressed the views of a large number of the Anglican clergy. Randall Davidson, however, did not condemn C.O.s out of hand but maintained a lukewarm detachment. Although he could not fathom, in particular, the convictions of the absolutist, he respected the opposition of those who objected to military service and the spilling of blood.\textsuperscript{72}

Similarly, although Cardinal Bourne refrained from either condemning or condoning them, the Catholic clergy in general condemned C.O.s in the strongest terms. An explicit example is shown in the speeches of two parish priests from Tyneside in March 1916. Fr. Byrne deprecated the C.O. as a coward who sheltered himself behind the men who donned the uniform. Fr. Bradley, meanwhile, was still more severe in his condemnation. He held it to be his duty “to honour those who killed Germans” and revealed that if it were up to him, he would eliminate C.O.s. In his opinion, “What had

\textsuperscript{69} In another memorandum written by Philip Kerr in July 1917, he wrote of conscientious objectors: “they are passive resisters against the policy of the nation as expressed in law.” He absolutely opposed compromise with passive resisters as it would bring about the ruin of the state. The ‘Absolutist’ Conscientious Objectors, 16 July 1917, GD40/17/219, Lothian Papers.


\textsuperscript{71} \textit{House of Lords Debates}, vol. 21, col. 904.
happened in Belgium would be repeated in our own country in a degree twenty times worse if the conscientious objector had his own way." \(^{73}\)

The clergy’s denunciation was matched by hostile speeches on the part of several leading Catholic laymen. Lord Denbigh, for example, poured scorn on C.O.s in the House of Lords in July 1917. Denbigh declared that he regarded C.O.s as “a set of despicable people who have no claim to the ordinary rights of citizens and who do not deserve any consideration whatever.” \(^{74}\) The same degree of anger was shown by Cecil Chesterton who felt enraged that “these lunatics” were tolerated and permitted to “exhibit their mental diseases to the astonished eyes of England.” \(^{75}\)

In addition, most of the Catholic press continually attacked conscientious objectors’ beliefs and displayed not an iota of sympathy for their principles. Indeed, when Edward Hicks, the Anglican Bishop of Lincoln, wrote a letter to *The Times* defending the genuine C.O. in April 1916, he came under severe criticism from *The Universe*. In his letter, Hicks asked whether the nation, in its military zeal, was not slipping into the old vices of intolerance and persecution. \(^{76}\) *The Universe* ridiculed Hicks’ concern for the way C.O.s were being treated and took exception to his regarding the C.O. as a “prophet and a visionary.” The paper claimed that the Bishop had written from hearsay and had not studied the facts; because if he had, “it would have been manifest to him that the arguments of the Conscientious Objector are in some cases enough to make the flesh of any sensitive man creep.” \(^{77}\)

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\(^{72}\) G. K. A. Bell, op. cit., p. 818.
\(^{73}\) Quoted in *The Tablet*, 1 Apr. 1916, p. 428.
\(^{74}\) *House of Lords Debates*, vol. 25, col. 857.
\(^{75}\) C. Chesterton, *The Perils of Peace*, p. 82.
\(^{76}\) *The Times*, 4 Apr. 1916, p. 9.
\(^{77}\) *The Universe*, 7 Apr. 1916, p. 3.
Not surprisingly, at least one Catholic newspaper did support the position of the genuine conscientious objector. The *Catholic Times*, having previously opposed the introduction of conscription, maintained its opposition. On 14 April 1916, the *Catholic Times* flew in the face of most Catholic opinion when it boldly declared: “We…can have no sympathy with the opponents of the genuine conscientious objector. To argue against exemption of any kind on that score is equivalent to advocating State tyranny.” It went on to explain that if a man enlightened his conscience by all possible means, and obeyed that conscience even if it was erroneous, then that man deserved support. The *Catholic Times* supported the claim that an individual must return loyalty to the society that protects him. But it saw a difficulty arising when that society, which was the state, insisted that the citizen render services which were opposed to his conscience.\(^78\)

Naturally, this blatant deviation from the rest of Catholic opinion did not go unchallenged. In its very next issue, the *Catholic Federationist* not only dissociated itself from the *Catholic Times*, but also criticised it for holding such views. The *Federationist* expressed amazement that the above statement could have been made by a Catholic paper and insisted that Catholics could have no sympathy with a person who denied the virtue of “patriotism”. It expressed astonishment at the *Catholic Times’* brutal insensitivity, as it portrayed it, when Catholic blood was pouring forth and Catholic manhood was being sacrificed to defend the country. In a defiant challenge to the *Catholic Times* it stated: “But we are the opponents of the genuine conscientious objector. We are convinced opponents, and we make bold to say that the conscientious objectors will find that Catholics are among their most determined opponents.”\(^79\)

\(^{78}\) *Catholic Times*, 14 Apr. 1916, p. 3.

\(^{79}\) *Catholic Federationist*, May 1916, p. 6.
Opposing non-religious and non-Catholic C.O.s was one thing; but, notwithstanding the zeal of the Catholic Federationist, opposing the phenomenon of the Catholic C.O. during the Great War was not such an easy thing for ordinary Catholics. As J. Rae has suggested, a lot of non-Catholic C.O.s (with some exceptions, notably the Quakers and Christadelphians) were in a difficulty: they were not necessarily supported by the traditional interpretations of war as outlined by their Churches. Nor were their religious leaders’ attitudes to this war to be an important factor in establishing their cases. These men were more vulnerable because their Churches offered them little guidance. Thus, they had to determine their pacifism almost on their own; that is, on the basis of a “subjective interpretation of the Christian ethic.” Catholic C.O.s, on the other hand, had at least the (admittedly ambiguous) support of the teaching of their Church on the “just war” and ought to have felt more comfortable because of the public stance of their Pope on this particular war. As we have seen, the Catholic Church had long maintained that a war could be supported as long as it fulfilled certain conditions that could render it just. Thus, the Church acknowledged, at least implicitly, the possibility of conscientious objection to certain wars. As a result, it was far less arduous in theory for a British Catholic C.O. to establish the merits for his case than it was for, say, an Anglican. In constituting his conditions for the just war, St. Augustine had stressed:

80 J. Rae, op. cit., p. 78.
81 The Pope himself was labeled a pacifist by a number of subsequent historians. For example, F. Stratmann in The Church and War: A Catholic Study, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971), has claimed that during the war, Benedict XV “adopted the Programme of Classic Pacifism” and called on a movement in the Catholic Church to promote the programme (pp. 159-160). Stratmann reasoned that “What made the Pope a convinced Pacifist...was his belief in the practicability of the Pacifist aim” (p. 163). R. G. Musto also refers to Benedict as an absolute pacifist in The Catholic Peace Tradition, (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), p. 171.
82 J. Rae, op. cit., p. 80.
As far as the ordinary citizen is concerned, he must obey his country’s summons to take up arms unless he is sure that the war is unjust, and in that event he must refuse to participate in actual combat, even though he would be sentenced to death as a consequence [my emphasis].

Ultimately, this meant that the Church viewed the individual’s conscience as the supreme moral authority in deciding whether a war was just or unjust.

In view of this, a debate ensued between Catholics as to whether such a thing as a Catholic conscientious objector could exist in the present conflict. It was admitted that technically, the teaching of the Catholic Church allowed for conscientious objection in any conflict, but pro-conscriptionists pleaded that surely the present war could not be considered unjust on Britain’s part. After setting out the conditions of a just war in *The Month* of July 1916, Sydney F. Smith, to offer just one example, pursued this argument. He advised that the Church’s principles of conscience made the British Catholic’s position clear: he was bound to fight since Britain’s cause was necessary and just. Smith found it difficult to conceive of any person who might believe that the war was not a defensive one on Britain’s part. To clarify the Catholic C.O.’s position, *The Month* included another article on Catholic conscientious objection a few months later. In his moderate but icily logical commentary, Joseph Keating distinguished between those C.O.s who considered all wars unjust, and those who looked on the present war as unjust. If a C.O. believed the former, then he must be considered a heretic. If he maintained the latter, according to Keating, then he was “worthy of commendation” as one willing to uphold his principles, even though he was ignorant and ill-informed of the facts.

Keating concluded that these kinds of C.O.s must follow their conviction even if that

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conviction seemed wrong to others. He affirmed that “so long as their conviction is, however erroneous, subjectively certain, so long are they bound to act in accord with it.”  

Despite this clarification, many writers in the Catholic press still found it incomprehensible that an individual could at once be a Catholic and a C.O. For instance, in a series of leading articles first appearing in May 1916, just after the extension of conscription to married men, the Glasgow Observer dealt “with that oddest of oddities to which these freakish times of ours have given birth, the Catholic ‘Conscientious Objector.’”  

In the second article of the series, the writer tried to prove that the war was absolutely just and asked rhetorically that if it was unjust, was it likely that the C.O. “would be the only man to perceive it?”  

The Tablet, too, appeared not to be able to fathom the disturbing phenomenon of a Catholic C.O. In April 1916, it lamented the existence in Salford of a person “who claims to be…a Catholic and a conscientious objector.” The Tablet wrote that the appearance of this particular C.O. before a tribunal was reported by the Manchester Guardian, “which mercifully suppress[e]” the man’s name.  

In the same way, the Catholic Herald expressed antipathy to Catholic C.O.s, referring to them as queer people and opposing their being granted exemption. It asserted that they knew nothing of religion and that they interpreted scriptures from their own viewpoint, which basically made them akin to Protestants in their religious actions.

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86 Ibid., p. 72.
87 Glasgow Observer, 27 May 1916, p. 2.
88 Ibid., 3 June 1916, p. 2.
89 The Tablet, 1 Apr. 1916, p. 427.
90 Catholic Herald, 22 Apr. 1916, p. 4.
Even though they were often reviled and rejected by their co-religionists, Catholic conscientious objectors did exist, albeit in very small numbers. According to a leaflet published at the time by the Friends’ Service Committee, only 3 percent of C.O.s were Catholics – the smallest percentage of objectors. Anglicans comprised 7.5 percent, while the figure for atheists was 12 percent – more than Anglicans and Catholics combined.  

One reason for such a diminutive percentage of Catholic and Anglican C.O.s may well be the lack of sympathy they received from their respective Churches.

One of the most prominent of those Catholic conscientious objectors was Francis Meynell. By 1916, Meynell’s strident opposition to the war and conscription was causing his father, Wilfrid Meynell, the manager of Burns & Oates, considerable embarrassment. To extricate his father from this awkward situation, Francis left Burns & Oates and decided to establish his own printing press. After his refusal to answer a summons for conscription in August 1916, he appeared before the Marylebone Local Tribunal. In his autobiography, Meynell intimated that there were several reasons for his conscientious objection. In part, his objection was emotional; he remembered the terrible slaughter of the Boer War and how he wept at the reports of the horrible killing when a little boy. In part, it was religious; “I was…a Roman Catholic and Pope Benedict XV denounced the war.” And in part, it was political; he was convinced that the war was between two imperialist powers and that the workers were used as cannon fodder. “Only for what I

91 The figures are quoted in A. Marrin, The Last Crusade, p. 147.
93 Local tribunals were district tribunals who heard and determined the cases of local conscientious objectors. Appeal Tribunals in specified areas decided the cases of those rejected by the Local Tribunals. Finally, the Central Tribunal was the highest authority in deciding appeals. An appeal to the Central Tribunal required the permission of the Appeal Tribunal concerned.
considered overwhelmingly good ends – and that for me then would have meant social revolution – would I have supported war and killing.”

When he appeared before the tribunal, Meynell cited his politics but emphasised his religion as his chief motive because it was one of the few reasons generally accepted by the tribunals weighing claims for conscientious objection. After explaining that the vast majority of fighting soldiers were conscripted and, therefore, not guilty of the war, and that as a soldier he would refuse certain orders, he cited his religious reasons. He told the chairman that as a Catholic, he heeded the Pope’s utterances, and from his central moral position, Benedict XV had clearly said that the war was “dishonouring humanity.” He had appealed to the belligerents to settle the dispute by some other means, as war did not solve problems. Meynell went on to illustrate this, arguing that “Roman Catholics have a definite system of moral theology…which enables us to look up any point and find what must be considered an authoritative answer.” To corroborate his point, he read two statements from Catholic text-books that confirmed an individual’s duty not to fight if that individual was not certain that the war in which he was to fight was just. When the chairman objected to him citing the Pope and pointed out that popes had waged war themselves, Meynell was quick to point out that he was only referring to the current war, which the Pope definitely opposed.

Meynell then produced three written references supporting his claim that he was a sincere C.O. These letters were from prominent Liberal politicians and publicists: James Douglas, the editor of the Star, Charles Masterman, then a junior minister in the government, and Eddie Marsh, a personal assistant to Asquith. Marsh wrote:

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94 F. Meynell, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
95 Ibid., p. 95.
I can testify that, though in my opinion wrong-headed, [Meynell] is a man of unimpeachable courage and complete sincerity. His attitude as a conscientious objector is of a piece with all his opinions and conduct. But for this kink he would make an excellent soldier. As it is, he would be worse than useless.

Masterman also declared:

I am sure that if there is a genuine conscientious objector in England you are one of the most obdurate kind, and I certainly can testify that these beliefs and determinations of yours are not the creation of a desire to shirk or the results of a natural cowardice. 96

Even though Meynell was exempted from non-combatant service, he did not receive absolute exemption. 97 He appealed to the national tribunal against the decision in September 1916. In his appeal, Meynell produced two more letters: one from H. G. Wells and the other from Lord Lytton. They both disagreed with the defendant’s opinions but insisted that he was an honest and upright character. However, in the same manner as the Local Tribunal, the Appeal Tribunal exempted him from military service but compelled him to do non-combatant work. This he again refused and, on 29 January 1917, he surrendered himself to the authorities and was imprisoned. 98 In prison, he went on a hunger and thirst strike. On the morning of the twelfth day, he collapsed and was promptly taken to the military hospital where he was told that if he accepted nourishment,

97 Local tribunals came under increasing criticism for not granting exemptions. On 29 February 1916, Philip Snowden, a member of the I.L.P., condemned the way local tribunals were treating C.O.s. He cited the case of a man who had gone before the tribunals and defended his case convincingly, yet was not exempted from military service. “I want to know what would satisfy a tribunal that the man had a conscientious objection.” *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 80, col. 947. Likewise, in his introduction to *I Appeal Unto Caesar*, Gilbert Murray cited two faults in local tribunals: 1) they did not have the necessary qualifications to deal with the minds of intellectual and religious men; and 2) they were eager to satisfy the War Office and the press. M. Hobhouse, *I Appeal Unto Caesar*, (London: Allen & Unwin, [1917]), p. vii. Tribunal proceedings are described in chapter 5 of D. Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1967).
he would be discharged unconditionally. He “nodded and accepted the sweetest drink of my life – a spoonful of peptonised milk.”

Publicly, Francis’ family disavowed any agreement with his actions. Just a few days after he was imprisoned, *The Times* reported that Alice Meynell, Francis’ mother, had written on behalf of herself and her family to disclaim “any agreement whatsoever with her son….” Although she respected Francis’ conscience, she held the war to be most just, “and Germany’s crime the greatest crime in history.” Privately, however, Meynell’s family could not but sympathise with his plight. It was around this time that his mother sent him a letter in which she told him that she thought him the happiest of her sons, for he was “so sure and certain.”

The ambivalence of the Meynell family reflected the division in Catholic thought and outlook regarding pacifism and nationalism. A yawning abyss separated the Catholic pacifist mind from that of the non-pacifist. This is most clearly visible in a letter from Stanley Morison, another Catholic C.O., to W. A. S. Hewins from Wakefield prison in October 1917. Morison had applied for total exemption in February 1916 and on 5 April he appeared before the Middlesex County Tribunal. In contrast to Meynell, whose objection was both political and religious, Morison’s objection was purely religious. In his hearing before the tribunal, he expanded on the moral and religious reasons for his

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99 Ibid., p. 102. Meynell later wrote a lengthy article about his experience as a C.O. in prison. It was to be published in the *Daily Herald* but this never eventuated. A draft of the article is in Box XXIV, C.O. Letters – 1917-1918, Morison Papers.

100 *The Times*, 1 Feb. 1917, p. 3.


102 Morison was born in Wanstead, Essex, in May 1889. He converted to Catholicism in December 1908 and in 1913 he was introduced to Wilfrid Meynell and employed in Burns & Oates. He was placed with Francis Meynell who was in charge of book design. Morison became Francis’ assistant and friend and they both refused enlistment for military service in 1916. For a biographical sketch, see *Stanley Morison: A Portrait*, (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1971).
objection which were, in his view, implicit in the Sermon on the Mount.\textsuperscript{103} As with Meynell, he was granted conditional exemption which he rejected. He was then arrested and refused to obey orders. In his subsequent court martial, he was sentenced to two months hard labour in Winchester prison.\textsuperscript{104}

The object of Morison’s letter to Hewins was to entreat him, as a Catholic, to assist him and some of his fellow C.O.s obtain a sympathetic hearing of their cases by the government. In writing the letter, Morison expressed penetrating insight into the ideals which separated Catholic pacifists from Catholic imperialists. It is worth quoting a large portion of the letter to illustrate these conflicting ideologies. After thanking Hewins for a letter he had sent to him, and acknowledging the sincerity of his conscientious objection, he wrote:

I am not of course as sure of my c.o. position as of my Catholicism – in the nature of the case there is the difference that I have in the former case only my individual conscience to prescribe my course of action – the Church itself can give me no advice….\textsuperscript{105} Willy nilly I am an individualist – all conscientious men are. You, for example don’t approve the war because Mr. Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne urged you to stand by France; you approve it because your own conscience and reason move you: you are an individualist therefore. So am I. The difference is this – you have the vast majority of other individualists with you while I am in a very small minority indeed. But the fact of your majority does not legitimise your conscience or illegitimise mine…. [W]hen you ask me to die – and you say ‘meritoriously’ – for my country I fear I am obliged to demur because I am sure that the death you would at the present moment consider meritorious would be no real use to that country which I am as anxious as you to serve. On the other hand were I to lay down my life for the principle of pacifism…I do consider that would be ‘meritorious’ while you would think it waste. Why so? Because we have opposing ideals – yours is the prospect of a prosperous and flourishing British Empire living happily after the present war forced upon it by a wicked competitor. Mine is not this but the prospect of being able to live with a firm purpose to live by what I know to be God’s truth. Lest I be led astray by a false or freakish conscience I as a loyal Catholic confer not with the great British public or with his Majesty’s Government but with the Catholic Church. I say \textit{not} with the Government because I am not now a Nationalist or Imperialist…. I learnt to hate national pride and Nationalism, Imperialism and all that love of self because of self which begets the more vulgar forms of patriotism – a longing to see more red on the map. So, the great society to which you truly say I belong, is, for me, the Catholic Church and for you the British Empire and thus you will understand and not think me a prig if I say I should welcome the privilege of dying for the Church or think me a coward if I say I should regard it as a waste to die for the Empire…. Do you not see that unless we do make our consciences our own


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 72.

\textsuperscript{105} Presumably, Morison is here referring to the British Catholic hierarchy, for the Pope clearly had given advice.
and not the King’s we are back to Luther’s *cuius regio eius religio* [each region has its own religion]? [emphasis in original].

Although Morison seemed to have forgotten that the war was, in the judgement of many contemporaries, as much a Liberal cause as anything else, his letter nevertheless demonstrated that a wide ideological gulf separated Catholic pacifists from Catholic imperialists, while also revealing the essential consideration that maintained this gulf. Morison’s direct moral appeal was to individual conscience. The letter indicated that whereas Catholic pacifists held, in conscience, that the war as an imperialist struggle between two equally aggressive empires, Catholic imperialists considered the preservation of the British Empire to be of paramount importance. Morison’s concern, as a Catholic C.O., was for an international order in which peace was based on justice and love as taught by the Church. Hewins, however, as a British Catholic imperialist, preferred to rely rather on military might to maintain the Empire which he regarded as the supremely beneficent force in the world.

Although such passionate debates between Catholics did not surface frequently in public, they did transpire from time to time. One telling debate took place in the pages of *The Universe* just as conscription was being implemented, in April-May 1916. It started when an anonymous letter to the editor accused the founders of the newly formed Guild of the Pope’s Peace of fomenting a dangerous Catholic pacifist movement which aimed to work in league with other peace movements. This evoked a response from E. I. Watkin, in the following issue of *The Universe*. Watkin, who courageously supplied

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107 *The Universe*, 28 Apr. 1916, p. 4.
108 E. I. Watkin was born near Manchester, England, in 1888 and was educated at St. Paul’s School, London, and at New College, Oxford. He converted to Catholicism in 1908 and in the inter-war period became a pacifist. In *The Crime of Conscription*, a booklet published in 1939, he denounced all modern wars and the clergy of almost all denominations for encouraging conscription. A biographical sketch on his
his name – unlike his detractors – denied emphatically that the Guild was in any way associated with such movements as the N-C.F. or the U.D.C. He asserted that, although he did not agree with the C.O.’s principles, he had nothing but intense admiration for those C.O.s who were suffering for their conscience.109 His response in turn drew a reply from another correspondent, calling himself “Conscientious Fighter”. He castigated C.O.s with bitter vehemence and, alluding to Watkin’s letter, said that if a man should “conscientiously object to a duty binding in conscience,” then he must be guided by a perverted conscience. Far from being admired, he was to be pitied. He felt sure that in the majority of cases, conscientious objection was merely a euphemism for selfishness and cowardice.110

The debate persisted when, in the following week, Watkin replied to “Conscientious Fighter” in four key points. Firstly, just as “Conscientious Fighter” was obeying his conscience to fight, he must leave the C.O. the liberty of objecting because his conscience so willed. Secondly, Catholic theology permitted everyone to follow their conscience, “and when this involves the endurance of suffering [they are] entitled to our admiration.” Thirdly, the persecution of C.O.s proved that they were not selfish, because going to jail and facing numerous hardships was no easier than being a soldier. Fourthly, regarding the sacredness of Britain’s cause, a “fighter” had no right to impose his views on a C.O. Watkin concluded his letter by reaffirming his admiration for C.O.s whether their conscience was right or wrong.111

thoughts and works is provided in M. Hoehn (ed.), Catholic Authors, (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1981), pp. 775-777.
109 The Universe, 5 May 1916, p. 4.
110 Ibid., 12 May 1916, p. 4.
111 Ibid., 19 May 1916, p. 4.
Such a stout defence of the C.O.’s position by a Catholic was sure to draw a response, and sure enough, another letter appeared in the next issue refuting Watkin’s view. The unnamed respondent conceded that Watkin might admire a C.O., but could on no condition admire a Catholic C.O. For “The status of the C[atholic] C.O., from points of view both moral and logical, is an impossible one.” The argument ran that if a Catholic C.O. considered it immoral to fight in defence of King and country, then it must be immoral for thousands of other Catholic soldiers. The letter stated that nobody knew better than a Catholic did what conscience really was. Hence, a Catholic could not be a C.O.112 This line of argument was unacceptable to Watkin who countered that a Catholic may be a C.O. on several grounds: firstly, through conviction that the current war was unjust; and secondly, through conviction that all modern wars were unjust, since they involved more harm than good. To support his assertion, he cited the Pope’s words, “The war has cost too much.”113 The exchange between Watkin and the other correspondents, however, demonstrates that the differences between Catholic pacifists and non-pacifists on the matter of liberty of conscience were immense. In the Catholic sense, pacifists believed that ultimately, they had to follow their conscience, which was guided partly by the Pope’s utterances. But while Catholic pacifists constantly alluded to the Pope’s attitude to the war to support their stance, Catholic conscriptionists avoided all reference to Benedict’s position. It was as if the Pope had not made any utterance concerning the war.

This is not to say that all non-pacifist Catholics abhorred their fellow Catholic C.O.s. Morison’s letters from prison indicate that there were some, chiefly among the

112 Ibid., 26 May 1916, p. 4.
113 Ibid., 9 June, 1916, p. 4.
Jesuit Fathers, who harboured some sympathy for the conscientious objector. In October 1917, for example, Morison sent a letter to the Jesuit Fr. Herbert Thurston from the work center in Wakefield prison. He told Thurston that he would have liked to have made contact with the Jesuit Fathers who provided Catholic masses in the prison chapel. As he explained, he knew none of them “and my ‘conscientious objections’ make me very nervous of first meetings even of S.J.’s – they may be – well – Bernard Vaughans.”114 Thurston immediately wrote to a number of his fellow Jesuit Fathers, telling them about Morison and urging friendly contact with him. A few days later, Morison sent another letter to Thurston in which he expressed appreciation for Thurston’s writing to his Jesuit brothers and for introducing him to them.115 It appears that at the very least, Morison was put in contact with those Jesuits visiting the prison.

The majority of Catholics in Britain objected to the introduction of conscription before it was introduced in 1916. Once it was implemented, however, the Catholic hierarchy fought with vigour in order to gain exemption for the clergy and for seminarians who were in their final years of study. All this might lead one to think that the Catholic hierarchy would not have been harsh on those Catholics who maintained a steadfast opposition to conscription. But the hierarchy’s decision to endorse compulsory military service and appear as “patriotic” as possible not only silenced the bishops as a body, but led them to denounce those Catholics who opposed conscription. By this action, they may have left themselves open to the charge of hypocrisy. To his credit, Bourne was not so inconsistent as, on the one hand, to have negotiated secretly the

exemption of as many seminarians as he could, whilst, on the other, to have endorsed conscription and condemned the anti-conscriptionists. But once conscription had been carried through parliament, most Catholics condemned those who rejected it and opposed the war. The Catholic body formed a phalanx of opposition to pacifists and conscientious objectors. The steadfastness of this opposition was truly remarkable. For since Roman Catholic teaching allowed a theology distinguishing just and unjust war, then obviously there could be unjust wars. Thus, implicitly, it was a matter of religious judgement, and the loyal Catholic was free to decide on the strength of the issues whether a war was just or unjust. This, in turn, implied that there could be sincere Catholic conscientious objectors. But sadly, the majority of Catholics favouring the war simply insisted that the current war was just and even made the startling accusation that the Catholic C.O.’s conscience was erroneous or misinformed or even perverted. Consequently, those few Catholics who dared defy the “patriotic” outlook of their co-religionists had to contend with an onslaught of Catholic criticism.
Chapter 5

Divided Loyalties: Pope or Nation?

Each Modern State is but one among many rivals; yet does it claim greater powers than ever the State claimed before, and with those powers I submit that the Catholic Church must inevitably come into conflict sooner or later; not because the State is modern, but because it claims unquestionable authority in all things.


The Catholic Church has risen from the grave to which it was consigned without ever being dead. It is a growing power all over the world, and its power will grow, and it will make its power felt, and if my voice will reach outside this House of Commons I call upon my co-religionists all over the world to organise themselves and to defend the Pope and to defend their faith.

J. McKean, Catholic MP, 14 February 1918.²

The war presented Catholics in Britain with a dilemma: they were subjects of the Crown but their spiritual allegiance belonged, in a sense, to a foreign authority. This posed a problem because the way the nation viewed the war was at times glaringly inconsistent with that of the Vatican. British Catholics’ attempts to balance their temporal and spiritual allegiances became exceedingly difficult as the Pope came under a barrage of extravagant criticism from secular Britons and ultra-Protestants. The Pope’s own understanding of his “neutrality” during the war vexed the British people and press, particularly his apparent refusal, as they saw it, to condemn the outright violation of Belgian neutrality. Catholics felt compelled to defend their spiritual leader against the resulting calumnies and insults. At the same time, Catholics manifested their own brand of ultra-patriotism as the war continued. Catholic leaders urged their co-religionists to

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² *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 103, col. 391.
continue waging war in a spirit of sacrifice in order to preserve the Empire. Moreover, prominent Catholics were willing and eager to assist their government in any way they could in order to further the war effort. Thus, while demonstrating allegiance to their King and country, British Catholics sought to maintain their loyalty to the Vicar of Christ and his ideals of charity and reconciliation. It was not easy, however, to sustain such divided loyalties because it brought British Catholics themselves into a clash with anti-Catholic elements in British society.

Soon after his election to the Supreme Pontificate, Pope Benedict XV indicated that the Vatican was going to adopt a policy of strict impartiality. He did not wish to be “neutral” in the sense of making no judgements at all about the conflict. As he himself explained: “The Holy See has not been, nor wishes to be neutral in the European War. It has, in turn, the right and the duty to be impartial” [emphasis in original]. Benedict considered that the word “neutral” implied indifference. He, the father of the largest Christian denomination, could not be indifferent to the calamities that were taking place around him. However, he could not support one side against another either. Thus, he declared that the only possible position open to him was to be strictly and benevolently impartial. He enunciated his position in an allocution he delivered on 22 January 1915:

Certainly anybody who judges carefully cannot fail to see that in this enormous struggle the Apostolic See, though filled with the greatest anxiety, must remain perfectly impartial. The Roman Pontiff, as Vicar of Jesus Christ…must embrace all the combatants in one sentiment of charity; and as the Father of all Catholics he has among the belligerents a great number of children, for whose salvation he must be equally and without distinction solicitous [emphasis in original].

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3 Indeed, even while he was still the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal della Chiesa delivered an impressive and forceful speech to Catholics on the Church’s need to “adhere to the strictest neutrality in the war.” K. Forster, The Failures of Peace: The Search for a Negotiated Peace during the First World War, (Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941), p. 126.
5 Ibid., p. 120.
Consequently, the Pope confined himself to choosing a position only on the basis of incontestable and officially recognised facts. Because the Holy See pursued this policy of strict impartiality, so neutrality was also urged on the Italian people through the *Osservatore Romano* at the beginning of the conflict.⁶

The British people were untouched by the Pope’s declaration that the Holy See would remain impartial through the war. In fact, the majority of the British showed very little understanding and consideration for the difficult position of the Roman Pontiff. In the first few months of the war, as we have seen, the great majority of the British public was fully convinced that Britain had been morally bound to enter the war for the sake of Belgian neutrality. In British eyes, here was a clear case where the Pope could manifest his latent spiritual power by morally condemning German conduct in Belgium. The fact that Benedict XV remained silent in the face of the apparently incontrovertible violation of Belgian neutrality outraged certain sections of British opinion. Furthermore, it was incomprehensible that the Pope could remain impartial when the Germans were clearly carrying out atrocities against Belgian Catholics.⁷

Undoubtedly, British Catholics were in a precarious position. They were bound to defend the stance of their spiritual head, but at the same time they could not ignore the substance of the argument mounted by the Pope’s detractors. Some Catholics groped for

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an answer to justify Benedict’s position as best as they could. Sydney F. Smith, for example, published an article in *The Month* in January 1915 in which he upheld the Pope’s special understanding of his own “neutrality”. He explained that the Pontiff’s “neutrality” was not the kind by which he eschewed any involvement in the conflict. Rather it was the “neutrality” of a father’s heart torn asunder “to see his children engaged in this internecine strife, who holds himself apart because his affection is equal for them all.”

Because the Supreme Pontiff was given the authority to teach the Church, he added, only he could decide when and how to speak; it was for others “to receive his words with obedience and reverence.”

Henry Howard, the head of the British Mission to the Vatican, also attempted to justify the Pope’s “neutrality” to his superiors, albeit not very convincingly. In a confidential report to Edward Grey on 11 January 1915, Howard defended the Pope’s attitude towards Belgium by reporting that Benedict had not yet been elected to the papal throne when Belgian neutrality was first violated. Moreover, in the absence of French and British representatives, the Pope had not been supplied with accurate details of German atrocities in Belgium.

Eleven days after Howard’s report to Grey, Benedict XV delivered his Consistorial Allocution, which provided British Catholics with some much-needed ammunition to refute claims of Papal indifference. Addressing the cardinals, the Pontiff said: “We proclaim without waste of words, denouncing all injustice on whatever side it
Such vague statements, amounting to only light ammunition, it
must be said, were reinforced with solid and unambiguous heavy artillery six months
later. This came in the form of an official letter, soon made public, from Cardinal
Gasparri to M. van den Heuvel, who had replaced Baron D’Erp as the Belgian
representative to the Vatican in March 1915. Gasparri’s letter, addressed to van den
Heuvel on 16 July, explained that the German Chancellor had openly admitted that
Germany had violated Belgium’s neutrality in his address to the Reichstag on August 4,
1914. The letter also stated that the Holy Father had included the invasion of Belgium
when he “condemned all injustices by whichever side and for whatever motive
committed.”

British Catholics at the Vatican had been trying to induce the Pope to issue such a
pronouncement, clearly condemning German actions in Belgium, since the first weeks of
war. In his first audience with the new Pope, a fortnight after the conclave, Cardinal
Gasquet attempted to elicit just such a public statement from Benedict. But the Pope
refused to abandon his impartiality and told him that any condemnation of brutal
practices in Belgium would be construed as a one-sided condemnation of Germany.
Likewise, J. D. Gregory, writing in 1929, revealed that after the invasion of Belgium, a
number of Allied prelates and politicians had visited the Pope, eager to extract a
condemnation from him. Gregory confessed that at the time, even he had written many
letters to Benedict on various controversial subjects “and advocating action which was as

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Dublin Review, 170, (Apr.-June 1922), p. 188.
12 The Tablet, 31 July 1915, p. 137. See also D. Gwynn, “Vatican Diplomacy and Peace”, p. 239.
13 S. Leslie, Cardinal Gasquet, p. 236.
In a meeting on 17 January 1915, Gregory implored the Pope to break his silence and condemn the violation of Belgium’s neutrality. The Pope replied that he sympathised with Gregory’s position but that if he singled out the Germans for condemnation, he would alienate millions of Catholics who were fighting against the British and place them in an intolerable position in their own countries.  

Gregory’s difficulty was characteristic of British Catholics who had to defend the Empire while at the same time respecting the Holy See’s policies. But Gregory’s predicament was all the more glaring because he was accountable directly to the Foreign Office. Thus, it may have been increasingly uncomfortable for him, as a Catholic, to carry out the policy of his government in contradicting the attitude of his spiritual pastor. Consequently, it might be plausible to suggest that this was part of the reason that Gregory could only recognise his action as “unreasonable” and “impolitic” some eleven years after the war.

The British public was not satisfied with either of the above two statements, the Papal statement of 22 January and Gasparri’s letter of 16 July 1915, both of which were made public immediately. They continued to look upon the Holy See as the equivalent of a judicial tribunal from which some precise judgement on the conduct of the war was to be expected. Criticism of the Pope’s alleged silence regarding Belgium was not confined to ultra-Protestants. Anglicans felt his pronouncements to be weak and ambiguous. Dean Inge of St. Paul’s, who was always a relentless critic of the Roman Church, accused the Papacy of selling itself to pan-Germanism and the Pope of refusing to castigate “the

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14 J. D. Gregory, op. cit., p. 96.
greatest crime in history.”\textsuperscript{16} Others attacked the Bishop of Rome for not speaking out more forcefully. Joseph McCabe, the anti-Catholic publicist, reproached the Pope in 1915 for being deaf to widespread outrages in Belgium. He speculated that Benedict remained silent because once Germany and Austria were defeated, the strongest Catholic political parties in Europe would be broken. Millions of Catholics would pass from the rule of the Central Powers to the rule of atheistic France and schismatic Russia. It was, therefore, not in the Vatican’s interest to condemn Germany.\textsuperscript{17}

Even after Gasparri wrote his explanatory letter to van den Heuvel, the British assault against Benedict’s “neutrality” continued unabated throughout the war. A few instances selected from the myriad of possible examples should suffice to illustrate the vehement and wide-ranging criticism that was directed at the Holy See. In October 1915, R. B. C. Sheridan, a Conservative publicist writing in the \textit{Nineteenth Century}, railed against the Pope’s neutrality as insincere and damaging. He noted “the deep sense of abandonment which Roman Catholics in the Allied countries seem to be experiencing” and praised the Anglican and Orthodox Churches for condemning the brutal violation of Belgium.\textsuperscript{18} The fact that the Orthodox and Anglican Churches were national Churches that reflected, more or less, their governments’ policies, while the papacy was a supranational institution that transcended national boundaries, was lost on Sheridan. Instead, he predicted that when the war did eventually end, French and Belgian Catholics were likely to emancipate themselves from the Pope’s tutelage because he had abandoned

\textsuperscript{16} A. Marrin, \textit{The Last Crusade}, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{17} J. McCabe, op. cit., p. 15.
them in their hour of need, and join the Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{19} The Rev. Vyrnwy Morgan, a Welsh Protestant and a Doctor of Divinity, sustained the growing wave of censure against the Pope. In a book published in 1916, he outlined his belief that Benedict was neither a diplomat nor a statesman. To the argument that the Pope did not possess all the necessary facts to condemn absolutely the atrocities in Belgium, Morgan retorted (somewhat naïvely) that the Pope was after all “not a historian” who required all the evidence before he could deliver a judgement.\textsuperscript{20} Another vehement pamphleteer against the Pope was one Charles T. Gorham, who wrote from an atheistic standpoint. In his denigration of Benedict’s impartiality, he observed that even though he may not have been sure who the culprits were in Belgium or elsewhere, it was nevertheless the Pope’s duty to reprove the evil of atrocities against civilians. But “In the ruthless violation of Belgium and the slaughter of thousands of its unarmed people he sees no ground for protest, and makes no appeal to the voice of humanity.” Gorham accused the Pope of being morally impotent and contended that his feeble language indicted him, for it revealed his attention to political rather than moral considerations.\textsuperscript{21} Ironically, these accusations tended to vindicate Catholics’ claims that the papacy was indeed a great moral power in the world, since it was the non-Catholics who were calling on the Pope to use the moral authority of his position to condemn moral outrages. Significantly, the accusers depicted the Pope’s moral judgement as worth having – but only in so far as it was convenient for them. His condemnation of German atrocities was earnestly solicited, but his wider condemnation of war was not welcome.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 866.
Leading British Catholics, who felt compelled to defend their chief pastor, tried their best to counter any attack against the Pope’s impartiality and to mollify public opinion. Immediately after the allocution of 22 January, the British representatives to the Vatican attempted in a diplomatic flurry to convince the Foreign Office that the Pope had finally delivered the condemnation everyone was demanding. On 25 January, Henry Howard sent a confidential report to Edward Grey in which he considered the allocution to have been a “diplomatic utterance of considerable astuteness.” Howard tried to strengthen the Pope’s case by explaining that although it appeared to be carefully impartial, it actually favoured the Allies if one read between the lines. In addition to warning the Germans to cease their current methods of warfare in Belgium, Howard elaborated, the Pope “practically makes his own the sentiments expressed by Cardinal Mercier in his famous pastoral.” The warning he issued against the violation of justice could only be directed against Germany’s actions in Belgium. Although Benedict did not directly condemn Germany, “it would nevertheless be unfair to credit him with indifference to the public immoralities which have aroused the indignation of both the allied and also sections of neutral countries.”

At the same time, Gregory was writing to Eric Drummond that the Pope had indicated “privately” that they should read between the lines regarding Belgium’s violated neutrality. A few days later, he wrote to William Tyrrell, the other Catholic at the Foreign Office, reporting that von Mühlberg had protested to the Pope against the allocution. The Pope smiled and said that if the Germans recognised themselves in the condemnation he could not be blamed, whereat Mühlberg “blustered”. Gregory further intimated that the Pope had said that he had sent the Kaiser a

number of telegrams protesting against German atrocities in Belgium, only to receive replies denying such charges.\textsuperscript{24}

At home, Cardinal Bourne spearheaded a campaign to extirpate any notion in the mind of the public that, through his impartiality, the Pope was guilty of indifference to a suffering world. On Sunday, 30 May 1915, he delivered a blistering sermon denouncing the widespread complaints against the Pope’s “silence”. Such complaints implied that the Vatican’s reticence regarding Belgian atrocities proved that Benedict was pro-German. In his sermon, Bourne emphasised that the bulk of the British people, as Protestants, had long boasted about their freedom from the Pope, and that for the most part, they had nothing but contempt for His Holiness. He berated his countrymen, stating that they had always rejected and resisted any action by the Holy See, but were now invoking the power of the Vicar of Christ and seeking a declaration in favour of Britain’s cause. His castigation continued:

\begin{quote}
It is a strange phenomenon that men, representative of English thought, who once would have refused to hear any appeal from Rome, are now the very first to condemn what they regard as the silence of the Holy See. The whole of their criticism is based on the fallacy that no protest is of any value unless it be shouted from the housetops and published in the daily papers.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

As for the demand that Benedict should condemn German atrocities in Belgium specifically, Bourne reminded the British that similar charges had also been made against Russia, Britain’s ally. It had treated the Galicians in the same abominable way that the Germans had treated the Belgians. Bourne pointed out that if the Pope was to issue public

\textsuperscript{24} Gregory to W. Tyrrell, 3 Feb. 1915, F.O. 800/67/57.
condemnations, then all these questions must be brought before him if he was to judge with true justice and impartiality.  

Although Bourne’s defence of Benedict XV was received favourably by the Catholic press, some Catholic newspapers found that now they had to vindicate not only their Pope, but their primate also. The Catholic Herald of 12 June, for example, found itself defending both the Pope and Bourne against Protestant disparagement. Clearly, Bourne’s sermon had touched a nerve among some Protestants who had always considered British Catholics to be aliens, loyal to Rome. The Catholic Herald was obliged to respond to an article that was contained in the Guardian, an Anglican newspaper, criticising Benedict’s silence and Bourne’s defence of the Pope. The Herald replied that Bourne’s statement was a “clear, statesmanlike explanation of the Pope’s position.” The Guardian also insinuated that the Pope had “at last plucked up his courage to utter some sort of condemnation of the German atrocities.”

The Herald seemed frustrated at what it saw as such Protestant fatuousness. It merely commented that it seemed a hopeless task to explain to Protestants that the Pope was the father of all Christendom; that it was difficult for him to condemn one side or another among his warring children.

Even before their Cardinal’s attempt to exonerate Benedict from the charge of culpable silence, a few Catholics had tried to counter the slanders that were made against the Pope’s impartiality. Sydney F. Smith, for example, again rose to the occasion, writing a commentary which appeared in The Month of April 1915. Smith blamed certain organs

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27 Quoted in the Catholic Herald, 12 June 1915, p. 8. The Guardian was here referring to the Pope’s condemnation of all committed injustices in his allocution of January 22. The small Anglican Guardian referred to here should not be confused with the famous Liberal daily, the Manchester Guardian.
of the press for raising a hue and cry against the Pope’s “neutrality” and accused these organs of being essentially hostile to the Vatican. He argued that it would be “fatal” for the Holy See to pronounce judgement on one side or the other of the belligerents. Such a pronouncement would only serve to divide Catholics, and it would be impossible for the Holy See to restore the lost unity after the war.29

It was as if Bourne’s sermon, however, was a sign for British Catholics to rally to the defence of the Pope’s impartiality. For after May 1915, there was an outpouring of material, particularly from the clergy, which attempted not only to clarify, but also to justify the Pope’s position regarding his so-called “neutrality” – the word being constantly employed in this debate in spite of the Pope’s explanations and his preference for the word “impartiality”. Bishop Keating of Northampton, for example, contributed a much-publicised article in July 1915. In his article, Keating deplored the anti-Papal party, whom he accused of not being “able to sacrifice their favourite sport of Pope-baiting, though horse racing and football [had] been abandoned.” Even some Catholics, he pointed out, had been ensnared in the “patriotic” fervour and had interpreted the Sovereign Pontiff’s silence as an indication of his being “guilty”.30 Keating affirmed the Pope’s unquestionable impartiality since the commencement of his pontificate. But he asserted that Benedict XV’s “neutrality” did not mean indifference. He pointed to his

28 Ibid.
30 Frederick W. [Keating], “The Neutrality of the Holy See”, Dublin Review, 157, (July 1915), p. 134. In a sermon delivered in August 1916, Keating reiterated the charge that the Pope’s silence against German atrocities had been construed as a sign of guilt. In this sermon, however, Keating insisted that “no matter how vehement a denunciation of the Kaiser the Pope issued, he would not restrain Germany’s deliberate policy of terror.” Sermon given at Coventry: “The Pope and the War”, 4 June 1916, S7, III, A/145, Keating Papers, AAL.
humanitarian efforts and his unceasing work to secure the exchange of prisoners.\textsuperscript{31} As for Belgium, Keating once again stressed that Benedict had condemned German actions in January 1915. The words in his allocution of January 22 could only be directed against the Germans, Keating insisted, because they were the ones who had undertaken an invasion and committed notorious injustices.\textsuperscript{32} Evidently, Keating seemed to have forgotten that Russia was allegedly treating the Catholic Galicians in the same way Germany was treating the Catholic Belgians. The article by Keating was one among many, typical of the literature produced in defence of the Pope’s “neutrality” by British Catholics.\textsuperscript{33}

Furthermore, Catholics emphasised that in being impartial, the Pope was not sitting idly by while his children slaughtered one another. As Cardinal Bourne pointed out in April 1917, Benedict had, among other things, arranged for the release of prisoners of war (POWs), and obtained an assurance from Germany that she would halt Belgian deportations.\textsuperscript{34} But Benedict XV achieved the most success in his endeavours to ameliorate the suffering of POWs. In 1915, the Vatican set up a humanitarian organisation called the \textit{Opera dei Prigionieri}. In the course of the war, it dealt with some 600,000 correspondences including 170,000 missing persons enquiries, 40,000 requests to help repatriate sick POWs, and the delivery of some 50,000 letters to and from

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\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 138.  
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 139-140.  
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{The Tablet}, 7 Apr. 1917, p. 450.
prisoners.\textsuperscript{35} This earned him the gratitude of King George V and elicited praise from the British government.\textsuperscript{36}

The Catholics’ vindication of the Pope’s impartiality was legitimised by the fact that some Protestants also defended such a policy. The most cited and noteworthy defence at the time was a booklet entitled \textit{No Small Stir}, written in 1917 by an Anglican under the pseudonym “Diplomaticus”. The author put forward a strong case justifying the “neutrality” of the Holy See. He pointed out that political “neutrality” was the most prudent policy for the maintenance of the unity of the Catholic Church. “Diplomaticus” also addressed the arguments put forward by the Pope’s enemies. These included the assertions that he was the most suitable person to condemn moral injustice, and that if Benedict would only pronounce his judgement on Germany’s immorality, they would more readily accept his decisions on other matters in the future. Such a charge, “Diplomaticus” conceded, was a grave one. He challenged those who employed it to “restore the Pope to the position he held in the Middle Ages.” Those who blamed him for not arbitrating must accept him unreservedly in the role of arbitrator. Furthermore, the Pope could only present himself as arbitrator at the request of governments and not private individuals.\textsuperscript{37} In addition to this, “Diplomaticus” made a critical point by asking: “\textit{What neutral Power except the Pope has officially condemned the violation of Belgian neutrality at all?’}” [emphasis in original].\textsuperscript{38} Needless to say, British Catholics met \textit{No

\textsuperscript{35} J. F. Pollard, op. cit., p. 113.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 14. H. Johnson, writing in 1933, made the point that the Vatican was not a signatory of the 1839 treaty which guaranteed Belgian independence and the Pope was not regarded as an arbiter in international disputes. Thus, there was no reason why he should make any pronouncement on the invasion of Belgium.
Small Stir with jubilation because it justified their confidence in their spiritual head’s discretion and confirmed that their defence of the Pope was having a positive effect on the public mind.³⁹

To outsiders, the rallying of British Catholics in defence of the Pope’s impartiality must have appeared to be the product of an impressive unity. But on the inside, vexation at Benedict’s policy was, in fact, beginning to produce cracks. Such cracks indicate that some Catholics were probably not wholly convinced of the righteousness of the Pope’s impartiality, even though they felt obliged to defend him against his opponents. One indication of this is seen in the action of von Hügel when he visited Rome in early 1915. Von Hügel decided not to seek an audience with the Pontiff because he felt that “it would tempt him to let the Pope have his mind” regarding the Holy See’s “neutrality”.⁴⁰ Even though von Hügel was not a typical British Catholic, he was not alone in holding this view. In February 1915, just over one week after Benedict XV had supposedly condemned Germany in his allocution, Bishop Burton received a letter from one of his parishioners deprecating the Pope’s silence on German atrocities. The writer complained that Benedict had not unreservedly and specifically condemned German atrocities in Belgium even though the Belgians were innocent victims who were most loyal to Rome.

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³⁹ After the booklet was published, for example, the Glasgow Observer praised it as “a stroke of genius” and asserted that it was a Protestant vindication of the Pope’s policies (15 Sep. 1917, p. 3). The Tablet, too, welcomed it with the comment that it was “a sign that a truer estimate of the Papal attitude is gaining ground.” Because it was written by an Anglican, it would convince men with the right mind of the injustice of the attacks on the Pope (11 Aug. 1917, p. 165). This is confirmed by the view of C. F. G. Masterman, who was the Liberal director of the Propaganda Department in Wellington House. During the war, he became estranged from the Church of England and considered that “the only religious leader who came through the war with credit was the Pope…” L. Masterman, C. F. G. Masterman: A Biography, (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1939), p. 290.

⁴⁰ M. de la Bedoyere, op. cit., p. 284.
He explained that he should have liked “to hear the righteous denunciation of the Hun’s demonic cruelties and the destruction of cathedrals, churches and libraries.”

It might be asserted that Gasparri’s letter of July 1915 to van den Heuvel ought to have dissipated such sentiments. But even after Gasparri’s explanatory letter to van den Heuvel, if not outright opposition, then at least nagging doubts could still be detected among some Catholics. Bishop Keating, for example, ended his above article on the Holy See’s “neutrality” with the following words: “If [Benedict XV] decides to speak, we shall support him with all our power. If he decides to remain silent, we shall understand and shall not rebel” [my emphasis].

Such choice of words is important because not only do they not appear to be those of an absolutely convinced man but also they imply that the Pope’s position was accepted only grudgingly by some Catholics. More importantly, in January 1916, The Universe contained a still more blunt message. Although it defended the Pope’s “neutrality”, it declared that individual Catholics could not follow his lead. In its view, “A neutral Catholic…is a traitor to his country, because he must necessarily be indifferent as to whether the land of his birth is Germanised.”

This, in effect, meant that although the Pope’s “neutrality” was respected, it was not regarded as a practical precedent for British Catholics. The above examples illustrate the dilemma of the Catholics’ dual loyalty: while they defended the Pope’s impartiality vehemently, they did not want to appear to be endorsing such a risky policy for themselves.

This, however, did not assuage critics in certain Protestant circles who continued to vilify the Pope and to accuse him of the more serious charge of being pro-German. “Diplomaticus” intimated that a few weeks into the war, “religious tract-sellers” could be

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41 [J.?] Davis to Bishop Burton, 3 Feb. 1915, Folder 1915-1916/10, Burton Papers.
42 Frederick W. [Keating], op. cit., p. 145.
observed selling pamphlets on street corners proving that the apocalypse was upon the world. The pamphlets claimed that the beast in Revelations with seven heads and ten horns represented the Kaiser with his states and allies, and the woman sitting on the beast, “drunken with the blood of the saints”, represented the Papacy. As days turned into months, however, it became common gossip that the Pope was in the service of the Central Powers. It was no longer obscurely confined to street corners and religious fanatics. “‘The pro-German Vatican!’ was aspiring to take the place of ‘Business as Usual’, ‘Single Men First’ and other earlier war-cries.”

These accusations of pro-German sympathy increased in 1915 and the accusers became more vociferous the longer the war lasted. For example, in its annual meeting, held in Edinburgh on 23 March 1915, the Scottish Reformation Society (S.R.S.) affirmed that the Vatican’s sympathies lay with the Central Powers and not with France, Britain and “poor Belgium”; if they had, the Pope would have condemned German atrocities.

Rev. Vyrnwy Morgan also accused the Vatican of being in league with, and influenced

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44 “Diplomaticus”, op. cit., p. 5. Indeed such tracts and books had been popular among the more fanatic Protestants before 1914 but proliferated in the more favourable atmosphere of the war. For example, in 1910, “Watchman” produced a book called *Rome and Germany: The Plot for the Downfall of Britain*, (London: Henry J. Drane), in which he argued that the Vatican was conniving with Germany to destroy Britain’s Protestantism and coerce her back into the Roman fold; that Germany’s Protestantism had waned through scepticism and unbelief and she had thus allied herself to the Vatican in order to overthrow British supremacy. This was followed by a sequel in 1916 under the title *Rome and the War and Coming Events in Britain*, (London: McBride, Nast & Co.), in which the above theory was expounded along with the additional claim that the Vatican and the Jesuits had deliberately started the war. For other examples of the Pope’s portrayal as anti-Christ, see E. P. Cachemaille, *The Prophetic Outlook Today*, (London: Morgan & Scott, 1918) and J. A. Kensit, *Rome Behind the Great War*, (London: Protestant Truth Society, 1918).
by, the Central Powers. He explained that “it is no secret that in Germany the Vatican is
looked upon as an ally.”

These accusations arose for several reasons. As noted above, the “neutrality”
question and Benedict’s perceived silence on German atrocities had occasioned much
hostile comment. Another reason, which became public knowledge at the time, was the
so-called Gerlach Affair. In August 1916, an Italian battleship, the *Leonardo Da Vinci*,
was blown up in Taranto harbour with a considerable number of lives lost. Upon
investigating, Italian police eventually implicated Mgr. Rudolph Gerlach, a German
prelate and Benedict’s private chamberlain, with the sinking of the ship. Gerlach was
linked to an espionage ring inside Italy which was financed by German and Austrian
intelligence. Gerlach was subsequently escorted to the Swiss border by the Italian
authorities at the beginning of 1917, only then tried by an Italian military tribunal, and
sentenced to life imprisonment *in absentia*.

This sensational affair, and the fact that Gerlach had been on intimate terms with
Benedict XV, buttressed the carefully nourished and prejudiced view that the Pope was
pro-German. As early as July 1915, E. J. Dillon had written that Gerlach was “one of the
most compromising associates and dangerous mentors that any Sovereign ever admitted
to his privacy.” But Pope Benedict maintained his firm belief in Gerlach’s innocence to
the last. J. F. Pollard defends this position, insisting that even though Gerlach was
convicted, there was in fact not sufficient evidence against him for the charge to be

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47 Rev. J. V. Morgan, op. cit., p. 140.
48 This had been preceded by the destruction of another ship, the *Benedetto Brin*, which had also exploded
suddenly on 27 September 1915 in Taranto harbour.
49 For an account of the Gerlach Affair, see D. Alvarez, “A German Agent at the Vatican: The Gerlach
W. A. Renzi, op. cit., pp. 496-497.
considered proven. Pollard argues that in the trial, much of the evidence came from a
discredited priest, Mario Tedeschi, who claimed to have been close to Gerlach but who
could not recognise his photograph. Although another of the accused withdrew his
charges against Gerlach, “the court ignored this development.” Pollard also dismisses
the charge of Gerlach’s involvement in blowing up the ship. He notes that there is no
“solid evidence” to suggest that Gerlach was either involved in the plot or that he was a
German spy. Furthermore, Pollard suggests that by expelling Gerlach before the trial
opened, the Italian authorities exposed their own suspicions that he would have been
capable of defending himself ably had he been present. As it was, “his conviction and
sentence satisfied both Allied governments and Italian anti-clericals” while his expulsion
from Italy shielded the Vatican from any involvement and avoided a potential
embarrassment. Consequently, the Gerlach Affair only served to heighten British
Protestant suspicions that the Pope was in fact pro-German.

For every accusation made and malignity shown toward Benedict XV and the
Vatican, Catholics, and the Catholic press in particular, had not only a reply, but also a
counter-accusation. For example, the Glasgow Observer, as the leading Scottish Catholic
newspaper, rebutted accusations by the S.R.S. that the Pope was pro-German by citing
what German newspapers were saying. The Vossische Zeitung of February 1917 had
written: “What really plays the authoritative and decisive role at the Vatican is Italian
nationality,…which is closely allied to the French.” Another German newspaper, the
Kolnische Zeitung stated that “the majority of the distinguished personages at the Vatican

52 Ibid., p. 105.
may be described as in full agreement with the Italian war policy.\textsuperscript{53} The Observer concluded that this was “damning evidence” against the S.R.S. and noted that both the German press and the S.R.S. were erroneous in their indictment of the Holy See. The Tablet also employed this method of dispelling any notion that the Pope was on the side of the Central Powers. In March 1917, it alluded to the complaints of the Hamburger Nachrichten that Benedict XV had not replied to the German peace note which was issued in December 1916. The Neueste Nachrichten in Munich was convinced that the Pope was Francophile. The Tablet explained that “if the ‘inspired’ German indictment of the Vatican fails to prove that it is the tool of the Allies, it proves at least that it cannot possibly be the tool of the Germans.”\textsuperscript{54}

The clergy, led by the Archbishop of Westminster, also attempted to shield the Vatican and the Pope from poisonous insults hurled at them. When asked about relations between Britain and the Vatican in his interview with the Corriere d’Italia while in Italy in the winter of 1916-17, Bourne tried to underline the importance of the Holy See. He told the interviewer that “England from the first day of the war understood clearly how useful it would be for us to have our representative at the Holy See.” He regretted that other powers, and here he could only be referring to France and Italy, did not follow suit.\textsuperscript{55} On his return to Britain, he defended the Vatican, insisting that while in Italy, he saw no lack of interest in the Entente’s cause and no antagonism towards the Entente. On the contrary, the Vatican was using all its powers and resources to reduce the horrors of war.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Quoted in the Glasgow Observer, 21 Apr. 1917, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{54} The Tablet, 10 Mar. 1917, p. 301.
\textsuperscript{55} Quoted in Ibid, 17 Feb. 1917, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{56} Catholic Herald, 31 Mar. 1917, p. 3.
Other members of the hierarchy followed in their Cardinal’s steps. They stressed that the greatest moral power on earth should not be continually traduced because peace, when it did come, would only be made secure through the application of those moral principles which were constantly supported and advocated by the Pope. In a sermon that Bishop Keating delivered in 1916, he asserted that far from destroying the Papacy, the war was strengthening it.\(^57\) Evidence of the real power of the Vatican in international politics could be seen by the fact that governments were finding that they were compelled to accredit representatives to the Holy See. This, according to Keating, was attributed to the moral influence of the Pope and the fact that the war would finally be decided, not by armaments, but by the moral principles of which His Holiness was the incessant exponent.\(^58\) Thomas Dunn, the Bishop of Nottingham,\(^59\) was more emphatic in his defence of the Pope than Keating. In his Advent pastoral of 1917, he protested against the injustice of the calumnies heaped upon Benedict XV. He urged Catholics to study the literature on what the Pope had done in the interest of promoting peace and to defend their spiritual leader against his adversaries.\(^60\)

The Vatican was aware of the strength of anti-Papal sentiments in Britain and the constant defamation of Benedict XV and the Holy See. It generally did not give them serious consideration in light of the more grave and pressing issues that it had to deal with. But when a more serious charge was made, namely, that the Vatican was

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58 Sermon by Bishop Keating, “The War against War”, [1916], S7, III, A145, Keating Papers, AAL.

59 Bishop Dunn was born in London in 1870. He attended St. Thomas’ seminary at Hammersmith and was ordained priest in 1893. Upon Bishop Robert Brindle’s resignation from the see of Nottingham in April 1915, Thomas Dunn was appointed his successor in January 1916. He died in 1931.

responsible for the Italian debacle at Caporetto in October-November 1917,\textsuperscript{61} the Vatican felt compelled to take action. In late November, the \textit{Morning Post} published an article claiming that the Vatican had played a major role in the recent military disaster at Caporetto. The \textit{Post} alleged that the Italian reverse was due “to the influence of the treacherous representations disseminated among the Italian armies” and alleged that the Vatican had a role in distributing that propaganda.\textsuperscript{62}

It is true that Rennell Rodd considered that the Pope’s Peace Note of August 1917 had seemed timed to weaken the army at the moment of the offensive and that this was deeply resented by the Italians.\textsuperscript{63} But this opinion was put forward as early as 2 September 1917 and it was not publicised. The \textit{Morning Post}’s allegations, on the other hand, were far more grave because they were public accusations made at a time when the situation was far more volatile: the Pope’s Peace Note had not achieved the desired result; Italy had undergone a potentially disastrous defeat at the hands of its enemies; and Russia’s Provisional Government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks. To accuse the Vatican, therefore, of contributing to the calamity and abetting the enemy at this moment could not be allowed to pass unanswered.

\textsuperscript{61} On 24 October 1917, Italy faced a perilous predicament when the Austro-German forces took the Italian army at Caporetto by surprise and routed it. In three weeks, the Italian army was driven back from the river Isonzo, over 120 miles to the river Piave. The casualties included 10,000 dead, 30,000 wounded, and 293,000 prisoners. 152 artillery pieces were captured. For full details of the defeat and its political repercussions, see chapter 19 in T. N. Page, \textit{Italy and the World War}, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1921), and H. J. Burgwyn, \textit{The Legend of the Mutilated Victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915-1919}, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp. 106-120. Page was the American ambassador to Italy from 1913 to 1919.

\textsuperscript{62} Quoted in \textit{The Tablet}, 1 Dec. 1917, p. 700. The \textit{Morning Post} also included a letter by Richard Bagot, an ultra-Protestant, in which he claimed that: “the Knowledge of the methods under which it has been deliberately sought to undermine the loyalty of the Italian Army and Navy and the spirit and patriotism of the Italian nation, the complicity…of the Vatican is not only…well known, but incontrovertible.” See newspaper clipping of the \textit{Morning Post}, 26 Nov. 1917, F.O. 371/3086/330. The fact that a copy of the letter is found in the Foreign Office files may indicate the importance that was attached to the whole episode.
Soon after the article appeared, Cardinal Gasparri sent a letter to Cardinal Bourne and requested that he communicate it to the *Morning Post*. On 3 December, Bourne granted an interview to the *Post* in which he related the Cardinal Secretary of State’s message. Gasparri not only denied the *Morning Post*’s accusations, but also declared that they were utter falsehoods. He stipulated that it was “nothing short of atrocious calumny to assert, as has lately been done in the columns of the *Morning Post,*” that the Vatican was implicated in Italy’s military misfortunes. He also challenged the paper to produce evidence in order to substantiate its allegations. In his interview, Bourne added that for the newspaper to make the imputation that the Vatican was involved in treachery, without presenting any evidence, was not in accordance with the English tradition.

Gasparri’s denial and Bourne’s defence were lost on the *Morning Post*, for on December 6 it continued its arraignment of the Holy See. In response to Gasparri’s challenge to produce evidence, the *Morning Post* simply stated airily that the evidence was in its possession. It added that the priests in the country districts of Italy had “suggested to the people that a ‘Pope-King’ would be able to make much better terms with Austria than the King of Italy.” Bourne immediately penned a lengthy letter to the *Morning Post* which appeared in that paper the next day. Bourne’s letter must be counted among the most brilliant defences of the Holy See by any Catholic in Britain during the First World War. At this moment, Bourne’s zeal as the unofficial leader of British Catholics indubitably shone. In his “crushing refutation”, he disproved the *Morning Post*’s allegations and placed the paper on trial. He asked whether their

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63 Rodd to Lord Hardinge, 2 Sep. 1917, not catalogued - no. 18, (F.O. correspondence, 1917), Rennell Rodd Papers.
64 Quoted in *The Tablet*, 8 Dec. 1917, p. 740 and *The Universe*, 7 Dec. 1917, p. 3.
65 *The Tablet*, ibid.
informant about the Italian priests’ alleged utterances had reported this “accurate
information” to the proper authorities in Italy or in Britain. He declared: “I contend that
we are in the presence either of a falsehood against the Holy See, which should be
withdrawn, or of a treachery against the Allies, which should be investigated.” 68

Bourne’s decisive letter to the *Morning Post* caused a sensation among Catholics.
It was considered a shattering blow to the famous Conservative newspaper’s anti-
Catholic imputations. In its commentary, *The Tablet* called the letter a “masterly and
reasoned reply.” 69 E. Oldmeadow referred to Bourne’s reply as a “smashing” letter. 70
Another contemporary at the time explained that the “Cardinal has routed the dear old
*Post*, horse, foot, and artillery.” 71 It was clear that when the Pope and the Holy See were
pilloried, Catholics were more than capable of standing their ground and vindicating
them. However, this did not always help the cause of Catholics as British citizens. Far
from converting the anti-Catholic zealots, in these circles Catholics could again be made
the subject of the most malicious propaganda.

The constant anti-Catholic defamation was not confined to the Pope but was also
applied to British Catholics as a whole by certain sections of British society. In the years
immediately prior to the war, there was a growing influence of Anglo-Catholicism and
numerous conversions of Anglican churchmen to the Catholic faith. This, combined with
the seemingly solid Catholic defence of the Pope’s policies during the war, must surely
have incensed Protestant extremists and rebounded back onto the Catholic community.

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67 See Appendix A.
1917, p. 3.
70 E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., II, p. 111.
71 Quoted in ibid.
Certain Protestants appealed to people’s emotions by urging them to rally to the defence of the Protestant faith, which was portrayed as being in danger. Initially, the outbreak of war had served to stifle any outbursts of anti-Catholicism because, after all, Britain’s most formidable enemy was also a Protestant power. Even *The Bulwark* described the war purely as a human struggle, opining that “religion has ceased to be a great power over people.” But this attitude did not last long. For as Ronald Knox later pointed out, when the British people talked of the Catholic Church, they tended to lose “all sense of reality.” Most British Protestants, he contended, believed anything about Catholics, without stopping to enquire about the plausibility of the stories they heard.

As a result, public expressions of anti-Catholic sentiment in high places caused occasional public controversies as the war continued. Some stray remarks in the Protestant press could indicate the depth of hostility beneath. For example, a few months into the conflict, *The Bulwark* changed its tune and attributed Germany’s atrocious actions to her casting off of her Protestant faith under “Rome’s growing anti-Christian influence.” Another more public incident which must have hurt Catholics was provoked by Dr. Russell Wakefield, the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, who in a letter to the press in September 1915 styled Catholics as merely “the guests of the nation.” This drew an immediate response from the Salford Federation, which issued a strongly worded resolution and conveyed it to Lord Derby. The resolution protested against the epithet and called attention to the thousands of Catholic lives that were being sacrificed for King and country. The resolution explained that the Federation had waited in vain for the

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authorities to repudiate the Bishop. However, as there was no repudiation, the Federation felt compelled “to respectfully urge your Lordship…to swiftly and publicly repudiate this attack on the Catholic citizens of this nation.” Mgr. Cannon Moyes and Bishop Burton of Clifton also sent letters to The Tablet denouncing Bishop Wakefield’s suggestion that the status of Catholics as citizens was qualified in some way. Finally, the Bishop of Birmingham wrote a letter to The Tablet in which he apologised for, and withdrew, his words.

Such anti-Catholic prejudice does not appear to have been restricted to a mere handful of individuals; while a minority opinion, it could be encountered commonly. It reached to the highest levels of the British government itself and some of the leading Catholics were aware of this. In September 1917, for example, Mgr. Arthur Jackman, Bourne’s private secretary, received a letter enquiring about Bonar Law’s disposition towards the Roman Church. Accompanying the letter was a newspaper clipping that suggested that Bonar Law was “a cordial hater of the Catholic Church.” In spite of his abhorrence for the Catholic Church, the article added, the Vatican had been able to trace and locate his son who had been listed as missing in action. The article questioned whether this might not mitigate Bonar Law’s “insane rage against the Catholic Church.”

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75 See Bishop Wakefield’s letter to the editor in The Tablet, 25 Sep. 1915. Quoted also in the Catholic Federationist, Nov. 1915, p. 2.
76 Catholic Federationist, ibid. See also The Universe, 22 Oct. 1915, p. 8.
77 The Tablet, 2 Oct. 1915, pp. 442, 444. The two letters were also included in the Catholic Federationist of November 1915, p. 2.
79 Newspaper clipping attached to letter from L. J. S. Wood to Mgr. Jackman, 12 Sep. 1917, Hewins 65/301, Hewins Papers. In fact, the Vatican was not successful in locating Bonar Law’s son. When Lieut. Charlie Law was reported missing after the Battle of Gaza in early 1917, Bonar Law was devastated. There was “a flicker of hope in mid-June when the Papal Apostolic Delegate in Constantinople forwarded information that Charlie might be a prisoner of war…. This small hope, however, was cruelly destroyed days later when the report proved to be false – it was almost as though he had lost the same beloved son twice.” Charlie’s body was found in late November 1917 – “still recognisable after so many months because of the dry heat of the desert.” R. J. Q. Adams, Bonar Law, (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 255-
Lord Hardinge, who after 1916 became the permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, was another government official who was an apparent “cordial hater” of Catholics. His hostility to, and annoyance at, Roman Catholics is clearly manifested in his correspondence. In one of his letters to Rennell Rodd in June 1918, he expressed the attitude that Catholics were particularly difficult to manage; “especially in this office where we have too great a percentage, a fact which naturally exposes us to attack.” He seemed frustrated at the number of offices they held, largely because he considered this Catholic ascendancy to have been a danger. In his opinion, they were “so stupid as not to see that at the present moment the Pope is at a discount and that their wisest course is to lie very low.”

80 All this evidence may lead one to investigate the extent of anti-Catholic excess that was left over from the Victorian period in Britain during the Great War. To say that anti-Catholicism was confined to a few extremists and undistinguished laymen who were ignorant of the Catholic faith would be to misconstrue an important element of British society. The evidence suggests that antipathy for Catholics tainted at least some leading figures of the theological and political establishments. Surely one would be hard put to believe that a bishop of the Established Church was merely ignorant in announcing that, in his view, Catholics were not fully British citizens on the basis of their religion. An ingrained prejudice was at work.

British Catholics, for their part, did not allow this all too common repugnance toward their faith to affect their loyalty to their King and country. On the contrary, while

256. Presumably, Jackman had sent the letter and the article to Hewins in order to receive more information.
80 Lord Hardinge to Rennell Rodd, 3 June 1918, not catalogued - no.19, (F.O. correspondence, 1918), Rennell Rodd Papers. The most prominent Catholics at the Foreign Office at the time that were presumably targeted by Hardinge’s remark included: William George Tyrrell, assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Eric Drummond as private secretary and Cecil Dormer as assistant private secretary to
showing formal loyalty to the Pope, they tried all the harder to prove their genuine loyalty and even ultra-patriotism to the nation. The Catholic body’s initial surge of nationalism, shown in the first two chapters above, continued to flourish through the subsequent years of conflict. The clergy, in particular, drove home to their flocks the bane of German militarism and preached the necessity of its extirpation. A few were more extravagantly nationalistic, but the vast majority remained “patriotic”. Some accepted the brutal logic of a war of “attrition”, as it was increasingly described in 1916. Fr. Bernard Vaughan was one of the more extreme clerics and this sometimes landed him in controversy. In his most controversial speech, made at the Mansion House on 25 January 1916, just a few weeks after the introduction of conscription, he said:

> Our business is to keep on killing Germans. Somebody has got to be killed, and do you suppose we ought to be killed in view of the motive we have gone out to fight for? Therefore we have to kill a sufficient number of that tremendous army so as to entitle us to dictate terms of peace. I know I shall receive to-morrow a batch of letters asking me if I am a priest of God. I am.

He went on to explain the options before the nation: conquer or be conquered. There was no possibility of making peace without conquering.\(^81\)

> These remarks raised a storm and the “batch of letters” did come from all kinds of people who displayed horror and disbelief at this incitement to mass killing for the war of attrition. While some tried to justify Vaughan’s remarks, most condemned such utterances as contrary to his duty to preach the message of peace. Among the popular newspapers, the *Daily Graphic*, for example, endorsed Vaughan’s statement wholeheartedly and asserted that words as blunt as his words “cannot be too often spoken by our public men.” It agreed with Vaughan that as many Germans as possible must be

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killed.\textsuperscript{82} \textit{The Universe} also condoned Vaughan’s speech and commented that he and his supporters were winning the controversy.\textsuperscript{83} Although C. C. Martindale, Vaughan’s biographer, claimed not to condone the speech, he tried to excuse Vaughan, stating: “in this very declaration of our duty of ‘killing Germans’ I am quite sure there was no spirit of hate or even of self-righteousness.”\textsuperscript{84}

There was, however, a consensus in the religious community as a whole against Vaughan’s statement, and Catholics as well as Protestants were to be found expressing dissatisfaction with the contents of the speech.\textsuperscript{85} \textit{The Catholic Herald}, while agreeing with the principle that as many Germans should be killed as it took to gain victory, observed that Vaughan’s duty as a Catholic preacher was to preach peace and mercy. It was inclined to the view that “as a minister of the Prince of Peace, Fr. Vaughan’s blood-thirsty, if quite logical sentiments, will jar on the ears of many people.”\textsuperscript{86} \textit{The Universe} received a number of letters from Catholic priests who took exception to Vaughan’s belligerent speech. One letter, from a priest who signed his name as “Sacerdos”, protested against Vaughan’s making such a speech, for it was “so flagrant an abuse of his office.” He declared that at such a bleak time, it would at least be proper to expect the clergy to refrain from such utterances.\textsuperscript{87} Another correspondent pointed out that the aim of warfare was to defeat the enemy, which did not necessarily mean killing as many as possible. As an example, he elucidated that if an enemy battalion was surrounded it might well be captured, rather than wiped out.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{82} Cited in \textit{The Tablet}, 5 Feb. 1916, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{The Universe}, 18 Feb. 1916, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{84} C. C. Martindale, \textit{Father Bernard Vaughan}, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{85} See, for example, J. Noble, \textit{Father Bernard Vaughan}, (London: Catholic Truth Society, [1933]), p. 17.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Catholic Herald}, 12 Feb. 1916, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{The Universe}, 18 Feb. 1916, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 25 Feb. 1916, p. 4.
Vaughan, however, was unrepentant about his remarks when two Protestant ministers criticised him. The Nonconformist Rev. Newsham-Taylor thought Vaughan’s utterance distasteful and suggested that it “ill beseems ecclesiastical lips to advise killing Germans.” Rev. F. B. Meyer, a Free Churchman, stated that Vaughan’s bluntness was unsurpassable and that he considered it a “misfortune” that they had to kill Germans. In his reply, Vaughan answered sarcastically: “In my stupidity I had always felt it was a misfortune to miss them;…in my simplicity I was under the impression that our troops had gone to the front…to wipe [the enemy] out” [emphasis in original]. If Meyer’s contention was correct, he added, then he, Vaughan, must have been wrong all along. In response to Newsham-Taylor, Vaughan insisted that he was simply speaking the truth as an Englishman and a “patriot”.

On a later occasion, unfortunately undated by his biographer, when Vaughan was making a speech “from the top of one of those tanks where he spoke so much”, he urged everyone to offer all their energy in support of the war. When a person in the crowd yelled that those were not the views of the Pope, Vaughan retorted: “Why should they be? Common or garden folks like you and me have the right to our own opinions.” This, along with the “killing Germans” episode, demonstrates that if anything, some leading ultra-patriotic Catholics could compete with non-Catholic “patriotic” blowhards in their extravagance and violence. Furthermore, even the most well-connected Catholics did not always put the Pope’s attitude above their national sentiments.

It cannot be said that Vaughan’s was a single case of ultra-patriotism among the Catholic clergy, although the intensity of his nationalist passion was remarkable. Led by

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90 *The Universe*, ibid.

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Bourne, most of the British Catholic hierarchy displayed a similar brand of nationalism. They displayed absolute confidence in the justice of their cause and promoted the belief that the British were fighting God’s battle. These themes were repeated constantly in their pastorals and sermons. In his pastoral letter of 10 September 1916, for example, Cardinal Bourne expressed his belief that final victory would be attained by the Allies. It was clear to him that “the providence of God has watched over us, time after time, and protected us.” In another pastoral of 1917, Bourne was heartened to perceive that while Germany’s power was waning, the Allies were gaining in strength. “In numbers, in leaders, in weapons of offence and defence a change has taken place of an extent and magnitude such as the world has never seen before.” He expressed confidence that God would provide the King and the Empire with victory.

Other members of the episcopacy displayed just as much, if not more, overt nationalism in their pastorals and sermons as did Bourne. Bishop Keating was one of the more fervent nationalists who stressed the obligation of “patriotism” for British Catholics as a matter of conscience. In a sermon he delivered at Wisbech in 1917, he reiterated the conviction that the war was forced on Britain and that the British would not sheath their sword until they had obtained guarantees. He ended his sermon with the assertion: “we are fighting for a decisive victory, as the only way to an enduring peace.”

As the slaughter continued, the bishops’ messages and exhortations to the people grew ever more incessant. And when the situation became desperate, the hierarchy’s

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92 The theme that the Allies were fighting for the essence of Christianity and the Gospel against German Kultur was common in William Barry’s writing. For examples, see his “The Return of Religion” *Nineteenth Century*, 82(485), (July 1917): 60-74.
93 Quoted in *The Universe*, 15 Sep. 1916, p. 5.
94 Pastoral Letter (210, no. 1), 1917, Bourne Pastorals, 1905-1935, Set I, Bourne Papers.
95 Pastoral Letter, Advent 1916, Fv.1(d), Keating Papers, DAN.
chauvinism fed off the desperation and became even more shrill. In his Lenten pastoral of 1918, for instance, just before the Spring Offensive, Bishop Richard Collins of Hexham and Newcastle renewed the call for men to reinforce the army. He emphasised that the situation had forced the government to take such measures as conscription and “combing out” in order to acquire men for the armed forces. The very existence of the Empire depended on such a policy and “we confidently hope that no Catholic will be found who will enter into any disturbance to hamper the necessary acts of the Government.” 97 Once the German Offensive of 21 March was underway, and spectacular advances were made, a Special Service of Intercession was held at Westminster Cathedral on April 10 to invoke God’s mercy and protection in the crisis. All the Catholic archbishops and bishops of England and Wales were present at the service. 98

The clergy’s enthusiastic support for the war effort was mirrored by leading Catholic laymen and thus, as a body, Catholics cannot be said to have neglected their duty as “patriotic” citizens. Because laymen were not “ministers of peace”, they did not attract the kind of wrath that Vaughan did when they exhibited their rhetoric to the public. German militarism continued to be denounced as a cancer that was invading other healthy parts of the body of Europe and therefore had to be extirpated. Such was the theme of an address that was delivered to the Catholic Reunion at Birmingham Town Hall by Cecil Chesterton on 18 January 1916, just after the adoption of conscription in Britain. Chesterton stressed that “Prussia” was a harmful ulcer which had to be cut out. He professed that the Allies were waging a war against a “pedantic barbarism” in order to

96 Sermon given at Wisbech, 1917, S7, III, A/195, Keating Papers, AAL.
97 Quoted in the Catholic Times, 8 Feb. 1918, p. 6.
98 The Universe, 12 Apr. 1918, p. 6.
achieve a justice which “is more precious than peace and stronger than the war.”99 Chesterton frequently linked the twin evils of Prussian barbarism and paganism in his numerous public speeches.100

Germany’s supposed barbarism and paganism, and her attempt at world domination were cited as proofs of a national moral collapse, deserving the destruction of the nation, in the speeches of leading Catholic laymen. Mark Sykes was one of those prominent Catholic laymen who advocated the annihilation of Germany as a fit punishment for the nation because of her grandiose plans to conquer the world. In September 1916, he asserted that there was only one way of preventing Germany from attaining her ambition of world-domination: that was to destroy “completely and irrevocably” her power and thus prove to the Germans that their ambition for world control was impossible.101 On another occasion, at the dedication of the “Mortimer brass” (a memorial to a friend killed in action) in July 1918, he combined oratory with emotion, telling his audience that when he was visiting Mortimer’s grave in France, he had heard a “cry from the dead”. It implored him to carry on the cause for which Britain’s heroes had died, no matter how long it took or how much had to be endured.102 He insisted that the conflict was “a holy war for Civilisation against Barbarism” and that what had started as a struggle against militarism, had turned into a war that pitted “democracy against imperialism”.103 Here the idea that the conflict was a crusade, which was advocated at the initial stages of the war, could be detected. More importantly, prominent Catholic laymen

100 See, for example, a speech he gave in Manchester on 9 October 1916 in which he said that out of Prussia “had come once more all the devilries of paganism.” Quoted in The Universe, 13 Oct. 1916, p. 10.
101 The Tablet, 23 Sep. 1916, p. 397.
102 R. Adelson, op. cit., pp. 257-258. Major James Mortimer was Sykes’ second-in-command in the Yorkshire Territorial Battalion. He was killed in France in September 1916.
103 Quoted in ibid., p. 258.
mirrored the clergy’s chauvinism and could not, therefore, be accused of disloyalty toward their country by non-Catholics. So much so, that their unwavering support for their country appeared to take precedence over their loyalty to their Pope.

As will be demonstrated, the Catholic leadership’s unwavering support for the war included an unstinting loyalty and “patriotism” in serving both the British government and the Empire – for “patriotism” and Empire went hand in hand. Indeed, leading Catholics seem to have enthusiastically – at times too enthusiastically – offered whatever services of which they were capable to their government. The British government, for its part, not only accepted these services, but at times utilised leading Catholics to initiate propaganda campaigns that would advance the Allied cause. For example, by 1915, the government was mobilising the proffered services of prominent Catholics to combat misapprehension about Britain’s role in the war in neutral Catholic countries. In June 1915, the Bishop of Southwark, Peter Amigo, offered to help secure Spain’s neutrality for the duration of the war. Spain had a strong pro-German element, especially among the clergy, who looked upon France as an anti-clerical state that represented atheism.\(^{104}\) Amigo undertook to visit Spain to combat the prejudice of Spanish ecclesiastics against the Allies. The Foreign Office welcomed his offer and expressed readiness to offer him whatever aid he needed for his trip. He left for Spain on 2 September 1915 and stayed there for over a month. M. Clifton, in his biography of

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Amigo, stresses the great importance of the Bishop’s visit to Spain, suggesting that it “did in fact help maintain Spanish neutrality.”

The Foreign Office made the most of Catholic enthusiasm to assist the national war effort and at times prodded leading Catholics into certain initiatives. This is evident in an enterprise suggested by the Foreign Office in October 1916. The plan was for prominent Catholics to write monthly “letters” – in reality, short pamphlets – in order to highlight the British cause and combat the German Catholics’ own practice of issuing monthly “letters”. Catholics in Germany had been using their monthly “letters” as a method of propaganda in which they portrayed Britain as “collectively and massively anti-Catholic.” Furthermore, they insinuated that a victory for Germany would be a victory for Catholicism. Thus, prominent British Catholics were invited by the Foreign Office to refute such claims with expository, rather than polemical “letters”, and to demonstrate that Britain was not, in fact, anti-Catholic. The series of letters – one Catholic was to present a “letter” each month – were to be edited by Fr. C. C. Martindale and prepared and issued in the leading European languages. The resulting pamphlets would at once defend the good name of Britain and British Catholics, and enlighten neutral opinion.

Certainly, in their endeavour to aid the government in every conceivable way, Catholics accepted the invitation eagerly, disregarding some of the more serious anti-Catholic elements that were entrenched in Britain. Although there is no indication of when they commenced the project, the first “letter” was printed sometime after October

106 C. C. Martindale to Duke of Norfolk and enclosed letter, 17 Oct. 1916, c597, 15th Duke of Norfolk Papers. On 6 September 1915, Benedict XV had specifically written to the German hierarchy expressing
1916. It was written by C. C. Martindale and issued by the British Catholic Information Society. It announced that it was the duty of British Catholics to counter German Catholics’ calumnies and enlist the sympathy of their fellow Catholics in neutral countries. British Catholics “will seek to convince themselves and their fellow-Catholics throughout the world that the cause of Catholicism is…bound up with the victory of themselves and their Allies.” Moreover, the letters were to illustrate that the fundamental Catholic doctrines of true justice, order, and charity were safeguarded by the Allies and “imperilled by the Prussian spirit.”

Other pamphlets were written by, among others, Bishop Frederick Keating and William Barry.

In his “letter”, Bishop Keating asserted the “patriotism” of British Catholics and explained the reasons for their loyalty. He stressed the great religious freedom they enjoyed under the British sceptre, thus enabling them to develop without hindrance from the secular government. As would be expected, Fr. William Barry portrayed Germany as the enemy of Catholicism and the Kaiser as a self-confessed opponent of the Catholic faith. If Germany won, Barry argued, Catholicism would become like Prussian Poland; the laws of Kulturkampf would be extended to the Catholic Church and bishops would be appointed by a Lutheran Emperor. The alternative to such a scenario, according to Barry, was the preservation of “British Freedom”.

It is plain that the monthly “letters” served to promote awareness of the religious freedom Catholics enjoyed in Britain and the Empire. However, this may have been at the cost of further antagonising their co-religionists in Germany in order to promote the cause of the British state.

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107 C. C. Martindale, Catholic Monthly Letters I, n.d., S1, VIII, B/12, Whiteside Papers.

108 Bishop Frederick Keating, Catholic Monthly Letters II, n.d., S1, VIII, B/12, Whiteside Papers.
The co-operation of leading Catholics with the government was at times to the detriment of the cause of peace. This became especially manifest in the latter half of the war. The failure of any leading British cleric to attend the Uppsala conference in 1918 is a clear example of this. Archbishop Nathan Söderblom\(^\text{110}\) of Uppsala had organised a conference for 8 September 1918. An earlier conference of the Churches from the various neutral countries had been held on 14-16 December 1917.\(^\text{111}\) However, it was decided that another conference, which would include churchmen from belligerent countries, should be organised. Initially, only Protestants were invited to the second conference but, on the advice of Randall Davidson, an invitation was extended to Roman Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiastics. This indicates that at this stage, Davidson had not decided to close the door on Anglican attendance at the conference. Söderblom established contacts with Catholic leaders such as Cardinal Bourne, who in his turn referred the Archbishop to Cardinal Mercier.\(^\text{112}\)

The invitation to Bourne to attend the conference was made by Söderblom, Jens Jandberg, Bishop of Christiania, Norway, and H. Ostenfeld, Bishop of Seland, Denmark. In February 1918, they addressed a letter to the Cardinal in which they emphasised the “strictly religious and unpolitical character” of the proposed conference. Bourne was invited to attend the conference at Upsala, the aim of which was simply to bear “witness

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\(^{110}\) Nathan Söderblom was appointed Archbishop of Uppsala, Sweden, on 20 May 1914. During the war, he felt some allegiance to the German position – not because he resented France and Britain, but because he was a Lutheran, and Lutheranism had bound Germany to Scandinavia since the Reformation. However, he maintained a strict impartiality in his public statements. See E. J. Sharpe, *Nathan Söderblom and the Study of Religion*, (Chapel Hill, U.S.A.: University of North Carolina, 1990), p. 134.

\(^{111}\) Söderblom had attempted to gain the co-operation of the Christian Churches to work for peace as early as September 1914. At the end of September, he had formulated an Appeal for Peace and sent it to Church leaders throughout the world. Although Church leaders in neutral countries accepted it, those in belligerent countries, understandably, did not see fit to sign the statement at such a time. B. Sundkler, *Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), p. 163.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., p. 192. See also Ronald Graham [F.O.] to Bourne, 30 Mar. 1918, Bo.5/50c, Bourne Papers.
to spirituality among Christians.” They warned of the “irreparable loss and shame to the 
Church, if she now fails to testify that the cross of Christ is a uniting force that transcends 
all earthly divisions.”

Cardinal Bourne seemed reluctant to attend the conference, without first 
consulting the Holy See in any case. But his decision to refrain from attending was made 
considerably easier by the government’s refusal to issue passports to any of the British 
churchmen invited to Upsala. On 30 March 1918, he received a letter from the Foreign 
Office informing him of Balfour’s opinion that the government saw “considerable 
objection to the issue of passports to British subjects” desiring to attend the Upsala 
Conference. The reason for this, as the explanation ran, was that political topics would 
inevitably be introduced in the meeting – a consequence that was undesirable in the 
circumstances. Bourne took the hint; he immediately replied that, in any case, neither 
he nor any other British Catholic bishop was likely to accept Söderblom’s invitation. He 
added, rather tamely: “Personally I cannot see what good purpose the proposed 
conference would serve in the present circumstances.” This reply, which corresponded 
with that of Archbishop Davidson, and Balfour’s opinions, was of course to the latter’s 
liking.

The government’s refusal to grant British churchmen, including Catholics, 
passports when it was considered unsuitable, contrasted starkly with its offer to help 
Catholics in any way when the Foreign Office needed the latter’s assistance. When, in 
March 1918, the government sought the co-operation of leading Catholics in a project to

113 Jens Jandberg, Bishop of Christiania, Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala, and H. Ostenfeld, 
Bishop of Seland to Bourne, Feb. 1918, Bo.5/50c, Bourne Papers.
114 Graham to Bourne, 30 Mar. 1918, Bo.5/50c, Bourne Papers.
115 Bourne to Balfour, 2 Apr. 1918, Bo.5/50c; Balfour to Bourne 6 Apr. 1918, Bo.5/49d, Bourne Papers.
build friendly relations with the U.S., it willingly offered to assist British Catholics with everything from passports to travel arrangements. The project came about in this way. In August 1918, Cardinal James Gibbons, the American Catholic primate, was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his consecration as a bishop. The British government saw in this an opportunity to affect positively Catholic opinion towards Britain in America, which had been placed under some strain by the events in Ireland since 1916. In addition, the government was planning to extend conscription to Ireland. Balfour, therefore, duly wrote a letter to Cardinal Bourne in March 1918. He told him that the Foreign Office had reliable information that “a great effect would be produced on Roman Catholic opinion” in the U.S. if two British representatives could attend Gibbons’ celebrations. He suggested one Catholic bishop and one Catholic layman and assured him that the government could arrange everything, including passports. He warned, however, that the value of this propaganda exercise would be lessened if it became known that “the initiative came in any way from the Foreign Office.” Hence, Bourne was asked to keep it confidential. Bourne could not have been more co-operative. He replied that he would put Balfour’s suggestion before the bishops when they met that Easter and he agreed to keep the details of the Foreign Office’s inspiration of the trip quite confidential.117

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116 This must be seen in the wider and crucial context of the German Spring Offensive and the British government’s plan to enforce conscription on Ireland, even though there was clearly a chance that this might incite civil war. Seen in this context, it was the aim of the British government to win Irish American favour and appease Catholic opinion in Ireland before conscription could be extended to Ireland. Even earlier, on 15 January 1918, Geoffrey Butler, the representative of the British Department of Information in New York, sent a “confidential” memorandum to London providing a thorough report on the propaganda implications of the Catholic situation in America. In his report, Butler advised that “three representatives of Irish politics should come over fully equipped to hold meetings and conversations with Irishmen here. It has been suggested to me that the best party would consist of a Roman Catholic Bishop, a Protestant Bishop and [a prominent layman].” Quoted in T. E. Hachey, “British War Propaganda and American Catholics, 1918”, Catholic Historical Review, 61(1), (1975), p. 54.

117 Balfour to Bourne, 15 Mar. 1918; Bourne to Balfour, 18 Mar. 1918, Bo.5/48a, Bourne Papers.
At the Easter meeting of the Catholic hierarchy, it was duly decided that Bishop Keating would represent England at Cardinal Gibbons’ celebrations. In August, he travelled to the U.S., with Mark Sykes as the lay delegate. The visit to America made a great impression. So much so, that Shane Leslie wrote to Eric Drummond from the U.S.: “I could only wish an English Bishop had come out years ago.” Nevertheless, two points emerge from the failure of the Upsala Conference and the success of the American visit. The first is that leading British Catholics exhibited unquestioning loyalty to the British government and an eagerness to co-operate in a project designed to exploit Catholicism’s international links, in order to strengthen links with the U.S. The second point is that the government’s inclination to assist Catholics was quite selective, and was applied only when it was deemed beneficial to Britain’s cause.

This might have been tolerable, even agreeable, had the government in its turn aided Catholics when they required its assistance to protect the reputation of the Catholic Church in Britain. However, it appears that while prominent Catholics, in the glow of their nationalism, had gladly aided the state, the government refused to reciprocate this goodwill. An instance which demonstrates this came in early 1918, when the Catholic Confederation of England and Wales decided to arrange, with the concurrence of Bourne, a deputation to the Prime Minister. In the aftermath of Caporetto, and amidst accusations of Papal complicity in that military disaster, the deputation was organised in order “to protest against the recent campaign of misrepresentation against the Holy Father and the Vatican in connection with the war.”

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118 Shane Leslie to Drummond, 22 Oct. 1918, F.O. 800/329/145.
119 W. P. Mara to Archbishop Maguire, 12 Mar. 1918, GC 50, Maguire Papers. It must be remembered that the controversy between Bourne and the Morning Post had only taken place a few months before.
After receiving the support of all the Catholic hierarchies throughout Britain and the Empire, as well as Cardinals Gibbons and John Farley in the U.S., the organisers prepared a letter summarising Catholic grievances for delivery to Lloyd George. The letter, signed by the chairman of the Confederation and by Sir Charles Russell, an ex-chairman, asked Lloyd George to kindly grant the proposed deputation an audience. The letter was personally taken to the Prime Minister by W. P. Mara, the general secretary of the Confederation, on April 9. On May 13, Mara wrote to John Maguire, the Archbishop of Glasgow, informing him with regret that no acknowledgement or reply had been received from Lloyd George.\textsuperscript{120} The Prime Minister had apparently ignored the letter. This cannot but prompt the historian to question the sincerity of the government: the British government was keen to exploit Catholic international connections to advance Britain’s cause; yet, when Catholics, in their turn, sought the governing elite’s assistance to combat bigotry and anti-Catholicism, they received little or no support.\textsuperscript{121} It is clear that during the war, the demonstrations of loyalty to their country given by Catholics as British citizens appear to have earned for Catholics little credit in the estimation of the British government.

The dual allegiance professed by leading Catholics was uncomfortable for many. Most sought to integrate a loyalty to both their Church as well as their nation. However, although Catholic leaders were able to sustain both loyalties simultaneously, it appears that their allegiance to their country took precedence over their allegiance to the policies

\textsuperscript{120} W. P. Mara to Maguire, 13 May 1918, GC 50, Maguire Papers.
of their Pope. Leading Catholics felt that they had to defend the Pope and his policies as their spiritual shepherd. But this did not mean that they were always totally convinced of the prudence of his policies. While the Pope maintained his impartiality, British Catholics identified themselves enthusiastically with the Allied cause, which they considered to be absolutely just. The nationalists among the Catholic body seemed slightly defensive and embarrassed by the Pope’s stance, and at times this undertone of embarrassment was reflected in their utterances. Nevertheless, they maintained formal loyalty – a loyalty of appearances – to Benedict XV. Prominent Catholics, led by Cardinal Bourne, resolutely and consistently defended his special need for impartiality and rejected accusations that he was pro-German. At the same time, however, they remained entrenched within the nationalist camp and never wished even to appear to be hindering the war effort lest they be accused of disloyalty. As a result, in their ultra-patriotic fervour, they mobilised their spiritual and material services in their endeavour to aid fully their country. In this way, British Catholics – at least in their own minds – were at once able to balance their responsibilities as British citizens in wartime with their religious affiliation to a universal Church transcending all national loyalties.

121 Article 15 of the Treaty of London is another case in point. As will be shown, the government ignored pleas from Catholics to revoke the article.
Chapter 6

“The peace for which we long”: Benedict XV’s Advocacy of a Negotiated Peace and the British Response

Lay aside your mutual purpose of destruction. Remember that nations do not die; humbled and oppressed they chafe under the yoke imposed upon them, preparing a renewal of the conflict, and passing down from generation to generation a mournful heritage of hatred and revenge.

Benedict XV, Allorchè Fummo, 28 July 1915.¹

Be not misled. Peace is not ‘the greatest gift God can bestow’ unless it be founded on justice. Be not carried away by formulae such as ‘no indemnities, no annexations.’ Justice may ask for time. Peace without justice is not worth having.

Cardinal Bourne, September 1918.²

Pope Benedict XV’s assiduous efforts to extinguish the torch of war and achieve a just peace by his numerous exhortations and his encyclical failed. These efforts, which culminated in the Pope’s Peace Note of August 1917, were unsuccessful because no leading power among the belligerents looked to them as suitable opportunities to initiate negotiations. In the inflamed atmosphere of war, each side wanted to attain complete victory and dictate peace to the vanquished enemy. As the cost of the war increased, and more men were sacrificed, proclaimed war aims grew ever more lofty. The peace that was proposed by the Pope was looked upon as inadequate and so his initiative was cold-shouldered by civil governments. For their part, a considerable number of British Catholics supported the peace utterances of their Pontiff publicly. The Peace Note, for example, was defended with particular vehemence after being labeled German-inspired

by the British popular press. Privately, however, the majority of Catholics in Britain expressed disagreement with, and at times resented, the Pope’s peace efforts. Clearly, the Pope’s view of the kind of peace that should be established was different to that of most British Catholics. Indeed, the majority of Catholic leaders in Britain appeared to have been opposed to any peace before the complete annihilation of German “militarism” was achieved. In this, they went so far as to resist other Catholics who were willing to listen to Benedict’s exhortations and obey his instructions to promote the cause of peace.

Immediately upon his election to the Supreme Pontificate, Pope Benedict XV began toiling to halt the explosion that had absorbed Europe. The war presented him with an opportunity to display conspicuously the unique powers believed to be possessed by the Pope in the interest of peace – the peace of his Master, which, unlike human peace, was perfect, complete, and pure. If the Pope could inspire such a peace in a world at conflict, he would be able to restore the papacy’s full moral authority, and its political influence, which had been much reduced by the loss of the Pope’s temporal power in 1870. The decline of the Pope’s power, both moral and political, was particularly apparent in Italy and France, where open hostility to the Holy See was prevalent. In France, the long disputes over the separation of Church and State had produced a defiantly anti-clerical majority among Republican politicians. In Italy, passionately secularist politicians were united in making every effort to prevent the Vatican from obtaining any international influence.  

Benedict was from the beginning opposed to the war, both morally and intellectually. Unlike other Catholic prelates who depicted it as a just war, he rejected the
conflict as totally unjustifiable. Seen in this light, it is understandable that only two days after his coronation, on 8 September 1914, the Pope issued a message in which he appealed for a negotiated peace. In this first message, he urged the belligerent leaders to solve their differences by diplomatic means and implored them “to reflect that this mortal life is already attended with enough misery and suffering as it is.”\(^4\) For the moment, the Pope could only make appeals; any concrete peace overtures would have been rejected outright.

Less than two months after this first appeal, Benedict XV issued his much anticipated first encyclical letter, *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum*,\(^5\) on 1 November 1914. As one historian has pointed out, while other European statesmen avoided examining the causes of the war, Benedict proceeded to list them in *Ad Beatissimi*.\(^6\) He delineated the causes and consequences of the war, blaming it on the absence of mutual love and the neglect of authority as well as antagonism between the social classes. In it, Benedict renewed his call for the rulers of the warring nations to resolve their differences without resorting to arms. “Surely there are other ways and means whereby violated rights can be rectified. Let them be tried honestly and with good will, and let arms meanwhile be laid aside.”\(^7\) From the very beginning, therefore, Benedict XV was an advocate of a negotiated settlement.

Arms were not laid aside and the war continued unabated. Benedict was greatly disappointed at the failure of his encyclical to produce any fruit. In his first Christmas

Eve allocution to the cardinals, he told them that he had hoped “to pierce this darkness of warring death with at least a ray, one single ray of the divine sun of peace.” Alas, his proposal, as he considered it, was nothing but “a dear hope and a dear illusion.”

The Pope, however, was not discouraged by his failure to stay the struggle. A few weeks after he issued his first encyclical, on 10 January 1915, Cardinal Gasparri published the details of a prayer for peace that had been prepared by Benedict XV. The prayer asked of the Prince of Peace that: “in this hour made terrible with burning hate, with bloodshed and with slaughter… may Thy divine Heart be moved to pity.” A letter was sent to the Catholic hierarchy throughout the world by Gasparri, instructing them that it was the Holy Father’s wish that every church in Europe should dedicate the Mass to peace on February 7. Outside Europe, the dedicated Mass to peace was to be celebrated on March 21, and the Pope’s prayer for peace was ordered to be recited in all churches on the respective dates and for the duration of the war.

However, the governments, and perhaps peoples, of Europe, were not yet ready to listen to any talk of peace. Some Catholics among the Allies were so “anxious to be accounted full patriots as to wince” at the Pope’s encyclical. They would have preferred that the Pope declare himself for an Allied victory instead. Indeed, as early as September 1914, there were signs that British Catholics were troubled by rumours that some politicians were beginning to do exactly as the Pope had urged – to talk of ending the war. Even then, the Glasgow Observer viewed the conflict as a continental war between tyranny and democracy and warned that “peace [was] not yet.” It asserted that before real

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7 Quoted in H. E. G. Rope, op. cit., p. 60.
8 Quoted in W. H. Peters, op. cit., p. 119.
peace could be gained, the false ideal of the “superman” must be destroyed and the prospect of future militarism nullified.\(^9\) In France, the Pope’s prayer for peace was so deplored that one Catholic bishop tampered with the text in order to make it more agreeable to the nationalistic public.\(^12\)

In Britain, the Catholic press generally declared its support for *Ad Beatissimi*, with the *Catholic Times* welcoming it as a refreshing document. It urged Catholics to read the encyclical and suggested that if the Pope’s counsel was adopted, better conditions would be created among men as well as nations.\(^13\) In contrast, W. A. S. Hewins recorded in his diary that questions were raised among British Catholics as to the propriety of the Pope’s prayer for peace. In explaining this, however, he wrote that there was “nothing in common between peace in the Catholic sense and that of pacifists and ‘stop-the-war’ parties.”\(^14\) This may have been a convenient way for Hewins to reassure himself that Benedict, in advocating a peace in the Catholic sense, could not be endorsing the pacifists’ alleged aim, the achievement of “peace at any price”. Nonetheless, it is evident that some Catholics also distinguished a Catholic peace, which was the idealistic peace that Benedict was striving for, from a victorious peace, the realistic peace that all good “patriots” desired, a peace achieved through realisation of the victor’s war aims. It was no wonder that a few months later, Hewins confessed in his diary that the British

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\(^9\) A copy of the letter to the hierarchy is found in Archbishop Whiteside’s Letter to the Clergy, 29 Jan. 1915, S1, VII, C/2, Whiteside Papers. A complete copy of the Pope’s prayer for peace is contained in W. H. Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

\(^10\) H. E. G. Rope, *op. cit.*, p. 68.


\(^12\) W. H. Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 124. The text in question was changed from “O King of Peace, we humbly implore the peace for which we long,” to “O King of Peace, we humbly implore peace on conditions honourable for our fatherland.”

\(^13\) *Catholic Times*, 11 Dec. 1914, p. 3.

\(^14\) Hewins Diaries, 4 Feb. 1915, Hewins Papers.
people “don’t want a Catholic peace, which is the only peace the Pope can desire.”

Clearly, Hewins did not want it either.

Taken from that point of view, leading British Catholics voiced their view that the time was not propitious to support peace in the months following the Pope’s prayer for peace. The opinion was prevalent among Catholics, as among many pro-war commentators, that a peace at that time with an undefeated Germany would be “premature” and nothing more than a blueprint for a larger, more destructive future war. Catholics who warned of the dangers of a “premature peace” continually expounded this theme publicly. In April 1915, The Tablet fully endorsed the views of Dr. Charles Eliot, the anglophile former President of Harvard University, who had stated that “Peace to-day could be no more than an armed truce, a pretence, a hypocrisy.” The danger of a hasty peace was further emphasised by Hilaire Belloc. On 30 April, he delivered a lecture in Liverpool in which he predicted that once Germany was facing imminent defeat, she would offer attractive peace terms to avoid complete annihilation. If the Allies were duped into accepting such terms, Belloc warned, “it would be equivalent to the signing of the death-warrant of Great Britain.” However, Belloc predicted, if those terms were rejected, Germany would be completely annihilated within six weeks of offering the terms. It must be noted that while the theme of a perilous “premature peace” was common in the Unionist press at the time, it was not necessarily the view of the Liberal government, which had not yet formed the Coalition with the Conservatives. In adopting this theme, therefore, certain Catholics were promoting the position of the “fight-to-the-finish” ultra-patriotic right.

15 Hewins Diaries, 23 June 1915, Hewins Papers.
16 The Tablet, 17 Apr. 1915, p. 493.
Of course, there were Catholics who genuinely supported the Pope’s calls for peace. As usual, the Jesuits were in the forefront of Benedict’s supporters and Sydney Smith was among the most ardent defenders of the Pope’s peace efforts in the first year of the war. He published an article in January 1915, soon after Ad Beatissimi was issued, with a positive explanation of what the encyclical contained. Furthermore, he pointed out in April that the Pope’s peace appeals were not made in vain, even though they had not produced any immediate results. “They may not have succeeded in staying the war at once, but they are sure to sink into all well-disposed minds, and sooner or later to turn their thoughts towards peace.” Thus, it was hoped that Benedict’s continuous peace appeals would eventually, perhaps even subconsciously, sink into a sufficient number of minds in order to make them amenable to peace.

Despite the failure of his appeals to the powers to solve international problems by arbitration rather than by resorting to the might of arms, Benedict XV was determined to “Clama, ne cesses” (Cry out, cease not). He therefore waited until the first anniversary of the war before pronouncing his next peace appeal to the belligerents. Allorchè Fummo, the Apostolic Exhortation to the Belligerent Peoples and Their Rulers, was issued on 28 July 1915. In his Exhortation, Benedict recounted his previous appeal in Ad Beatissimi and how it had been rejected, and expressed his determination to devote his energy to reconcile the warring nations. He implored the leaders of the belligerents to end the carnage and reminded them of the responsibility that they were endowed with:

> We adjure you, whom Divine Providence has placed in authority over the nations now at war, to put a final end to this horrible butchery which has been disgracing Europe for a whole year…. You

17 Catholic Times, 7 May 1915, p. 7.
20 H. E. G. Rope, op. cit., p. 71. The phrase was used by Benedict XV in his allocution to the Sacred College on Christmas Eve, 1914.
bear the dread responsibility of peace and war in the sight of God and man, listen to the voice of a
father, who is the vicar of the Eternal and Supreme Judge, to whom you will have to give an
account of your public undertakings as well as your private actions.  

An incredibly accurate prophecy followed this impassioned plea. With penetrating
insight, Benedict warned the hostile peoples of the dire consequences if vanquished
nations were subjected to a humiliating peace: “nations do not die; humbled and
oppressed they chafe under the yoke imposed upon them, preparing a renewal of the
conflict, and passing down from generation to generation a mournful heritage of hatred
and revenge.” This remarkable prophecy, anticipating by eighteen months Woodrow
Wilson’s famous “Peace without Victory” speech of 22 January 1917, put the case clearly
for a negotiated peace as a better outcome.

In Allorchè Fummo, the Pope stretched out his hand and offered it to a continent
that had become fixed in the quagmire of a war of attrition. For Benedict had called on
the belligerents to begin a “direct or indirect” exchange of views. As J. F. Pollard points
out, this reference was a hint that the Vatican was willing to initiate contacts – even
secret contacts – between the two sides. It was in the Vatican’s interest that Europe
should return to the status quo ante bellum and that the balance of power be maintained.
If the balance of power was lost, then Austria, the last Catholic great power in Europe,
might be eliminated or Orthodox Russian power might be greatly enhanced. However,

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21 Ibid., pp. 88-90. A full translation of the Exhortation was given in The Tablet, 7 Aug. 1915, p. 177.
Two years after Hitler came to power, Eppstein wrote that no one who saw the rearming of Germany could
deny that Benedict XV “knew human nature only too well….” For he predicted “after the first year of the
war this tragic alternative to the peace for which he pleaded.” J. Eppstein, Must War Come?, (London:
Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1935), pp. 13-14. This, before World War II had even taken place.
23 He had actually asked: “Why not begin with a sincere exchange of views made in the spirit of goodwill,
direct or indirect, in order to assess, as far as may be, [the peoples’] rights and aspirations…?”
25 It seems that the Pope was obsessed with the rise of Russian power if the Allies won the war. According
to J. D. Gregory: “Benedict XV had one obsession – Russia. In all the conversations I have had with him,
he can never keep off the subject. Even the fear of another Kulturkampf, if Germany wins the war, pales in
the Entente powers still maintained that if a negotiated peace was concluded in 1915, Germany would retain its military apparatus, a prospect that was unacceptable to the Entente, particularly Britain. The argument against a “premature peace” prevailed. For this reason, Benedict’s outstretched hand was not grasped and even British Catholics received the Pope’s proposals without any warm enthusiasm.

Although British Catholics tried to display public support for the peace proposal, in effect it was received with a marked coolness that amounted to a rebuff. The Catholic press, while attempting to show at least some solidarity with Benedict’s peace appeal, implicitly rejected the kind of peace that he was advocating. The Catholic Times, in particular, tried to show support for the Pope’s endeavours. In its first issue after the Exhortation, it announced: “we Catholics have reason to feel proud that at the head of the Church there is a man who rises above the tempests of passion and strives to strengthen the bonds of Christian charity….” Nevertheless, the article contained a subtle hint that Britain was fighting for total victory and freedom from German militarism. 26 By the following week, the Catholic Times’ moderate tone had undergone a complete volte-face. Although it expressed gratitude to the Pontiff for his peace effort, it frankly admitted that this was not the proper moment to pursue peace. It reinforced the point that Britain did not seek the conflict and that she would fight on until she achieved what she set out to achieve. 27 Like the Catholic Times, the Glasgow Observer had at first rejoiced that once more the Pope had spoken of peace in his Exhortation of July 28. But the Observer, too, rebuffed Benedict, upholding the Allies’ resolve to destroy the Prussian threat. It

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26 Catholic Times, 6 Aug. 1915, p. 3.
maintained that nothing could “alter the conditions which made this war, and which must
be ended before the war can end.”

In contrast to the above two newspapers, The Universe and the Catholic Herald
showed an amazing lack of diplomacy in rejecting the Pope’s peace appeal. The Universe
warned outright that short of a Prussian victory, a colossal disaster would befall the
Entente if they concluded peace at that moment. It asserted that a current peace would not
settle the moral and spiritual issues involved and would therefore be nothing but an
armed peace. The Catholic Herald seemed annoyed by, and almost aggressive toward,
any suggestion that a gesture be made in the direction of a negotiated peace. In its issue
of 14 August, the Herald contained a copy of a letter from Dr. Edward O’Dwyer, the
Bishop of Limerick, to John Redmond. O’Dwyer petitioned Redmond to admonish the
British government and urge it to initiate the first step in responding to the Pope’s peace
appeal of July 28. In its next issue, the Herald responded disparagingly to the Bishop’s
letter to Redmond, suggesting that an early peace was “not in season”. It stated that:
“Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland have the right to be as fervidly enthusiastic [about
victory] as the members of the [Catholic] Centre Party on the German side.” Moreover, it
would not be in the interests of the Church in Britain and Ireland if Catholics in those
countries were to throw in their lot “with the discredited faction who represent the

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27 The Catholic Times stressed that “The battle is one for liberty, for justice, for humanity. Not one of the
Allied Powers dreams of laying down the sword till it has done its work.” Catholic Times, 13 Aug. 1915, p. 3.
28 Glasgow Observer, 14 Aug. 1915, p. 3.
29 The Universe asked: “who can say with truth that peace would not be a greater curse to the world than
30 Catholic Herald, 14 Aug. 1915, p. 7. Bishop of Limerick to John Redmond, 4 Aug. 1915, Ms. Film 1069,
Redmond Papers, Bod. Lib. Redmond replied that this was not the best time to put pressure on the
government to commence peace negotiations. Redmond to Bishop O’Dwyer, 9 Aug. 1915, Ms. Film 1069,
Redmond Papers.

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pacifists.” To follow the advice of the Bishop of Limerick, the article continued, would be to play into the hands of the Germans.\textsuperscript{31}

Privately, eminent Catholics were even less inclined to accept a peace similar to that proposed by Benedict XV. It seems that the concept of an allegedly “inconclusive peace” continued to plague them, and it was widely accepted that if peace came in 1915, Britain might have to fight a better prepared Germany in the near future. A few months after the Pope’s initiative, for example, W. A. S. Hewins wrote to Cardinal Gasquet that he was confident of ultimate victory; the only danger was to conclude a false and premature peace.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, the British hierarchy advocated such a peace with victory, while there is no evidence in the private papers of the episcopacy to indicate what they thought of Benedict’s peace initiative. However, from the lack of utterances in support of Benedict’s effort at that time, one may confidently deduce that they did not receive it favourably. This inference is further buttressed by the numerous pastorals and sermons in which the hierarchy implored their people to pray for either victory or a victorious peace.\textsuperscript{33}

The number of British Catholics who remained truly loyal to Benedict’s principles of peace and reconciliation dwindled to an astonishingly small minority. Sydney Smith was one who retained his steadfast loyalty to Benedict’s peace ideals and

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\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Catholic Herald}, 21 Aug. 1915, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{32} Hewins to Cardinal Gasquet, 15 Oct. 1915, File 875, Gasquet Papers.
\textsuperscript{33} There were numerous pastorals and sermons in which the hierarchy expressed their belief in the necessity of the destruction of Prussian militarism, and adjured their flocks to pray for final victory. For a few examples, see Archbishop Whiteside’s Report of the Ecclesiastical Education Fund, 8 Mar. 1916, \textit{Liverpolitana V}, 1915-1919, Whiteside Papers; Sermon of Bishop of Clifton, [July 1916], envelope marked “Personal Envelope”, Brindle Papers, Diocesan Archives of Nottingham; Cardinal Bourne’s Pastoral of 10 September 1916, reprinted in \textit{The Universe}, 15 Sep. 1916, p. 5. Bourne wrote that ultimate victory depended on God alone and that providence protected the Allies when the enemy ought to have been victorious. See also Bishop Dunn’s A Pastoral Letter, Oct. 1916, (\textit{Ad Clerum}), v.1, 1916-1918/27, Dunn Papers, in which he declared that “Victory will be ours”.
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wrote again in support of the papal peace initiative in the autumn of 1915. Smith’s article, published in *The Month* of September 1915, lamented the stark disapproval which had confronted the Pope’s appeal for peace, even though it had been expressed in sympathetic language. Smith himself endorsed the Pope’s appeal for arbitration, imploring the nations to embrace this principle in the hope of ending the nightmare of slaughter.\(^{34}\) Furthermore, he castigated *The Times* for insinuating that Benedict’s appeal had been made in collusion with the enemy. *The Times* had implied that the Pope supported the Germans in order to force an inconclusive peace upon the Allies, which would benefit the Central Powers.\(^{35}\) Smith deprecated such insinuation as “preposterous”. Even if Benedict sympathised with the Germans, Smith argued, “it is altogether too base to suspect him of prostituting his spiritual power to further the temporal objects of one of the belligerents in a way so disreputable.”\(^{36}\) But even though such stout defenders of the Pope’s peace initiative can be found, it is clear that the majority of Catholics chose to shun a peace of arbitration, which was what Benedict was advocating, in favour of a victorious peace – the great object espoused so uncritically by the vast majority of Britain’s press and political elite.

The lack of support for a Pope’s peace among the majority of British Catholics can be discerned in their antagonism to a small *ad hoc* Catholic organisation which promoted quite specifically the precise formula for peace advocated by Benedict. The skillfully named Guild of the Pope’s Peace was founded by Francis Meynell and Stanley Morison after the introduction of conscription in January 1916. The Guild was composed of a committee of seven people, including two priests, which made up its limited

\(^{34}\) S. F. S[mith], “The Pope’s Peace Appeal”, pp. 228-229.

\(^{35}\) See *The Times*, 31 July 1915, p. 7.
membership. In a “Preliminary Notice”, issued in early 1916, the Guild explained that
the Pope had invited “all the friends of peace in the world to help Us in hastening the end
of the war.” Catholics could not turn a deaf ear to Benedict’s adjurations. The Notice
called on every “loyal Catholic” to answer Benedict’s pleas in order for them to be
effective. “[T]he voices of many thousands must speak as one” through the Guild of the
Pope’s Peace. The Catholic Truth Society (C.T.S.) appears to have published this
Preliminary Notice in early April 1916 in Catholic Book Notes (C.B.N.), its monthly
journal.

Of course, these stated aims of the Guild stood in stark contrast to the nationalist
sentiments of most of their fellow Catholics. Hence, from the beginning, this small
Catholic group was viewed with misgivings by the majority of the Catholic body, both
lay and clerical. As E. I. Watkin recounted more than five decades later, the Catholic
hierarchy was putting immense effort into preventing British Catholics from heeding the
Pope’s pleas for a negotiated peace. But only one bishop went so far as to publicly
condemn the Guild – “not easy, one might suppose, since the Guild…did not preach
pacifism but confined itself to the Pope’s pleas.” That one bishop who pronounced a
public condemnation against the Guild was Ambrose Burton, the Bishop of Clifton. He

37 F. Meynell, op. cit., p. 90. The committee was made up of Francis Meynell, who was also the secretary of
the Guild, Stanley Morison, J. F. L. Bray, Christopher St John, E. I. Watkin, Fr. W. H. Kent, and Fr. H. S.
Squirrell. The fact that two priests were members of the Guild indicates that, of course, not all the clergy
were opposed to it.
38 Quoted from the Pope’s Exhortation of July 28 in the Preliminary Notice of the Guild of the Pope’s
Peace, [April 1916], Box XXIV, P IV, Morison Papers. See also H. E. G. Rope, op. cit., p. 89.
39 Preliminary Notice of the Guild of the Pope’s Peace, [April 1916], Box XXIV, P IV, Morison Papers. It
was clearly stated that the Guild’s aim was “to help now towards the making of the Pope’s Peace. For the
achievement of this end the Guild will press for the Holy Father’s own suggested methods – methods
which, indeed, he calls ‘the only way.’” These were: 1) a truce; 2) a declaration of conciliatory peace terms;
and 3) an immediate conference. “Only the Pope’s Peace, a spiritual peace, can be either holy or
permanent; for any other will be founded on militarism, vengeance, force, and worldly ambitions.”
wrote a letter to the *Catholic Times* in April 1916, declaring: “Whatever authority be behind this stop-the-war ‘Guild’ …, it has no sanction or countenance from us, and will receive none, as we trust, from any of our clergy and people.”

Burton’s remarks, however, were not allowed to go unanswered. J. Hevin, a member of the Guild, addressed a letter to Burton from Newcastle telling the Bishop that he was perplexed by his attitude to the Guild of the Pope’s Peace. Hevin informed him that there was confusion among the Guild members as to where they had erred, because their objectives were in consonance with Benedict’s constant calls for a negotiated peace. Hevin added: “Of course, if your Lordship’s view is that the Pope’s strenuous and ceaseless efforts for peace are ill-timed…then the position you have taken up is perfectly logical.” But he could not believe this to be Burton’s attitude, hence his desire to be enlightened. It is not known whether this softened Burton’s disposition towards the Guild or whether he even replied. But a few months later, Francis Meynell forwarded a copy of *A Little Book of Prayers for Peace*, which had been compiled by E. I. Watkin for the Guild, to Burton. In a short, cold letter accompanying the book, Meynell wrote: “Dear Sir, If your indignation is indeed against the Guild and not against the Pope, it will not be aroused…by the enclosed prayer book which is…duly authorised.” The book was authorised by Benedict himself and a special blessing was conferred onto its compiler, E. I. Watkin. In this way the Pope unofficially showed his appreciation and approval of the Guild and its work.

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41 Quoted in the *Catholic Times*, 28 Apr. 1916, p. 4.
42 J. Hevin to Bishop Burton, 8 May 1916, Folder 1915-1916, Burton Papers.
44 Francis Meynell to Burton, 9 Sep. 1916, Folder 1915-1916, Burton Papers. Note the “Dear Sir” instead of “My dear Lord” or “Your Lordship”, the customary address to a bishop.
45 See booklet entitled “The Pope & the War”, 1917, Box XXIV, P IV, Morison Papers.
Most of the other British Catholic bishops, while not condemning the Guild publicly, disapproved of it privately. Evidence suggests that this reached the highest level of authority in the British Catholic Church. Cardinal Bourne had prudently refrained from condemning or denouncing the Guild publicly, but was privately at best unhappy with its existence. After the appearance of the Guild’s Preliminary Notice, Bourne wrote to the Duke of Norfolk requesting that he write a few lines to James Britten, the Secretary of the C.T.S. and editor of Catholic Book Notes. Bourne told the Duke that the Guild had “no authorization of any kind” and that a few words of remonstrance “from your Grace to Britten would be helpful in obtaining a disclaimer from the C.T.S.”

The Duke of Norfolk promptly wrote to Britten, who expressed regret for publishing the Guild’s work. In expressing his regret, Britten obediently assured the Duke that he would disavow the Guild in the next issue of C.B.N.

In fact, Britten had already received strenuous complaints on the same matter from Peter Amigo, the Bishop of Southwark. Amigo had received letters from other prominent Catholics condemning the Guild and he was also indignant at the publication of the Guild’s pamphlet by the C.T.S. without consulting him. Embarrassed by the letters of complaint and the fact that the C.T.S. was located in the see of Southwark, Amigo wrote to the C.T.S. committee. In his letter, the Bishop urged a clarification:

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48 See, for example, letters from Herbert Dean to Bishop Amigo, 12 Apr. 1916, and W. Marchant to Amigo, 24 Apr. 1916, Box: 1st World War: Involvement of Diocese in Various Home Activities – The Guild of the Pope’s Peace, Amigo Papers, Diocesan Archives of Southwark. While Marchant, in a strongly worded letter, urged Amigo to condemn the Guild with the rest of the hierarchy, Dean, the editor of The Universe, wrote that he was shocked to receive a copy of C.B.N.: “in which was inserted a seditious pamphlet in which certain Catholics call upon us to join in an effort to ‘stop the war’, and assert, equivalently, that the Nation does not know what it is fighting for! These people…endeavour to entangle the Catholic body in
While realising the purity of the sentiments of Catholic devotion and loyalty to the Holy See, which animate the promoters of such a Guild, I think that this notice, considering the temper of the Country at the present time, is likely to arouse the gravest misunderstandings, and I am sorry that it seems to come out with the approval of the authorities of this Diocese when I have not been consulted. I am sure that you will agree with me in regretting its being issued.⁴⁹

Amigo received two replies from the C.T.S. expressing unqualified regret that the circular had been enclosed in C.B.N. and promising that the mistake would be rectified in the next issue.⁵⁰ On 29 April 1916, a disclaimer appeared in *The Tablet* by Britten admitting that he felt it “to have been a serious error of judgement” to have included the Guild’s circular in C.B.N. Britten apologised and felt it necessary to express his regret “publicly”.⁵¹

This scarcely edifying incident reveals one of the great paradoxes of the war from the British Catholic perspective. The hierarchical authorities entrusted with promoting the Pope’s ideals by the Church itself, became staunch opponents of the Guild of the Pope’s Peace. On the face of it, it might have been expected that the Catholic hierarchy would have gladly endorsed the formation of a group of Catholics aiming to promote the ideals of the Vicar of Christ, and using his exact words. But the fear of anything that smacked of “sedition” in time of war was too great. The fact that the Guild had no authorisation from the hierarchy, and that it was promoting the idea of a negotiated peace, an idea that was contrary to popular sentiments, meant that the Guild could be easily smeared as nothing more than a pacifist movement. And as we have already seen, the pacifist movement was anathema to the majority of Catholics in Britain during the First World War. Thus, lest silence regarding the Guild might have been considered tantamount to

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condoning pacifism in their ranks, the episcopate strove to discredit the Guild before it could gain any real influence. The “patriotic” reputation of the British Catholic Church was believed to be at risk. The hierarchy saw the safeguarding of that reputation as more important than promoting the vision of Benedict himself for a negotiated end to the war.

The agitation that the Guild created was soon carried from the private into the public arena and Catholic disunity was displayed for all to see. The battlefield was chiefly the Catholic press, namely The Universe, and the protagonists that faced each other were the opponents and exponents of the Guild. The protracted controversy which ensued was triggered by a letter to the editor of The Universe, in which the members of the Guild were identified with such pacifists as E. D. Morel, Ramsay MacDonald, and Clifford Allen. Furthermore, the lack of official Catholic episcopal authority was emphasised. This gave the founders of the Guild a chance to defend themselves. In the next issue of The Universe, three letters appeared from members of the Guild both defending their aims and refuting the charge that the Guild lacked authorisation. The first letter, by an anonymous correspondent, made the point that: “to circulate extracts from the Holy Father’s utterances, and to suggest that Catholics should pray, as Benedict XV entreats them…, is not a proceeding that is open to any very serious objection.” It was further argued that the Guild surely did not need “official sanction” in order to promote the Pope’s own statements.

The other two letters are of more interest because they were written by members of the Guild’s committee and went into greater depth in their defence. E. I. Watkin, the

51 The Tablet, 29 Apr. 1916, p. 567.
52 The Universe, 28 Apr. 1916, p. 4. The correspondent was W. S. Marchant.
second correspondent (whose letter was cited in chapter 4 above), denied any connection with other pacifist organisations such as the N-C.F. or the U.D.C. He pointed out that the Guild’s aim was to foster the outcome for which the Pope had been calling all along, not for “peace at any price” but peace by negotiation. Further, he justified the Guild’s legitimacy, arguing that it had the “highest possible authority”, that of the Pope himself.  

The differentiation by Watkin between peace at any price and a negotiated peace was of critical importance. It meant that, essentially, the Guild could not be accused of being in league with other “defeatist” associations whose alleged slogan was “peace at any price”, even that of forgoing all or part of Britain’s war aims. The Guild called merely for a negotiated peace which, in effect, made it possible for Britain still to realise some of her war aims, but through negotiation instead of bloodshed.

The third letter was an appeal that was signed by Fr. Kent, Fr. Squirrell, and Francis Meynell, the Guild’s secretary. It outlined what precisely Benedict had said on peace between September 1914 and April 1916, stressing his various entreaties to the warring nations to lay down their arms and pursue peaceful negotiations. “Surely”, the letter reasoned, “the fact that we do no more than desire to see these appeals and exhortations successful should preserve us from the sneers of Catholics.” In response to the question of whether or not the group had been sanctioned by British Catholic authorities, they replied that they had not. They reiterated Watkin’s assertion that they were in existence in response to an invitation from the Pope himself: “We invite all the friends of peace in the world to help us in hastening the end of the war [their emphasis].”

53 Ibid., 5 May 1916, p. 4.
54 Ibid. It is important to note that by implying this, Watkin did not mean that the Pope had officially sanctioned the Guild, since he could not do so. Watkin was referring to Benedict’s adjuration to Catholics
It was on this basis alone that the Guild relied for its very existence. The letter concluded with the assurance that: “The Guild is nothing more than a voluntary association of certain Catholics who wish…to take literally to heart the Holy Father’s advice about the war.”\textsuperscript{55} This, of course, was to hint that in actual fact the Guild did not need sanctioning by the Catholic hierarchy in Britain.

Far from dispelling any reservations that their fellow Catholics may have had regarding the Guild, this correspondence appears to have further raised their ire. For in the very next issue, \textit{The Universe} dedicated its leading article to a pitiless denunciation of the Guild. \textit{The Universe} declared: “[The Guild’s] belief borders on heresy; its objects are indistinguishable from those of the ‘stop-the-war’ organisations already in existence.” It denounced the Guild’s conjectures that since Benedict had implored the belligerents to end the war, every loyal Catholic should support his proposals.\textsuperscript{56} The Guild’s programme was similar to all “unpatriotic” peace movements created since the beginning of the war. \textit{The Universe}’s objection to the Guild was not only that it was “an essentially anti-patriotic society,” but also that its stance was wrong on Catholic grounds. It objected to a “few laymen” presuming to act on the Pope’s words, and on the basis of what they thought to be his wishes, without the approval of the hierarchy. “If concerted action on the lines of the Guild…were necessary…we may be sure that the Bishops, who…are

\footnotesize{to pray for peace. In this regard, the Guild was only doing what the Pope had asked Catholics to do and thus, had his “authority” only indirectly.\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, p. 5. The quotation of Benedict XV was taken from \textit{Allorchè Fummo}, his Exhortation of 28 July 1915.\textsuperscript{56} It must be remembered that, as was expressed in the previous chapter, although \textit{The Universe} had defended Benedict’s neutrality in January 1916, it had insisted that individual Catholics could not follow the Pope’s lead.}
more likely to be safe interpreters of the Pope’s intentions…, would have taken the appropriate steps.”

Thus, the traditional strictures against lay initiatives were asserted.

This comprehensive condemnation of the Guild received the hearty endorsement of the Catholic Federationist. The Federationist found the article “refreshing” and castigated members of the Guild for constituting themselves as interpreters of Benedict’s words. It also announced that Catholics were opposed to “an organisation which begins its career by ostentatiously declaring, by implication, that it has no need of episcopal approval.” Such a harsh charge was unfair to the Guild, as it had never “ostentatiously” declared such a thing. Indeed, in their letter to The Universe, Kent, Squirrell, and Meynell had admitted that the Guild’s existence depended on the utterances of Benedict.

Nonetheless, the “implication” had been present: in flaunting Papal “approval”, the Guild’s leaders appeared to argue that they had no need of local episcopal approval.

The lack of official episcopal authorization plagued the Guild and a solution had to be found somehow. For one thing, the Guild’s status as a spontaneously created lay initiative was constantly alluded to by the Guild’s enemies to discredit it. For another, if the Guild could not convince Catholics that it was legitimate, the Catholic rank and file would eschew it and its influence would remain at a minimum. The Guild committee, therefore, turned to the one Catholic bishop who had privately expressed some sympathy with it. Frederick Keating was the diocesan Bishop of Fr. Squirrell and thus the Guild had a direct connection with him, since Squirrell was on the Guild’s committee. It appears that Squirrell had requested his Bishop’s help in solving the authorisation question. For on 14 May 1916, Keating wrote to him that they had to be careful how they handled the

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57 The Universe, 12 May 1916, p. 1.
58 Catholic Federationist, June 1916, p. 5.
charge of lack of episcopal authorisation. “It will not do to say that it [episcopal authorisation] is superfluous because the Pope has invited the faithful to pray,” because that was sufficient justification for private devotion only. Since episcopal sanction was required for organised public action sooner or later, Keating advised Squirrell: “I consider that your defence is that, at present, you are acting *individually*, testing the feeling of the Catholic Body, and getting in touch with those who are in sympathy” [emphasis in original]. As Keating explained, he understood the Guild’s leaders to be proposing that, if the Guild’s experiment justified further public action, *then* the committee would approach the hierarchy.\(^{59}\) Whatever the intentions of the Guild’s leaders, this strategy did not work because the Guild’s membership remained very small and the “experiment” failed.

This period represented the high-water mark of the Guild’s influence and it gradually faded away as the majority of Catholics remained firmly “patriotic” in their view of the war. The failure of the Guild scarcely reflects well on the capacity of Catholic leaders to think imaginatively in response to the crisis of war. The Guild, a lay initiative, but with some assistance from two principled priests, was hoping to mobilise opinion in favour of the ideal of a negotiated end to the war by promoting the Pope’s own messages. Neither leading Catholic laymen nor the bishops lent any assistance to the Guild. It was convenient for Catholics to charge the Guild with mischief-making on account of its not seeking episcopal sanction, because this was the most effective way of isolating it.\(^{60}\) Isolating the Guild and stifling its voice would convince the wider British public, which

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\(^{59}\) Bishop Keating to Fr. Squirrel, 14 May 1916, Box XXIV, P IV, Morison Papers.

\(^{60}\) In assessing the reaction to the Guild of the Pope’s Peace, it is worth remembering that the lingering after-effect of the modernist crisis of the previous decade may still have played a role in the hierarchy’s
was already accusing Catholics of disloyalty (in the context of the Easter Uprising of 1916), that the Guild was not representative of Catholic opinion. Concern for the reputation of the Catholic Church in Britain appears to have been the primary consideration. To have had anything in the nature of a “pacifist” group in their midst was regarded as an embarrassment for Catholics since they had denounced “pacifist” movements such as the U.D.C. Bishop Keating put it very succinctly when he wrote to Squirrel: “Public Opinion is in such a highly nervous state that it ‘smells a rat’ in every corner.”

This nervous state of public opinion probably contributed to the lack of peace moves from any European power between July 1915 and December 1916; no government wanted to risk appearing “weak” by offering peace terms first. In December 1916, however, after many months of equivocation and diplomatic wrangling with the German Supreme Military Command, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, the German Chancellor, persuaded Kaiser Wilhelm II to issue a peace offer. This was done in early December, soon after the fall of Bucharest, when the German governing elite believed the nation to be in such a strong position that an offer of peace to the Entente could be made without appearing to be weakening in her resolve to continue fighting if necessary. The Peace Offer, which was published on 12 December by the Central Powers, included no opposition to the Guild. Modernist persecution ceased only with Benedict’s election. Understandably, there still would have been tension towards any lay innovations without episcopal sanction.

61 Bishop Keating to Fr. Squirrel, 14 May 1916, Box XXIV, P IV, Morison Papers.
62 Z. A. B. Zeman, in A Diplomatic History of the First World War, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), has contended that the peace offer was “made in the teeth of fierce opposition at home and marred by compromises with its opponents” (p. 118). Similarly, L. L. Farrar has argued that the subsequent peace offer was “as convincing and pacific a statement of German willingness to discuss peace as the generals’ increasing opposition seemed to allow.” See Farrar’s Divide and Conquer: German Efforts to Conclude a Separate Peace, 1914-1918, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 70.
initiatives and gave no concessions. It was too ambiguous and vague in its proposals and too arrogant in its tone. Even defenders of Bethmann Hollweg have conceded that without any specified war aims, the offer “was foredoomed from the start.”\textsuperscript{64} The Entente rejected the offer out of hand, with Aristide Briand calling it a “trap” and Lloyd George, who had come to power the previous week,\textsuperscript{65} committing himself to total victory. He replied to the peace initiative with a quote from Abraham Lincoln: “We accepted this war for an object, and a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained.”\textsuperscript{66} The object, presumably, was the abolition of German militarism with his “knock-out blow”.

The German government sent a separate and different note to the Vatican. It expressed the government’s confidence that the Pope would welcome the Central Powers’ peace initiative and would give it his precious support.\textsuperscript{67} The Vatican, however, received the Peace Offer with coldness and Benedict made no reply. W. H. Peters has contended that Benedict’s failure to reply to the Peace Offer led some to think that he was indifferent to peace. In fact, Benedict and Gasparri had received a message from Count de Salis\textsuperscript{68} informing them that “any intervention on the part of the Pope at that precise moment would be ill-received by France and England.” Benedict, realising that the Allies

\textsuperscript{64} G. Ritter, \textit{The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany}, vol. 3, (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1972), p. 281. Ritter was one of the most ardent defenders of Bethmann Hollweg and German war aims during the First World War. In the 1960s, he was involved in a controversy with Fritz Fischer, a fellow German historian, over Germany’s war aims in the Great War.


would meet any future effort on his part with antagonism if he offended them, chose to tread carefully at this time, and made no formal response.  

At the exact time that the German Peace Offer was made, Cardinal Bourne was on his second visit to Rome during the war. He was, therefore, in a position to respond to the peace offer and, being in the capital city of Catholicism where the Pope had been unceasingly advocating peace, his words carried great weight. Speaking to Italian journalists in Rome in early 1917, the Catholic Archbishop of England reaffirmed his country’s “ardent desire for peace”, but insisted that Britain was not willing to discuss peace until Belgium was fully restored to her freedom. Therefore, he regarded Germany’s Peace offer as “a piece of common trickery” and “a vulgar trap.” Earlier, less than two weeks after Germany had issued the Peace Offer, Bourne had written to the Duke of Norfolk telling him that he was doing his best in Rome to serve the cause of the Allies. He was concerned that “Italian opinion, especially in clerical circles, is somewhat lukewarm, and too ready for peace at any price.”

The consensus among British Catholics that no kind of peace was to be concluded with Germany except a victorious peace was pithily stated by the Catholic Times. Immediately after the Peace Offer was released, the Catholic Times offered the opinion that everyone yearned for peace and desired the ceasing of bloodshed. But a peace from Germany would only be accepted when she admitted that she was beaten and that she was willing to restore all occupied territory and pay indemnities. The Catholic Times echoed the thoughts of many when it declared: “Germany seeks peace because the

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68 Count John de Salis had replaced Henry Howard as head of the British Mission to the Vatican in October 1916. For a brief history of his diplomatic career, see The Tablet, 11 Nov. 1916, p. 625.
69 W. H. Peters, op. cit., p. 141. See also J. F. Pollard, op. cit., p. 120.
German militarists know that a turning point has been reached in the war....”

Only a minority of Catholics welcomed the idea of peace at that time. Among them, *St. Francis’ Magazine*, the Northampton diocesan magazine, deplored the Allies’ swift repudiation of Germany’s peace move. Although the rejection seemed like a forgone conclusion, the magazine intimated, “Yet it is something that, on the eve of the New Year, peace should have been seriously discussed by the belligerents.”

The magazine lamented that this chance had been lost, a chance for both parties to do what Pius X implored them to do from the beginning: “to think the thoughts of peace and not of affliction.”

Hitherto, the Pope’s peace utterances had been merely acknowledged politely or ignored by the great powers. This in itself is scarcely surprising; it is an oft-expressed axiom that as long as warring nations retain strength, peace is far from their minds. Only when they grow war-weary do they begin exhibiting a desire for peace. In the first half of 1917, signs of the growing desire for peace among the warring people of Europe were beginning to show. In March, the Russian Revolution took place, and the Petrograd Soviet soon announced that its policy was to seek a negotiated peace under the formula “no annexations, no indemnities”; in May, the French army mutinied after the failure of the Nivelle offensive. In Britain there was a growing demand for moderate war aims; in early June, the Leeds Convention urged the government to “announce its agreement with the declared foreign policy and war aims of the democratic government of Russia”, on

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72 *Catholic Times*, 15 Dec. 1916, p. 3.
73 *St. Francis’ Magazine*, Jan. 1917, DAN.
74 Quoted in ibid.
75 Quoted in K. Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The “Peace Movement” in Britain, 1914-1919*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), p. 120. The Leeds Convention was organised by the I.L.P. and the British Socialist Party. A resolution was adopted by the delegates at the Convention to work “for the reestablishment of a general peace which shall not tend towards either domination by or over any nation, or
29 June, Lloyd George delivered a speech in Glasgow in which he announced that he was willing to accept a moderate peace with a democratic Germany, providing Belgium’s independence was restored.\textsuperscript{76} On the Central Powers’ side, too, there was growing popular clamour for peace. On April 12, Count Czernin, the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, warned that Austria could not cope with another winter campaign and supported the possibility of peace negotiations.\textsuperscript{77} More importantly, in July the German Reichstag devised and passed the Peace Resolution demanding that the government renounce annexations and support a peace of understanding.\textsuperscript{78}

This intensifying popular pressure in favour of war aims revision and a moderate peace prompted the Vatican to embark on an adventure in peace diplomacy. At the outset, the restitution of Belgium’s full independence was recognised as a \textit{conditio sine qua non} to the success of any peace initiative. Benedict, therefore, consecrated Mgr. Eugenio Pacelli as an archbishop and immediately dispatched him as papal nuncio to Bavaria in May 1917 in order to sound out the German government concerning peace conditions.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{76} J. L. Snell, “Benedict XV, Wilson, Michaelis, and German Socialism”, \textit{Catholic Historical Review}, 37(1), (Apr. 1951), pp. 151-152.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 152. For Czernin’s memorandum of April 12, see F. Fischer, \textit{Germany’s Aims in the First World War}, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), pp. 351-352.
\textsuperscript{78} Philip Scheidemann, leader of the Social Democratic Party, and Matthias Erzberger, a leading member of the Catholic Centre Party, instigated the Peace Resolution. They warned the government that it would be fomenting revolution if it insisted on a war of conquest while the Allies renounced annexations. Chapter 8 of K. Epstein’s \textit{Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy}, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959) covers the background and passing of the Peace Resolution in detail.
\textsuperscript{79} For a comprehensive account of Pacelli’s mission to Germany, see C. J. Herber, “Eugenio Pacelli’s Mission to Germany and the Papal Peace Proposals of 1917”, \textit{Catholic Historical Review}, 65(1), (Jan. 1979), pp. 22-34. As early as October 1916, a Reuters agent who knew the Pope personally told Rennell Rodd that Benedict had reason to believe: “that Germany was most anxious to make peace and if there were any possible means of bringing that about she would restore Belgium, evacuate France and even probably give up Alsace and Lorraine in return for certain compensations.” Rennell Rodd to Lord Hardinge, 20 Oct. 1916, Hardinge 26/255, Lord Hardinge Papers, Manuscripts Department, Cambridge University Library. By January 1917, Rodd could report to his government that he had been told by the
Pacelli presented his credentials to King Ludwig III of Bavaria on May 26 and made a lofty call for peace, emphasising Benedict’s sincere interest in hastening the end of the war by a negotiated peace. One month later, Pacelli visited Bethmann Hollweg in Berlin; the Chancellor assured him that Germany was willing to restore Belgian independence on one condition: that it would not fall under the political, military or economic dominance of the Entente. Furthermore, Bethmann intimated that peace need not fail over the vexed issue of Alsace-Lorraine provided that Germany and France could agree on mutual border adjustment. Unfortunately, these promising diplomatic openings were all put at risk by a major political upheaval inside Germany: Bethmann was forced to resign by the German General Staff on 13 July, at the height of the Peace Resolution crisis. To the undisguised astonishment of most observers, he was replaced by Georg Michaelis, a plain bureaucrat of mediocre ability.

Undeterred by this unfortunate change in the chancellorship, Pope Benedict XV drafted a note offering concrete proposals for peace. The Pope’s Peace Note was dated August 1 but, for reasons still not fully clear, it was issued on 10 August 1917. The Note was more practical and precise in its proposals than any other peace initiative that had hitherto been published. (The Papal Peace Note’s full text is reproduced in Appendix

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Spanish ambassador to Italy that “Mühlberg, the Prussian Minister to the Holy See…had sent a communication to the effect that Germany was now quite ready to restore Belgium to her independence with military guarantees.” Rodd to Arthur Balfour, 30 Jan. 1917, F/56/1, Lloyd George Papers. Thus by early 1917, both the Vatican and the British government were aware that Germany was ready to restore Belgian independence.


See Appendix B. The Pope’s Peace Note is analysed point by point in D. A. Maclean, The Permanent Peace Program of Pope Benedict XV, (New York City: Catholic Association for International Peace, 1931).

On handing the Peace Note to de Salis on 9 August, Cardinal Gasparri explained that “Although the belligerents were still far apart, recent declarations had brought their points of view nearer together.” The Reichstag had passed a peace resolution while statesmen in England alluded to reparation instead of annihilation. The Pope’s aim, explained Gasparri, was to see if recent utterances could initiate an agreement. Confidential Report on Mission to the Holy See, de Salis to Lord Curzon, 25 Oct. 1922, F.O.
B.) The proposals can be summarised in seven main points: 1) the substitution of material force with “the moral force of law”; 2) simultaneous and reciprocal disarmament “according to rules and guarantees to be established”; 3) a mutual commitment to international arbitration; 4) true freedom “and common use” of the seas; 5) mutual renunciation of all war indemnities; 6) restoration of all occupied territories including “a total evacuation of Belgium” and “restitution of the German colonies”; 7) the examination of disputed territorial claims in a “spirit of equity and justice”. The Note was supposed to be viewed by the cabinets of the recipient nations only, thus making it a highly secret document. It was not the Pope’s intention that it should be released to the press. However, to his dismay, translations and discussions of the Note started appearing almost at once in the newspapers of London and Rome. In Germany, there was strong opposition to the Peace Note from right-wing newspapers and leading Protestants. These newspapers thought that “The Pope wishes France to win, in order to welcome back that daughter of the Church” and the Protestant Alliance warned the new Chancellor “not to go into the devil’s net.” In addition, they resented the fact that the Pope had chosen the jubilee year of the Reformation to inspire a negotiated peace.

In Britain, France, and Italy it was claimed that the Pope’s Peace Note was German-inspired. Rodd told Lord Hardinge that the Pope’s proposals were an embarrassment in Italy. The Socialists printed copies of the Note and distributed them throughout the country while in Rome there was a general feeling of resentment about the

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371/7671/103, Central Italy (Political), P.R.O. Thus, in Benedict’s view, that was the most propitious moment to launch a peace offensive.


85 Quoted in ibid., p. 13.
Vatican’s interference.\textsuperscript{86} Clemenceau, soon to be the French Premier, denounced the Peace Note for advocating “a peace against France” and he was supported by most of the French Catholic hierarchy.\textsuperscript{87} In Britain, the government received the Note with suspicion and accused the Vatican of being in constant contact with the Germans while composing the proposals. As a result, according to British government sources, the terms of the proposals were of a greater benefit to the Central Powers than to the Allies.\textsuperscript{88} The Foreign Office minutes at the time of the Note’s reception indicate the immense suspicion with which it was viewed. One official referred to the Pope’s Note as a “thoroughly pro-German document”; another official noted that “the proposals are unacceptable even as a basis for discussion”; a third warned that “Berlin and Vienna, to whom the proposals will mightily appeal, will publish and support them”.\textsuperscript{89}

The British government was in a predicament. If the Central Powers accepted the Pope’s proposals, then Britain could not be seen to reject them outright. So, initially, it was decided that the British government should send an acknowledgement and await developments. On 21 August 1917, Balfour telegraphed instructions to de Salis to relate to Gasparri a message acknowledging the Pope’s Peace Note and to tell the Cardinal that the British Government had not yet had a chance to consult its Allies.\textsuperscript{90} De Salis duly

\textsuperscript{86} Rodd to Hardinge, 26 Aug. 1917, Hardinge 34/71, Lord Hardinge Papers.
\textsuperscript{87} H. Johnson, op. cit., p. 30.
\textsuperscript{88} A. Rhodes, \textit{The Power of Rome in the Twentieth Century}, pp. 241-242. In 1919, General Erich Ludendorff of the German High Command wrote in his Memoirs: “The Note pronounced entirely in favour of a peace without annexations or indemnities and expected us to make considerable sacrifices, while the Entente got off very cheaply.” General Ludendorff, \textit{My War Memoirs}, 2 vols., (London: Hutchinson, 1919), II, p. 513-514. Ludendorff’s observation implies that the Pope was not inspired by Germany, as his detractors in the Allied camp claimed. Even Rodd believed that the Peace Note was “not the result of any suggestion from the Central Empires”, but the Pope’s independent initiative. Rodd to Balfour, 18 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371/3083/317, The War Files (Political), P.R.O.
\textsuperscript{89} See minutes for 10 and 14 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371/3083/216, 225.
\textsuperscript{90} Balfour to Count de Salis, 21 Aug. 1917, F.O. 371/3083/ 299.
related this message to Gasparri on 23 August; it was to be the only official reply that the Vatican was to receive from Britain regarding the Peace Note.

With the exception of some Radicals and pacifists, the peace proposals were received with hostility and vehement criticism in Britain.\textsuperscript{91} The “fight-to-the-finish” press, in particular, swiftly dismissed the proposals as propitious for Germany and disadvantageous to Great Britain. The clause regarding the freedom of the seas was especially scorned but the British were perhaps being unreasonable in objecting to its inclusion. As H. E. G. Rope has pointed out, the British had “failed to convince others that their own particular view of the freedom of the seas was objectively a fair one.”\textsuperscript{92} The Anglican \textit{Guardian} dismissed the peace terms curtly, positing that “no Allied Government will give them five minutes’ serious consideration….”\textsuperscript{93} Other newspapers, such as \textit{The Times}, rejected the initiative out of hand. On 16 August, \textit{The Times} labeled the initiative “pro-German and…anti-Ally” and accused Benedict of offering “a German peace”.\textsuperscript{94}

The pacifist and Radical press accorded the Peace Note the most generous support, deploring its repudiation by the British “militarists”. The \textit{Nation}, for example, declared that “the tone of the document is touching in its simplicity and unworldliness” and suggested that anyone who read it could not suppose that it was motivated by

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\item \textsuperscript{91} For one such example, see “The Vatican and the Germanic Powers”, \textit{Contemporary Review}, 112, (Oct. 1917): 403-412. The anonymous author charged that the Note was not only premature, but it was partial to the Central Powers and it reflected the “Teutonic atmosphere” of the Vatican (p. 405).
\item \textsuperscript{92} H. E. G. Rope, op. cit., p. 146.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Quoted in A. Marrin, \textit{The Last Crusade}, p. 227.
\item \textsuperscript{94} \textit{The Times}, 16 Aug. 1917, p. 7. \textit{The Times} denounced the epithet in the Peace Note that the war had come to be “more and more a useless massacre”. It asserted that because the Allies were fighting for the moral force of right, “the war does not appear to them to be ‘more and more a useless massacre,’ as the Note describes it”.
\end{itemize}
“anything other than the desire to serve humanity.” The Tribunal, the N-C.F.’s organ, praised Benedict’s efforts at peace and denounced those who rejected the Note because it did not definitely take the side of the Allies. It considered the negative reception of the proposals by pan-Germans and Protestants in Germany as “a tribute to the Pope’s fair-mindedness.”

In contrast to the Radicals and pacifists, the Established Church received the Note with mixed reactions. Although a handful of Anglicans urged that the Note should be given some attention, the great majority of Anglicans rejected the initiative. The Anglican press was warm in its opposition. The Church Quarterly Review, an Anglican periodical, for example, insisted that the allusion to freedom of the seas was utterly unsatisfactory. The Church Family Newspaper, an Anglican paper read mainly in suburban and rural England, warned: “we cannot take peace as a boon from the hands of the great Antichrist.”

The Pope’s own flock in Britain viewed the Note with some discomfort. Most prominent British Catholics were not yet ready to support a negotiated peace but could not reject outright their Pontiff’s peace offer – the most notable peace move yet offered in the three years of war. Thus, in a show of solidarity with their Pontiff, they publicly welcomed the Pope’s attempt to procure peace for a dying Europe and defended the move as the Vicar of Christ’s duty. Only a few, however, tried to influence public opinion

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96 Tribunal, 23 Aug. 1917, p. 5.
97 These included the editors of Challenge and Rev. Walter Lock.
99 Quoted in ibid., p. 228.
regarding the Peace Note in its favour by publicising it in the press and by explaining its purpose in pamphlets and booklets.

The British Catholic press mounted a campaign in defence of the Note and while some Catholic organs were careful not to endorse it, others affirmed their loyalty by attempting to vindicate it. They were simply doing their duty in justifying the Peace Note in the face of what they considered to be a bigoted and intolerant environment, where an opportunity to injure the Holy See was never missed. Having said this, however, it must be noted that not all Catholic newspapers welcomed the substance of the Peace Note and some even showed public reserve in accepting it. *The Tablet*, for example, while approving some of the terms proposed by the Pope, rejected the Note in no uncertain terms. It argued that moral justice was alien to the German ideal of *Kultur*. *The Tablet* conceded that if Belgian redemption could not be restored by the sword “then there is much to say for the poor second-best which would secure the restoration of her territory by a promise to let bygones be bygones.”\(^{100}\) It was only fair, *The Tablet* continued, that the Peace Note be judged on the assumption that the Allies could not attain complete victory. But such an assumption, the paper added, was not shared by the British “and certainly not by anyone connected with this journal.”\(^{101}\) Since non-Catholics saw *The Tablet* as the mouthpiece of Catholics in Britain, other Britons had every right to conclude that, whatever might be said in defence of Benedict and his motives, Britain’s most prominent Catholics had rejected the Note.

*The Tablet* earned a reprimand from some Catholic newspapers for its imprudence and its lack of respect in dealing with the Note. The *Glasgow Observer* was one of those

\(^{100}\) *The Tablet*, 18 Aug. 1917, p. 196.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
Catholic organs that chastised *The Tablet*, claiming that it had dealt “with the appeal of his Holiness in terms little less derogatory than those held by the other Jingo Tory organs.” The *Observer* repudiated the allegation that the Peace Note was inspired by the Central Powers, reminding its readers that after the failure of his previous peace effort two years before, Benedict had said that he would try again at a more propitious time. However, in defending the Pope, the *Observer* assured the wider public that British Catholics were not disposed to embarrass the government in any moment of difficulty by making extreme judgements in the political field. In this way, the *Glasgow Observer* at once retained its allegiance to the Holy See while at the same time professing its “patriotism” and loyalty to the government. 

*The Universe*, on the other hand, appeared to be quite unsympathetic to the Peace Note at the outset, and only eventually came round to a more favourable view. Between 17 August and 28 September 1917, *The Universe* dedicated six out of its seven leading articles to the Pope’s Peace Note. Its initial reception of the document was not enthusiastic. Although it pointed out that the proposals were tentative in so far as they were open for discussion and alteration, it observed that “no one need be surprised if…neither group of belligerent powers is ready to accept the proposals as they stand.” In addition, *The Universe* reasoned, even though millions of people desired an honourable settlement, “nothing will be lost” if the initiative failed. In its next issue, however, *The Universe* had changed its tone, vehemently denouncing the British press for its egregious treatment of the Roman Pontiff and his Peace Note. It contended that the British press deceived itself if it considered itself “a much better judge of moral issues than the

103 Ibid., 18 Aug. 1917, p. 6.
occupant of the See of Peter.” In particular, *The Universe* defended the clause concerning the freedom of the seas. It reported that the freedom of the seas was a very reasonable subject for discussion and that, furthermore, in putting forward the clause, Benedict had taken into account the menace of the submarine.\(^\text{105}\)

The *Catholic Times* and the *Catholic Herald* welcomed the Pope’s peace initiative wholeheartedly, the *Catholic Times* even declaring that the contents of the Note indicated that morally the Pope was on the Allies’ side. “If any moral authority”, the *Catholic Times* suggested, “would weigh with the Allies at this sad hour of war and bloodshed, it would be the Pope’s. He has spoken.” The result of his utterance, the *Catholic Times* insisted, was as creditable to Benedict as it was condemnatory of the Kaiser.\(^\text{106}\) The *Catholic Herald*, in comparison, seemed more concerned with the Socialists’ efforts to achieve peace at the Stockholm Conference.\(^\text{107}\) While urging the belligerents to give the Pope’s proposals the utmost consideration, the *Catholic Herald* directed its appeal to Catholics especially. Catholics, it stressed, must throw their complete support behind the Pope so he would not be left isolated. While the Socialists were busily discussing how to bring about peace at Stockholm, Catholics must also show that as a body they, too, desired a just and enduring peace.\(^\text{108}\) On 25 August, the *Catholic Herald* exhibited its preoccupation with the Stockholm Conference once again. It castigated radicals who tried

\(^{104}\) *The Universe*, 17 Aug. 1917, p. 1.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., 24 Aug. 1917, p. 1. *The Universe* was apparently inconsistent in its outlook. As will be shown in chapter 8, *The Universe* had been severely critical of President Wilson’s reference to freedom of the seas in January 1917. Unlimited submarine warfare was launched by Germany after the failure of its peace offer in December 1916.

\(^{106}\) *Catholic Times*, 24 Aug. 1917, p. 3.


to discredit the Pope, particularly those politicians who encouraged and supported the Stockholm Conference. According to the *Herald*, such left-wing agitators praised the Socialists and their call for peace without annexations or indemnities while at the same time they scorned Benedict’s peace move and questioned his motives.\(^{109}\)

Attempts to publicise the Peace Note and to show that it was issued from a position of impartiality were also disseminated through pamphlets and booklets written by prominent Catholics. The Benedictine Hugh Edmund Ford published one such booklet in which he tried to clarify the meaning of the Peace Note for the public. Ford denied that the Note contained “‘Peace proposals’ – a title which raises expectations that are not fulfilled, and obscures the sense of some of the most important passages in the document.”\(^{110}\) According to Ford, the note presented a blueprint for the terms that would be discussed by the belligerents when they approached the arbitration table. Ford also tried to present a satisfactory elucidation of one of the most vexing terms in the Note from the British perspective: the freedom of the seas. He hypothesised that it was Benedict’s intention that the freedom of the seas was to be accomplished only after the reduction of armaments, that is, “after the passing of the German military domination on the Continent of Europe.” Because Benedict prefixed the qualifier “just” to the phrase “freedom of the seas”, he implied, according to Ford, that this freedom would still be regulated by international laws.\(^{111}\)

Another pamphlet that was more publicised and received significant coverage at the time was Fr. Martindale’s, *The Pope’s Peace Note*, published in September by the Catholic Social Guild. Due to the untiring zeal of Fr. Charles Dominic Plater, the

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\(^{109}\) Ibid., 25 Aug. 1917, p. 4.  
pamphlet sold with astonishing speed. Within ten days of its publication, it sold 10,000 copies followed by 40,000 in the next month. Ultimately, 60,000 copies were sold.\textsuperscript{112} In commenting on the Peace Note, Martindale emphasised that Benedict had issued the Note “\textit{because he was Pope, but not exclusively as Pope}” [emphasis in original]. Martindale explained that because he was Christ’s representative on earth, the Pope could not be silent. However, because not all belligerents believed him to be their spiritual leader, he spoke in his Note as an eminent person and a politician who desired the termination of the useless slaughter.\textsuperscript{113} Here, Martindale could have been directing his words to Catholics as much as non-Catholics. He could implicitly have been warning Catholics not to be affected by the secular disparagement of the Note. He warned them that, just because the Note was a diplomatic rather than an ecclesiastical document, Catholics should not consider themselves free to dismiss it as unsatisfactory.

Moreover, Martindale repeated the point that the terms of the Note were not final. Rather, they were a starting point for the warring nations, which should study these terms and proceed from them. Nor was he offering them as a judge. He was offering them as a compromise to help bridge the divergent aims of the two opposing blocs. Martindale argued that since both the Allies and the Central Powers did not agree with the other’s war aims, it was logical that a third party “cannot merely repeat what has already been said and rejected. The Pope has to distinguish between what is desired, or even desirable, and what is just.”\textsuperscript{114} These arguments were applauded by \textit{St. Francis’ Magazine}, which

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{112} C. C. Martindale, \textit{Charles Dominic Plater}, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 9. Evidence suggests that after its publication, a press campaign was being planned against the pamphlet. It was claimed that the pamphlet was a German peace propaganda initiated by the General of the Jesuits, who was thought to be a German. (He was in fact Polish). Since it was published by the Catholic Social Guild, and since Plater and Joseph Keating were prominent members of the Guild, it was believed
urged Catholics to read Martindale’s pamphlet and the clergy to “endeavour to give this tract the widest possible circulation.” The reason offered for this was that the Catholic population was a minority in Britain and therefore liable to “infection” from the overwhelming power of a secular press determined to disparage the Pope’s peace efforts.\textsuperscript{115}

In contrast to the public show of support for the Pope’s Peace Note on the part of most of the Catholic press and the pamphleteers, the majority of leading Catholic individuals were hesitant to accept the proposed terms at the expense of abandoning Britain’s war aims.\textsuperscript{116} These individuals were at best not genuinely convinced of the expediency of the Note and at worst remained fully committed to a victorious peace. A determination to achieve peace through victory was in fact the reaction of the man at the highest level of authority among British Catholics. Cardinal Bourne publicly expressed his disagreement with his Pontiff’s Peace Note and his commitment to British war aims when he declared, shortly after the Note was released:

> The Pope has proposed that all the belligerents should come to a compromise. No! We demand the total triumph of right over wrong. We do not want a peace which will be no more than a truce or

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\textsuperscript{115} \textit{St. Francis’ Magazine}, Oct. 1917, DAN.

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armistice between two wars. There may be in our land some people who want peace at any price, but they have no following among us. We English Catholics are fully behind our war leaders.117

Speaking for his flock in England, Bourne had apparently either forgotten, or chose to ignore, the thorn known as the Guild of the Pope’s Peace in the side of the “patriotic” Catholic body. For soon after, the Guild printed a booklet reviewing the history of the Popes and peace, contradicting Bourne’s confident assertion. The booklet scolded Catholics for their rejection of Benedict’s attempt to mediate between the belligerents. It enquired accusingly:

How is it that even now, after the Pope’s proposal of terms which would secure all the finer objects for which our politicians claimed to be fighting, and for which the masses of our soldiers are indeed fighting, there are many Catholics who still reject the Holy Father’s mediation? Not only do they reject it, but…seeking to invent new ‘war aims’ when the old are in danger of realisation, many endure in silence, some even approve, the calumnies of the war press against the Holy Father.118

This stark contradiction, which clearly showed that not all Catholics were fully behind their war leaders, must surely have disconcerted Bourne. It also demonstrates a key reason behind the hierarchy’s determination to denounce the Guild.

Nevertheless, Bourne’s blatant repudiation of the Pope’s peace offer must have been very satisfying for the opponents of Benedict XV. One can imagine how justified they would have felt at the sight of one of the princes of the Church dismissing his own Pontiff’s appeal for peace. By October, Bourne must have realised that his own statements had been so unequivocal in opposition to an early peace that he sought to revise his position somewhat. In his Sunday sermon on 14 October, he expressed sorrow on behalf of Catholics at the hostile newspaper coverage of the Peace Note. He observed that rarely “in the history of newspapers in this country has there been a more utter confusion of ideas than in their treatment of that Note.” He added that although the

document did not pertain to matters of morals and faith, the Pope still deserved the “reverence, submission, and obedience” of Catholics.\textsuperscript{119} His sermon appeared to be a mere gesture, late in the day, to distance the Archbishop from the more extravagant criticisms of Benedict XV in the British press. But by then, it was too late. In any case, even if Bourne had readjusted his observations upon the Peace Note, his true convictions had been found to be on the side of nationalism rather than on the side of Benedict XV and a negotiated end to the war. No show of sympathy for the misunderstood Pope could hide this.

Tragic as this might seem, the tragedy was buttressed by the fact that Bourne’s was not an isolated case. A tone of disparagement toward the Pope’s intentions could be detected in the utterances of other leading Catholics, even when presuming to defend him. For example, less than one week after the Note was publicly released, the \textit{Manchester Guardian} labeled it a “singularly flabby, uninspiring, and unilluminated document” which was also “colourless and evasive”.\textsuperscript{120} Bishop Casartelli felt compelled to answer this insult, writing to the \textit{Guardian} that it had dismissed Benedict’s suggestions “in most unsuitable and unpardonable terms.” In the course of his reply, however, he contended that it was “quite open for us, even for Catholics, to maintain that the Pope’s proposals are inadequate, or unacceptable as being too favourable to our adversaries.”\textsuperscript{121} Bishop Keating echoed these sentiments a few weeks later. In a sermon he preached on 16 September, he asserted that since the Note was a diplomatic rather than a doctrinal initiative, “An English Catholic…was free to form his own opinion without any violation

\textsuperscript{118} “The Popes and Peace” (p. 3), [Nov. 1917], Box XXIV, P IV, Morison Papers.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{The Tablet}, 20 Oct. 1917, p. 511.
\textsuperscript{120} Quoted in the \textit{Catholic Federationist}, Sep. 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. See also \textit{The Universe}, 24 Aug. 1917, p. 11.
of his obedience.”122 Such statements demonstrate the extent to which leading Catholics openly declared that their first loyalties were to their nation and that they supported the government’s policy over the Pope’s.123 The difference in outlook between the hierarchy and Benedict is further underlined by the fact that the great majority of bishops simply ignored Benedict’s Note; an exhaustive search of their pastoral letters around that time does not reveal a single instance where the Note was mentioned. This astonishing silence is eloquent testimony to the sharp disharmonies that war could create, even in communities of faith, and even among those prelates supposedly united by indissoluble bonds of loyalty to Pope and universal Church.

Be that as it may, the first official government reply to the Peace Note came on 28 August 1917 from Woodrow Wilson,124 the President of the United States. It is not within the scope of this study to go into great detail in explaining Wilson’s reply or the various governments’ reactions to it. This diplomatic history has been covered in numerous other studies.125 Suffice it to say that in his reply, the President peremptorily rejected the

122 The Tablet, 22 Sep. 1917, pp. 381-382. The Universe, 21 Sep. 1917, p. 3. It must be noted that in the sermon Keating nevertheless added that “no English Catholic worthy of the name was free to forget that the utterance was the utterance of the Father of Christendom.”

123 The hierarchy is concentrated upon here because it was supposed to be the beacon of Rome in Britain. However, other prominent Catholics were just as much in opposition to the Peace Note as the hierarchy. W. A. S. Hewins, for example, wrote in his diary on 15 August: “I am quite sure our government is not quite ready for negotiations, in policy or preparations for carrying it out. It is dangerous to negotiate with Popes without being clear and straight in aims and motives.” Hewins Diaries, 15 Aug. 1917, Hewins Papers. Fr. Bernard Vaughan, in reference to the Note in a speech at Mansion House in late August, also said that the Pope “had, perhaps, not fully realised that the Allies did not feel they could come to peace with the enemy till they themselves could dictate the terms of it.” Quoted in the Catholic Times, 31 Aug. 1917, p. 4. See also M. Vaughan, Courtfield and the Vaughans, (London: Quiller Press, 1989), p. 105. In the Vatican, both Cardinal Gasquet and Count de Salis disapproved of the terms of the Peace Note. See the confidential memorandum from H. J. Mackinder to [Ian] Malcolm, 30 Oct. 1917, F.O. 800/213/383, P.R.O.

124 See Appendix C.

Pope’s Note, stating that negotiations with Germany, such as the Pope envisaged, were not possible because the current German government was utterly untrustworthy. Thus, the President sought to encourage revolution in Germany, stating that the American people were not out to destroy the German people, but only their militaristic and irresponsible leaders. The British Foreign Office welcomed Wilson’s wholly negative and unilateral reply as a way of extricating itself from the potential predicament in which it had found itself upon receiving the Pope’s Peace Note. For the Pope’s Note was, on the face of it, Wilsonian in tone. On August 30, the Foreign Office, with evident relief, informed its diplomatic representatives abroad that in view of Wilson’s response, the government did not consider it necessary to reply to the Peace Note. It had taken the simplest course by endorsing what Wilson had said. In any case, this seemed to be the safest way since it is highly doubtful whether the Allies would have ever been able to agree on a joint reply to the Pope. As will be seen, this was an unwise move on the part of the government because, although it solved one problem for the Foreign Office, it gave rise to another.

Wilson’s reply was received with mixed reaction by the British Catholic leadership. On the whole, the pro-war Catholic press was sympathetic, notwithstanding Wilson’s rejection of the Pope’s ideas. Most newspapers applauded Wilson’s firmness and resolve not to negotiate with the German militarist leadership. The Tablet announced its full agreement with Wilson’s letter. It empathised with Wilson’s perception of the

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C. J. Herber dissents from the accepted view that the British government welcomed Wilson’s response to the Peace Note. Herber argues that the British government objected to two points in particular: 1) Wilson’s declaration that it was impossible to negotiate with current German leaders, for it was feared that the Allies would soon have to negotiate with such leaders; and 2) “Wilson’s condemnation of
“difficulty of negotiating with a government which regards all treaties as scraps of paper which may be destroyed at will.” The *Glasgow Observer*, while not willing to endorse Wilson’s reply uncritically, nevertheless expressed gratitude at the “dignified amity and deference” of it. The *Catholic Times*, in comparison, accepted it unreservedly, proclaiming that “the elected representative of…the people of the freest and greatest self-governing nation on earth” was saying that he would have nothing to do with current German leaders. In contrast, *The Universe* appeared to be the only Catholic newspaper that was somewhat critical of Wilson’s rejection of the Peace Note. *The Universe* expressed surprise, noting that in rejecting Benedict’s programme for freedom of the seas, disarmament, and international arbitration, “the President had suddenly disavowed the whole programme that he himself ha[d] so long advocated.” Even so, the paper was not wholly critical. It interpreted his letter to mean that, if there was to be peace, its basis must have the full support of the German people, and *The Universe* denied that Wilson was in effect demanding the deposition of the Kaiser.

Other leading Catholics were not willing to judge Wilson so generously and tended to accept his reply with some reservation. Hugh Edmund Ford, for instance, distinguished between the conflicting duties of Benedict and Wilson. Whereas Wilson, through his letter, sought to uproot the ruthless German autocracy and substitute it with a democratic government, the Pope was the guardian of Christian truth and morals. He was concerned only that governments should be just, honest, and Christian, regardless of economic leagues and discriminatory practices.” The leaders of the Entente had planned to reserve the economic weapon so that it could be applied against Germany after the war. C. J. Herber, op. cit., p. 41.

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127 *The Tablet*, 1 Sep. 1917, p. 264.
128 *Glasgow Observer*, 1 Sep. 1917, p. 6.
129 *Catholic Times*, 7 Sep. 1917, p. 3.
whether they were democratic, autocratic, monarchical or republican.\textsuperscript{131} Therefore, Ford explained, Benedict could offer ways toward peace but could not condemn outright a form of government. Even so, Ford took some comfort from the fact that “the Papacy and the head of the greatest democracy in history have met together on the world’s stage, and in the theatre of nations their voices are heard by all.”\textsuperscript{132}

There were some among prominent Catholics who went even further and declared their complete disagreement with Wilson’s reply. As was to be expected, among the most vociferous opponents were members of the Jesuit order. C. C. Martindale, collaborating with Charles Dominic Plater, produced a sequel to the earlier pamphlet, \textit{The Pope’s Peace Note}. In \textit{Replies to the Pope’s Appeal}, Martindale denied that the Peace Note was based upon a return to the \textit{status quo ante bellum} and demonstrated that, in his reply, Wilson had misunderstood the Pontiff. Martindale argued that Benedict did not desire to revert back to the \textit{status quo} in every respect but was instead calling for its alteration.\textsuperscript{133} For example, Alsace-Lorraine might have been returned to France, and the seas were to have been truly and justly free. He considered the President’s reply harsh and believed that it “went further than necessary, [asking] for a German revolution.” Martindale thus attributed the Peace Note’s failure in large measure to President Wilson.\textsuperscript{134}

Wilson’s reply, however, was not the only reason – it was not even the chief reason – that Benedict’s peace effort of August 1917 failed. In analysing the reasons for the failure of Benedict’s peace initiative, one must consider a number of factors that combined to render the Peace Note unappealing to the belligerents. In Germany, the fall

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{131} H. E. Ford, op. cit., p. 12.
\item\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., pp. 13-14.
\item\textsuperscript{133} C. C. Martindale, \textit{The Replies to the Pope’s Appeal}, (London: Catholic Social Guild, 1918), pp. 5-6.
\item\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 6.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of Bethmann Hollweg, and the apparent triumph of the military caste in securing Michaelis’ appointment as Chancellor, meant that German policy-makers became unyielding in their war aims. In its reply to the Peace Note on September 19, the German government accepted compulsory international arbitration and disarmament in the future. Crucially, however, it made no mention of Belgium and Michaelis stated that his government was not going to make any immediate proclamation regarding Belgium.\textsuperscript{135}

As D. Gwynn pointed out, Germany’s position of occupying Poland, Romania, Belgium, and France, combined with the fact that the military was exerting great influence on the civilian government, prompted the German government to reject the peace terms.\textsuperscript{136}

However, it is important to remember that Michaelis himself was forced to resign on 31 October over his refusal to endorse democratic changes and his opposition to the Reichstag over the question of Belgium. The Papal Peace Note, therefore, had a very significant impact on German politics.

On the other side, the Entente could not accept them because, even had Germany agreed to evacuate all occupied territory, she was under no obligation to pay indemnities to France. As for Britain, even de Salis had told Gasparri that the British were fighting for Belgium as well as for sterling.\textsuperscript{137} Thus, Britain’s unstated aim was to defeat Germany economically as well as militarily and she could not accomplish these aims had she accepted the proposals of the Peace Note. Little did the warring governments realise that their rejection of the Pope’s peace – and all other possibilities of negotiation during 1917 – would have dire consequences. In particular, the failure of the Provisional Government in Russia to advance the project of a negotiated peace, or war aims revision, may have

contributed to the Bolshevik coup d'état in November, the immediate results of which were civil war and famine.

Some historians have attributed the failure of the peace initiative to the notorious article 15 in the secret Treaty of London,¹³８ signed by Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy in April 1915. The treaty became publicly known after the Russian revolution of early November 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power. Soon, the new regime started publishing the secret documents of the Russian Foreign Office, among which was the Treaty of London. These were printed in the Manchester Guardian, beginning in mid-December 1917. Article 15 of the treaty stated:

France, Great Britain, and Russia shall support such opposition as Italy may make to any proposal in the direction of introducing a representative of the Holy See in any peace negotiations or negotiations for the settlement of questions raised by the war.¹³⁹

There is evidence to indicate that the Vatican was aware of the existence of article 15 as early as 1915. In January 1916, Rennell Rodd wrote to the Foreign Office that the Vatican knew of the clause. This was confirmed by M. Gonse, the French ambassador to Italy, as well as Henry Howard.¹⁴⁰ When it became public knowledge in December 1917, article 15 disgusted many people, including non-Catholics. It underlined the apparent hypocrisy of the Entente, which lectured the Pope about appropriate means of ending the war while at the same time plotting to deny him any voice in the peace conference.

¹³⁷ J. F. Pollard, op. cit., p. 132.
¹³⁸ See, for example, J. K. Cartwright, “Contributions of the Papacy to International Peace”, Catholic Historical Review, 8(1), (Apr. 1928), p. 166.
¹³⁹ W. H. Peters, op. cit., p. 169. The article was inserted by Italy to prevent the Vatican from attending the future peace conference and raising the unresolved Roman Question.
¹⁴⁰ A. Rhodes, “The Pope of the First World War”, The Month, 22 (New series), (June 1989), p. 250; letter marked “Very confidential” from Howard to Grey, 10 Jan. 1916, F.O. 371/2684/365. Howard informed Grey that the Vatican was “furious” with England for concluding the secret pact, which the Vatican knew included a clause agreeing to exclude the Pope from the peace conference. It is interesting to note that Howard himself appears not to have believed rumours that such a clause existed. For he wrote that he believed the report had emanated from Germany and expressed sympathy with the Pope’s wish to be
As soon as the secret treaty became known, a flurry of diplomatic effort was undertaken by the Foreign Office which lasted well into 1918 in order to defuse – or at least limit – the potentially humiliating situation. A mistranslation of article 15 compounded the Foreign Office’s predicament. The *Manchester Guardian* printed the following translation from the Russian on 18 January 1918:

> France, Great Britain, and Russia pledge themselves to support Italy in not allowing the representatives of the Holy See to undertake any diplomatic steps having for their object the conclusion of peace or the settlement of questions connected with the present war.  

As well as excluding the Holy See from the future peace conference, this translation also implied that the Allies had rejected the Pope’s Peace Note intentionally because they had promised Italy not to support any peace initiative emanating from the Vatican. Even earlier, Vatican sources appear to have obtained a copy of the secret treaty, possibly from American sources, as the secret treaties were first published in American newspapers in mid-November 1917. On 2 December 1917, Rennell Rodd sent a telegram to the Foreign Office revealing that the existence of the article was causing great agitation at the Vatican and asking permission to show the real text to de Salis. The Foreign Office refused him permission to show the actual text to de Salis but allowed de Salis to assure Gasparri that the interpretation of the text was incorrect. The Foreign Office had even included in the peace conference on the cessation of hostilities. See also *The Tablet* for a report from its correspondent in Rome, 22 Jan. 1916, p. 117.

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142 G. Kennan, in *Russia Leaves the War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), says that the *New York Times* published “several of them [the secret treaties]” on November 25 1917 (p. 923), but it is not clear whether these included the secret Treaty of London. It is probable that it was among them if its terms were known in Rome in early December.
toyed with the idea of altering the actual text of the clause to make it less offensive to the Holy See, but this was soon abandoned.\(^{144}\)

The Vatican, however, was not content with the mere alteration of article 15, demanding instead its complete removal from the treaty. On 11 January 1918, Gasparri addressed a letter to the British government in which he asserted that the Holy See had received many protests from the Catholic episcopate throughout the world regarding the infamous clause. But the Vatican had refrained from publishing them because it did not want to prejudice the cause of the Allies; “also because it has hopes that, thanks to the fairness and rectitude of the British Government the offensive article may be eliminated.”\(^{145}\) In this way, Gasparri had indirectly warned the British government that if the offensive article was not revoked, strong Catholic pressure from around the globe, including Britain, would be brought against the government to rescind the clause.

To be sure, the revelation of article 15 hit British Catholics like a thunderbolt from the clear blue sky. They would never have expected their government to repay them for their unwavering loyalty in this way. As we have seen, in their endeavour not to contribute to the weakening of the war effort, they had declared their trust and belief in the government and in the British cause as early as November 1914; they had contributed immensely in men and material towards the war effort; they had taken pride in the fact that only a tiny number of pacifists were to be found in Catholic ranks, and in the instant disavowal of the handful of peace activists that were found; they had gone so far as to receive their Pontiff’s peace attempts with only the most tepid enthusiasm. And all along,

\(^{144}\) See minutes for 24-26 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371/3086/430 and a draft of the alternative clause, 28 Dec. 1917, F.O. 371/3086/431. The idea of an alternative clause was dropped because, as Lord Bertie, the British ambassador to France, explained, a new article could not be substituted for the old one because it would
the government had been sitting on a secret clause in its diplomatic arrangements excluding the Pope from any role in any future peace diplomacy or conference. As soon as Cardinal Bourne learnt of article 15 in December 1917, he made arrangements to visit the Foreign Office and meet Balfour. The Foreign Secretary, although sympathetic to the Vatican, attempted to defend the government. Offering an explanation that scarcely testified to his powers of creative thinking, Balfour told Bourne that the treaty contained “so many clauses of extreme importance” that article 15 had been accepted “almost without attention or discussion” by Grey. Furthermore, Balfour added that the clause was meant to exclude all neutral states. When the Cardinal pointed out that a precise mention of the Holy See was not justified under that category, Balfour explained that his colleagues had not realised Italy’s anti-clerical intentions at the signing of the treaty.

Although this meeting was privately convened because of Italy’s position vis-à-vis the Vatican, Balfour allowed Bourne to disclose the meeting to the Pope.

Cardinal Bourne, while giving the impression that he was satisfied with Balfour’s explanation at the time, nevertheless continued to enter mild protests against the clause. In one sermon he delivered in February 1918, he expressed strong objection to the government’s signing of the secret treaty. He said that the British government may not have meant any disrespect to the Pope, but it proved that it failed to grasp the importance of the Holy See in world events. He went so far as to warn that “No one has ever forgotten the Holy See but has had to pay the price.” Nor was he the only leading Catholic who was hurt at this seeming betrayal. The majority of other prominent British

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145 Gasparri to [Lloyd George], 11 Jan. 1918, F.O. 371/3438/16.
146 Quoted in E. Oldmeadow, op. cit., II, p. 114.
Catholics deplored the existence of the clause. Even the “patriotic” Cardinal Gasquet, who had hitherto always played the role of an uncritical defender of his country, became angry at the existence of the article. He complained to Bishop Amigo that he was “getting tired of defending England” after the way she had treated Benedict through the secret Treaty of London. On 14 February, John McKean, the member for South Monaghan, declared in the House of Commons that article 15 constituted “a blunder of the first magnitude” and that it was one of “the most extraordinary clauses ever inserted in a treaty.” He called on the government to formally withdraw the clause from the treaty if it ever hoped to win the war.

The Catholic press was no less vociferous in its denunciation of the contentious clause. Most Catholic newspapers agreed that the article achieved nothing but harm to Britain’s cause. The Catholic Times urged the government to reconsider its attitude to the pressing problem of article 15, which had created a painful impression in the Vatican and offended Catholics throughout the Empire. While The Universe could not agree on whether to call the article a colossal blunder or an outrage, the Catholic Herald agreed that it was a “gross insult”. The Herald alluded to Benedict’s work for prisoners, his attempts to gain release for the wounded, and the financial help he provided to the needy.

147 Ibid.
148 Quoted in the Catholic Herald, 16 Feb. 1918, p. 5.
150 House of Commons Debates, vol. 103, cols., 377, 386. The Catholic Times of 22 February 1918 approved of McKeans’s speech and urged other Catholic members of the House of Commons to support him. The Catholic Times commented: “it surely is the duty of Catholic representatives of the people to show that they disapprove of a policy plainly designed to restrict and reduce the influence of the Holy Father” (p. 3).
151 Ibid., col. 391.
152 Catholic Times, 15 Feb. 1918, p. 3.
And then article 15 was published. “Clause 15 of the Italian Treaty was not only a gross insult to the Holy See, but it circumscribed the Pope’s power.”

Not only did the British government have to contend with Catholic pressure being exerted from within the kingdom, but it also had to deal with strong international representations from Catholic hierarchies. For in its effort to eliminate the article, the Vatican had enlisted the aid of Catholic prelates throughout the world. Soon, the Foreign Office was inundated with protests from Catholic primates requesting the repudiation of article 15, including telegrams from Michael Kelly, the Archbishop of Sydney, and Cardinal Bégin of Quebec. The government replied by merely acknowledging the receipts of the protests. Two particular Catholic representations, however, could not be merely acknowledged but had to be handled delicately. The two protests were from men of international standing: Cardinals Gibbons and Mercier.

In February 1918, Gibbons had an interview with Lord Reading, the recently appointed British ambassador to the U.S., and told him that he favoured the elimination of article 15. Gibbons warned that if the clause was not removed, the American archbishops might protest against this explicit insult to the Holy See at their upcoming Easter meeting. This, he assured Reading, would result in embarrassment and division among the Allies. This was passed on to Balfour who replied in extraordinarily conciliatory terms. He wrote to Reading that article 15 could not be justified and was “in any case worded with singular infelicity, and which I should gladly see eliminated or profoundly modified.” However, at its inception, the pact was an Italian treaty and it

154 Catholic Herald, 23 Feb. 1918, p. 5.
could not be altered without Italian consent. He stated that the consequences would be very embarrassing were the American bishops to make a public protest.\footnote{J. T. Ellis, The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, 2 vols., (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952), II, p. 270.} This seems to have assuaged Gibbons since no protest was issued at Easter.

The other, even more crucial, representation made to the Foreign Office on behalf of the Holy See was that of the redoubtable Cardinal Mercier. On 2 June 1918, he wrote to Balfour urging the elimination of article 15 and threatening to engineer a public protest against the said article if it was not revoked.\footnote{Balfour to Lord Reading, 13 Mar. 1918, F.O. 800/202/342.} The government took this threat very seriously and the minutes of the Foreign Office indicate that there was a scramble to appease Mercier and prevent him from carrying out his threat. Finally, Balfour replied to Mercier in late June, denying that his government was responsible for the clause and pleading that it could not alter it unilaterally. The British government, Balfour stated, would be glad to alter the clause, but it had no power to revoke it, although it did hope to modify it eventually. Balfour cautioned Mercier that a public protest would hinder his campaign to modify the clause and serve only to aid the German government.\footnote{Cardinal Mercier to Balfour, 2 June 1918, F.O. 371/3438/138.} By early autumn 1918, it had become evident to the most sanguine of Catholic officials that article 15 would not be revoked.

The wider ramification of the existence of article 15, especially the connotation that the mistranslated version gave, was to create an exasperating difficulty for the British government in its relations with British Catholics. This was buttressed by the government’s quite deliberate misleading of the country regarding the Pope’s Peace Note. On 18 October 1917, C. P. Trevelyan, the Liberal MP and active member of the U.D.C.,
asked in the House of Commons whether the government had officially adopted Wilson’s reply to the Peace Note as its own. The reply was that it had not – when it clearly had.

By January 1918, when the translation of article 15 appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, the conspiracy by the Entente against the Holy See seemed to British Catholics to be complete. The British government had denied that it had adopted Wilson’s reply, yet by January it still had not sent its own reply to the Pope. On 18 January, the mistranslation of article 15, which inferred that the Entente had deliberately set out to foil any of Benedict’s attempts to achieve peace, appeared. The British Catholic leadership could not but be infuriated at the government’s apparent double-dealing and lack of respect for them and their Holy Father.

This, combined with the increasing war-weariness and some growing support for peace initiatives in the wake of Lord Lansdowne’s letter, initiated a new agitation on the part of leading British Catholics. They attempted to induce the government to reverse its policy of excluding the Vatican from any role in peace-making. The failure of the British government even to respond to the Pope still rankled. On 21 January, three days after the mistranslated article 15 appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, Cardinal Bourne wrote to Edmund Talbot: “I hear from [a] reliable English source in Rome that our cause

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159 Balfour to Mercier, 29 June 1918, F.O. 371/3438/145.
160 *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 98, col. 246.
161 Although some British Catholics opposed Lord Lansdowne’s letter of 29 November 1917, many others welcomed it. Hilaire Belloc, for example, always uncompromising whenever there was talk of peace, disapproved of Lansdowne’s peace move. He wrote to G. K. Chesterton on 12 December: “The great pacifist move is checked for the moment but not scotched.” Belloc to G. K. Chesterton, 12 Dec. 1917, Add. 73190/889a, G. K. Chesterton Papers, British Library, Manuscripts Room. Others, however, particularly the Catholic press, received it favourably. The *Catholic Herald*, for example, castigated the “silly jingoes of the country” for abusing Lansdowne’s letter and for “stupidly” thinking that it would be conceived as a sign of weakness. *Catholic Herald*, 8 Dec. 1917, p. 2. Similarly, the *Glasgow Observer* asserted that the “war-at-any-price” press attempted to present the letter as a sign of defeatism and weakness. But, according to the *Observer*, the aim of the letter was to send a message to Germany that the perception that Britain was out to destroy and dominate Germany was false. “The Lansdowne letter cannot fail to prove a help and strength to the Allies and a confusion and injury to Prussianism.” *Glasgow Observer*, 8 Dec. 1917, p. 6.
is injured by the long delay on the part of our Government in not sending a reply to the Papal Note of August 1 last.” He asked Talbot to bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities in the government.\footnote{Cardinal Bourne to Edmund Talbot, 31 Jan. 1918, F.O. 800/329/159.} Talbot passed Bourne’s letter to Ian Malcolm, Balfour’s secretary. In acknowledging Bourne’s letter, the Foreign Office now openly acknowledged that the government had hidden behind Wilson’s convenient and intransigent reply: the Foreign Office informed Talbot that the government thought a reply to the Peace Note was “not necessary” since it had associated itself with Wilson’s reply.\footnote{Eric Drummond to Talbot, 5 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800/329/160.} This answer displeased Talbot, who replied: “I expect [Bourne] will consider your explanation most unsatisfactory, as indeed I do myself.” He pointed out that the government’s acknowledgement to the Holy See in August 1917 implied that a reply in the name of Britain would be sent. Even so, it would have been “at least ordinarily civil” to have sent a communication stating that the government associated itself with Wilson’s reply.\footnote{Talbot to Drummond, 6 Feb. 1918, F.O. 800/329/161. Talbot sent Drummond’s reply to Bourne, reiterating to the Cardinal that he considered it to be “most unsatisfactory”. Talbot to Bourne, 6 Feb. 1918, Bo.5/50c, Bourne Papers.} By February, representations to, and agitation against, the government by prominent Catholics began in earnest. On 14 February, John McKean, the Irish Nationalist MP, pressed his attack against the government in the House of Commons. He insisted that it was unacceptable for the government of a great empire to adopt the reply of President Wilson. He called it an “extraordinary position” and asked sarcastically: “Might we not go further, and leave it to the President of the United States to answer all our correspondence?”\footnote{House of Commons Debates, vol. 103, cols. 377-378. The British government never formally endorsed Wilson’s reply. On 6 December 1917, however, when Robert Cecil was asked why the government had}
to the King, it was for the British government, and not President Wilson, to reply to the Note.\textsuperscript{166} At the end of McKean’s lengthy speech, Robert Cecil answered that the government found that it could add very little to Wilson’s note and that nothing would be gained by adding anything further to what Wilson had already said.\textsuperscript{167}

Even the Conservative \textit{Tablet}, which had rejected the Peace Note, found the government’s position intolerable. \textit{The Tablet} thought that Cecil’s reply to McKean was totally inadequate and criticised the government for telling the Pope that it would give his Note “the closest and most serious considerations,” and then not replying at all. \textit{The Tablet} contended that the Foreign Office could at least have sent the Holy See a note saying it could not accept the proposals, or it could have explained to Gasparri that the government had associated itself with Wilson’s reply. Instead, it had made no formal communication with the Vatican whatsoever.\textsuperscript{168} In addition, a special meeting of the Catholic Confederation, that is, a gathering of the various Catholic federations in Britain, took place in February 1918. The Confederation directed its address to the government and, among its various complaints, it regretted that the government had still not sent an official reply to the Pope regarding his Peace Note. Although the government acknowledged the Note and assured Benedict that it was studying his peace terms, “the result of these studies has never been communicated to the Vatican.” Furthermore, it denounced article 15 and declared that Catholics could not accept the lame explanation

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\item\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., col. 378.
\item\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., col. 393.
\item\textsuperscript{168} \textit{The Tablet}, 23 Feb. 1918, p. 236.
\end{itemize}
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that the article was meant for the exclusion of all neutrals from the peace conference.\textsuperscript{169} The Confederation advised the alteration of the clause into a formula which would not be so insulting to Benedict.\textsuperscript{170}

The assault on the government by the united Catholic body in Britain continued until June. In March, Sydney Smith expressed regret that the government did not reply to the Peace Note, more so since it appeared that it had been committed to article 15. He affirmed that this had “caused considerable dissatisfaction among Catholics everywhere.”\textsuperscript{171} In his opinion, the government not only should have sent a note to the Pope indicating that it had adopted Wilson’s reply, but also should have accepted the Peace Note’s proposals in the first place.\textsuperscript{172}

In June, Lord Braye, a Catholic peer, kept the controversy alive by launching a forceful castigation of the government’s policy against the Holy See in the House of Lords. Braye had already been dismayed by the government’s failure to reply to the Pope’s Peace Note and the discovery of article 15. He had called on each Catholic throughout the Empire to protest against the discourtesy that had been shown to the Pastor of Catholicism.\textsuperscript{173} On 13 June, Braye accused the government of ridiculing the Pope by accrediting an envoy to the Vatican, yet taking no notice of the letters that Benedict directed to the envoy. The reason for this, Braye believed, was because the government had all along been a signatory of the secret Treaty of London, which

\textsuperscript{169} On 20 December 1917, Robert Cecil had explained in parliament that the object of article 15 was that the terms of peace should be settled by the belligerents only. \textit{House of Commons Debates}, vol. 100, col. 2108. However, it must be asked that if all neutrals were to be kept out of the peace conference, then why was not the clause composed in such a way as to apply to all neutrals and why was the Vatican singled out?\textsuperscript{170} Catholic Federation Address, [Feb. 1918], Bo.5/90d, Bourne Papers. See also the Catholic Federationist, March 1918, p. 2.\textsuperscript{171} S. F. S[mith], “Critical and Historical Notes: The Pope’s Peace Note Again”, \textit{The Month}, 31, (Mar. 1918), p. 262.\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 264.
contained article 15. Braye condemned the government’s actions, arguing that, while the
government undertook complex negotiations to secure various annexations with other
governments, “special care was taken to prevent the Pope from bringing about peace by
negotiation before the re-arrangement of the map was secured.”

His condemnation
extended to the British government’s failure to reply to the Pope’s Peace Note and its
advertising of its contempt for the Holy See in its continuing silence. “There is no
contempt so piercing as the contempt expressed by silence.”

In reply to Lord Braye, Lord Stanmore insisted that the Peace Note had been
answered by the adoption of Wilson’s reply by the government. As for article 15,
Stanmore’s defence was that only belligerents were to attend the peace conference, and
that no neutral could be admitted unless all belligerents consented.

In his memoirs, Braye intimated that he thought the reply by Stanmore was “the most shuffling – well, the
most unsatisfactory answer that ever emanated from official lips.” As late as
November 1918, the Vatican communicated a protest to Lord Braye that it still had not
received a reply to the Papal Peace Note from the British government. On 20 November,
nine days after the war formally concluded, Gasparri sent a letter to Braye informing him
that the British minister to the Vatican had acknowledged the Peace Note in August 1917.

“And since then to this day the Holy See has received no other communication on this
subject. I leave it to your enlightened judgement…whether this is sufficient to be
considered as a reply to the Pontifical Note.” By then, of course, any protest from the
Holy See was unlikely to produce any results. Catholics throughout the Empire, and

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175 Ibid., col. 211.
176 Ibid., cols. 212-213.
British Catholics especially, had put the British government under immense pressure and produced no positive results. To British Catholics, this would have seemed to be a bitter blow from their government, who had received their full loyalty and co-operation.

The watcher in the chair of Peter toiled unceasingly throughout the war to bring about peace. While the Catholic hierarchies in each belligerent country asserted the justice of the cause of their respective nations, the Pope appeared to be among the very few leaders in the world, secular or religious, who constantly raised his voice in favour of a negotiated peace. He exhorted a bleeding Europe to rise above the hatred engulfing the continent and support all efforts for a conciliatory peace. But his pleas for peace and reason were drowned out by the roar of the conflagration as ambitious leaders pursued their war aims. Even Catholics did not grant the Pope their support and British Catholics displayed exquisite discomfort each time Benedict appealed for peace lest a “premature peace” be concluded. Of importance also was the desire of British Catholics to manifest their continuing loyalty to their country, even in the face of their government’s flat rejection of the Pope’s appeals for peace. Here, they would not even tolerate other Catholics amongst them who heeded Benedict’s pleas and supported peace lest they be seen as condoning “pacifism”. In this atmosphere, most British Catholics were bound to reject the Pope’s Peace Note because they felt that the Pope could not really understand the ideals for which the Entente was fighting. However, even though British Catholics had given their full support to the government and rejected Benedict’s peace initiatives, in the end they found that they had been duped. The British government had failed to

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177 Lord Braye, op. cit., p. 316.
reply to the Pope’s Peace Note and the revelation of article 15 had exposed to British Catholics the fact that their government had mutely accepted an anti-Catholic policy. The mobilisation of their resources failed to reverse that policy.
Chapter 7

“We are alienating the splendid Irish race”: British Catholics and the Irish Question

The Irish have not forgotten the action of the British Government in 1798. You are going to have disaster in Ireland, and we shall lose the war unless the Irish question is settled once for all.

Bishop Amigo to Lloyd George, 28 May 1918.¹

Ireland was something of a paradox during the Great War. She was the “one bright spot”, from the British point of view, at the time of the July-August crisis in August 1914, because the threat of civil war in Ireland was greatly diminished when the Great War commenced. Furthermore, just when Britain accepted the inevitability of, and offered to grant her, Home Rule at the height of the conscription controversy in 1918, the Irish rejected the offer. When war began, there was a general feeling of hopefulness which was evident in the people’s apparent willingness to supply recruits to the British army and in Irish Nationalist politicians’ offering support for Britain’s “defence of small nations”. Unfortunately, the British government, by the pursuit of an egregious policy in Ireland, gradually dispersed these generous feelings. Moreover, unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, which accepted conscription as a necessity, Ireland refused to have conscription imposed on her, even in 1918, when Britain faced its greatest peril. Like other Britons at this time, leading British Catholics were divided in their opinion over the Irish Question. However, unlike other Britons, they shared the same faith with the majority of Irish and this added a difficulty which other Britons did not experience. Irish

Catholic recalcitrance and obstinacy threatened to destroy the image that was being carefully cultivated by British Catholics as a highly “patriotic” body. This created division between those Catholics in Britain who considered the Irish as troublesome rebels who muddied the British Catholics’ reputation and those who saw the Irish as an oppressed race who deserved British Catholic sympathy. The significance of the Irish Question to Catholics in Britain was that they could not escape public controversies arising from their common faith with their Irish co-religionists. In certain instances, such as the 1918 conscription controversy, this caused bitter division and discord among British Catholics as well as between Catholics and the rest of British society.

Ireland had long been a cause provoking political difficulty and moral heart-searching in British history. The history of how civil war in the United Kingdom was averted only by the spark of a greater and more horrible conflagration that engulfed the whole of Europe has been told in numerous studies. The outbreak of the First World War not only saved Britain from a potential civil war, but also rallied Ireland to support Britain’s cause in the fight for “little Belgium”. There was a hope, too, that the European War would place the Irish-English political situation into perspective and that once the war was over, things would somehow fall into place.

John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, played a vital role in marshalling Ireland to fight on Britain’s side at the initial stages of the war. As early as 3

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August 1914, when Edward Grey referred to Ireland as the “one bright spot in the whole of this terrible situation” in the House of Commons, Redmond declared Ireland’s support for Britain. Without consulting any of his Irish colleagues, Redmond offered the British assurance “that they may to-morrow withdraw every one of their troops from Ireland…. [W]e will ourselves defend the coast of our country.” In pledging Nationalist Ireland to the cause of Britain, Redmond took a difficult, but “honourable”, risk. Writing soon after Redmond’s death in March 1918, Shane Leslie commended the Irish Nationalist leader for the stance he took on 3 August 1914, contending that Redmond took the only honourable path that was open to him.

While some in Ireland deplored Redmond’s speech, the majority of Irishmen applauded his prudence in his prompt reply. Horace Plunkett, who had been president of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society and a convinced Home Ruler, for example, wrote to Redmond that his speech would probably give the Irish Volunteers the lead they needed. Plunkett added: “May Sir Edward Grey’s ‘one bright spot’ shine more brilliantly than the most enthusiastic of us could have ever hoped.”

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3 House of Commons Debates, vol. 65, col. 1824. Stephen Gwynn, the Nationalist MP for Galway City, argued that in labeling Ireland “the one bright spot”, Grey was in reality referring to Ulster. Gwynn explained that hitherto, Grey had only received definite promises regarding Ireland and the war from Edward Carson. Carson had assured Grey that the government could rely on Ulster’s “imperial patriotism”. “Ulster, so far as pledges went, was the bright spot.” This part of Grey’s speech, as far as Gwynn was concerned, was misunderstood. S. Gwynn, John Redmond’s Last Years, (London: Edward Arnold, 1919), p. 130.


7 Horace Plunkett to John Redmond, 4 Aug. 1914, Ms. 15221, John Redmond Papers, National Library of Ireland, Manuscripts Room (hereafter cited as NLI).
member of the Irish Parliamentary Party and a distinguished journalist, also supported Redmond’s speech, pointing out that the Irish were strongly behind the war effort. Furthermore, O’Connor emphasised the tremendous effect the speech had had on the Irish-Americans, who formed a significant pressure group in America. O’Connor calculated from trusted sources he had received that “99 per cent of the decent and reasonable Irish in America were in accord with Redmond’s speech.”

In Britain, Redmond’s speech was received with profound enthusiasm and, as Plunkett pointed out, it changed the bulk of British opinion on the Irish Question. British Catholic opinion seemed to endorse Redmond’s stance unanimously. Even Catholic Conservatives appeared to have been impressed by Redmond’s promise that Ireland would lend her support to the British cause. The British Catholic Conservative as well as Liberal press welcomed the speech. The Tablet, the leading Catholic Conservative newspaper, commented that “in five minutes Redmond did more for Home Rule than he could have done by five years of agitation.” The Tablet declared that Redmond’s stance had gone far to mollify relations between England and Ireland and that the old saying that England’s difficulty was Ireland’s opportunity no longer applied. If The Tablet gave the speech its support, then Redmond must have converted many Britons who had opposed

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9 Plunkett to Redmond, 12 Aug. 1914, Ms. 15221, Redmond Papers, NLI.
10 Hewins, for example, wrote in his diary the day after the speech: “Redmond made a great impression.” Hewins Diaries, 4 Aug. 1914, Hewins Papers.
11 The Tablet, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 205.
12 Ibid.
Home Rule for the whole of Ireland, for *The Tablet* itself was at times unsympathetic to Home Rule and the Irish struggle.¹³

The Catholic Liberal press asserted that Redmond’s speech had had a unifying effect on all political parties. The *Catholic Herald*, which was a forceful advocate of Home Rule, embraced the “remarkable” speech, suggesting that it had metaphorically swept Britons of various political affiliations off their feet. In the *Herald*’s opinion, the fact that Redmond could make such a declaration vindicated the policy of Home Rule from a British point of view. Even while praising the speech, the *Herald* attacked the Unionists who appeared unenthusiastic about Redmond’s stance. The Catholic weekly, which never missed an opportunity to berate the Unionists, ridiculed Unionist leaders who felt “discomfiture at the fact that Mr. Redmond was winning the good opinions of his British colleagues.”¹⁴ The *Glasgow Observer*, the organ of the Irish Catholics in Scotland, commended Redmond on his speech and advised every Irish Nationalist to endorse it. The *Observer* explained that Redmond “spoke wisely, prudently, and, above all, sincerely and unequivocally” in declaring Ireland’s support for Great Britain.¹⁵ It stated that the speech had unified the masses as well as political parties. Even the *Times*, which was normally reserved about Redmond’s speeches, had praised the “graceful” language he used.¹⁶ Thus, at the outset of the war, British Catholics appeared to be united on the Irish issue. Catholic Conservatives, who generally supported Unionism, and

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¹³ This was in line with John George Snead-Cox, its editor’s, policy. When asked why this was so, Snead-Cox replied that “he was not ‘against Ireland’, but against applying political remedies to economic and social evils, and that an English Catholic had the same right to uphold the interests of England as Irishmen had to uphold what they considered the interests of Ireland.” Quoted in M. Walsh, op. cit., p. 23.


¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.
Catholic Liberals, who espoused Home Rule, agreed that through Redmond, Ireland was contributing towards preserving the Empire in Britain’s hour of need.

This unity between Catholics, as well as between non-Catholics, on the Irish Question was not to last very long. Catholic Liberals and Conservatives in Britain were soon displaying antagonism over Irish issues. An example of the persistence of the Catholic Conservative hostility to Irish Catholics who were born in Britain and who were, for the most part, Nationalists or Liberals, can be illustrated in Cardinal Mercier’s visit to London on his way from the conclave that elected Benedict XV in September 1914. Henry FitzAlan Howard, the Duke of Norfolk, arranged a deputation from the C.U.G.B. to meet the Cardinal on his very brief visit. Mercier was invited to the Archbishop’s House in Westminster, but he was met by T. P. O’Connor at Victoria Station and invited to attend a massive Irish demonstration the next day. Writing to Wilfrid Ward soon after, on 15 September 1914, Howard complained that Mercier attended the demonstration, himself shouting “God save Ireland”, and did not seem to “appreciate the delicacy of the situation.” The Duke of Norfolk told Ward that he was “very much annoyed” at the actions of the Irish. Presumably, “the delicacy of the situation” referred to final negotiations surrounding the placing of the Home Rule Bill on the statute book; in fact, less than one week later, on 18 September, the Royal Assent to the bill was announced. Understandably, there would have been immense anxiety on the part British Catholic Conservatives lest Mercier’s actions might have been construed as a public stunt to promote the cause of Home Rule.

The deeply divisive issue of Home Rule, which had almost led to civil war before the Great War, had re-emerged soon after the outbreak of war and again exasperated the
British government. The Nationalists under Redmond, on the one hand, demanded that a settlement for Ireland could only be concluded by granting the whole of Ireland, including Ulster, Home Rule immediately. The Ulster Unionists under Edward Carson, on the other hand, insisted that the Home Rule Bill must be shelved and all domestic controversy suspended during the crisis of war. This impasse was only resolved when Grey proposed that the Home Rule Bill be passed and placed on the statute book for the duration of the war. As noted above, on 18 September 1914, the Home Rule Bill received the Royal Assent and was placed on the statute book, but in company with a Suspensory Act which would prevent its coming into effect until the conclusion of the war.\textsuperscript{18}

Through some of the organs of the British Catholic Liberal press, one can clearly see that Catholic Liberals welcomed what they considered to be a positive development. The \textit{Catholic Herald}, the extreme pro-Nationalist newspaper, for one, had been attacking the Unionists all through August for opposing the Home Rule Bill. On 15 August, the \textit{Herald} condemned Bonar Law, leader of the British Unionists, and Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionists, for protesting against the bill. It called their actions “cowardly” and referred to them as “two firebrands”.\textsuperscript{19} In another issue, the \textit{Herald} denounced the Unionists in the strongest terms, accusing them of being only “conditionally loyal” to Britain and of being sympathetic to Germany, hailing the Kaiser as their “continental deliverer”\textsuperscript{20} – which probably referred to the fact that his war had brought Liberal reforms to an end.

\textsuperscript{17} Duke of Norfolk to Wilfrid Ward, 15 Sep. 1914, Ms. 38347, VII, 222(a), Ward Papers.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Catholic Herald}, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 5 Sep. 1914, p. 2.
After it became law, the Catholic Herald applauded the passing of the Home Rule Bill, capturing the moment in an editorial entitled “Home Rule – at last!” Although the bill had not come into operation, the Herald was content that it had been placed on the statute book, ensuring its future implementation. The Catholic organ announced boldly that “Imperial policy with regard to Ireland shall never again be moulded by a handful of miserable bigots in Ulster.”

The Herald’s faith in Home Rule was reaffirmed on 15 May 1915, just before the Liberal government was dissolved, stating that the fact that it was on the statute book made all the difference to the Irish. It led them, for example, to fight all the fiercer for the Empire. The more moderate Catholic Times was less trenchant in its campaign for Home Rule. As early as 7 August it had urged Asquith and his government to stand firm on Home Rule and place it on the statute book immediately. Once this was achieved, the Catholic Times seemed satisfied, although it lamented that, “owing to the attitude of the Unionists the gift has been given in a spirit which appears to be somewhat grudging.”

After securing Home Rule for Ireland, John Redmond called on the Irish Volunteers, which had been formed in 1913 in response to the creation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, to enlist in the British army. On 24 September 1914, Redmond made a speech at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, urging members of the Irish Volunteers to extend their support for Britain to the trenches. This precipitated a split in the Irish Volunteers. Although Redmond received the loyal support of the majority of the Volunteers, a hard-core minority which was dedicated to the cause of Ireland’s freedom

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21 Ibid., 26 Sep. 1914, p. 4.
22 Ibid., 15 May 1915, p. 4.
24 Ibid., 18 Sep. 1914, p. 3.
from British rule remained loyal to the original Provisional Committee. While this minority retained the original name of Irish Volunteers, the Redmondites became known as the National Volunteers.\(^25\) Despite the division in Ireland over whether Irish men should spill their blood for England, Redmond continued with his recruiting drive throughout 1914 and 1915.\(^26\) Speaking at Limerick in December 1914, Redmond requested that Nationalist Ireland defend Britain, stressing that Ireland was fighting for small nations in Europe. Ireland, he emphasised, had to fight for little Catholic Belgium in particular.\(^27\) This message of fighting for the rights of small nations was a crucial theme, since Irish Nationalists could identify with Belgium’s adversity and thus encourage Catholic recruiting in Ireland.

Although in Ireland there was considerable opposition to Redmond’s call on his countrymen to join the British armed forces, in Britain he gained immense support among Catholics. Irish-British Catholics took their stand for the war with fervour. They perceived the assertion that Britain’s fight was a struggle to uphold democracy and the rights of small nations as including Ireland’s rights also. In Scotland’s mining villages, where there were large pockets of Irish inhabitants, there was hardly a home that did not

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\(^27\) Cited in *The Tablet*, 26 Dec. 1914, p. 868. To reinforce this, Redmond also stressed the faith of the Irish Catholic soldier: “The Irish soldier, with his limpid faith and his unaffected piety, his rosary recited on the hillside, his Mass in the ruined barn under shell-fire, his ‘act of contrition’ in the trench before facing the hail of the assault, his attitude to women, has been mostly a singular impression.” Quoted in M. Dungan, op. cit., p. 17.
have a man at the front. The Irish-Scottish enthusiastically threw their wholehearted support behind the war effort at this time, where voluntary enlistment was as high among them as the native Scots. Charles Diamond, who was editor of the Glasgow Observer and who wielded immense influence in the Irish community in Scotland, encouraged their participation. In England, the Catholic Herald pointed out time and time again that Ulster was doing its best to discourage Nationalist recruiting and maintain “religious animosity”. Despite this, the Herald insisted proudly, Nationalist recruits comprised half the total enlistment in Belfast, even though the Nationalists made up only one quarter of the total population.

Native British Catholics were gratified with Ireland’s constitutional representatives’ decision to lend their full support to Britain. At this time, British Catholics felt a sense of unity and purpose with their Catholic brethren across the Channel that they had not felt for a long time. In October 1914, the Conservative Tablet expressed satisfaction with Redmond’s decision to extend Irish military support to the British army. It affirmed that the Nationalists’ position “should help silence the insinuations which are being made that Ireland is unprepared to do anything beyond home defence.” One year later, The Tablet praised Ireland’s continued loyalty and

28 H. Harris, The Irish Regiments in the First World War, (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1968), p. 25. Although “patriotism” played a major role in the high Irish-Scottish enlistment in the armed forces, the advantages of financial gains among the Irish poor must also be taken into account.
30 See, for example, the Catholic Herald, 21 Nov. 1914, p. 5 and 27 Feb. 1915, p. 2.
31 The Tablet, 24 Oct. 1914, p. 559.
contribution to the war effort, assuring its readers that “The service which Ireland had rendered in this supreme hour of trial can never be forgotten in Great Britain.”

This was not confined to the Catholic press but extended to the highest Catholic leadership. Cardinal Bourne, for example, constantly accentuated the critical importance of the union of the British and the Irish in the conflict to successfully prosecute the war, and perhaps also to attain Ireland’s freedom after the war. To reinforce this belief, and arguably to buttress Irish Catholic support for Britain, he celebrated Mass for Irish Catholic soldiers and visited Irish troops in England occasionally. In 1915, Bourne underlined the necessity of the union of the English and Irish races for the “cause of God” and explained that those who “create, or foster, or perpetuate misunderstanding, are the enemies of Faith and Fatherland.” In November of that year, he visited the 16th Irish Division at Blackdown. In his address to the troops, he told them that they were giving themselves as free men for the freedom of Ireland. It was their conscience, he noted, which had enabled them to heed Redmond’s call and “to take up arms in defence of your country, of the Empire, and of your King.” At the same time, Bourne believed that the freedom of Ireland could not be granted before the conclusion of the war. In an interview to the Corriere d’Italia on his first trip to Italy during the war in December 1915, he was asked about Ireland and the future of Home Rule. The Cardinal replied that Britain and Ireland were like two quarrelling sisters which the war had united. As for the future of Home Rule, he told the Corriere: “You may take it as that Home Rule is an accomplished fact. It is only a question of its application after the war.” He stressed that for the

34 Quoted in The Tablet, 20 Nov. 1915, p. 670. See also The Times, 14 Nov. 1915, p. 5.
moment, Britain and Ireland needed to concentrate on achieving victory before anything else. Thus, while Bourne used his prominence and his common faith with the Irish to encourage them to fight for Britain and the “freedom of Ireland”, he, like many other Britons, does not appear to have been willing to concede Ireland her freedom as long as the war continued.

Although the Irish Party had succeeded in obtaining Home Rule for Ireland – even if it was not yet operational – support for the Party was gradually eroding among their Catholic adherents in Ireland and Britain by 1915. One of the key issues that undermined the authority of the Irish Party was the formation of the Coalition in May 1915. Before forming the Coalition, Asquith informed Redmond that the government was to be reconstructed and implored him to join the new administration. Redmond regretted that the principles and history of his party made it impossible for him to join, and added that in view of this, “I think most strongly Carson should not be included. From [an] Irish point of view [it] would do infinite harm and make our [the Irish Party’s] efforts to help far more difficult.” When the new Cabinet was composed, however, it included such leading Unionists as Bonar Law, and more importantly, Carson, who was given the post of Attorney General, in spite of his spectacular defiance of the government at the time of the Curragh crisis in March 1914. For the Irish Nationalists, Carson’s appointment was by far the most detested because they had not forgotten that in the Home Rule crisis before the war, he had aggressively challenged the government and the

36 Mathew Nathan to Redmond, 18 May 1915, Ms. 15165(5), Redmond Papers, NLI.
implementation of Home Rule. These Unionist appointments were seemingly a dismissal of Irish Nationalist aspirations.

The formation of the Coalition and the inclusion of Carson, when Redmond had clearly refused to join, angered Nationalist Ireland and caused indifference to replace the early enthusiastic support not only for Britain, but also for the Nationalist Party. This is illustrated by the attitude of Bishop Michael Fogarty of Killaloe, who was a staunch supporter of the Nationalist Party. He addressed a letter to Redmond after the Coalition was formed telling him that Carson’s inclusion in the ministry was a “horrible scandal”. He denounced the British government, noting that this was Ireland’s reward for her loyalty in Britain’s perilous hour. He was also infuriated with the Nationalist Party, stressing that “The Party…have taken the whole thing lying down,” and that the greater disappointment was its declaration that it would support the Coalition. Finally, he declared that “Home Rule is dead and buried and Ireland is without a national Party or national Press.”

The concern over the status of the Home Rule Act and Redmond’s exclusion from the Coalition was not confined to Nationalist Ireland. In Britain, those Catholics who advocated Home Rule recognised the imbalance of the Nationalist and Unionist influence within the government. Consequently, they both condemned the inclusion of Carson in the Coalition and questioned Redmond’s wisdom in refusing to participate in the new ministry. Again, the Catholic press offers a comprehensive insight into the reaction of British Catholics to the formation of the new Cabinet in relation to the Irish Question. The Catholic Times, for instance, anxiously pondered what would happen to Home Rule

38 Bishop Fogarty to Redmond, 3 June 1915, Ms. 15188(5), Redmond Papers, NLI. For the general dissatisfaction among the Nationalist Irish, see T. Hennessey, op. cit., pp. 107-108.
under the new government. The large presence of Unionists within the government meant that Home Rule could be strangled before it ever had a chance to breathe. Furthermore, the *Catholic Times* deplored Redmond’s refusal to join the government, regretting that he had remained aloof. At the same time, it expressed disappointment with Asquith for including such disreputable opponents of Home Rule as Carson in the ministry. The *Catholic Times* contended that his inclusion would make the whole government suspect and that Nationalists would regard it with contempt.

The more militant *Catholic Herald* condemned the Cabinet reshuffle, particularly the incorporation into the government of leading British Unionists and “others” who were “bitter and notorious enemies of Ireland.” Although Carson was not directly named, this was clearly a reference to him. Like the *Catholic Times*, the *Catholic Herald* was particularly concerned about the future of Ireland, which it considered to have been “thrown into the melting-pot.” By 10 July, the *Herald* declared sombrely that Home Rule was in danger. It intimated that the Carsonites’ hand was greatly strengthened and that the “possible inclusion of the whole of Ulster in the Bill is, we greatly fear, now absolutely destroyed.”

This concern for the crucial, and possibly endangered, position of complete Home Rule was also expressed by the leading Scottish Catholic organ, a staunch supporter of the Irish Party, the *Glasgow Observer*. The *Observer* exhibited amazement that Carson had been included in the Cabinet and asked whether in light of this, Irish autonomy was likely to continue to draw the support of such Liberals as Asquith and Lloyd George in

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39 *Catholic Times*, 28 May 1915, p. 3.
40 Ibid., 11 June 1915, p. 3.
41 *Catholic Herald*, 29 May 1915, p. 2.
42 Ibid., 10 July 1915, p. 2.
the government. The Observer’s own reply was: “It is not in human nature to expect it.” Moreover, the newspaper made it absolutely plain that if Home Rule was not implemented after the war – and the Observer did not expect that it would be – it would place a grave responsibility on the Nationalist Party. With such a bleak outlook, the Catholic weekly announced that the cause of Home Rule had received the greatest “set-back since the days of the Parnell split.”\(^{43}\) This open criticism of the Irish Nationalists was an indication that Redmond’s support was beginning to disintegrate even among some of his strongest Catholic adherents in Britain.

In contrast to the rest of the Catholic press, The Tablet seemed content with the new Cabinet and its constituted members. It indicated that “The composition of the new Ministry is perhaps as good as could be expected,” thus insinuating that it approved of the presence of leading anti-Home Rule Unionists in the government. The Tablet went on to remark quite plainly that it had “no special comment” on the allocation of Unionist offices in the new government and did not, therefore, perceive any danger to Home Rule. Like the other Catholic organs, however, it did stress that “the Irish leader…would only have accentuated the new situation if he had seen his way to taking office in a Coalition Administration.”\(^ {44}\)

It was obvious that Redmond’s refusal to enter the new ministry while Carson embraced the opportunity was having wider ramifications, even among the Irish-Americans. If the Irish in America combined their anti-British efforts with the German-Americans’ agitation, not only might the U.S. remain neutral, but it would also endanger American munitions exports to the Entente. Certainly, Redmond’s exclusion from the

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\(^{43}\) Glasgow Observer, 29 May 1915, p. 6.  
\(^ {44}\) The Tablet, 29 May 1915, p. 688.
government did have a negative effect on Irish-Americans. In early June 1915, for example, Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador in Washington, sent a telegram to the Foreign Office saying that two of the three American cardinals were strongly with the Allies. However, he asserted: “I know that Cardinal Gibbons, whose prestige is great and who is one of our best friends, has difficulties owing to Redmond’s not joining the Government when Carson did.” In addition, Shane Leslie, who was in America at this time, was also able to notify Redmond that the Nationalist leader still had some support among Irish-Americans. However, Leslie added poignantly: “I must say that Carson’s seat in the Cabinet did more than the postponement of Home Rule to alienate the Irish opinion from the Allies.” Support for Redmond among Irish-Americans, including the Irish World and the U.I.L., had already began to crumble following his agreement to the suspension of Home Rule and his full backing of the British government in the war in September 1914. This, coupled with Redmond’s abstaining from the Coalition, further disillusioned his Irish-American supporters and provoked impatience with the Irish Party’s policy.

But the event that changed by far the Irish political landscape and shook support for the Irish Nationalists from its very roots was the Irish Easter Uprising, which was launched on 24 April 1916 in Dublin. After that Irish epoch-making milestone, the

45 Telegram from Sir C. Spring-Rice, 8 June 1915, D/19/19, Lloyd George Papers.
46 Shane Leslie to Redmond, 11 Nov. 1915, Ms. 22834, Leslie Papers, NLI.
Nationalists began gradually to lose power in the greater part of Ireland while Sinn Fein’s prominence arose from Dublin’s ashes. The significance of this for British Catholics was immense. The initial unifying effect of Redmond’s speech at the outbreak of war evaporated. While the granting but instant suspension of Home Rule in September 1914 had shattered that unity, the Easter Uprising eliminated it completely.

News of the uprising enraged Nationalist Ireland and led the Irish Party to condemn the rebels, who were believed to have been aided and inspired by the Germans. Speaking in the House of Commons on 27 April 1916, John Redmond joined Edward Carson in pledging his united support for the government. Redmond distanced his Party from the rebels, saying that it regarded the uprising with a “feeling of detestation and horror.” He expressed the hope “that no set of newspapers or public men in this country [Britain] will attempt to use what has happened in Ireland as a political weapon against any party that may exist.”

Although some prominent Irishmen realised that Irish history had always turned vanquished rebels into posthumous heroes and refused to condemn the rebellion, most Irishmen shared the feeling of “detestation and horror”. Irish soldiers such as Tom Kettle, the Irish scholar, poet, and lawyer, considered it a matter of honour for Ireland to fight alongside Britain for the cause of smaller nations. When Kettle heard of the uprising, therefore, he was astounded. He condemned the foolish venture of the rebels as insane madness.

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49 House of Commons Debates, vol. 81, col. 2512.
In Britain, the outbreak of the rebellion was received with a shock that created intense animosity towards the rebels. This feeling of embitterment was augmented all the more by the fact that the rebellion had been launched during a war in which Britain was engaged in a grinding struggle and making little headway against a highly organised and sophisticated enemy. Furthermore, it had been argued for a long time by Home Rulers that once Ireland was granted Home Rule, her people would commit their loyalty to Britain. Home Rule was on the statute book and yet, it was asserted, some militant Irish were still rebelling against Britain. Yet, a clear distinction was drawn between the insurgents and the rest of Ireland. While there was universal denunciation of the instigators of the rebellion, with the exception of the right-wing press there was no condemnation of Nationalist Ireland as a whole. Most newspapers regarded the uprising as severe a blow for Ireland as it was for Britain.

Irish-British Catholics denounced the uprising and viewed it as a senseless and irrational move that jeopardised the implementation of Home Rule at the conclusion of war. The Liverpool Nationalists denounced very strongly “the insane acts” of Sinn Fein. At the same time, in Birmingham, the representatives of the U.I.L. in England passed a resolution condemning the rebellion. This was supported by another resolution by the Cardiff branch of the U.I.L., deploring the “unfortunate condition of affairs in Dublin.” The Catholic Herald did not treat the situation in Dublin with quite the same seriousness that the U.I.L. did. In its issue of 29 April, the Herald refused to refer to the troubles in Dublin as an uprising or a rebellion. To do so, it contended, would be to give the situation

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52 D. G. Boyce, “British Opinion, Ireland, and the War, 1916-1918”, Historical Journal, 17(3), (1974), pp. 578-579. Not everyone in Britain was completely against the rebels. C. F. G. Masterman, for example,
more significance than it deserved. In its perennial opposition to the Unionists, the
_Herald_ sought to blame Carson and Ulster for contributing to the disturbances. It claimed
that the Orangemen gave Sinn Fein moral credibility through the former’s shameless gun
running. “The apparent immunity enjoyed by the Orangemen gave the Sinn Feiners their
chance.” It was not until May 6 that the _Herald_ acknowledged that the disturbances
were, in fact, a “revolt”. At this stage, the paper condemned the rebels as “crazy fanatics”
and it saddled their leaders with “a terrible responsibility”.

Further north, the _Glasgow Observer_ was somewhat more severe with the rebels.
The rebellion was judged to be a “criminal action” by “pro-Germans”. Considering the
circumstances in which Britain was placed, the action was “needless, foolish, wicked, and
unjustifiable” and “Irish Nationalists…condemn it as unpatriotic folly.” The _Observer_
affirmed that the loyalty of the Irish in Britain to the Empire was unquestionable.
Nevertheless, like the _Catholic Herald_, it placed part of the blame on Carson and his
followers who had defied the government and undertaken military operations before the
war. The _Observer_ declared: “Of Sinn Fein lawlessness Sir Edward Carson and Mr.
Bonar Law are the foster parents.”

The other Catholic organs in Britain received news of the rebellion with mixed
feelings but they all agreed that it was tragic and condemned the rebels. The _Catholic
Times_ blamed the rebellion on Roger Casement and a few other extremists, and

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sided “emotionally” with them since he was a convinced Home Ruler. Masterman considered the delaying
of Home Rule to Ireland as an injustice to the Irish. L. Masterman, op. cit., p. 290.
53 *Catholic Times*, 5 May 1916, p. 5.
54 See the two separate articles in the _Catholic Herald_, 29 Apr. 1916, pp. 4-5.
55 Ibid., 6 May 1916, p. 4.
56 _Glasgow Observer_, 29 Apr. 1916, p. 6. For the _Observer’s_ reiteration that the rebels were dupes of the
Germans, see 6 May 1916, p. 6.
57 In addition to his gun-running schemes, Casement had also attempted to raise an “Irish Brigade” from
Irish Catholic prisoners of war in Germany. Casement was captured on Good Friday, soon after he was
exonerated Nationalists and Catholics from any involvement. The *Catholic Times* asserted that “it would be unjust and unwise to hold the Nationalists and Catholics of Ireland responsible” for the episode when the entire responsibility lay with a few individual extremists.\(^\text{58}\) By 5 May, the horror of the situation seemed to have fully dawned on the *Catholic Times*, and it expressed regret at the “foolish” attempt to hurt Great Britain. In the opinion of the Catholic newspaper, it was a senseless move since the rebels knew that Home Rule was on the statute book and would be implemented after the war.\(^\text{59}\) Nonetheless, the *Catholic Times* declared enthusiastically, the reaction to the rebellion in Ireland itself left no Briton in doubt that “Ireland is most loyal to the British Empire.” But the paper was very slow to comprehend the significance of the rebellion, saying: “The episode has been ugly, disagreeable. But its political consequences have been nil.”\(^\text{60}\)

In contrast to the *Catholic Times*, *The Tablet* was more cautious in its treatment of the uprising. Although it was concerned that the “tragic farce in Dublin” threatened to reopen old wounds which were healing, *The Tablet* was convinced that the rising was “Germany’s latest campaign”. Like the *Catholic Times*, however, it showed concern lest the whole of Ireland be condemned for the actions of a few and her heroism during the war be forgotten. Thus, it warned that it was “the urgent duty of us all to put a bridle on

\[\text{\footnotesize \(^\text{58}\) *Catholic Times*, 28 Apr. 1916, p. 3.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \(^\text{59}\) It is interesting to note that British Catholics did not fully appreciate that the leaders of the Easter Uprising were not content with Home Rule but fought for Ireland’s full independence instead.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \(^\text{60}\) *Catholic Times*, 5 May 1916, p. 3.} \]
tongue and pen, and not by a single reckless word to make the task of the leaders of the Irish people more difficult than it must be."\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{The Universe}, which normally did not comment on political issues, condemned the rebellion, but also incriminated the government. \textit{The Universe} suggested that “Irish loyalty and Irish heroism have both been insulted and desecrated by the insane rebellion of Irish traitors.” However, part of the blame, \textit{The Universe} insisted, must be attributed to the government as well as the Irish Executive. After the policy that had been pursued in Ireland by the government, namely, delaying Home Rule and needlessly hindering recruiting in Catholic Ireland,\textsuperscript{62} the British should not be astonished that a rebellion had broken out. The Irish Executive, too, stood condemned for its “culpable blindness” after its inaction in the face of overwhelming evidence that the Irish Volunteers were active and were fomenting an uprising.\textsuperscript{63}

Soon, the uprising reached its \textit{dénouement}, being crushed by the overwhelming military superiority of the British army. The rebels’ hope that all of Catholic Ireland would rise up against British rule once the uprising commenced never eventuated. Indeed, the Pope had sent a telegram to Cardinal Logue, the primate of Ireland,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{61} The Tablet, 29 Apr. 1916, p. 552.
\textsuperscript{62} Recruiting in Nationalist Ireland was initially hindered because the War Office discriminated between Nationalist and Ulster Volunteers. Whereas Ulster recruits were allowed to join their own 36th (Ulster) Division, Nationalists were not even permitted to form a specifically Nationalist unit. Furthermore, while Kitchener allowed Ulster volunteers to wear their own badges, he refused the same request to the Nationalists. Another reason Kitchener discouraged recruiting in Catholic Ireland was because he felt that Irish Catholics “would bring their priests with them and start wholesale proselytising.” Quoted in M. Snape, op. cit., p. 336. See also P. Simkins, op. cit., pp. 94, 114; T. Johnstone, \textit{Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-1918}, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), pp. 10, 14-15. See also the \textit{Glasgow Observer}, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 6. These and other obstacles that were created by the War Office in Nationalist Ireland were outlined in a memorandum by John Redmond, 14 Nov. 1914, File 6748/537, Dillon Papers, Trinity College Dublin, Manuscripts Room.
\textsuperscript{63} The Universe, 5 May 1916, p. 1.
\end{footnotesize}
conveying the message that the rebels should abandon their arms and make peace. But almost immediately upon suppressing the rebellion, the British authorities imposed martial law on the whole of Ireland, proceeded to try the rebel leaders secretly, and to execute them. The execution of the rebel leaders, as well as the army’s attempt to cover up murders that were carried out by British soldiers during the rebellion, reversed Irish public opinion. The executions provided the Irish with the blood sacrifice that the rebel leaders hoped would unite Irishmen against the British, and turned Irish opinion from hostility towards the rebels into hostility towards the British.

The Irish Nationalist Party was furious over the executions. As early as 3 May, when the first executions were carried out, Redmond wrote to Asquith begging him “to put a stop to such an insane policy [the execution of rebels].” Redmond’s numerous protests did not have the effect of staying the executions. On 10 May, the Irish Nationalist Party passed a resolution at a party meeting asking that no more executions take place and urging the immediate withdrawal of martial law from Ireland.

The next day, John Dillon bombarded the government in the House of Commons, indicting British martial law in Ireland and condemning the way the army was summarily shooting Irish prisoners without trial and alienating the Irish people. His lengthy address was passionate

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64 H. Howard to Drummond, 3 May 1916, F.O. 800/67/395. P.R.O. The Pope knew that the uprising was going to take place shortly beforehand. He had been informed of the intended uprising by Count George Noble Plunkett, Count of the Roman States and a prominent Catholic Irishman. The Pope was said to have been “perturbed” by this revelation. T. J. Morrisey, op. cit., pp. 282-283.

65 The most notorious murder, which enraged the Irish people, was that of the innocent Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. The officer who ordered his execution, Captain Bowen-Colthurst, was court-martialed and found guilty but insane at the time of the murder. He was confined to an asylum for the criminally insane and released after twenty months. L. Levenson, *With Wooden Sword: A Portrait of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Militant Pacifist*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), pp. 230-231, 235. Chapter 14 outlines Sheehy-Skeffington’s arrest and execution.

66 On 17 May, John Dillon wrote to Redmond that executions, house searches and wholesale arrests and deportations of men who had no Sinn Fein sympathies had exasperated feelings among the Irish. John Dillon to Redmond, 17 May 1916, File 6749/625, Dillon Papers.

67 Redmond to Asquith, 3 May 1916, Ms. 15165(6), Redmond Papers, NLI.
and bitter, since he was the only member of the House to experience the rebellion first-hand.  

69 His vibrant and assertive speech appealed to the sentiments of Irish Nationalists in Ireland as well as in America. Shane Leslie wrote to him that his speech was warmly received in the U.S. and that he was “the only member of the Party who could live for 10 minutes on an American platform.”

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British Catholic opinion leaned overwhelmingly in favour of leniency and was severely critical of the harsh measures that were meted out to the rebels by the British government. Most of the Catholic press advocated clemency towards the rebel leaders after the initial executions and was shocked and angered at the provocative policy the government was pursuing. As early as May 5, two days after the initial execution of Patrick H. Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and J. T. Clark, the Catholic Times urged the government not to shoot any more rebels but to show more leniency.  

71 On May 12, as the execution of rebel leaders continued unabated, the Catholic Times urgently wrote that conciliation was needed instead of force. It pointed out that all major newspapers in Britain, as well as Carson and Lord Bryce, had spoken out in favour of leniency. John Bernard, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, alone backed stern retribution.  

72 By 19 May, the Catholic Times was altering its previously bitter attitude to the rebels. It

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69 Dillon was in Dublin throughout, and immediately after, the rebellion. Dillon’s speech is in the House of Commons Debates, vol. 82, cols., 935-951. See also F. S. L. Lyons, John Dillon: A Biography, (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1968), p. 382.

70 Leslie to Dillon, 16 June 1916, File 6838/5, Dillon Papers. F. S. L. Lyons, ibid., p. 383. Leslie wrote that there was a wave of fury among the Irish in America because of the executions. Leslie to Redmond, 16 May 1916, D/14/2, Lloyd George Papers. This was confirmed by Spring-Rice, who explained that at first there was little sympathy with the rebels in America but that the “executions have greatly changed situation and I fear if they continue effect will be very serious…[sic.]” Telegram marked “urgent” by C. Spring-Rice, 19 May 1916, CAB. 37/148/14, P.R.O. In addition, Cardinal Gibbons begged the British government to “stop supplying America with ‘martyrs made in Germany.’” S. Leslie, The Irish Tangle, (London: MacDonald & Co., [1946]), p. 165. See also confidential memorandum from S. Leslie, 3 July 1916, Ms. 15236(14), Redmond Papers, NLI.

71 Catholic Times, 5 May 1916, p. 3.
believed that the Sinn Feiners were the defenders of Ireland and although it did not condone the rebellion itself, its attitude had clearly changed. It proclaimed that England had conquered and subjugated Ireland and that rebels had fought to free Ireland from the clutches of British rule.\textsuperscript{73}

The \textit{Glasgow Observer} was at first harsh in its castigation of the rebels and condoned their execution. It categorised the rebels into three groups: the first was “venal vermin” who had accepted German pay; “for those hanging is too good”. The second was the irreconcilable die-hards who resented British rule; those were not Nationalists. The third group comprised Sinn Feiners who were dreamers; although they were to be pitied, “their doom was just”.\textsuperscript{74} By May 13, however, when the \textit{Observer} found that public opinion in Britain and throughout the world had arrayed itself against British actions, it began to appeal for clemency. The \textit{Observer} appealed to Asquith that “There has been shooting enough. It is time to stop.” At the same time, it admonished \textit{The Times} and castigated John Bernard, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, in particular, for encouraging the swift and stern punishment of the rebels.\textsuperscript{75} Gradually, the \textit{Glasgow Observer} turned into a critic of the Irish Party and by 1918 it openly endorsed the Sinn Fein cause.

In contrast to the \textit{Glasgow Observer}, the \textit{Catholic Herald} did not condone the execution of the rebel leaders. After the first spate of rebel shootings, the \textit{Herald} pleaded that although those were probably deserved, shootings should cease immediately.\textsuperscript{76} By 27 May, the \textit{Catholic Herald} expressed strong objections against the on-going arrests of

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 12 May 1916, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 19 May 1916, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Glasgow Observer}, 6 May 1916, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 13 May 1916, pp. 6, 7.
innocent people and the execution of rebels. The *Herald* stated its belief that the arrests and executions were “not doing the British cause any good, either in Ireland or in Great Britain.” By October 1916, the *Herald* was completely alienated from the Irish Party and the British government and also espoused Sinn Fein as the alternative party.

The only Catholic newspaper that continued to condone the harsh British policy in Ireland even after public opinion had ranged against that policy was *The Universe*. On 19 May, *The Universe* published an article expressing indignation at the fact that everyone was talking about the “poor foolish young men” who had joined the uprising. *The Universe* felt that those British sons who had been killed in Ireland by the rebels had been forgotten and that not one word had been uttered about English mothers who were grieving for those sons.

Opinion among leading British Catholics was somewhat divided, with the majority condemning retribution as an absurd course to follow, while a minority attempted to justify harsh measures. Wilfrid Meynell, Francis Meynell’s father and a Conservative, could not reconcile himself with the perceived cruelty of the Catholic rebels whom, he claimed, had shot their own countrymen in the mêlée. “That will always seem…the highest cruelty one Catholic can show towards another,” Meynell explained to Clement Shorter. Although he grieved for the rebels facing execution, he felt that the harsh measures were justified by the fact that millions of Britons as well as thousands of Irishmen were offering their lives for their countries, without ostentation. He believed that “Englishmen think their own lives as of no account, when a cause is in hand; and I

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76 *Catholic Herald*, 13 May 1916, p. 2.
77 Ibid., 27 May 1916, p. 2.
don’t believe they are wrong in attributing the same sense of sacrifice to the fifteen [executed rebel leaders].”

Such views were not shared by all Conservative Catholics. The general outlook was that the execution of the rebel leaders had provided the Sinn Fein movement with the halo of martyrdom and antagonised the Irish people. One person who embraced this view was Mark Sykes. Sykes regarded the uprising as a German plot the aim of which was to “provoke gout in the heel of Archilles.” Nevertheless, he opposed retribution and believed that the government ought not to have overreacted to a small number of rebels in Dublin since the majority of the National Volunteers were serving loyally in the British army. In November 1916, he replied to an article in the *Morning Post* and denounced the way Britain had treated and alienated the Irish: “time and again right times have passed and wrong things have been done and the reward has been reaped.”

Some leading British Catholics became openly supportive of the rebels once the rebellion was crushed and the rebel leaders put to death. Francis Meynell, in contrast to his father, considered the Irish Uprising a tragedy, particularly because it touched him personally. He had known the rebel Thomas MacDonagh, who was “dear” to him “in poems and person”, since his time at Trinity College. In addition, he had known James Connolly through the *Herald*, as well as Roger Casement, whom he had met in 1913 and

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78 On 19 December 1914, the *Catholic Herald* had condemned the Sinn Feiners as pro-Germans who would not have hesitated in calling in the Kaiser to help them (p. 2). By 14 October 1916, the *Herald* blamed all of Ireland’s woes on the “many glaring blunders” committed by the Irish Party (p. 4).
79 *The Universe*, 19 May 1916, p. 2.
81 Such an opinion was expressed in an article entitled “The Irish Question” written by Philip Kerr, n.d. [1918], GD40/17/81, Lothian Papers. The article was published anonymously under the title “The Irish Crisis” in *Round Table*, 8(31), (June 1918): 496-525.
82 Quoted in S. Leslie, *Mark Sykes*, p. 263.
84 Quoted in S. Leslie, *Mark Sykes*, pp. 263-264.
whose trial was dismissed by Francis as the climax of an orchestrated smear campaign.\textsuperscript{85} 

Father and son were poles apart; while the father looked on the rebel leaders as mutineers deserving death, to the son those executed “became my heroes.”\textsuperscript{86} 

Lord Braye, who supported Home Rule, became one of the most vehement upholders of the Irish cause among British Catholics in the aftermath of the rebellion. Writing some time after the uprising, Braye made a heartfelt plea to British Catholics to support their Irish brethren. He wrote that even British Protestants were beginning to sympathise with the Irish. He summed up the difficulties between British and Irish Catholics very succinctly when he wrote that he did not doubt that Catholics in Britain consoled with their Irish co-religionists, but:

\begin{quote}
\textit{alas! that sympathy is almost entirely inarticulate, and until the Catholics of this country take their courage in both hands, and, putting the fear of social unpopularity resolutely behind them, make a mighty protest against the Irish policy of the present Government, so long will Ireland continue to think that she is without friends in this country.}\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

Braye also condemned British hypocrisy and the British race’s self-perception of its superiority to other races. He complained that while Britain proclaimed to the world that it was fighting on behalf of small nations and self-determination, Ireland was kept in “perpetual bondage”. Provocatively, he blamed Protestantism for this: “The fact is that Protestantism, self-contradictory in every Christian thesis, prevents the national genius from perceiving self-contradiction in any theory or in any practice, whether political or religious.”\textsuperscript{88} It must be noted, however, that Lord Braye’s strong sympathies with the

\textsuperscript{85} F. Meynell, op. cit., p. 92. It was alleged after Casement’s trial that his diaries were forged by the British security service in order to indict him. He was executed on 3 August 1916. See, for example, A. Mitchell, “The Casement ‘Black Diaries’ Debate: The Story so Far”, \textit{History Ireland}, 9(2), (2001): 42-45 and J. Campbell, “‘Give a Dog a Bad Name’: The Curious Case of F. E. Smith and the ‘Black Diaries’ of Roger Casement”, \textit{History Today}, 34, (Sep. 1984): 14-19.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p. 91.
\textsuperscript{87} Lord Braye, op. cit., p. 419.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 425. Ultra-Protestants, for their part, blamed Catholicism for the rebellion. John Kensit accused Rome of fomenting the uprising and insisted that “priests were everywhere moving in and out amongst the
Irish Catholics, so clearly coloured by his religious convictions, were representative of only a very small minority of British Catholics. Thus, while most British Catholics shared the sentiments of the wider British community regarding the Easter Uprising and its aftermath, a small minority only approached it from a purely Catholic point of view. If Braye’s remarks are anything to go by, the reason for this was because British Catholics were afraid of the social stigma that would be attached to them if they were seen to be in full support of Irish Catholics.

The wider significance of the executions was that even among the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland, disillusionment with the Irish Party and British rule was growing. This was evident among the most influential leaders of the hierarchy. The Archbishop of Dublin, for example, did not condemn the rebellion and he clearly harboured an underlying sympathy with Sinn Fein. In fact, he started to support Sinn Fein in its opposition to the Irish Party, “whom he had ceased to trust”, particularly after it appeared to agree to the temporary partition of Ireland in the attempt to reach a settlement after the rebellion. Edward O’Dwyer, the Bishop of Limerick, was another influential prelate who showed undisguised opposition to the British in the aftermath of the rebellion. When General Sir John Maxwell, who became commander-in-chief of the British military in Ireland after the suppression of the rebellion, requested that O’Dwyer discipline two of his priests who displayed sympathy with the rebels, the Bishop refused, replying: “You took good care that no plea for mercy should interpose on behalf of the poor young rebels blessing their deeds and giving absolution to their flocks.” J. A. Kensit, Rome Behind Sinn Fein, (London: Protestant Truth Society, 1920), pp. 14-16. In fact, most newspapers paid tribute to the bravery of the Catholic priests who ministered to the wounded and the dying in highly dangerous areas. See, for example, The Tablet, 13 May 1916, p. 621 and T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., p. 288.

89 P. J. Walsh, op. cit., p. 571.
fellows who surrendered to you in Dublin…. Personally, I regard your action with horror, and I believe that it has outraged the conscience of the country.”

Such an open and glaring challenge to the British military authorities by a Roman Catholic bishop, which soon became public, was received with alarm in Britain. Lord Midleton, a prominent Conservative, wrote to the Duke of Norfolk, the leading Conservative Catholic in Britain, complaining that young priests in Ireland were urged to join the Sinn Fein movement. Midleton deplored especially O’Dwyer’s correspondence with General Maxwell and asked the Duke whether it was not “possible that any check could be put on him[.]” Had he not been a bishop, Midleton claimed, he would certainly have been punished. This instance conveys the dilemmas British Catholics could face as a result of the intransigence of their fellow-Catholics across the Irish Sea. Although they could not influence or direct Irish Catholic views towards Britain, in Britain itself leading Catholics were inaccurately looked upon as being able somehow to rein in their Irish brethren. In fact, a considerable number of leading British and Irish Catholics shared little in common beside their faith. This may also explain why British Catholics preferred to approach the Irish problem from a political, and therefore British, rather than a religious, and therefore Catholic, perspective.

After the harsh suppression of the rebellion and the controversial executions, the old confidence that Britain was fighting for the rights of small nations was shaken and faith in the Irish Party waned rapidly. This was accelerated after the Party agreed to accept Home Rule with partition in the attempt to reach a post-Uprising settlement. In

90 Quoted in T. Hennessey, op. cit., p. 142. See also T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., pp. 290-291. The two priests were Fr. Tom Wall and Fr. Michael Hayes.
late May Lloyd George was authorised to initiate talks between the Nationalists and the Unionists in order to seek an agreement. Shortly thereafter, Lloyd George fostered an understanding between Redmond and Carson that a self-governing parliament would be established in Dublin immediately, with the exclusion of the six Ulster counties. However, while Lloyd George secretly assured Carson that the exclusion would be permanent, Redmond was led to believe that it would be temporary, until the war ended. Be that as it may, Redmond rejected the plan on 24 July, but not before further alienating support for his Party in Ireland for agreeing to any partition – even if that contemplated partition was to be temporary. The only Catholic paper to support partition in Britain was *The Tablet*. The Conservative Catholic organ praised the Ulster Unionists for agreeing to the division of four-fifths of Ireland and for assenting to the application of Home Rule to 26 of the 32 counties. *The Tablet* commented that it would be “ungenerous and unfair not to admit that this new attitude of the Ulster Unionists represents a great advance.”

Understandably, the failure to find a solution to the Irish problem at this juncture was beginning to increase the impetus for Sinn Fein as an alternative party in Ireland and to create great tension in Britain. An indication of the growing support for Sinn Fein can be measured by the increasingly defiant political views of Bishop O’Dwyer. By September, when the *Freeman’s Journal*, the organ of the Irish Parliamentary Party, was said to be “on its last legs”, O’Dwyer made a speech in which he declared that he no

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93 Archbishop Walsh, for instance, who had already become disenchanted with the Irish constitutional representatives at Westminster, found it “a shocking thing to find any Irish nationalists approving of negotiations being entered into on the basis of the exclusion of certain counties or cities.” Quoted in T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., p. 295.
longer trusted the Irish Party. He said that he would like to tell the Irish MPs: “Come home, shake the dust of the English House of Commons off your feet, and throw yourselves on the Irish nation…. Sinn Fein is, in my judgement, the true principle.”95 His speech was greeted with prolonged cheering. This was a vital endorsement of Sinn Fein by a Catholic prelate who became the episcopal voice of nationalism in Ireland.

This growing nationalism among Catholics in Ireland, particularly the clergy, did nothing to improve the Catholics’ position in Britain. On the contrary, Ireland by this time became a constant source of friction between prominent British Catholics. Even eminent Catholic Conservatives could not agree on the Irish Question anymore. On 27 November 1916, Mark Sykes addressed a letter to the editor of the *Morning Post*. Sykes wrote that he had just attended a Requiem Mass for the Irish Guards at Westminster Cathedral. On his return home, he found a copy of the day’s *Morning Post* which contained an article on Ireland. “Between the ceremony and the article there appears to be an hiatus,” Sykes noted, with evident self-control. At the Requiem, there were thousands of Irishmen who came to mourn their countrymen who had fallen in the grand crusade to resurrect the rights of small nations, as Sykes saw it. Those Irishmen were wearing the British uniform and had tears in their eyes. The tone of the *Morning Post* article, however, was very different to that evoked by the Requiem Mass. The article, Sykes complained, differentiated between Ulster and Ireland as if they were two separate nations. The article also had a “deliberate confusion of Nationalism and rebellion, with its implied insults, its epithets of ‘sullen’ and ‘bribed’[directed at Nationalists,] its scornful reference ‘to fair share of obligation’ and its request that ‘Ireland be governed with

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94 *The Tablet*, 1 July 1916, p. 4. It must be noted that *The Tablet* had given this opinion before the secret deal between Carson and Lloyd George became known publicly on 27 July.
strength and justice.’” These lines, Sykes added, “must lacerate the hearts of the men” who were at the Requiem. Such articles, Sykes insisted, served only to incite political division in Ireland. Furthermore, the harsh policy pursued in Ireland by Britain had stifled enthusiasm among the Irish everywhere, including Australia and North America.  

Conversely, Lord Denbigh, the Catholic ultra-Conservative peer, thought that the government had not dealt with Ireland harshly enough and that, as a result, there was growing support for Sinn Fein. In November 1917, The Times published a lengthy letter from Denbigh, in which he castigated many of the Irish Catholic clergy for their assimilation into Sinn Fein and tried to distance English Catholics from the younger Irish clergy’s growing nationalism. Denbigh wrote: “I am convinced that the great body of English Catholics…have noted with pain and deep resentment the part which so many of the Irish Catholic clergy have been taking since the rebellion of last year.” He blamed Asquith and the government of Ireland for their weakness and hesitancy in clamping down on Sinn Fein’s defiance of the law.  

Not only did Denbigh’s view, which represented that of a large majority of British Catholic Conservatives, run completely counter to Sykes’ sympathy with the Irish, but it also angered British Catholic Liberals. The Catholic Liberal press, in particular, reacted swiftly, denouncing Denbigh and denying that his views were representative of general British Catholic opinion. The Catholic Times was extremely critical of Denbigh, writing that at a time when every sensible person in Britain stood breathless, “afraid to utter one single word, lest the chances of a settlement of Ireland’s difficulty may be prejudiced,

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95 Quoted in T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., p. 296.
96 Draft letter from Mark Sykes to the editor of the Morning Post, 27 Nov. 1916, DDSY(2)/4/127, Sykes Papers. The letter was published in the Morning Post on 28 November. Sykes received many letters expressing gratitude and congratulating him on his letter. These are found in DDSY(2)/7/30.
Lord Denbigh would have laid an ox on his tongue.” The Catholic paper deplored his “political stupidity” and referred to him satirically as an “English Sinn Feiner”. It was Catholics like him, the Catholic Times argued, who gave the false impression that the Catholic Church in Britain was Tory. The writer of the article denied that this was so and as a British Catholic, registered his strong protest at Denbigh’s impudence in lecturing the Irish clergy.98

This theme was also pursued by the Catholic Herald, but, being a staunch supporter of Asquith, it concentrated more on defending the former Prime Minister. The Herald did not look favourably on Denbigh’s assertion that Asquith’s weakness and vacillation was responsible for the rise of Sinn Fein. While Denbigh placed all the blame on Asquith, the Herald insisted, the reactionary Catholic peer had said nothing about John Maxwell or his execution of the rebels “in cold blood” after the rebellion. Although the paper asserted that it did not approve of the young Irish clergy’s support for Sinn Fein, it emphasised that Denbigh had no right to lecture them. They must retain their freedom of action.99

Thus, the division that the Irish quandary was causing among British Catholics was becoming deeper as the war continued, while the Irish Question itself became increasingly complex. This division was compounded by the failure to find a solution through Lloyd George’s stratagem to buy time, the Irish Convention,100 which ended in

97 The Times, 28 Nov. 1917, p. 8.
98 Catholic Times, 7 Dec. 1917, p. 3.
100 The Irish Convention sat between July 1917 and March 1918 and Horace Plunkett was appointed its chairman. Delegates of the Convention failed to reach an agreement and by March 1918, it “fizzled out in confusion”. Quoted in T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., p. 302. N. Mansergh, in The Unresolved Question: The Anglo-Irish Settlement and its Undoing, 1912-72, (Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), argues that the Convention suffered from two vital handicaps: the absence of Sinn Fein and the presence of Ulster Unionists (p. 104). For detailed accounts of the Convention, see M. Digby, Horace Plunkett: An Anglo-
failure in March 1918. The danger of a fresh explosion in Ireland then loomed large when the government, panicked by the German Spring Offensive, moved to apply conscription to Ireland in April 1918. The controversy provoked by this proved to be especially divisive for British Catholics and deserves analysis in detail.

The Irish, in their growing restlessness, were determined to oppose the extension of conscription to their island in 1918. The Irish Party had succeeded in preventing conscription from being applied to Ireland in January 1916, when it was implemented in the rest of Britain, and the party was thereafter always opposed to the extension of any conscription measures to Ireland. By 1918, however, resentment was growing in Britain at the fact that while she was exhausting her male population through “combing out”, Ireland remained outside the conscription net. By the time of the German Spring Offensive, the situation was growing desperate and Lloyd George conceded – under pressure from Ulstermen such as General Sir Henry Wilson – that Ireland could not be exempted from compulsory military service yet again.

In an effort to secure Irish compliance, the British government decided on a major concession to accompany the extension of conscription in Ireland. The government decided to grant Ireland Home Rule immediately after conscription was applied, in an

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101 As early as November 1915, Redmond warned Asquith that “the enforcement of conscription in Ireland is an impossibility…. Faced with this dilemma, if a Conscription Bill be introduced, the Irish party will be forced to oppose it as vigorously as possible at every stage.” Redmond to Asquith, 15 Nov. 1915, Ms. 15165(5), Redmond Papers, NLI. See also, House of Commons Debates, vol. 76, col. 152 and vol. 78, col. 58 as well as J. F. Boyle, op. cit., pp. 254-255.

effort to make compulsory military service more agreeable. Even leading Unionists
accepted Home Rule in this package as the price to be paid for conscription in Ireland.\footnote{These included Lord Midleton, Austen Chamberlain and Robert Cecil. See D. G. Boyce, op. cit., pp. 588-590.}

Despite this carrot-and-stick policy, however, Nationalist Ireland united to oppose
conscription even with the palatable ingredient of Home Rule. On 16 April, in spite of the
vigorous opposition of the Irish MPs, the Military Service Bill passed its third reading
and conscription was to be imposed on Ireland by force if necessary. On 18 April, while
the whole of Catholic Ireland was seething in opposition to conscription, the Irish bishops
assembled at Maynooth for their annual conference in a somewhat bellicose mood. That
evening, they issued the following statement:

An attempt is being made to enforce conscription upon Ireland against the will of the Irish nation
and in defiance of the protests of its leaders…. [W]e consider that conscription forced in this way
upon Ireland is an oppressive and inhuman law, which the Irish have a right to resist by all means
that are consonant with the law of God.\footnote{Quoted in T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., p. 309. Quoted also in T. E. Hachey, “A Catholic’s Secret Counsel to the British Government on His Irish Church: April 1918”, \textit{Journal of Church and State}, 15(1), (Winter 1973), p. 98.}

Even though Cardinal Logue was only reluctantly drawn into this position,\footnote{Cardinal Logue “was led on from point to point before he realised it. He had first advocated ‘passive resistance’ but the Archbishop of Dublin and others made short work of his passive resistance…and passive resistance was the only panacea of the Cardinal. Standing on the steps of the front house after the}

opposition of the Catholic Church in Ireland, combined with that of leading Nationalist
politicians and trade unions, made a formidable alliance which the government could not
easily ignore. It is ironic that when Britain finally accepted the necessity of granting
Ireland Home Rule, a demand that Nationalist Ireland had made throughout the war, the
Irish people rejected it as too little – and now fatally linked to the odious policy of
military conscription.
Even though a considerable number of British Catholics did not share such inflexible opposition to conscription in Ireland, they deprecated the extension of conscription without a simultaneous and generous measure of self-government. Indeed, Cardinal Bourne expressed his disapproval to Lloyd George, not so much because of the injustice of the matter, but because it would hurt Britain’s cause if the Irish Question was not settled first. Before the conscription bill was introduced, Bourne assured Lloyd George: “I have very deeply at heart the welfare of the Empire, which is endangered until the Irish question is settled…. I do most earnestly hope and pray that the Government will resolutely avoid the policy with which rumour now credits it.” Bourne reassured the Prime Minister that he was not writing to him as a critic but as a sympathiser who understood his difficult position.106 In this, Bourne was expressing the opinion of other leading British Catholics, including even some prominent Conservatives. In debating the Military Service Bill, Mark Sykes inferred that the government had antagonised the whole of Ireland by pursuing a brutish and repressive policy there and needed to grant Home Rule immediately in order to stabilise its moral position. Thus, he advocated maintaining voluntarism in Ireland and asserted that conscription would lead to “concentration camps of turbulent men.”107 Hewins did not go as far as Sykes; he supported the bill, but he advocated further delay in enforcing conscription on Ireland after the bill was passed. On 26 April 1918, Hewins warned Lloyd George that if the authority of the Irish bishops was overridden by the government, violence would be very likely. He advised against using force, and since enforcing conscription was not an

meeting…the Cardinal mournfully remarked to the Archbishop [Walsh], ‘I think this is the worst day’s business the Bishops ever did.’” Quoted in T. J. Morrissey, op. cit., p. 310.

106 Bourne to Lloyd George, 5 Apr. 1918, Bo.5/27b, Bourne Papers.

acceptable option, he recommended negotiation: “you can only get the men with the moral sanction of Ireland and this means you must negotiate with the Bishops and the other leaders.”

The Irish Catholic hierarchy’s apparent sanctioning of popular defiance of conscription in Ireland had immediate and immense repercussions for British Catholics. Two major consequences faced leading Catholics in Britain as a result of the actions of the Irish hierarchy: an attempt to initiate an anti-Catholic campaign by Protestants and a division between those Catholics who condemned, and those who justified, the stance of the Irish hierarchy.

The first consequence was somewhat limited due mainly to the quick and zealous defence of prominent British Catholics such as Mark Sykes. When influential newspapers such as *The Times* and the *Morning Post* attempted to raise an anti-Catholic campaign, prominent Catholics as well as the Catholic press rushed to quash such a campaign. On 24 April, for example, under the title “A Grave Responsibility”, *The Times* accused the Irish Catholic bishops of undermining religious toleration. According to *The Times*, they had “openly assumed the right to interfere as a Church in politics, and in so doing they have shaken to its foundations the whole edifice of religious toleration in these

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108 Hewins to Lloyd George, 26 Apr. 1918, Hewins 123/2/63, Hewins Papers. Walter Long, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, disagreed with Hewins that conscription could not be enforced. He believed that if men in Ireland were not forthcoming, “the soldiers could get them without much trouble or bloodshed” provided they were given a free hand. [Walter Long] to Hewins, 28 Apr. 1918, Hewins 123/2/66, Hewins Papers. This gives some indication of the government’s ongoing determination to impose conscription on Ireland at all costs.

109 Irish Protestants joined their Catholic countrymen’s opposition to conscription also. In a circular dated only April 1918, presumably produced soon after the Irish Catholic hierarchy’s statement, Irish Protestants declared: “We, the undersigned, wish to join our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen in protesting in the strongest possible manner against the application of Conscription to Ireland.” Circular by Irish Protestants, Apr. 1918, Add. 52783, J. H. Bernard Papers, British Library, Manuscripts Room. This circular, however, does not appear to have been widely publicised and did not gain the notoriety achieved by the Catholic hierarchy’s statement.
This provoked an immediate response from Mark Sykes; he attacked certain articles that appeared in *The Times* which pointed the finger of blame at the Vatican for inciting the defiance of Ireland. Sykes accused the newspaper of approving of, and abetting, a “No Popery” cry. He protested that the editor should even suggest that “the re-enactment of penal laws against Roman Catholics throughout the United Kingdom may be necessitated as a war measure.” Sykes assured the editor that the stimulation of religious passions would not win the war, and advised that only if the right methods were adopted could Britain obtain men from Ireland. The editor of *The Times* replied that only the Irish bishops could prevent a “No Popery” campaign, and this could only be assured if they did not “seriously challenge the authority of the Imperial Parliament.”

This in turn prompted Sykes to send another letter to the editor the next day, remarking:

> I hope you will assure me that I am both misconstruing and misunderstanding you if I assume this to mean that in certain eventualities English Catholics are to be ‘pogromed’ even though they may be opposed to Home Rule; that is to say, that an Englishman may be tolerated as a Protestant, though he sympathize with the attitude of the Irish Bishops, but not as a Catholic, though he sympathize with Sir Edward Carson.

This public defence of Catholicism by Mark Sykes was noted and praised as exemplary by the Catholic press. On 27 April, the *Catholic Times* commended Sykes for his firm and steady defence, remarking that his protest, “as a Catholic and as a patriot, was certainly called for.” The *Catholic Times* also denounced newspapers such as *The Times, Morning Post*, and *Globe* which were straining to initiate a religious campaign against Catholics. On 4 May, an article by “Senex” which appeared in the *Catholic Times* stated that he was glad for the recent attempt by Lord Northcliffe to raise a “No

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111 Ibid., 25 Apr. 1918, p. 4.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., 26 Apr. 1918, p. 5.
Popery” campaign, for it showed the real reason why Ireland was not granted self-government – hatred of Catholicism. He expressed the opinion that “If the Irish Catholics would embrace Protestantism, they could get Home Rule tomorrow.”115

The Tablet also expressed its full support for Mark Sykes on 27 April, condemning The Times for insinuating that the actions of the Irish Catholic hierarchy had shaken the “edifice of religious toleration” in the United Kingdom. The Tablet also denounced an article which appeared in the Morning Post and which, in the same manner as The Times, implied that the Vatican was behind the Irish hierarchy’s attempt to prevent the implementation of conscription in Ireland. The Tablet retorted that the Vatican offered no opposition to conscription in other Catholic countries such as Belgium, France and Canada. Why would it oppose conscription in Ireland? It argued that there was no evidence whatsoever to support such a charge.116

In its next issue of 4 May, The Tablet continued to absolve the Vatican from any involvement in the Irish conscription controversy. However, while the Pope was to be defended, the Irish bishops were another matter. The Tablet seemed to revert back to its anti-Home Rule prejudices, and stressed that the Irish hierarchy’s stance was a regrettable direct challenge to parliamentary authority. As a result, the “smouldering embers of the old ‘No Popery’ passions have been fanned into a flame.” Although The Tablet was careful not to condone the hierarchy’s actions, it saw no reason why the Holy See should

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114 Catholic Times, 27 Apr. 1918, p. 4. See also its issue of 4 May 1918, p. 3, where the Catholic Times reaffirmed its praise for Sykes’ letters.
115 Catholic Times, 4 May 1918, p. 5.
116 The Tablet, 27 Apr. 1918, p. 3. Even Archbishop John Bernard, the Protestant primate of Ireland, when asked by Archbishop Davidson what he thought of the Irish Catholic hierarchy’s actions, admitted that the Vatican was not implicated. Although Bernard disapproved of the position the hierarchy adopted, he strongly doubted that the Irish Catholic bishops were given orders by the Vatican to embarrass the British government. The reason he gave was that the Vatican would also have given such orders to the
be involved in the controversy. The Catholic paper did not blame the British for being exasperated with the Irish, and, consoling itself, it stated: “Happily no nightmare lasts for ever, and in his cooler moments John Bull will begin to ask himself what evidence there is to connect the Holy See with the political action of the Bishops of Ireland.”\textsuperscript{117} The \textit{Tablet} went on to warn against other bigots, such as the Anglican Rev. R. J. Campbell, who attacked the Catholic religion in a “No Popery” sermon in St. Paul’s Cathedral. The paper impressed upon the government that when the Holy See was being maligned even in the national cathedrals, the government had “a plain duty before it.”\textsuperscript{118}

Behind the scenes, Bishop Amigo tried to use his influence to defuse the anti-Catholic campaign – or at least reduce its effect – but without success. On 6 May, he addressed a letter to Hubert Walter, an influential representative at \textit{The Times}, in which he asked him to use his influence with that newspaper to cease its hostility to the Irish bishops.\textsuperscript{119} Walter, however, assured Amigo that \textit{The Times} was not hostile to the Catholic Church in either Spain or Ireland. At the moment, Walter insisted, both of these hierarchies were hostile to Britain and in the face of such hostility, it was difficult to return a soothing reply.\textsuperscript{120}

The anti-Catholic outcry was not confined to England only but was manifest in other parts of Britain also. In Scotland, the \textit{Glasgow Observer} of 4 May published a comment made by the \textit{Scotsman} that the Irish hierarchy connived with the Vatican in its opposition to conscription. Fortunately, according to the \textit{Observer}, a Catholic priest in

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 4 May 1918, p. 572.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 573.
\textsuperscript{120} Walter to Amigo, 9 May 1918, J45A, “The Irish Question, 1916-1939”, Amigo Papers.
Edinburgh, one Fr. J. B. McCluskey, quickly repudiated the *Scotsman*’s claims. McCluskey wrote to the *Scotsman*, asserting that the hierarchy’s act was strictly independent. He declared that printing such an accusation “without the slightest evidence or proof, either [of] the Pope’s knowledge of or authority for any purely national decision of the kind is an unwarranted, unjustified, unfair assumption.” The *Observer* commended McCluskey for “promptly collaring” the *Scotsman* after its outburst.

Despite these efforts by British Catholics to subdue an incipient anti-Catholic campaign, anti-Catholic sentiments persisted, even among some government representatives. A prime example included an inflammatory statement made by Lord Curzon, leader of the House of Lords and a member of the War Cabinet, in June. Addressing the House of Lords on 20 June, Lord Curzon blamed Irish opposition to conscription solely on the Irish Catholic clergy. He claimed that the Catholic clergy “advised their flocks…under ‘penalties of eternal damnation’ to resist conscription to the uttermost.” This threat of eternal damnation, according to Curzon, completely changed the attitude of the people. In response, Cardinal Logue, on behalf of the Irish hierarchy who was assembled at Maynooth, condemned Lord Curzon’s speech. The Cardinal said that the bishops protested “against this grave calumny” especially because it was uttered by a government representative.

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121 Quoted in the *Glasgow Observer*, 4 May 1918, p. 6.
122 *House of Lords Debates*, vol. 30, col. 330. This claim by Curzon raised an outcry from the Irish Catholic MPs in the House of Commons, accusing Curzon of bigotry. They insisted that the reference to the Irish clergy by Curzon was false and called on him to apologise. On 25 June, for example, John McKean said that Curzon’s statement was extremely “scandalous” and advised that the government “ought not to retain the Noble Lord…in his rank, unless he withdraws that statement or substantiates it.” *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 107, col. 937.
123 Quoted in *The Universe*, 28 June 1918, p. 3.
In Britain, there was widespread condemnation of Curzon by prominent Catholics who considered his statement to have been irresponsible. On 21 June, the day after Curzon made his speech, Amigo wrote him a letter inquiring:

I as a Catholic Bishop should like to know the authority for such a statement. At a time when all of us ought to be working to remove misunderstandings and to make the whole Empire united, I cannot imagine that your Lordship would use, without great consideration, words which can only hurt my fellow-Catholics and bring about ill-feeling.\textsuperscript{124}

In addition, Mark Sykes pressed the issue in the House of Commons on 25 June. He expressed the importance of knowing whether the Irish clergy as a whole did in fact threaten their flocks with eternal damnation. Sykes demanded that if they did, then action against them should be taken because the charge was a serious one.\textsuperscript{125}

The Catholic press also took up an offensive position, denouncing Curzon for his ignorance. Even after Curzon sent a letter to the \textit{Morning Post}\textsuperscript{126} citing supposed instances where Irish priests had threatened citizens with eternal damnation, \textit{The Tablet} still questioned the reliability of these claims, asking whether he had obtained his information from government or newspaper sources.\textsuperscript{127} \textit{The Universe} was even more aggressive in its tone, castigating Curzon’s “stupidly exaggerated statement”. \textit{The Universe} fully approved of the \textit{New Witness’} designation of Curzon as “a man ignorant beyond even the ignorance of his class.”\textsuperscript{128}

This first consequence, that is, the anti-Catholic campaign that was raised, could be said to have directly abetted the second consequence – the division between British Catholics which arose as a result of the Irish hierarchy’s action. To be sure, disagreement

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{124} Amigo to Lord Curzon, 21 June 1918, J54A, “The Irish Question, 1916-1939”, Amigo Papers.
\item\textsuperscript{125} House of Commons Debates, vol. 107, col. 952.
\item\textsuperscript{126} See newspaper clipping of Curzon’s letter to the \textit{Morning Post}, 27 June 1918, Bo.5/42e, Bourne Papers. Curzon condemned those Irish bishops, including Cardinal Logue, who had attacked his speech in the House of Lords. He protested that he did not mention any bishops in his speech.
\item\textsuperscript{127} The Tablet, 29 June 1918, p. 815.
\end{footnotes}
among British Catholics intensified after the commencement of the anti-Catholic
campaign, around April 24. Tellingly, this disagreement turned into an open breach
after the C.U.G.B. issued a public condemnation of the Irish hierarchy and thereby
established an invisible line that divided the entire British Catholic body into two camps:
those opposing, and those supporting, the Irish hierarchy in its resistance to conscription.

On 29 April, the editor of The Times published a letter from Lord Denbigh.
Denbigh was a prominent member of the C.U.G.B. and he condemned absolutely the
Irish hierarchy. In his letter, Denbigh proclaimed that the Irish bishops’ resistance to the
law “almost makes me ashamed of the word Catholic.” He chastised the Irish episcopate,
arguing: “The Irish Catholic Hierarchy has, by this deplorable hasty act, done more harm
to the cause of Catholicism and to that of peace in Ireland than they can have any idea
of.” Denbigh exonerated the British authorities from any guilt and concluded by urging
the Irish hierarchy and politicians to revoke their stance if they did not wish to antagonise
the British, Americans, and the Allies.

Denbigh’s letter could be viewed as a harbinger of what was to follow. For on the
next day, April 30, the C.U.G.B. held a meeting at which Lord Denbigh, Lord Talbot and,
interestingly, Mark Sykes were present among others. It was resolved that all the people
of the United Kingdom had a duty to contribute to attaining victory; that the Catholic
Union regarded with “serious misgivings” the foray of ecclesiastics into political
questions; and that it dissociated itself completely from the actions of the Irish

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128 Quoted in The Universe, 5 July 1918, p. 3.
129 One needs only to read the letters by Catholics to the editor in The Times in the issues of 24 April 1918,
p. 8 and 26 April 1918, p. 5 to get an indication of the wide-ranging opinions among British Catholics
regarding the stance of the Irish hierarchy.
130 The Times, 29 Apr. 1918, p. 10. Denbigh had already written to Balfour on 27 April urging that British
representation at the Vatican should be made good use of to keep the Vatican informed about the actions of
the Irish bishops. Lord Denbigh to Arthur Balfour, 27 Apr. 1918, F.O. 800/213/369, P.R.O.
hierarchy. A copy of the resolutions was promptly communicated to Benedict XV appealing against the decision of the Irish hierarchy. Needless to say, the ostentatious and emphatically pro-conscription resolutions delighted non-Catholic Britons. The *Church Times* of 3 May, for example, received this development on the part of the “main body” of British Catholics with gladness. The Anglican paper reported: “No sensible person would have supposed for a moment that the main body of Roman Catholics in Great Britain would endorse the policy of the Irish bishops…. [W]e are glad that they have taken the step of placing on record their protest.”

It was soon clear that Catholics were not similarly gladdened. For example, the Catholic Union’s resolutions elicited an immediate protest from Lord Braye, himself a member of the Executive Council of the C.U.G.B., who wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* dissociating himself from the Catholic Union. He protested against the Union’s “contention that…they represent Catholic feeling in Great Britain. In this they are mistaken.”

Indeed, the Catholic Union, although it claimed to represent the majority of leading Catholic laymen, could hardly be considered truly representative – in the political

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131 Five resolutions were actually passed by the Union and were printed in *The Times* on 1 May 1918, p. 6. The resolutions were:

1. The Catholic Union has viewed with the deepest regret the action which the Catholic Bishops of Ireland have deemed it necessary to take for resisting compulsory service in the present war, action which appears to support a movement for organized disobedience to the law.
2. The Catholic Union is of opinion that it is just and right that the people of every portion of the United Kingdom should take their share in the defence of the Empire and the liberties of mankind from the grave peril to which they are exposed…..
3. The Catholic Union cannot regard without serious misgivings any interference by ecclesiastical authority in questions which are purely temporal and political and in no way connected with faith and morals.
4. The Catholic Union desires emphatically to dissociate itself from a movement which cannot fail to hamper the full development of the military forces of the Allies, and thereby endanger the cause of humanity.
5. The President of the Catholic Union, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Walter Kerr, is requested to communicate these resolutions to the public prints and to forward them to His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State for submission to His Holiness the Pope.

132 Newspaper clipping from the *Church Times*, 3 May 1918, Bo.5/42e, Bourne Papers.

133 Quoted in the *Catholic Herald*, 11 May 1918, p. 1. See also K. Aspden, *Fortress Church*, p. 79.
sense – of the main British Catholic body. For one thing, C.U.G.B. members themselves were not unanimously accepting of the resolutions.\textsuperscript{134} For another, the British Catholic hierarchy could not possibly be discounted. This fact presented itself in the uproar that followed among Catholics. On May 1, Bishop Casartelli wrote to Archbishop Whiteside explaining that the Union’s resolutions seemed calculated to cause maximum harm. He advised Whiteside that “It ought surely to be made publicly clear without delay that the C\[atholic\] U\[nion\] does not in any way represent the Catholic body in England and has no right whatsoever to speak in its name.” He urged that the British Catholic hierarchy should repudiate publicly and officially the Union’s action immediately.\textsuperscript{135}

Casartelli was not going to wait for his brother bishops to organise themselves before personally refuting the C.U.G.B. In the following week, the Bishop and Chapter of the Diocese of Salford issued a public protest against the Union’s resolutions and refuted the claim that the Union represented British Catholics.\textsuperscript{136} In addition, the Salford Catholic Federation also issued a statement protesting that the Union’s resolutions were “unnecessary and calculated to aggravate a serious situation.”\textsuperscript{137} Already, when Denbigh came to visit Casartelli on May 3 to talk about the action of the C.U.G.B., the Bishop gave him a “very straight talking to and did not mince matters.”\textsuperscript{138} Thus, Casartelli had taken a public and unequivocal stand against the C.U.G.B. and for this he received the

\textsuperscript{134} At least one member of the C.U.G.B. discontinued his membership because he felt that the third resolution was too strong. W. S. Lilly to Stuart Coates, 24 May 1918, Folder 889, envelope marked “Catholic Union of G.B.,” Gasquet Papers. Lilly, the secretary of the Union, found it impossible to fathom “how any candid mind” could fail to see the “unpatriotic” position of the Irish bishops.

\textsuperscript{135} Bishop Casartelli to Archbishop Whiteside, 1 May 1918, Box 162, WW, 4801 to 4900/4896, Casartelli Copy Letters, Casartelli Papers.

\textsuperscript{136} Cited in The Universe, 10 May 1918, p. 4. See also the Catholic Federationist, June 1918, pp. 2-3.

\textsuperscript{137} At the same time, the Clapham branch of the U.I.L. passed a “most emphatic protest against the unjust and impertinent attack” made by the Union upon the Irish hierarchy. Cited in ibid.

\textsuperscript{138} Casartelli to Mgr. Canon O’Kelly, 3 May 1918, Box 162, XX, 4901 to 5000/4913, Casartelli Copy Letters, Casartelli Papers. See also Casartelli Diaries, 3 May 1918.
gratitude of Cardinal Logue. On 8 May, Logue wrote to Casartelli thanking him and his
Chapter for their support. Logue included this remarkable complaint: “We generally
receive nothing from England but remonstrance or abuse, more frequently the
latter….“139 Casartelli replied by assuring the Irish primate that “we all feel the deepest
sympathy with the Irish Episcopate in the present trying juncture.”140 These letters are
extraordinary because, besides a few messages between Bourne and Logue that seemed
detached and distant,141 they appear to be the only reciprocal correspondence between
Irish and British prelates during the war period. Thus, this was one of the very few
instances where Irish and British Catholic prelates co-operated amicably in a show of
unity.

Another prelate who emerged once again as a champion of Ireland and the Irish
hierarchy was Bishop Amigo. After the publication of Denbigh’s letter in The Times,
Amigo penned a private letter reprimanding him. He informed Denbigh that “When
nearly thirty Bishops in Ireland with their clergy and people are all of one mind at
present, there must be a good deal to be said for their point of view, even if we don’t
understand it.” Denbigh’s letter, Amigo affirmed, had hindered rather than furthered the

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139 Cardinal Logue to Casartelli, 8 [May] 1918, Box 162, XX, 4901 to 5000/copy to 4925, Casartelli Copy
Letters, Casartelli Papers. Logue deprecated the C.U.G.B. since its action did not contribute to peace. He
further complained that there was “no remonstrance from those gentlemen when the Pope was ignored and
flouted; but now they want to use his Holiness as an instrument for coercing the Irish Bishops.”
140 Casartelli to Logue, 10 May 1918, Box 162, XX, 4901 to 5000/4925, Casartelli Copy Letters, Casartelli
Papers.
141 One letter was from Bourne to the whole hierarchy in the United Kingdom. It informed the bishops that
if they desired to transmit any confidential communications which they wished to secure from censorship,
they could forward it to Bourne because he had been assured by Edward Grey that his mail would not be
checked by the censor. A copy was forwarded to Logue by Bourne, 30 Nov. 1914, Box 8, P 323, European
Bishops, Logue Papers, Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Library and Archive. Another letter was sent by Bourne
to Logue to request more army chaplains from Ireland. Bourne to Logue, 3 Feb. 1916, “Hierarchy”, Box 2,
Army Chaplains, Logue Papers.
attempt to gain peace in Ireland. Amigo enclosed a copy of this letter to Archbishop Walsh, noting that Denbigh and “the few others of the Catholic Union had the impudence to read us all a lecture in the Press.” He expressed his heartfelt sympathies for Ireland and professed puzzlement at the attack of British Catholic laymen on the Irish hierarchy.

Denbigh, of course, did not sheepishly submit to the Bishop, but responded with recalcitrance. He regretted his disagreement with Amigo over the Irish issue but assured the Bishop that he had received many letters from Catholics expressing approval of his views. Such a breach within the Catholic body in Britain over Ireland became all the serious in the following weeks.

By mid-May, the majority of the British Catholic hierarchy, some prominent Catholic laymen, and most of the Catholic press had either condemned or distanced themselves from the C.U.G.B. In early May, Bishop Dunn of Nottingham made his position clear when he wrote to the *Nottingham Guardian* that the stance of the Irish bishops was “perfectly sound when they declare that England’s right to impose universal conscription is limited to her own country and people….” By 11 May, even Bernard Vaughan added his voice to the chorus of clerical support for the Irish hierarchy. He said that if the Irish episcopate had remained silent about the conscription issue, “we might now be plunged in civil war.” He pointed out that all the Irish bishops had asked was for Ireland to be granted the liberty to decide her own affairs, just like Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

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145 Quoted in the *Catholic Times*, 4 May 1918, p. 2.
On May 12, another powerful British Catholic voice was added to the opposition of the C.U.G.B. and professed sympathy with the Irish bishops. In an address to a meeting at Jarrow which lasted for more than one hour, Bishop Keating dealt with the issue of Irish conscription, among other things, warning: “it would be sheer impertinence on the part of the English Bishops, still more on the part of English laymen, to sit in judgement upon the action of the Irish Hierarchy.”  

The next week, Amigo endorsed Keating’s viewpoint, adding that the British people did not fully understand the position of the Irish episcopate. In his opinion, the Irish bishops had no alternative but to pursue the policy they did because they aimed to avoid serious civil unrest in Ireland.  

Shortly, most of the British bishops rallied behind their Irish brethren. This emerged in a survey undertaken by H. S. Dean, the editor of The Universe. Asked about their opinions regarding the claim that the C.U.G.B. represented Catholic opinion in Britain by Dean, most of the bishops rejected such an assertion. Archbishop Ilsley of Birmingham replied that the C.U.G.B. was “not authorised” to represent his diocese. Archbishop Whiteside surmised that Catholic public opinion was “decidedly” against the claim. James Smith, the Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, denied that the Union had any right to speak for his diocese. Archbishop James Bilsborrow of Cardiff said that the claim was “preposterous”. Bishop William Cotter of Portsmouth repudiated the Union’s claim “most emphatically”.  

Indeed, Bishop Cotter, who was born in Ireland, had written to Amigo earlier depreciating the English Catholicism that was representative of the C.U.G.B and defending Irish Catholicism. He told Amigo: “I am not

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147 Quoted in The Universe, 17 May 1918, p. 8.
surprised at the English Catholics finding fault with the ‘Catholicity’ of the Irish – even with the Hierarchy thrown in! When ever did they agree that the Irishman could do right, except when he happened to be doing something which was a benefit to the Englishman?"\(^\text{150}\)

These answers and others of the hierarchy were prepared for publication in an article in *The Universe* refuting the idea that the C.U.G.B. was representative of British Catholic opinion. However, the publication of the article was cancelled at the last minute for a very unusual reason. As Dean wrote in a private letter\(^\text{151}\) to individual members of the British hierarchy:

> The governing reason is that we discovered a fact of which we were all previously ignorant…that the Union enjoys an old mandate…from the English Hierarchy and the Scottish Vicars Apostolic, confirmed by Pope Pius IX, to act for certain purposes and under certain conditions as a representative body such as its title implies.

In light of this, the letter explained, the article could not be published because of the likelihood of a potentially embarrassing controversy that would arise if the Union were to confront and challenge those opposing it.\(^\text{152}\) Even though the hierarchy’s replies were not published, it is obvious what its views were: the British Catholic hierarchy was not prepared to tolerate Catholic laymen disparaging episcopal authority, be it Irish or otherwise. In addition, the letter reveals the extremely tense situation and the extent of division that existed among leading Catholics over the Irish Question by the Spring of 1918. Technically, the C.U.G.B. *did* represent British Catholic opinion. In reality,
however, its original mandate from the hierarchy had become largely obsolete by 1918 – and when it spoke it clearly did not speak for all Catholics.

A conspicuous omission from *The Universe*’s survey of the views of the British Catholic hierarchy was that of Cardinal Bourne. The Archbishop of Westminster never joined the rest of the British bishops in condemning the C.U.G.B. and he remained notably silent during the whole episode. His reluctance to get involved was manifested on 10 May when a meeting of bishops was held to discuss the new Code of Canon Law. Although some bishops wanted to issue a public repudiation of the Catholic Union through the meeting, Bourne, “who controlled the agenda…refused to be drawn on the issue.”¹⁵³ His views only became public some two months later, when he prevented the Catholic Federation Council of Westminster, of which he was president, from discussing the issue. When some members of the Federation insisted that a full discussion of the Union’s action should take place, Bourne wrote to the chairman of the Federation: “So far as I am aware the Council of the Catholic Union has never made any claim to speak in the name of all the Catholics of Great Britain. It represents only the members of the Union, who are fully entitled to extend its action if they think fit to do so.”¹⁵⁴ It is not known whether the Archbishop took this line of action out of a genuine desire to prevent further division among the Catholic body in Britain or whether because privately he supported the stance of the C.U.G.B. It can be conjectured that it was a combination of both factors. The latter factor, however, may have taken precedence since Bourne took no significant step to curb the controversy at its height and since it is known there was no

¹⁵³ K. Aspden, *Fortress Church*, p. 82.
¹⁵⁴ Quoted in *The Tablet*, 6 July 1918, p. 23.
love lost between him and the Irish hierarchy, particularly between him and Cardinal Logue over the issue of army chaplains.\footnote{See, for example, untitled note in Bourne’s papers, dated 3 Dec. 1916, Bo.1/62. Although it did not state it explicitly, the brief note indicates that the relationship between Logue and Bourne was tense. The note read: “Proposals to Card. Logue at beginning of war [regarding army chaplains]. Refusal, then acceptance – result – final declaration of incapacity [sic.].” Thus, the problem of army chaplains may have contributed to the tension between the two prelates. Irish Catholic priests were reluctant to volunteer as army chaplains and, according to Oldmeadow, by Easter 1915, the diocese of Westminster had provided more chaplains to the armed forces than the whole of Ireland. See, E. Oldmeadow, op cit., II, p. 119 and also Bourne to Logue, 3 Feb. 1916, “Hierarchy”, Box 2, Army Chaplains, Logue Papers. This was only one of a number of issues which caused tension between the two primates.}

Notwithstanding Bourne’s position, the stance of the British Catholic hierarchy was buttressed by most of the organs of the British Catholic popular press. The \textit{Glasgow Observer} of 4 May published an article in which it referred to members of the C.U.G.B. as “the flower of English Toryism.” The \textit{Observer} rebutted the claim that the Union represented British Catholics; certainly it did not represent Irish Catholics in Britain. The \textit{Observer} pointed out that the Union only represented “the personal and political views of English Catholic Tories.” The aim of these Catholic Tories, according to the \textit{Observer}, was to strangle Home Rule under the “mantle” of conscription. It accused the Union of grossly insulting the Irish bishops by trying to teach them how to guide their people. Furthermore, the suggestion that ecclesiastics had no right to interfere in temporal or political questions was insane. The \textit{Observer} offered a particularly forceful analogy, alluding to Cardinal Mercier’s constant interference in matters that did not pertain purely to faith and morals. Nobody ever lectured \textit{him} for that.\footnote{See, for example, untitled note in Bourne’s papers, dated 3 Dec. 1916, Bo.1/62. Although it did not state it explicitly, the brief note indicates that the relationship between Logue and Bourne was tense. The note read: “Proposals to Card. Logue at beginning of war [regarding army chaplains]. Refusal, then acceptance – result – final declaration of incapacity [sic.].” Thus, the problem of army chaplains may have contributed to the tension between the two prelates. Irish Catholic priests were reluctant to volunteer as army chaplains and, according to Oldmeadow, by Easter 1915, the diocese of Westminster had provided more chaplains to the armed forces than the whole of Ireland. See, E. Oldmeadow, op cit., II, p. 119 and also Bourne to Logue, 3 Feb. 1916, “Hierarchy”, Box 2, Army Chaplains, Logue Papers. This was only one of a number of issues which caused tension between the two primates.}

The \textit{Catholic Times} assailed Lord Denbigh’s letter to \textit{The Times} before turning to the C.U.G.B. The paper indicted Denbigh for taking a position that was in stark contrast to Mark Sykes. It chastised him, saying that “he ought to be ashamed of himself, not of [the Irish bishops], for they are vindicating a national right.” The \textit{Catholic Times} also
rejected the Catholic Union’s resolutions, affirming that the Union was not likely to have any weight either with British Catholics or with the Holy See. The Universe went further in its vindication of the Irish hierarchy, saying that the bishops were trying to control a furious agitation within Ireland. Thus, The Universe reasoned, they did not in fact rush into politics but only answered the call of Irishmen, “a call that they could not in conscience resist.”

The editor of the Catholic Herald made arguably the most significant public appeal directly to the Pope against the C.U.G.B., offering to acquaint him with the bare facts about the Union. The editor addressed in five columns “An Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XV” regarding the ongoing animosities between British Catholics. He informed the Pope that members of the Catholic Union carried no weight or importance among the Catholic community and that they only represented themselves. The letter maintained that these individuals desired to be on good terms with anti-Catholics in Britain and so did not even welcome the Pope’s Peace Note in their press organ (that is, The Tablet). Although that organ had dared not assail the Pope openly, asserted the editor of the Catholic Herald, “it went so close to it as to leave no doubt in the mind of any honest man as to what its real feelings were and are.” The letter warned that Irish nationalism was mild compared to the “uncompromising” and “selfish” nationalism of the likes of members of the Catholic Union. By denouncing the Irish

156 Glasgow Observer, 4 May 1918, p. 3.
157 Catholic Times, 4 May 1918, p. 4.
158 The Universe, 17 May 1918, p. 9.
hierarchy, the letter continued, the Catholic Tories were sowing dissent among their Catholic brothers. 159

The Catholic Herald’s editor was correct in his basic premise that The Tablet was the Union’s press organ. For The Tablet was the only Catholic newspaper that came out in support of the C.U.G.B. and in opposition of the Irish hierarchy. On 4 May, The Tablet made it clear that in its judgement, the Irish hierarchy had no right to “challenge” the authority of the British parliament, a challenge which had come, said The Tablet, “as a rude shock to public opinion” in Britain. As far as The Tablet was concerned, Protestant complaints about the Irish hierarchy meddling in politics were justified – although it did not condone the “No Popery” campaign that was emerging. The Tablet reiterated the Union’s assertion that the Irish bishops had quite wrongly involved themselves in a “purely political matter”. The Tablet professed astonishment that, at a time when Britain was marshalling its last ounce of strength against the German offensive, Ireland refused to assist in the colossal struggle. When Britain had called upon Ireland to bear some of the burden, she was “met with a refusal, and the hierarchy, coming down into the political arena, encourages the people to resist.” 160

Certainly, the Catholic Union did not acquiesce in the face of pressure from the rest of the Catholic body. On 12 May, for example, the secretary of the Sheffield Catholic Association asked Mark Sykes whether, in light of reports that he was present at the Union meeting when the notorious resolutions were passed, he was party to them. The secretary added that he knew that the stand recently made by Sykes did not coincide with

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159 Catholic Herald, 11 May 1918, p. 4. On 18 May, Admiral Walter Kerr received a letter from Gasparri in response to the resolutions of the C.U.G.B. Gasparri assured Kerr that the Vatican had nothing to do with the action of the Irish hierarchy and that its manifesto was not received by the Holy See until April 27, eight days after it was published. The Times, 1 June 1918, p. 7; Glasgow Observer, 8 June 1918, p. 6.
the resolutions, but that he would be pleased to hear that Sykes was not placed in a false position by press reports. Sykes returned the following somewhat cold reply: “I do not think that adhesion to the resolutions passed by the Catholic Union puts me in a false position, [and] I deeply deplore and regret the action of the Irish Bishops….“ Sykes’ position was, indeed, quite complex; he was no hypocrite for defending Catholicism on the one hand while condemning the Irish bishops on the other. While regretting the Irish bishops’ resistance to conscription, he had sought to prevent the English ultra-patriots’ hostility to the Irish hierarchy from degenerating into a dangerous anti-Catholic agitation. He confirmed this in a letter to Amigo after his 25 June statement in the House of Commons regarding Curzon’s accusation. In his letter, Sykes expressed disappointment that the Irish members who associated themselves with the Irish hierarchy were not there to defend their bishops. He told Amigo: “I who disagreed with the Bishops had to do my best on…the question of Lord Curzon’s statement.”

But more importantly, the Catholic Union tried to influence eminent British prelates, namely Cardinal Gasquet, to their viewpoint. By the end of May, the Union had transmitted a copy of its resolutions to Gasquet, who was informed by the Union that the resolutions were enormously beneficial to Catholic soldiers and officers. Moreover, the Cardinal was told that all “right-minded” Catholics opposed the Irish hierarchy’s action and that two prominent theologians (who were not named) had supported the resolutions in Britain. Although Gasquet disapproved of the Union’s protest against the Irish episcopate, Edmund Talbot insisted that the Union was right in its bona fide protest

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160 *The Tablet*, 4 May 1918, p. 572.
161 J. Mulvey to Mark Sykes, 12 May 1918, DDSY(2)/7/30, Sykes Papers.
162 Sykes to Mulvey, 15 May 1918, DDSY(2)/7/30, Sykes Papers.
because the bishops had publicly allied themselves to rebels against the Crown. Talbot did not regret the Union’s protest, even though he doubted the wisdom of the last resolution.\(^{165}\)

Throughout this conscription controversy, the government sought Bourne’s aid and opinion regarding the explosive situation in Ireland. After the Irish bishops released their manifesto, Bourne was sent a letter explaining that in this hour of peril, Ireland was asked to contribute her manpower in common with Britain and in common with Catholics from other Allied countries. Since Ireland refused, “may we not hope that your Eminence will feel it your duty at once to take the necessary steps to make your views more widely known to the Empire generally and to the people of Ireland in particular?”\(^{166}\)

In mid-May, Bourne’s opinion was again sought by Walter Long who sent a memorandum to the Cardinal evaluating the situation in Ireland. The memorandum revealed that the Royal Irish Constabulary could not be relied on if it was called upon to arrest those Catholic priests who were fomenting the anti-conscription campaign in Ireland. The Constabulary could not be trusted to carry out such orders because the Roman Catholic members of the force were seriously affected by the hierarchy’s call to resist conscription. The memorandum advised that such arrests should be carried out by the military instead and recommended that the “sedition” of the priests could not be allowed to go unpunished by the government.\(^{167}\) Bourne replied that in his opinion, the

\(^{164}\) Stuart Coates to Cardinal Gasquet, 28 May 1918, Folder 889, envelope marked “Catholic Union of G.B.”, Gasquet Papers.

\(^{165}\) Edmund Talbot to Gasquet, 17 June 1918, envelope marked “From Gasquet’s Papers”, Gasquet Papers.

\(^{166}\) I. Balfour Allan to Bourne, 24 Apr. 1918, Bo.5/ 27b, Bourne Papers.

\(^{167}\) Memorandum by Arthur W. Samuels, 10 May 1918, Bo.1/72, Bourne Papers.
federal solution\textsuperscript{168} for Ireland must be pressed “as rapidly as possible”. This would grant Ireland equality with Britain in all local, and some national, matters – always short of full independence. Furthermore, Bourne expressed certainty that such a solution, although it would not be well received in Ireland, “will put England right in the eyes of the United States,\textsuperscript{169} the Dominions, and the Continental countries….” He also suggested that voluntary recruiting should be given a last chance before the imposition of conscription. Finally, he recommended that the names of those priests who had counseled extremism in their pronouncements should be given to Cardinal Logue, and he would surely reprove them.\textsuperscript{170}

This, along with other strong representations in support of the Irish, influenced the government’s hitherto aggressive policy. Amigo, for example, continued to write to the government in late May after a new wave of mass arrest of members of Sinn Fein. On 20 May, he addressed a letter to R. Brade of the War Office emphasising: “You will never drive the Irish people, but generosity will win them completely.”\textsuperscript{171} Of more significance was his letter to Lloyd George on 28 May. He began by assuring the Prime Minister that he was not of Irish descent but he had come to love the Irish race. As for the Irish Question, Amigo continued, it had become a war question and a victory for the Allies depended on it. Despite all the wrongs that had been inflicted on Ireland, it was in Lloyd George’s power to rectify the situation by abandoning coercion. As with Brade, Amigo

\textsuperscript{168} For an insightful account of the federal system and the government’s endeavour to compose a federal constitution in 1918, see J. Kendle, “Federalism and the Irish Problem in 1918”, History, 56(187), (1971): 207-230.
\textsuperscript{169} On 5 May, Shane Leslie wrote to Dillon that almost everybody in America hated conscription being imposed on Ireland. If the British government caused bloodshed in Ireland, it would give German agents an excuse to cause a diversion. Leslie to Dillon, 5 May 1918, File 6838/24, Dillon Papers.
\textsuperscript{170} Confidential letter from Bourne to Walter Long, 17 May 1918, Bo.1/72, Bourne Papers.
cautioned the Prime Minister that “The Irish can be won, but never driven.” Finally, he included this very strong warning:

The Irish Bishops have been able to restrain them up to now…. [The Bishops’] influence is very powerful, but if care is not taken by the Government, the young people will be beyond restraint soon. While we boast that we are out to protect small nationalities, we are alienating the splendid Irish race.\(^{172}\)

Regrettably, this passionate letter barely received one line in acknowledgement from Charles Masterman, who was attached to the Ministry of Information in 1918.

Nevertheless, this, and the other warnings by influential Catholics such as Bourne, Sykes, and Hewins, coupled with those who were non-Catholic, plus the many indications of Irish determination to resist conscription, forced the government to abandon its plans to impose conscription on Ireland. This back-down, however, did not come before the government’s threatened action had created discord among the British Catholic body and forged a more radical spirit of unity among the Irish. In increasing numbers, the Irish people now espoused Sinn Fein’s cause and abandoned the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Whereas Ireland started out as the “one bright spot” on the political landscape, towards the end of the war it had become an ineradicable blemish. The government’s counter-productive policy largely contributed to this and alienated Catholic Ireland in the process. Leading British Catholics, although united briefly at the beginning of the war, were almost always divided on the Irish Question, particularly after the formation of the Coalition in May 1915. Their division over Ireland was a constant strain and if Irish Catholics expected their British co-religionists to aid them in their struggle on the basis of their shared faith, that aid was never forthcoming. For even the British Catholic bishops,

who defended their Irish counterparts most fervently during the conscription controversy of 1918, hardly ever corresponded with them on intimate or friendly terms at any time during the war. This provides at least some insight into the attitude of British Catholics – that in politics, their citizenship was predominant over their faith. Although a few British Catholics argued that their common religion should bring them closer to Irish Catholics, those were lonely voices that remained largely unheard. Only when the authority of the Irish Catholic hierarchy was truly impugned did a section of British Catholics come to its aid. Although it is clear that at this time the British bishops sympathised with their Irish brother bishops, they may have had another motivation in defending them: they may have been genuinely alarmed at the prospect of a lay challenge to episcopal authority. For if a lay organisation successfully challenged the Irish hierarchy, what was to stop it from challenging the British hierarchy’s authority when lay and clerical interests clashed?
Chapter 8
A New World Order: Austria-Hungary, the United States, and a League of Nations

These various kinds of Slavs, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, and the rest, want to be free. They would not be Austrian twenty-four hours longer if their votes could bring them their freedom. We in the West...have agreed that Government should exist by consent of the governed.

William Barry, September 1917.¹

It is right, I think, that I should express to your eminence what I know to be the feeling of the Catholics of this country [Britain], namely their deep joy and consolation that your great and generous nation should be united with us in the defence of those sacred principles with which centuries of Christian teaching have inspired the world.

Cardinal Bourne to Cardinal Gibbons, [April 1917].²

At the beginning of the war, the Entente powers were reluctant to support the formation of new nations in eastern Europe because they hoped that they could persuade Vienna to sign a separate peace and disengage from the conflict. If Austria withdrew from the war, she would probably be able to retain her empire. Indeed, in Britain, Austria had been looked upon as a traditional friend, and the tradition of amicable relations between the two nations was evident in the fact that Britain did not declare war on Austria-Hungary immediately on 4 August 1914. In fact, Britain and Austria-Hungary did not formally enter a state of war with each other until 12 August. By mid-1916, however, President Woodrow Wilson was becoming more ideologically involved in the European war, and his liberal internationalist ideals were eventually to affect British policies with regard to Austria-Hungary. In May 1916, in a major speech in New York to the League to Enforce

¹ W. Barry, “Break Austria”, Nineteenth Century, 82(487), (Sep. 1917), p. 446.
² Bo.5/48a, Bourne Papers.
Peace, Wilson presented a new demand for democracy and high ideological goals which included self-determination of subject nationalities and the creation of a league of nations. Wilson recapitulated these themes in January 1917 in more depth. The President’s new internationalism and sweeping liberal principles were of great significance to British Catholics, not least because the future of Austria-Hungary hung in the balance. National self-determination of peoples would herald the end of the Habsburg Empire.

Throughout the war, Austria was a dilemma for British Catholics because they could not explain how a Catholic superpower could ally herself to largely Protestant Germany, a “chauvinist” and “militarist” state. British Catholics had gone to great lengths to link Germany’s militarism and lust for power to her adherence to Lutheranism and the Protestant faith. Conversely, Catholicism was supposed to be the embodiment of conciliation and the spirit of peace. It remained for British Catholics to explain how, if religion played any role at all in the war, Catholic Austria could be allied to Lutheran Germany if the two religious spirits were in such stark contrast to each other. While most prominent British Catholics preferred to overlook this question, and even to express a degree of sympathy with Austria-Hungary instead, some of them called for the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the granting of independence to her subject peoples; for, according to this interpretation, Austria had lost her Catholic spirit and had chosen to buttress Germany’s militarism. This view received strong moral impetus after President Woodrow Wilson’s “Peace without Victory” speech in January 1917 with its stern denunciation of authoritarian and militarist states. Nevertheless, British Catholics received the speech with ambivalence, rejecting Wilson’s insistence
upon a negotiated end to the war. This changed, however, with America’s entry into the war in April 1917, when the principles of self-determination and a league of nations became key issues for discussion in the controversies surrounding war aims. British Catholics viewed America’s declaration of war as a powerful moral endorsement of the Entente’s cause and prided themselves also on the overwhelming American Catholic support for the war in the U.S. However, in contrast with their enthusiasm for America’s moral endorsement of the Allied cause, British Catholics gave only lukewarm support to the idea of a league of nations. Although initially attracted to Wilson’s promotion of the league scheme, they had largely withdrawn their support by the end of the war.

Two schools of thought developed almost at the beginning of the war in Britain regarding the future of Austria-Hungary. The first school, which was led by a small knot of enthusiasts for the New Europe, advocated the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire while the second school, which included the U.D.C. and other Radicals, opposed it. The New Europe advocates, liberal nationalists of whom Robert W. Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed were the chief figures, favoured a *victoire intégrale*. A complete victory, they argued, would enable the Entente to roll up the map and redraw it around the ideals of a new world order. The subject nationalities under Habsburg rule in Eastern Europe would be granted their freedom and a federal Yugoslavia would unite the southern Slavs.\(^3\) In October 1916, the group started publishing its organ, *The New Europe*, the aim of which was to inform public opinion and promote the emancipation of subject peoples.

\(^3\) Several studies have been published on Britain and Austria-Hungary during the war, which include extensive material on the advocates of a New Europe and national self-determination for the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary. The most useful are H. and C. Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*,...
from Austrian control. The Radicals and socialists, of whom H. N. Brailsford was one of the most brilliant publicists, opposed such schemes of self-determination and the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire. They argued that such plans were beyond the original war aims of the Entente and would only serve to prolong the war. This group rejected the idea that the war was a result of dissatisfied national aspirations and blamed it instead on secret diplomacy and the balance of power.

In contrast to this division in Britain, the Holy See was sympathetic towards the Habsburg Empire from the beginning, although this did not mean that the Pope favoured the Central Powers. The received wisdom is that although he favoured the preservation of the Austrian Empire as the last leading European Catholic power in Central Europe, he perceived it also as a pivotal bastion against the looming threat of Orthodoxy and Lutheranism. However, it is not clear exactly why the Vatican was so well disposed towards Austria-Hungary; whether it was because the *cura* was genuinely concerned about the proliferation of Orthodoxy, or whether it feared the expansion of Lutheranism. J. F. Pollard expresses the view that Benedict and Gasparri were actually anxious about both. Pollard notes that, on the one hand, Benedict followed the policy of Cardinal Rampolla, who had been the Secretary of State to Leo XIII: “The essence of Rampolla’s strategy was that Germany, a Prussian, Protestant power, needed to be balanced by Catholic, cosmopolitan Austria.” On the other hand, it was vital that Austria-Hungary be conserved because it was, in Pollard’s words, “the last Catholic great power and a
bulwark against Russian Orthodoxy and Pan-slavism.” The triumph of Russia, according to Pollard, would have been worse, in the Vatican’s estimation, than the collapse of the Central Powers, particularly Austria-Hungary.\(^8\)

Although this concern may have been shared by leading British Catholics, they could not express it freely. Since Russia fought alongside Britain for most of the war, it was not expedient for most British Catholics, who had shown unwavering “patriotism” throughout the conflict, to be seen openly criticising one of their country’s principal allies on account of its anti-Catholic policy.\(^9\) Consequently, this was one of the reasons they directed all the drive in their attack against Germany’s alleged paganism, militarism, and worship of might over right.

It has already been noted that the vast majority of British Catholics went to great lengths to portray Germany as a pagan nation which desired the conquest of Europe and “worshiped” military might. But there had to be a reason for Germany’s supposed loss of her virtuous soul and its replacement by an aggressive spirit. The reason, as a number of prominent British Catholics explained it, was that since the Reformation, Prussia had not been touched by the Catholic spirit and Prussia had infected most of Germany. On 9

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\(^8\) Ibid., p. 90.
\(^9\) One need only compare the reaction of British Catholics to Germany’s treatment of Catholics in Belgium and Russia’s treatment of Catholics in Galicia and Poland to see the difference. While there was an outcry by British Catholics at German outrages against Catholic Belgium, there was, in comparison, hardly a whimper at Russian brutality against Catholics in Galicia and Poland. Indeed, Laurence Ginnell, an Irish Nationalist MP, had asked just such a question in the House of Commons in March 1915. Ginnell enquired whether the Archbishop of Lemberg, who was captured by the Russians, was imprisoned or, like Mercier, confined to his diocese; also “whether it is by direction of the Foreign Office or of the Censor [that] the entire British Press is closed against one of these cases while giving full particulars to the other” [my emphasis]. The reply he elicited was unspecific and equivocal. *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 70, col. 778. *The Harvest* was more precise when Fr. Folton, a Catholic priest from Manchester, deplored its lack of coverage of the Archbishop of Lemberg’s persecution by the Russians. Folton urged *The Harvest* to reveal the whole truth, noting where the Archbishop of Lemberg was being imprisoned and predicting that no mercy could be expected to be shown to him. But *The Harvest* reluctantly pointed out that “so long as Russia is one of our allies in this awful war we have to restrain ourselves from making a deliberate attack on her.” *The Harvest*, Dec. 1916, p. 210.
October 1916, for example, while addressing an audience at Manchester, Cecil Chesterton said that the only nation in Western Europe which had not been touched by the Catholic faith for centuries was Prussia. Since she had never experienced the Catholic faith properly in the modern era, Chesterton explained, her inherent evil was coming to the surface. Chesterton predicted that after the war, atheistic France and Protestant Britain were going to find that only the Catholic Church could prevent such evils.¹⁰

Of course, there were numerous other instances where Catholicism was extolled and Prussianism reviled and, therefore, Catholics succeeded in creating a picture where the two appeared to be completely in opposition to one another. In What of Today?, for example, which was published a few months after the outbreak of war, Bernard Vaughan compared the strengths of the recently deceased Pius X and German power. Vaughan pointed out that the Germans considered their military prowess a reflection of the German “superman”. Yet, according to Vaughan, Pius X was the real superman because, although he had been militarily impotent, he had lived a simple life filled with faith and piety. When he died, there was a universal tribute for him “of admiration and applause”. In Vaughan’s view, the German worship of brute force, which was fuelled by a veneration of science and the values of “blood and iron”, and which was devoid of spirituality, could not compare with the strength of the simple Pius.¹¹ Similarly, in his Advent sermon in December 1917, Bishop Keating condemned Protestant Germany’s

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¹¹ B. Vaughan, op. cit., pp. 17-18. Vaughan wrote that Pius X “was an example – and the world was quick to recognise it – of the real Superman and not the spurious brand which ‘culture’ and ‘science’, uncontrolled by religion, have set before us” (p. 18).
militarism, which had revered false gods; gods such as science, philosophy, and scholarship “which had dethroned the Bible.”

William Barry vigorously upheld this argument that Germany was essentially a barbaric power that did not have a shred of the spirit of Christ, while the Catholic Church had enriched European civilisation. Barry contended that even though the Allies were “divided in points of dogma...[they] are yet in fact fighting for the very heart and essence of the Gospel” against German inhumanity. In articles later in the war, Barry added an historical and even racialist interpretation. In January 1918 he placed more emphasis on the contributions of the Catholic Church, and Rome, to the cause of the western Allies. He reminded his readers that Rome was a Christian metropolis and the capital of Christendom. The West, Barry asserted, had retained everything civilised that Rome had to offer including law, art, literature and religion. Barry went on to argue that the Germans, in contrast, were the successors of the barbarians who had destroyed the Roman Empire and who had given nothing worthwhile to the world. In this war, Barry insisted, the seeds sown during Luther’s revolt against the Church were being reaped. For Luther gave “to the Prince what he took from the Pope”, and the secular king, therefore, held more religious power. Mocking this increase of power to the secular authorities, Barry stated: “To make Caesar Pope is to write the charter of slavery in religion.” While the temporal law remained with the state, the spiritual power must belong to the Pope alone, who had been the guardian of that divine distinction. However, Barry continued, since everything that was treasured by the civilised world was given by Rome,

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12 Advent sermon, 2 Dec. 1917, S7, III, A/109, Keating Papers, AAL.
15 Ibid., p. 115.
civilisation itself was now in peril because Rome was in peril. For “the storm is bearing down on the Catholic Church” and Germany was encroaching on the Pope’s sphere of influence. The Germans, Barry believed, desired a spiritual empire throughout the world led by a “Kaiser-Pope”. Thus, it had become clear that German militarist godlessness and Roman Catholicism could never be reconciled.\(^\text{16}\)

Those British Catholics who advocated that German *Kultur* and Catholic civilisation were engaged in an unprecedented struggle for survival faced an insoluble problem. Britain’s allies and Britain’s enemies did not align in terms of the allies and enemies of Catholicism. In particular, the puzzle could not be completed because one piece stubbornly would not fit. If the conflict, as Hilaire Belloc and others saw it, was a “clash between Catholic civilisation and pagan barbarism,”\(^\text{17}\) then why was Austria, the last Catholic power on the continent, allied to Protestant Prussia, which was allegedly trying to extirpate Catholicism?

This question was not easy to answer and, as might be expected, Catholics, like their compatriots, were divided over the issue of Austria-Hungary. They approached the question in several ways. Some tried to find proof of the superior moral standard of Catholicism by citing examples of its heroic exercise by Catholics on the Allies’ side. An example of this can be seen in one of the monthly “letters” that were being written by leading British Catholics. In late 1916, Algernon Cecil, who was attached to the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty, argued that many people might have presumed that since France was hostile to the Church and Austria was the faithful daughter,

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 116. Evidence that German ethics did not contain any trace of humanity, according to Barry, was demonstrated by the “judicial murder” of nurse Edith Cavell. W. Barry, “False and True Idealism in the War”, p. 922. Nurse Cavell was executed by the Germans on 12 October 1915 after she was found guilty of
Austria’s allies enjoyed “a strong presumption of righteousness.” But in fact, Cecil posited, the focus should have been on Prussia and Belgium. In this comparison, Prussia stood “for a militant and all devouring nationalism” while Belgium “stood for faith in international justice” and a belief that all nations were bound together by moral obligation. Although Cecil reiterated the theme that Britain had always been opposed to “Caesarism”, he nonetheless lamented that it was “one of the tragedies of history that she should have [sic.] seemed, and to a large extent have been, one of the great opponents of the Catholic Church.” In this way, Cecil not only succeeded in shifting the focus from Germany and Austria-Hungary to Prussia and Belgium, but, in a sense, also attempted to apologise for Britain’s supposed pursuit, since the Reformation, of the same “anti-Catholic” policy as Prussia.

Other British Catholics wisely refrained from trying to square these circles. Some avoided the question altogether, while others expressed a certain sympathy towards Austria-Hungary in spite of hostilities. This was particularly notable in the Catholic press. Thus, immediately upon war being declared, The Universe can be found describing Franz Joseph, the Habsburg Emperor, in an affectionate way. The Universe claimed that the “venerable monarch” desired peace, and conceded that there had been provocations towards Austria-Hungary. Who, asked The Universe, would deny that “the aged monarch, who has overgrown the very shadow of any ambition”, did not long for the

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17 A. N. Wilson, op. cit., p. 226.
18 “Caesarism”, as defined by Cecil, was where one state would attempt to dominate other nations. Thus, Britain had opposed Louis XIV, and fought with Spain and Russia against Napoleon.
19 Algernon Cecil, Catholic Monthly Letters VIII, n.d. [after October 1916], S1, VIII, B/12, Whiteside Papers.
“peace and tranquility of his people”? In another article in February 1915, The Universe stated that the British did not regard themselves as being antagonistic to Austria-Hungary. The writer believed that the British viewed the enmity of Austria-Hungary towards Britain as “rather [more] accidental than deliberate.” Catholics in Britain, in particular, The Universe emphasised, regretted that Catholic Austria had been “hoodwinked” into war with the Entente. Hence, The Universe implied that Austria-Hungary was only a reluctant ally of Germany – or enemy of Britain, depending on one’s point of view – and had been, therefore, deceived into going to war.

The next month, the Glasgow Observer repeated in essence The Universe’s iteration, pronouncing it a tragedy that the British had to fight against Austria, a traditional friend of Britain. The Observer ruefully declared: “We have been forced into a position of enmity with Austria, but none of us feel her to be our personal foe.” The Observer, rather daringly, referred to the Habsburgs as “the most illustrious Royal House still reigning” and expressed the view that Catholics should be all the more anxious because Catholic Austria had thrown in her lot with Prussian Kultur. By July 1915, however, the Glasgow Observer had changed its tune somewhat. It postulated that Austria was moving towards inevitable ruin whether the Central Powers were victorious or defeated. If they were victorious, the Observer reasoned, Austria would become a vassal state of Germany. She would be suppressed and would have no voice. If they were defeated, the Allies would dismember her. The Observer suggested that the only solution for Austria was to dissociate herself from Germany and conclude a separate peace. In this way, even though she would lose some territory, she would retain her empire and would

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20 The Universe, 7 Aug. 1914, p. 6.
remain a great power.\textsuperscript{23} Here, it is unclear if the intention of the \textit{Observer} was to express concern for Austria-Hungary’s survival or, in common with so much Allied propaganda, to promote tension between Austria-Hungary and Germany.

The \textit{Catholic Herald} was arguably the most resolute defender of Austrian Catholics. In April 1915, the \textit{Herald} published an article in which it made it quite clear that Catholics in the Central Powers were not to be viewed in the same light as Protestants. Austrian Catholics, the \textit{Herald} claimed, were very different from Prussian Protestants in their nature and in their sentiment. “Even Germans of the south who are Catholics, but are unfortunately under the dominating influence of Prussia, are admitted to be very different people from the Prussians.”\textsuperscript{24} Even in early 1917, after Emperor Charles and Empress Zita came to power, the \textit{Catholic Herald} expressed indignation at the suggestion by an article in \textit{Nineteenth Century} that they were unfit to rule because they were under the “thumb of the Catholic Church.”\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{Herald} retorted that although Charles was a staunch Catholic, he was far from being controlled by the Church. Belgium was more controlled by the Church than Austria, and yet, the paper argued, Belgium was praised by the Allied press and Cardinal Mercier was regarded as a hero. Would Charles and Zita have been thus chided if Austria was fighting on the side of the Allies?\textsuperscript{26} By June 1917, the \textit{Herald} confidently expressed the opinion that in Britain “there is, except technically, no sense of hostility to Austria.”\textsuperscript{27} Perhaps this was so among some British

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\item[22] \textit{Glasgow Observer}, 27 Mar. 1915, p. 6.
\item[23] Ibid., 3 July 1915, p. 6.
\item[25] Ibid., 3 Feb. 1917, p. 2. The article was by Countess Z. Landi, “The Only Hope for Austria”, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, 81(479), (Jan. 1917): 217-223. Landi contended that “Charles, Zita…and all the rest are completely under [the Catholic Church’s] thumb, and this in itself is sufficient proof that they are not fit to rule” (p. 223).
\item[26] Ibid.
\item[27] Ibid., 9 June 1917, p. 2.
\end{footnotes}
Catholics, but in the wider British society, hostility towards Austria-Hungary certainly did exist.\(^\text{28}\)

Indeed, even some British Catholics adopted a hostile tone towards Austria. Soon after the outbreak of war, for example, *The Tablet* published a leading article in which it denounced Austria’s misrule of her Slavic subjects. *The Tablet* accused Austria of being only nominally Catholic and argued that the Catholic religion had “suffered from being used as a political tool by Austrian statesmen….” Not only had Austria largely lapsed from Catholicism, *The Tablet* asserted, but she was also treating contemptuously “the most practical Catholics of the Apostolic Empire”, the Slavs. The Catholics of Croatia, Bosnia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia were united in their national aspirations and in their bold opposition to Austrian rule.\(^\text{29}\) In light of Austria’s suppression of the Slavs, who were *the* sincere Catholics, *The Tablet* asked, “Would Austria’s collapse be disastrous for the true interests of the Church whose mainstay she professes to be in the Balkans?”\(^\text{30}\) Hence, as early as August 1914, at least one British Catholic newspaper was prepared to contemplate the abolition of the Austrian Empire, if only because it was detrimental to the development of other Catholics in south-eastern Europe.

A few Catholics – and these formed only a very small number – attempted to answer still more precisely the question of why Catholic Austria was allied to Protestant Prussia. These indicted Austria-Hungary as irredeemably corrupt and encouraged the dissolution of her empire. The prolific Fr. William Barry became one of the most forceful of these Catholic opponents of Austria. In Barry’s mind, western democracy – which had

\(^{28}\) In *The Times* on 7 June 1917, for example, there was a call for the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (p. 5). See also L. King, “The Passing of the Habsburg Empire”, *Contemporary Review*, 212(1229), (June 1968), p. 323 and M. Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, (Hampshire, Great Britain: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 176-177.
reached its apogée in Britain, America, France, and Italy – was the “direct offspring of the Gospels”, in that the Gospels stated that the strong must help the weak, and that you and your neighbour are one. Germanism, however, Barry declared, was the direct opposite of that doctrine. It believed in force and physical strength as well as the devious diplomacy of Bismarck. Consequently, Barry argued that, even though Austria was Catholic, she had been necessarily steeped in this German spirit because she had for centuries been consuming races rather than civilising them. All those subject races, including the Czechs, Slovenes, and Croatians, were oppressed captive nations. What was more, according to Barry, Royal Austrian and German marriages had produced “a trade union of crowned heads” and had become “a peril to Europe.” In passing judgement on Austria, Barry condemned her to “be handed over to the executioner.” Her empire should be liquidated, in Barry’s opinion, not only because she had flung Europe into the current apocalyptic conflict, but also because she had betrayed her true mission. Barry believed that “Austria received from providence…the task of reconciling German, Slav, and Magyar in defence of Christendom against the unspeakable Turk.” This she not only failed to do, but, incredibly, she had allied herself with militaristic Germany and Muslim Turkey – both enemies of Europe and both enemies of Christendom – against her brothers in Christ.

29 The Tablet, 15 Aug. 1914, p. 237.
30 Ibid., p. 238.
33 Ibid., p. 263.
34 Ibid., p. 261.
35 Ibid., p. 262. See also his “Teuton against Roman”. Here, Barry detested the fact that the most prominent among Catholic states had acted as a “brilliant second” to an Emperor who abhorred Catholicism, who was the chief bishop of Lutheranism”, and who was the leader of the people of Odin against the people of Jesus Christ. Moreover, according to Barry, Vienna had assured the Turks that they would regain Jerusalem after it had fallen to the Allies (p. 120).
Barry’s passionate conviction regarding Austria’s looming fate differed immensely from the more tolerant ideas of some other Catholic intellectuals and their plans for Austria-Hungary. For example, Rev. F. Cuthbert, Principal of the Franciscan House of Studies, Oxford, judged that far from oppressing the races under her rule, Austria had developed “mild and liberal systems of government….” As a result, Cuthbert believed that she would have been “more fittingly in alliance with England than against her.” Of more significance, certain prominent British Catholics had exalted visions for the resurgence of Austria as a great Catholic power at the end of the war. Chief among these was Hilaire Belloc who, in January 1915, prophesied that “the Vatican will, toward the end of the war, desire to strengthen Vienna and weaken Berlin.” He went on to add that “the power of the Catholic organisation in Europe is something our people misjudge.” Believing that Vienna would eventually break with Berlin, Belloc predicted that Austria was not only going to survive the war, but that she was also going to be the mainstay of a Catholic revival in Central Europe. This vision of a revived Austria was buttressed by Cecil Chesterton. As has already been stated in an earlier chapter, Chesterton devised a scheme whereby the German problem would finally be solved after the war. This involved abolishing Prussia as a state, returning Alsace-Lorraine to France, and resurrecting Poland as an independent Kingdom. It was Austria, however, which occupied a major position in the program to prevent Germany from ever threatening civilisation again. Chesterton calculated that Austria was to become a major power at the end of hostilities and could be “the focal point for a Catholic South German nation.”

36 F. Cuthbert, op. cit., p. 74. In that context, Cuthbert was arguing that the war was not for democratic freedom, because if it was, then Austria would not have been fighting against, but on the side of, Britain. 37 R. Speaight, Letters from Hilaire Belloc, p. 67. 38 J. P. Corrin, op. cit., p. 69.
The fate of Austria-Hungary was, of course, but a part of the larger question of self-determination of peoples. As the war proceeded, this question became more significant. Both sets of belligerents claimed to have been fighting in self-defence and for the self-determination of peoples, but applied the principle selectively. The Entente stressed the case for the self-determination of the Belgians, the Serbs, and all the subject nationalities of Austria-Hungary. The Central Powers claimed to be fighting for their peoples and for the self-determination of the “captive nations” held in thrall to the Tsarist Empire, especially the Finns, Ukrainians and Baltic peoples. The Germans pointed to the British, French, and Russian denials of self-determination in their Empires from Ireland to India. Both sides claimed to support independence for Poland, as long as the new state was carved out of their enemies’ former Polish possessions. President Wilson had made the principle of self-determination a recurring theme in his various pronouncements on the war. It is important, therefore, to examine the response of leading British Catholics not only to the emerging issue of the fate of Austria-Hungary, but to the much grander visions promoted by Wilson of a new world order, a new internationalism, and sweeping self-determination.

President Wilson encapsulated his programme a number of times during the war in the period of American neutrality. As we have seen, two speeches were especially important. On 27 May 1916, in an address to the League to Enforce Peace, he advocated America’s willingness to mediate peace in the European war on the basis of self-determination of subject peoples and a “universal association of nations” to prevent
future wars.\textsuperscript{39} But Wilson’s most advanced ideas before America entered the war were propounded in his “Peace Without Victory” speech, which was delivered to Congress on 22 January 1917, focusing on a new world order and the rights of nations to govern themselves. Outlining his ideals of self-determination, Wilson declared that “inviolable security of life, of worship, and of industrial and social development should be guaranteed to all peoples who have lived hitherto under the power of governments devoted to a faith and purpose hostile to their own.”\textsuperscript{40} He also enlarged upon his controversial notion of the freedom of the seas, recommending direct outlets to the sea for all peoples struggling towards their own development and opining that the “freedom of the seas is the \textit{sine qua non} of peace, equality, and cooperation.”\textsuperscript{41} In addition, Wilson committed the United States to an international guarantee against war within a new league of nations, if the belligerents accepted the American vision of a “peace without victory”. This included the renunciation of the old system of balance of power as well as the equality of rights of all nations, great and small.\textsuperscript{42}

Since peace without victory did not correspond with the principles for which the Entente claimed to be fighting – the complete obliteration of German militarism – British Catholics, in common with many of their compatriots, received Wilson’s speech with disapproval at best. Although they considered Wilson’s intentions to be noble, they complained that his speech indicated that he was too far removed to understand the

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., pp. 535-536.
Entente’s cause. The Catholic press, with the exception of the more moderate Catholic Times, was vehemently critical of such terms as “peace without victory” and “freedom of the seas”. The Universe dedicated a leading article to the President’s address, commenting that although it admired the speech’s contents, it considered a peace short of victory to be quite unacceptable. “Peace without victory”, The Universe remarked, brought home the realisation of how utterly distant Wilson was from the conflict at hand. The Universe compared Wilson’s vision to someone watching cinema. The person could see the picture moving, could see death and blood, but it was only a moving scene which had no peril for that person. “With every respect to President Wilson, we know for what we are fighting and with whom.” The Universe also took particular offence at Wilson’s expression the “freedom of the seas”, complaining that, to Germany, this phrase meant “freedom from the sea-power of England.” The article concluded with the retort that: “if a ‘peace without victory’ and the ‘freedom of the seas’ be conditions precedent to a final settlement, that final settlement will never be reached while we have a sovereign left to spend and a man left to fight.”

The Catholic Herald received the speech with a similar cynicism. The Herald welcomed Wilson’s attempts at peace and found his aims laudable. In the Herald’s view, however, his terms were too idealistic to carry much weight with the Entente. It was not rational, the Herald explained, to ask the two enemies to conclude a “peace without victory” because, in effect, this meant that each had “to admit that the other is as right, as meritorious, as honourable, and as just in his aims and acts as is his opponent.” This was

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43 Even the Catholic Times admitted that some points in the speech could be criticised. As a whole, however, the Catholic Times found the speech “a noble pronouncement.” It praised Wilson’s efforts and expressed agreement with him that unless peace terms were in accord with justice and freedom, there could be no lasting peace. Catholic Times, 26 Jan. 1917, p. 3.
unacceptable to the Herald, for “never can…truth and error, honour and dishonour, mean just the same things.” The Catholic newspaper strongly reaffirmed the Allies’ wish to attain a clear and overwhelming victory. Once that victory was attained, they would be able to create a league of peace with or without America’s aid. Like The Universe, the Herald concluded defiantly that the reply to Wilson was that the Allies demanded the continuance of war “till those who treacherously and ruthlessly commenced it shall fully agree to forgo the ambitions that prompted them.”

Similarly, The Tablet objected vehemently to a “peace without victory”, although it conceded that there was much in Wilson’s speech that was similar to the Allies’ war aims. According to The Tablet, however, these similarities would be overshadowed if the Allies were to conclude a peace without victory. The Tablet went on to list some of the Allies’ demands and to consider whether these demands could be achieved if a peace based on Wilson’s formula was to be agreed upon. For example, the restitution and reparation for all the small nations that had suffered at the hands of the Central Powers was not likely to be carried out if total victory was not achieved by the Entente. Poland was not likely to be surrendered by Austria and Germany if they were not overwhelmingly defeated, Armenia was to be freed and Turkey evicted from Europe. Did Wilson think this could be done “by some process of moral suasion, or be included in the terms of any peace which is not founded on victory?” asked The Tablet. The newspaper maintained that: “Any peace which is not founded on the victory of the Allies will…leave

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rankling memories of bitterness, born of the knowledge that the forces of freedom had failed in the strife, and that those answerable for the great crime had gone unpunished.”  

Prominent Catholics complimented the spurning of President Wilson’s peace formula by the Catholic press. Bishop Keating, for example, in his Lenten Pastoral of 1917, rejected any form of peace before the menace of German Kultur was destroyed: “‘Peace without victory’ is a misreading of the actual situation so gross as to be hardly credible.” Prussianism and that frightful doctrine, Kultur, he added, must be suppressed before Europe could experience tranquility. It was asserted that peace based on Wilson’s formula would only be a temporary truce that would lead to an even greater war. In March, Fr. Joseph Keating (no relation to Bishop Keating), the editor of The Month, published an article in that periodical criticising Germany’s, and also implicitly Wilson’s, notion of the “freedom of the seas”. Keating explained that the seas were relatively free in time of peace. Germany, however, wanted “the abolition of navies outside territorial waters, and consequently freedom from interference in her subsequent designs of world-empire.” Keating argued that Germany already possessed the most powerful land instrument on earth. Britain’s Royal Navy had prevented her from accomplishing world dominion. Thus, the logic behind Keating’s argument was that the freedom of the seas, as he saw it, would give Germany combined land and sea power.

But Wilson’s own vision of a negotiated peace between equals was short-lived. The U.S. entered the war on 6 April 1917. Germany’s resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February, after many months of wrangling between the German

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46 *The Tablet*, 27 Jan. 1917, p. 100.
civilian and military leaders, was one of the main contributing factors that led America to declare war on Germany. The civilian government, led by Bethmann Hollweg, had long opposed unrestricted submarine warfare. But Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the new military High Command which was appointed at the end of August 1916, promised a quick victory if the submarine weapon was applied without any restrictions. If a confrontation between Bethmann Hollweg and the military took place over the issue, the Chancellor was bound to lose. As David Stevenson has succinctly put it, “whereas the U-boat lobby promised rapid victory, Bethmann could offer only a continuing battle of attrition, in which the Allies seemed likely gradually to gain the upper hand.”49 After the failure of Germany’s Peace Offer in December 1916, Bethmann could no longer resist the clamour to release the submarines. This, coupled with the interception of the Zimmerman Telegram50 by British intelligence and its transmission to Washington on 24 February, propelled America over the precipice. America’s entry into the war, combined with the fact that Russia had undergone a transformation from autocracy to democracy in March, meant that Wilson could now plan for the implementation of his ideals in a post-war Europe. As the champion of liberal internationalism, he would take part in the peace conference after the war and promote the “Wilsonian” ideology of self-determination and an international organisation to enforce peace.

America’s eventual declaration of war evoked the full support of the Catholic hierarchy in America, despite the fact that relations between Wilson and the Catholic bishops had been cool for many months. Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, and John

Ireland, the Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, had long been critical of Wilson’s policy of neutrality. As a result, and in contrast to his two predecessors, Presidents Roosevelt and Taft, who had always welcomed the leading Catholic prelates at the White House, Wilson the Presbyterian “did not make them feel at home.” In the summer of 1916, at the height of the “preparedness” campaign, Gibbons had publicly supported universal military service; like Bourne, he maintained his belief that military discipline would improve the character and physical condition of young men. Once America declared war, the Cardinal issued a statement to the press, urging “every American citizen to do his duty…. The primary duty of a citizen is loyalty to country.” His “patriotic” call elicited gratitude from Roosevelt, the former President, who thanked the Cardinal for his “noble and patriotic appeal.” Indeed, under Gibbons’ leadership, the Catholic body in America was the first group to pledge its unstinting support to the government. On April 18, the Archbishop of Baltimore led the other archbishops in passing a resolution stressing their loyalty and “patriotism” in that dark hour. They declared:

Inspired neither by hate nor fear, but by the holy sentiments of truest patriotic fervor and zeal, we stand ready, we and all the flock committed to our keeping, to co-operate in every way possible with our President and our national government, to the end that the great and holy cause of liberty may triumph and that our beloved country may emerge from this hour of test stronger and nobler than ever.

Thus, remarkably, “patriotic zeal” was now declared one of the “holy sentiments” by the American bishops. By 11-12 August 1917, the National Catholic War Council was

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51 S. Leslie, The Irish Tangle, p. 165.
52 J. T. Ellis, op. cit., II, pp. 237-238.
53 Quoted in ibid., p. 239. See also J. T. Ellis, American Catholicism, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 136.
54 Quoted in J. T. Ellis, The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, II, p. 239.
formed to unify all Catholics in their war activities and, therefore, to render all assistance to the government.  

The clarity of the pro-war statements on the part of the hierarchy had its remarkable effects on the Catholic laity in America. The solid show of loyalty was supplemented by Catholic enlistment in the armed forces. Although Catholics formed but one sixth of the American population, they comprised one third of the total naval and military forces.

Fresh from denouncing Wilson’s irritating high-minded liberal internationalist idealism only weeks before, now the overwhelming majority of leading British Catholics publicly welcomed American entry into the war as a testimony to the moral superiority of the Entente’s cause. The British Catholic press as well as prominent Catholic individuals paid tribute to this and were delighted with American Catholic devotion to the war. The Catholic Times, for example, expressed gratification with America’s declaration of war because, it enthusiastically declared, it was more a moral than a material triumph for the cause of democracy. This was all the more evident, the Catholic Times maintained, because America was not interested in conquests but only in the attainment of justice and liberty. The Catholic Herald described America’s decision to commit itself to the Allies’ side as a momentous event. The Herald contended that it had always known that Wilson would bring the U.S. into the conflict, but that he had had to wait patiently in order to clear some domestic hurdles first. On 21 April 1917, the Herald published another article, asserting that in light of America coming to the aid of democracy, other

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56 Ibid., p. 817. For other “patriotic” activities that were carried out by American Catholics after the U.S. entered the war, see J. Hennesey, American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 225. P. McNeil, in her article “Catholic Conscientious Objection during World War II”, Catholic Historical Review, 61(2), (1975), has revealed that out of a total of 3989 American C.O.s in World War I, only 4 were Catholic (p. 232).


58 Catholic Times, 13 Apr. 1917, p. 3.
nations must consider their own democratic principles. As a consequence, for example, British “misrule” in Ireland and in other states in the Empire must come under review.\textsuperscript{60}

Prominent Catholic individuals mirrored this opinion of the Catholic press. Upon America’s plunge into the foray, for instance, Bernard Vaughan voiced his pride in such a move and considered it an affirmation of the justice of the cause of the Allies. He proclaimed: “The Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes are now floating in the same breeze and the two nations have made up their minds…to keep their flags flying topmost high while beneath them there is a fight for freedom and justice against frightfulness and \textit{Kultur}.”\textsuperscript{61} Vaughan’s rhetoric was surpassed by that of William Barry, who lavished praise on President Wilson and allocated to him a place in greatness beside Presidents Lincoln and Washington. Barry viewed Wilson’s step as “the boldest ever ventured since America became a free nation” because by entering the war, the U.S. had spoken the verdict of history on the conflagration.\textsuperscript{62}

Noting the nationalistic susceptibilities of British Catholics, as well as the “patriotic” sentiments of Cardinal Gibbons, the British government saw its chance to make use of these two elements for a propaganda ploy. On 7 April, Cardinal Bourne received a letter from the Department of Information informing him that if he cared to send a “message of greeting” to Gibbons on U.S. entry into the war, the letter would be sent through official channels.\textsuperscript{63} Bourne was more than willing to comply, immediately penning a letter to his American counterpart. He told him of the “deep joy and consolation” of British Catholics that America should unite with Britain “in the defence

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Catholic Herald}, 14 Apr. 1917, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 21 Apr. 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{61} Quoted in \textit{The Tablet}, 21 Apr. 1917, p. 516.
\textsuperscript{62} Quoted in the \textit{Catholic Times}, 13 Apr. 1917, p. 5.
of those sacred principles with which centuries of Christian teaching have inspired the
world.” The letter continued:

The judgement passed on the present awful conflict by the righteous entrance of your nation
therein is a testimony of inestimable value to us all, and must do much to hasten that triumph of
right and justice upon which the welfare and freedom of all peoples and nations depend.64

Gibbons hastily replied to Bourne in like terms:

We enter the war with no rancour towards any people, with no desire for gain of any kind, but
solely – to quote the words of our able and patriotic president – ‘to vindicate the principles of
peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power….’ Happy then
are we to unite with your country….

When asked by the government whether it could make the exchange between the two
Cardinals public, Bourne quickly consented. The result was that these stage-managed
declarations of the Anglo-American Catholic hierarchy in favour of the righteousness of
the war were publicised in the major organs of the British Catholic and secular press to
elicit the maximum propaganda value from them.66

The American Catholics’ apparently unqualified commitment to duty in war and
their effusive loyalty to their country delighted their British co-religionists. The Glasgow
Observer published an article in June 1917 expressing its pride in the “patriotism” of
Catholics in America, particularly after the archbishops passed the resolution of 18 April
pledging their solidarity with the government. The Observer boasted that after that
pledge, and after the manifestation of American Catholic dedication to the fight at hand,
intelligent men outside the Catholic faith would now recognise the “loyalty, patriotism,
fidelity” and capacity for sacrifice of Catholics.67 Even in early 1918, The Universe was still elated that Catholics in America were so solidly united behind the war effort.68 In February, it proudly reported that Cardinal John Farley of New York had “spoken out strongly” in his Christmas message and had referred to the conflict as a “glorious cause”.69 Thus, “patriotism” was flaunted as an inherent part of Catholicism and this was said to have strengthened British Catholics’ claims that their absolute loyalty was naturally affiliated to the nation.

To return to the broader history of the battle for hearts and minds, by the winter of 1917-18, Wilsonian themes were again at the foreground and had again become intensely controversial. There was growing pressure on the Entente powers to revise their war aims from Wilson as well as from other quarters. The last time the Entente powers had made any statement on their war aims was in the official reply to Wilson’s Peace Note in January 1917. In October 1917, Wilson sent Colonel Edward M. House, his closest adviser, to Europe to attend the upcoming Inter-Allied Conference in Paris in November. House was to try and obtain a moderate statement on war aims from the Entente leaders. When the conference convened on 29 November, however, House was unable to extract a joint war aims statement disavowing the secret treaties and renouncing all annexations from the leaders of the Entente.70 Furthermore, before the conference was held, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in Russia on 7 November and issued a peace decree with a tone that was strikingly Wilsonian. The decree called for the

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68 The Universe, 25 Jan. 1918, p. 3.
69 Ibid., 1 Feb. 1918, p. 5.
“immediate opening of negotiations for a just and democratic peace.” This was followed by their publication of the secret treaties of the Allies two weeks later, which were printed in British and American newspapers. By 15 November, the Bolsheviks had begun negotiations for an armistice with Germany at Brest-Litovsk. This, and the publication of Lord Lansdowne’s letter on 29 November, as well as the publication on 28 December of a Memorandum on War Aims by the British Labour party, further added to the enormous pressure on the Entente and the U.S. to nominate liberal democratic war aims. By that time, the Austrian question had again come to the fore and deciding Austria’s fate had become another urgent war aim of the Allied and Associated Powers.

Thus, Lloyd George was compelled to make a statement on British war aims. In a major speech at the Caxton Hall on 5 January 1918, he echoed the Wilsonian ideology on the new diplomacy, and advocated “genuine self-government on true democratic principles” for the different nationalities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, Lloyd George insisted that “the breakup of Austria-Hungary is no part of our war aims” if a degree of self-government was granted. More importantly, on 8 January President Wilson proclaimed his famous Fourteen Points. Point 10 stated: “The people of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest possible opportunity of autonomous development.”

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71 Quoted in T. J. Knock, op. cit., p. 140.
72 Ibid., p. 142.
73 Quoted in K. J. Calder, op. cit., p. 126.
words hinted at the continued existence of the Habsburg Empire in Central Europe in the form of loosely connected, but autonomous states along federal lines.

By March 1918, Wilson, with his double agenda of new world order and self-determination, was looked upon by his ideological friends as the saviour of Europe. So much so that the Catholic Herald found it necessary, particularly after the publication of the secret treaties by the Bolsheviks, to demand an explanation of the Entente’s policy. It attacked the Allied governments for not adopting Wilson’s more liberal policy and for eschewing peace. “If the Allies do not wholeheartedly accept Wilson’s policy,” preached the Herald, “but are out to rival the Huns in a game of grab, of annexations and compensations…then what matters it who wins? One Hun is as bad as another.” Wilson, in the Herald’s opinion, was the upholder of freedom and justice while Lloyd George was a self-seeking warmonger.75 The reopening of full-scale battle on the Western Front in March 1918 soon silenced such discordant voices. Hopes for separate peace with Austria-Hungary faded also. After the failure of the Sixtus Affair,76 Austria-Hungary became increasingly dependent on Germany and decided to stake her hopes on the German Spring Offensive and final victory of the Central Powers. Thereafter, Allied

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75 Catholic Herald, 23 Mar. 1918, p. 2.  
opinion swung decisively against the Habsburg Empire, and by the summer of 1918, clear and unequivocal commitments were made to dissolve it.\footnote{D. R. Zivojinovic, “The Vatican, Woodrow Wilson, and the Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918”, \textit{East European Quarterly}, 3(1), (Mar. 1969), p. 49. See also K. J. Calder, op. cit., p. 196ff.}

Whereas by the summer of 1918 the Allies became more determined to dissolve the Habsburg Empire, the Vatican never abandoned Austria. At the beginning of 1918, when the collapse of Austria-Hungary seemed imminent, Benedict sent a letter to Emperor Charles urging him to seek an immediate way out of the war. The situation was becoming desperate for the Habsburgs and, as Benedict suggested to Charles, he must sue for peace through President Wilson, for the President was the only one that could extricate Austria from her grave position.\footnote{J. F. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 131-132.} Even as late as October 1918, Benedict was still trying to convince Vittorio Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, of the efficacy of preserving Austria-Hungary, but all to no avail.\footnote{This pro-Austrian policy, not only in 1918, but throughout the war, earned a reputation for the Vatican of being pro-German among British Protestants.} This pro-Austrian policy, not only in 1918, but throughout the war, earned a reputation for the Vatican of being pro-German among British Protestants.

Catholics in Britain rejected this notion that because the Vatican sought to preserve Austria-Hungary, it necessarily favoured the Central Powers. Some Catholics in fact saw the Vatican’s policy towards Austria-Hungary in quite a different light and stressed the importance of preserving the Habsburg Empire. Christopher Dawson expressed this most acutely when he wrote to Leo Ward, Wilfrid Ward’s son, in late 1917 that the Anglo-American policy of the “liquidation of Europe” was not compatible with the Holy See’s “conservatism and diplomatic traditionalism.” To the Vatican, Dawson explained, the partition of Germany and Austria would seem like “a lunatic’s nightmare.”
Thus, from that point of view, according to Dawson, “the ordinary English publicist jumps to the idea that [the Vatican is] pro-German.” He continued:

The charge of pro-Austrianism is more plausible, but isn’t it true rather that Austria is for peace because she is Catholic than that the Pope is for peace because he is pro-Austrian[?] Where you get Protestantism in Hungary…you get the spirit of war. The Vatican has a deep understanding of the European tradition on one side of it which our directing forces have not. Austria is a child that she [Rome] has nursed through the measles of the Reformation and the influenza of Josephinism and even if the child is sickly and ill-behaved she would never consent to throwing it into a Medea’s cauldron in order to satisfy nationalist doctrinaires.80

Thus, some Catholics in Britain insisted that Austria was still a vital factor for long-term peace in Europe. That the maintenance of Austria as a great power in a post-war Europe was imperative was stressed by John McKean in the House of Commons on 14 February 1918. McKean declared that Austria was a key to permanent peace in the world. He warned the government that if it desired to achieve a lasting peace after the war, there was a primary condition that had to be fulfilled: the detachment of Austria-Hungary from Germany. He asserted his conviction that Austria commanded the situation. “If you are able to detach Austria in the future from her alliance with Germany, then, humanly speaking you have taken one of the very safest measures for the future peace of the world.”81

But this was precisely what the excitable William Barry had warned against when the Austrian question became more prominent in late 1917 and 1918. After September 1917, Barry published a series of articles in Nineteenth Century on the theme of “breaking Austria”. These articles, even by his own admission, made “English readers, especially among Catholics,” wonder “at the severe language I used in regard to the

79 Ibid., p. 132. For the Vatican as negotiator between Italy and Austria-Hungary in 1918, see D. R. Zivojinovic, The United States and the Vatican Policies, pp. 158-159.
80 Quoted in M. Ward, p. 467-468.
House of Habsburg.”

For Barry advocated that only by dissolving the Habsburg Empire would true peace be achieved. In “Break Austria”, an article he published in September 1917, he argued that “no German defeat can be deemed final which does not lead as an immediate consequence to the dissolution of Austria.” He warned the Allies that “unless you break Austria”, the defeat of Germany would be nothing more than a temporary truce that would lead to a more exhaustible struggle than the one being fought. The reason that Barry was at such pains to eliminate Austria-Hungary was because he considered that Austria-Hungary formed “the solid keystone of the mighty Pan-German arch” which was devouring Europe and which made Britain its object of attack. Another reason why he so desired the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was because it would free all the subjugated nations from Habsburg domination, and these would form a ring of free and independent nations around Germany that would isolate her.

In November 1917, Barry reiterated the need to destroy Austria and give the various nationalities under Habsburg rule their independence. Again, he warned the British government that whereas Germany constituted the military problem in Europe, Austria remained the chief political problem which was just as dangerous as Germany’s militarism. The solution which Barry proposed to the Austrian problem was to “Break Austria, else Austria will break you.” Unlike McKean, Barry opposed the idea of detaching Austria-Hungary from Germany. He reasoned that this would simply consolidate Germany, and Austria-Hungary would be able to offer her valuable assistance as a neutral state, just as Holland was feeding Germany during the war in the name of

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82 W. Barry, Memories and Opinions, p. 270.
83 W. Barry, “Break Austria”, p. 442.
84 Ibid., p. 445.
trade. At the same time, the Kaiser would have been “liberated…from a grave anxiety.”

Barry’s final article of the war years appeared in September 1918, in which he again argued that Austria was more villainous than Germany because she was enslaving so many races.

Supporting Barry’s contention that Austria-Hungary must be broken was The Tablet. Even as late as November 1918, just before the armistice with Germany was signed, The Tablet published a rather startling article denying that Catholicism was identified with the Habsburg Monarchy. The Catholic weekly declared that it appeared that the Catholic Slavs, who had long suffered under the rule of nominally Catholic Austria, were going to be granted their demands. In Croatia and Slavonia, The Tablet reported proudly, the Catholic episcopate was united with, and to a certain extent directing, the nationalist movement. Although the Czecho-slovak hierarchy was not as united, the lesser clergy were siding with the people and, therefore, the nationalist movement, and seemed determined to throw off the Austro-Hungarian yoke. Thus, the perpetual call to “smash” Austria, The Tablet declared enthusiastically, was “rapidly approaching fulfillment.”

Consequently, we find that at a time when the Pope was doing his utmost to prevent the dissolution of the Austrian Empire, some British Catholics were preaching equally determinedly in favour of her destruction.

In both his “Peace without Victory” speech as well as in his Fourteen Points, Wilson advocated a league of nations. In his address to the Senate on 22 January 1917, he

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85 Ibid., p. 451. Barry predicted that for this very reason, Germany would resist the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy to the end.
87 Ibid., p. 889.
said: “It is right that before [the final settlement] comes this Government should frankly formulate the conditions upon which it would feel justified in asking our people to approve its formal and solemn adherence to a League for Peace.”90 In these terms, he revealed his plan to ensure America’s adherence to a league of nations. In addition, the last of his Fourteen Points, placed in that position intentionally to give it maximum emphasis, was announced to the world in a speech delivered almost a year later. Point fourteen read: “A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”91 Indeed, as early as May 1916, Wilson had stood on the same platform with his opposite number, Henry Cabot Lodge, leader of the Republicans in the Senate, and addressed a rally of the League to Enforce Peace. Both Wilson and Lodge stressed the need for a new international system to maintain peace and justice.92

In Britain, interest in a post-war organisation for peace was expressed almost as soon as the war broke out. In its 1914 September programme, the U.D.C.’s third of its four “Cardinal Points” advocated the setting up of an “International Council…with such machinery for securing international agreement as shall be the guarantee of an abiding peace.”93 Furthermore, in September and October 1914, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson,
a scholar in classics and probably the first Briton to conceive of the idea of the League of Nations, founded a group that met under Lord Bryce’s chairmanship and came to be known as the Bryce Group. The Bryce Group’s objective was to consider various proposals for a league of nations and the resulting discussion and ideas were printed in the winter of 1914-1915 under the title *Proposals for the Avoidance of War.* Of much more importance was the League of Nations Society (L.N.S.) which was formed in May 1915. By November 1915, the Society had formulated a programme and, in addition to circulating this programme in liberal circles, proceeded to educate the public about the league idea over the next two years. In addition, the Fabian Society published a detailed examination of the question of international peace after the war in the *New Statesman* in July 1915. This publication, combined with further study of an international organisation, was published in book form, as *International Government*, in 1916.

The Liberal government leadership was supportive of the creation of a league of nations after the war. While Asquith and Grey both made statements that amounted to an endorsement of a league as a British war aim after the war, they made it clear, however, that they could make no formal declaration on the issue without first consulting their allies. When Lloyd George succeeded Asquith, however, support for a league of nations in his government was less than enthusiastic. It has been suggested that Lloyd George’s announcement of his own support for a league was given only for propaganda reasons. G.

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94 Ibid., p. 8.
95 Ibid., p. 9.
97 Ibid., pp. 8-10. G. W. Egerton, op. cit., pp. 14-16. *International Government* was a landmark in the League of Nations movement because it provided the public with the earliest and most thorough examination of an international organisation for peace. Moreover, it was also used by the British government to prepare its position on the League question in the Peace Conference.
W. Egerton, for example, has argued that in his Caxton Hall address in January 1918, which accepted in the vaguest terms the need for the creation of some international body to prevent war, the Prime Minister sought only to regain the support of British labour and liberalism.\footnote{G. W. Egerton, op. cit., p. 61. In his address, Lloyd George said: “we must seek by the creation of some international organization to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war.”} The government gave no firm commitment to the concept, preferring to establish an enquiry into the viability of such a scheme, under the chairmanship of Walter Phillimore. Only General Smuts and Robert Cecil gave strong support to the proposal for a league of nations from within the British government. Thus, the implication is that Lloyd George himself did not genuinely espouse the league idea.

Initially, a large section of British Catholics was in agreement with the need for a society of states to preserve peace after the war. The Jesuits in particular were enormously supportive of the idea. The Jesuit Charles Plater promoted the benefits of such a society as early as 1915, almost two years before the L.N.S. intensified its campaign to educate the public about the league scheme. In his essay “Efforts towards Peace”, Plater pointed out that many systems to create peace had been developed over the years, including aggressive imperialism and international socialism. But these, he was sure, would all fail.\footnote{Plater considered the various systems in his “Efforts towards Peace”, in C. D. Plater, (ed.), op. cit., pp. 139-147.} Plater supported a Society of States because he considered the interdependence of nations as an important ideal and urged that the idea should receive more consideration. “Such a Society [of States]”, he believed, “if it is to be one and permanent, will need to establish an international authority which, while preserving national liberties, will deal with international problems.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 174.} This was one of the earliest
expositions by a leading British Catholic on a future organisation of peace during the war.

By the early months of 1917, when American entry into the war seemed almost to be a certainty, the League of Nations Society thought the time was ripe to carry out an intense campaign to gain public support for a league. At that time, there was a hint that Catholics would insist on the inclusion of the Holy See in any association formed to keep the peace in the future. This appeared in the 1917 Lenten Pastoral of Bishop Keating, in which he stressed that the most potent agent that the peace movement could have was the Pope. Keating explained that “The Brotherhood of Nations, the dream of Peace Societies, is and has ever been an accomplished fact under [the Pope’s] sway, where the cold word ‘foreigner’ is unknown.”102 “Even in the full fury of this tempest”, Keating continued, “the Rock of Peter raises its serene peak above the boiling waves – the one neutral that retains undiminished its subtle and unshaken hold on the confidence of all.” Surely, the Bishop insisted, such a valuable asset could not be ignored by the world. The world had excluded Pope Leo XIII from the first Hague Convention and it had resulted in a miserable failure. Keating warned the nations not to repeat the same mistake again.103

The position of some British Catholics on the project of a league of nations was not to be made clear until Mgr. Henry Grosch, a Jesuit, was to speak at an interdenominational conference in July 1917. The origins of this conference are of interest. This ad hoc conference was arranged by the League of Nations Society, since the support of the Churches was judged to be vital in building respect, and the necessary moral sanction for any future league. In response to an invitation to a preliminary

102 [Frederick W. Keating], Bishop of Northampton, The Peace of God, p. 10.
103 Ibid., p. 11.
meeting, which was to be held in June for various denominational representatives in order to organise the main conference, Fr. Joseph Keating urged Bourne to ensure that Catholics were represented. Bourne agreed to this, and Fr. W. MacMahon S.J. represented the Catholic body at the meeting, where it was resolved that the main conference would be held on 17 July and personal invitations would be sent to one thousand clergy. The conference was also to be advertised in religious newspapers. In reporting to Keating, MacMahon stressed that there was “nothing pacifist in [the proposed conference], and nothing of Quakerism showed its head.” The hierarchy’s on-going sensitivity about anything that smacked of the peace movement is exhibited here. Thus reassured that the proposed league would not threaten this war, Bourne agreed that the Catholic Church would be represented and Mgr. Grosch should be appointed to speak at the conference.

The conference eventually convened in the Central Hall, Westminster, and was composed of ministers representing the Church of England, the Catholic Church, and the nonconformists. Bishop Gore, the Anglican Bishop of Oxford, who presided, argued that the project for a league of nations was an extension of the “ethical implications” of Christianity. In addressing the conference, Grosch approved of the L.N.S. and its aims. However, he confessed, he was surprised to find that physical and economic force were contemplated for use against an aggressive nation after diplomatic efforts were exhausted, but there was no indication of invoking moral force. There was “one great moral force which that Society would ignore, or not secure the help of, at its peril; that institution was…the Holy See.” Grosch called on the Society not to ignore the immense

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104 Fr. Joseph Keating to Bourne, 7 June 1917, Bo.5/80, Bourne Papers.
105 Fr. W. MacMahon to Fr. Keating, 12 June 1917, Bo.5/80, Bourne Papers.
moral value which could be provided by the Holy See. The Pope, Grosch continued, had millions of adherents in every country of the world who were “bound to him by the strongest ties of reverence and obedience.” As one who was disinterested in material gain, the Pope would appeal to all members of the League.107 He warned that if the League was to succeed, it must have spiritual as well as moral sanction, and this could only be provided by the Holy See. Like Bishop Keating, Grosch alluded to the Hague Convention and noted that it had ended in “disastrous failure”. It would be interesting to speculate, he added, whether it would have had the same result had the Pope not been excluded and his voice prevented from being heard among the nations. Grosch concluded with the ominous warning that if the L.N.S. “disregarded the power of the Holy See as a power morally great, and attempted to effect this union of nations, it might look forward to defeat – and it would deserve it.”108

By late 1917, the Guild of the Pope’s Peace published a pamphlet in which it, too, deplored the exclusion of the Holy See from any projected society of nations the objective of which was to promote peace. The booklet outlined past instances in which popes had mediated between nations. It then turned to the formation of a league of nations, stipulating that unless an impartial authority was included in such a league, it would fail. “It has been proved again and again that a league of nations without such a supreme authority is like a ship without a rudder.”109

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107 This was echoed by Lord Braye ten years later. Writing in 1927, Braye expressed the firm belief that the Holy See should have been the “arbiter of nations”. The League of Nations, according to Braye, was a poor substitute for the Holy See because the latter was free from the entanglement of temporal power and was therefore efficacious in deciding the worthiness of international claims. Lord Braye, op. cit., p. 314.
108 The full speech was reported in *The Tablet*, 21 July 1917, p. 79. See also *The Universe*, 20 July 1917, p. 3.
By December 1917, Fr. Keating was getting more involved in the League of Nations Society as a representative of Bourne. On 2 December, he wrote a letter to Cardinal Bourne explaining that the L.N.S. was anxious to bring a statement of its aims before the Catholic clergy. It had been suggested, he explained, that the statement should be sent to the bishops and deaneries of each diocese, and Keating advised Bourne to attach a covering letter recommending the study of the statements to secure the clergy’s attention.\footnote{Keating to Bourne, 2 Dec. 1917, Bo.5/57d, Bourne Papers.} This was further elucidated on 14 December when he reported to Bourne that he had attended several of the Society’s meetings. At the last meeting, he had pointed out that “an appeal to the Catholic clergy from a mixed gathering of all ‘denominations’ would have no force, and that the only way of securing their attention was to address them through their own authorities.” Keating kept up his attempts to prod his Cardinal into action. Keating told the Cardinal that he, Bourne, could give an informal recommendation to the clergy advising that the Society’s programme was to be carried out after the war, as if to reassure the “patriotic” members of the clergy. Bourne, he advised, could also point out that the substance of this programme was similar to that expressed by the Pope in August 1917. In his enthusiasm for the L.N.S., and probably to convince Bourne to make this leap in endorsing the league project, he warned that it would be unfortunate “if Catholics were backward in advocating the restoration of international law.”\footnote{Keating to Bourne, 14 Dec. 1917, Bo.5/57d, Bourne papers.} Bourne appears to have endorsed the programme because in January 1918, a Committee of Ministers of Religion was formed as an auxiliary to the Executive Committee of the L.N.S. It comprised clergy from all denominations and Fr.
Keating represented the Catholic Church. The aim of the Committee was to promote the idea of a league of nations throughout the Churches.\textsuperscript{112}

The inclusion of the Holy See in any future league, however, was still not listed among the aims of the L.N.S. Thus, in a letter to Bishop Dunn of Nottingham on 17 February 1918, Bourne admitted that they could only insist on the presence of the Holy See in the peace conference if other neutrals, such as Switzerland and Spain, were included. However, when a congress for the establishment of a league of nations was to be held, he added, Catholics’ insistence on the inclusion of the Holy See must be adamant.\textsuperscript{113}

This indignation at the neglect of the Holy See may have contributed to Bourne’s refusal to sign an interdenominational manifesto supporting the League of Nations in February 1918. A copy of the manifesto, which was drafted by Bishop Gore and Rev. William Selbie, the Congregationalist Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, was sent to Bourne by Vernon Bartlet of the L.N.S. to sign. In a rare show of unity among the Christian bodies, the manifesto, entitled “Christianity and the League of Nations”, was supported by leading churchmen, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and it urged that a league of nations should be the first priority in the peace terms. The signatories affirmed their support for a league stating: “We believe that a new system of international law and authority, acting through an inclusive League of Nations in place of any Balance of Power, is the condition of a just and lasting peace.”\textsuperscript{114} Bourne, however, without giving any reason, refused to sign the manifesto himself, replying rather mysteriously two days after the manifesto was published in the press that “It seems better that I should not

\textsuperscript{112} Pamphlet entitled “League of Nations Society”, Jan. 1918, Bo.5/57d, Bourne papers.
\textsuperscript{113} Bourne to Bishop Dunn, 17 Feb. 1918, G.02.01, “Correspondence with Westminster”, Dunn Papers.
sign it now.”¹¹⁵ The final draft of the manifesto had Charles Plater’s, and not Bourne’s, name appended to it.¹¹⁶ Again, the incident underlines Bourne’s extraordinary caution and his reluctance to be associated with any initiative that might be seen to be supporting peace before a final victory was achieved.

Thereafter, there is no evidence to indicate that Bourne, or the Jesuits, took any further active interest in the League of Nations movement. In fact, evidence suggests that towards the end of the war, Bourne became quite apathetic to the project of a League of Nations. On 18 October 1918, Hall Caine invited him to take part in a literary conversation on the League of Nations. Caine explained that some of the most intelligent minds in the world would be involved, including Edward Grey, Lord Bryce and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York among the British.¹¹⁷ Even the assurances of such respectable company left Bourne unmoved. The Cardinal seems not to have taken part since there is no indication of a reply or any other correspondence with respect to the invitation.

This is further buttressed by the rejection of another invitation from Archbishop Randall Davidson to Bourne on 22 October to attend a conference for the Churches to discuss the proposals of the League of Nations. Bourne politely declined the invitation, explaining that since it was “pre-eminently an international question, and one distinctly for international statesmanship,” he could not attend or be represented. He asserted that the scheme could only be worked out by the statesmen and the statesmen had “hardly
begun to do so.” He also noted that he must refuse as a result of the two resolutions that were passed the previous week. This was a reference to a private conference made up of various denominations that had been held on 16 October. Bourne had been represented by Mgr. Bidwell, his Auxiliary Bishop. Two resolutions were adopted at the conference, but Bidwell did not vote and indeed left the conference before the resolutions were passed. Bourne may have felt strongly against the first resolution in particular, which implied the immediate implementation of the League of Nations proposal – even during the war. Thus, towards the end of the war, just as real planning for the League of Nations was being undertaken, the leading Catholic authority in Britain abstained from any initiatives supporting it.

In contrast to Bourne, who was initially at least willing to be associated with initiatives to promote the idea of a league of nations after America entered the war, most Catholic Conservatives remained nonchalant about the whole project. Indeed, like other Conservatives, some were outright in their hostility toward any talk of such a league while the war was being fought for two reasons: firstly, its origins emanated from Radical circles and secondly, most of these Radicals supported a negotiated settlement. Thus, those who were most in favour of the war were least in favour of a league. Even in 1918, when the league was being endorsed by a considerable section of British society, most Catholic Conservatives rejected the idea. A characteristic example is that of Lord Denbigh. On 29 March 1918, Denbigh wrote a letter to the editor of The Times revealing that he had been invited to attend a private conference on the consideration of a league.

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118 Quoted in The Times, 31 Oct. 1918, p. 4.
119 The first resolution stated: “This meeting, realizing the responsibility of the Churches in reference to the speedy furtherance of the League of Nations proposal, respectfully requests the Archbishop of Canterbury to summon a gathering, consisting of the heads of all the British Churches...to confer without delay and to
Denbigh declined the offer, saying that he did not want “to have anything to do with this underground agitation for discussing the question of a League of Nations.” He was convinced that before Germany was utterly defeated, Britain could not afford to be seen talking about such an organisation. And yet, he continued, in the midst of the crisis, “meetings are being called by intriguing, chicken-hearted politicians and supporters of conscientious objectors to discuss a League of Nations…. ” According to Denbigh, such action only distracted people from concentrating on winning the battle at hand.  

This was followed by another letter to The Times one week later, in which Denbigh developed his argument against the consideration of a League. In this letter, Denbigh argued that in spite of the government’s tentative adoption of the League of Nations as a British war aim (in the Caxton Hall address), it was going to remain an ideal until Germany was beaten. Another important point, Denbigh asserted, was that such an organisation would not succeed until “human nature” changed and man was incapable of being considered a “fighting animal”. “All this cackle about a League of Nations being our war aim savours too much of dividing the bear’s skin while he is still wearing it.” The implication here is obvious. Denbigh did not consider that a League of Nations could be established in the near future and even if it was, he doubted whether it could achieve its objective of maintaining peace among nations.

Similar in tone to Denbigh, but somewhat contrasting in argument, The Tablet was willing to advocate a League of Nations in July 1918 but on the condition that it did not include Germany with her current system of government. For a League would entail a 

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appoint a standing committee to take appropriate action in support of the League of Nations proposal.” The Times, 18 Oct. 1918, p. 5.  
120 The Times, 29 Mar. 1918, p. 3.  
121 Ibid., 5 Apr. 1918, p. 8.
limited curtailment of the national sovereignty of a nation, a curtailment that Germany could not accept under her present militaristic regime. *The Tablet* agreed that a League of Nations without Germany was “futile”. But it was equally impossible to admit autocratic Germany to the League. Thus, *The Tablet* upheld the idea that “as a necessary preliminary to a League of Nations, the whole Hohenzollern system must go.” To lend its argument moral authority, it stressed that President Wilson himself, who was seen as a kind of Saviour of the civilised world by the Allies, supported the idea. In April, according to *The Tablet*, the President had said: “No autocratic Government could be trusted to keep faith within [the League of Nations], or observe its covenants.”

Hence, unlike Denbigh, *The Tablet* did not explicitly reject the idea of the League of Nations, but like Denbigh, it implicitly rejected any talk of a League before Germany could be defeated and her current government overthrown.

A few individual Catholic Conservatives did discern the need for a League of Nations to prevent future catastrophic wars. They advocated the need for an international organisation to enforce peace as early as January 1917, and spoke up in favour of the League without embarrassment in 1918, although these remained something of an aberration among Catholic Conservatives. Mark Sykes was one such supporter who, towards the end of the war, became more willing to think daringly about the means of safeguarding a future peace – beyond victory. In his last speech in the House of Commons, on 1 August 1918, he emphasised the need for a League of Nations and stressed the devastating impact that modern war was having on the world. He predicted that if another war occurred in fifty years’ time, it “will not shake the fabric of

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122 Quoted in *The Tablet*, 13 July 1918, p. 31.
civilisation – it would destroy it.” He warned that unless a “device is discovered to prevent that catastrophe,” the world would sink into a spiritual as well as a material barbarism. Consequently, he proposed that “the idea of a League of Nations carries the good wishes of practically the whole of the civilised world.”

By 1917, then, with America’s declaration of war on Germany and Russia’s democratisation, the world war underwent a definite change. A rising groundswell of opinion supported President Wilson’s insistence that a new diplomacy should replace the old diplomacy; that is, that a new community of powers should replace the old balance of power. Thus, for the first time, the high ideological goals of the war were unambiguously placed at the forefront, with various degrees of sincerity on the part of the belligerents in the West. In examining the British Catholic reaction to these new idealistic, democratic themes, we find that sadly, British Roman Catholics made no coherent response to the new idealism that became so prominent in the war in the aftermath of the American entry. Neither self-determination of peoples nor the new vision of a League of Nations, the two key new doctrines born of liberal internationalism, evoked an enthusiastic response from British Catholics. They had no coherent explanation for the enmity of Catholic Austria, and they were certainly lukewarm in response to the idea of the League of Nations, long advocated by President Wilson, especially if it excluded the Holy See. Their argument that the war was a battle between barbarism and civilised Catholicism was not convincing because Austria-Hungary’s position remained inexplicable. The arguments that it was a mere accident of history that Austria-Hungary was found fighting on the wrong side, or

that she was deceived by Germany, were quite implausible. Only if William Barry’s equally implausible argument, that Austria had somehow abandoned her Catholicism and that she was the cornerstone of German militarism, was accepted, could the assertion be maintained that the war was a struggle between barbarism and Catholicism. As for the project of the League of Nations, it did not seem to receive any wholehearted support from leading British Catholics, although the Jesuits appeared inclined towards it at the start. By 1918, however, the fact that the Holy See was accorded no place in the Western Allies’ plans for a League, combined with the hostility of most Catholic Conservatives to any project originating in Radical circles, eroded any enthusiasm for it while the war was being fought. Indeed, the only thing that leading British Catholics could agree on was the spirit of patriotic duty and devotion that, they insisted, epitomised Catholicism. The clearest manifestation of this was when American Catholics overwhelmingly supported their country’s war effort and placed their complete service before their government, to the applause of their British co-religionists.

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THE VATICAN AND THE ALLIES.

A LETTER FROM CARDINAL BOURNE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING POST

Sir,— It is hardly likely that his Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State will feel called upon to answer the leading article in Yesterday’s Morning Post. Therefore, though I rarely intervene in a discussion of this kind, I may be permitted to make some very obvious comments on your statements.

Your charges are now called “observations”; but they remain charges, none the less. You state correctly that Cardinal Gasparri has challenged you “to produce evidence”; but, instead of producing it, you simply declare that it is in your possession. You say that Cardinal Gasparri has given you “the lie direct.” I concur; and I am at the same time surprised that, under so grave a charge from his Eminence, you are still holding back your witnesses.

While withholding dates and names and everything else which could be brought to the test, you claim a basis of “accurate information” for a new charge to the effect that “the parish-priests in the country districts of Italy suggested to the people that a ‘Pope-King’ would be able to make much better terms with Austria than the King of Italy.” I note you do not say “some parish-priests in some country districts.” As they stand, your words indict a majority of the Italian clergy. Yet, a few lines lower down, you tell us that you “are not concerned to dispute the statement” of Cardinal Gasparri “that the Italian Parliament and Government have unreservedly praised the action of the hierarchy and the clergy.” I am forced to conclude that you mean less than you have said, and that you allude to some priests and some districts only. Although I have never heard of such cases, let it be granted for the moment that a few individual priests may have uttered the nonsense you impute to them. If their words were seditious, and if their aim was to lower the army’s moral, I ask: What has been done in the matter by those who have supplied you with “accurate information”? Suitable machinery, both ecclesiastical and civil, exists in Italy for dealing with such cases. Has your informant placed the details before those who are alone competent to elicit truth and to punish guilt? This question was clearly proposed to you last week by one of your correspondents, who has not been answered; and I contend that we are in the presence either of a falsehood against the Holy See, which should be withdrawn, or a treachery against the Allies, which should be investigated. It is now the Morning Post which is on its trial.

Only once do you attempt to adduce concrete evidence. Whether “the German Emperor gave £6,000 to the Vatican, ostensibly for the purpose of defraying the expense of repairing the garden walls,” I do not know. It is believed that a German chamberlain in attendance at the Vatican did give a considerable sum for the renovation of the Gardens. Is this the gift now attributed to the German Kaiser? Your suggestion, however, appears to be that a sum of £6,000 was paid by way of a bribe. Has the Morning Post lost its sense of humour? The Vatican is popularly though erroneously supposed to be fabulously rich; but even if it were on the verge of bankruptcy, and were as corruptible as its worst foes declare, could any serious man believe that it would sell its honour and run immeasurable risks for £6,000? Is this the sole proof that can be adduced that, in your words, “the recent Italian reverse was largely
due to the influence of treacherous representations disseminated among the Italian Armies” and “that the Vatican was implicated in that propaganda”?

As regards Cardinal Gasparri’s statement that the Papal Note was not intended for publication, you ask: “Of what, then, was the Vatican afraid?” The Vatican was afraid of nothing. It was simply following the old practice of the Chancelleries which must necessarily conduct international affairs with discretion, especially when the public mind is inflamed. Recalling as I do that the *Morning Post* has always been contemptuous of certain modern demands for uninterrupted limelight on all diplomatic transactions, I can only borrow your own phrase and say of this taunt that it is “not a method which I admire.” As for the Note itself, it is hated as much by the Prussian military caste, with whom is our essential quarrel, as by any Englishman or Frenchman; and no candid person can say it would be a “German Peace” under which the Flemish littoral would belong to an independent Belgium and under which Alsace and Lorraine would settle their own future.

That there are foes of the Allies in certain countries with Catholic populations is, you say, “further evidence” for Cardinal Gasparri if he should want any more after the £6,000 and the garden wall. Have the Allies had none but sympathisers in Protestant Sweden, in Protestant Denmark, and in largely Protestant Holland? The *Morning Post* itself has been foremost in bruiting abroad the alleged unneutral acts of Swedes, Danes, and Dutchmen. On the record of your own files, has Sweden or Spain proved our better friend?

Once more you proclaim that the Sovereign Pontiff has preserved, in moral issues, a neutrality which is contemptible: and once more you say that Cardinal Mercier’s indictment “was received by Benedict XV in silence.” The Vatican is not Fleet-street or the Strand, and much which is received there “in silence” comes in the long run to a better fate than many things which are tumultuously hailed in journals and in assemblies. So long as the Vatican is in diplomatic relation with any Power, so long must protests and representations to such a Power be made by the Holy See through diplomatic channels and not in public utterances. Does the *Morning Post* claim to know what diplomatic protests have been made, or to be in a position to assert that they have not been made? To-day, however, I feel justified in making, on my personal responsibility, and not in the name of the Cardinal Secretary of State, a comment which should go a long way to dispel the difficulties of those who blame the Holy Father. Just below your yesterday’s denunciation of the Sovereign Pontiff I read in large letters: “The Downfall of Russia.” If what you tell us under that heading is true, I shall not hurt the cause of the Allies by saying that while our foes the Germans were persecuting Catholics in Belgium, our Allies the Russians were persecuting Catholics in Galicia. On the one hand, Cardinal Mercier, though insulted, was free to speak and act, and he has done so to considerable purpose; on the other, the Archbishop of Lemberg was exiled, thrown into prison, and treated with contumely. The soldiers of the Protestant Kaiser and the soldiers of the Orthodox Tsar alike stained innumerable pages with foul deeds. I personally brought these terrible events to the mind of the representative of Russia in England. They were deplored but not denied. Our own government deprecated, nay prevented, any allusion to them, and at no time uttered any public protest against them. I do not suggest that no diplomatic representations were made. But any criticism of the Holy Father’s alleged silence in regard to Belgium lies equally at the door of his majesty’s Government in regard to Russia. As a matter of fact, I have had reason to believe that the Foreign Office did make diplomatic representations to Petrograd. Yet, while under the protection of the Holy See, Cardinal Mercier, though in the midst of much suffering, has been able to exercise the essential duties of his pastoral office, the Archbishop of Lemberg remained an imprisoned exile until the fall of Tsardom. The contrast needs no comment. So long as there was a Russian Government faithful to the Alliance it was right perhaps to keep silence on these matters. To-day, however, it is known that those who have been loudest in
bidding the Holy Father to take their side are also those who are most determined that his Holiness shall be shut out from the Peace Conference as he was excluded at The Hague; and I am released from my reserve. The character and conduct of his Holiness will be more than vindicated when the whole truth is known; and meanwhile I ask you Sir, in all justice, to make honourable amends in this matter. You say your appeal is to the Ten Commandments. So is mine. And I remember that one of them is “Thou shalt not bear false witness.”—Yours, &c.,

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.
Archbishop’s House, Westminster, S.W.1,
Dec. 6.

Source: The Morning Post, 7 December 1917, p. 6.
Appendix B

Pope Benedict XV’s “Dès le Début” containing
Peace Proposals to Terminate the First World War,
August 1, 1917

To the heads of the belligerent peoples.

From the beginning of Our Pontificate, amidst the horrors of the terrible war unleashed upon Europe, We have kept before Our attention three things above all: to preserve complete impartiality in relation to all the belligerents, as is appropriate to him who is the common father and who loves all his children with an equal affection; to endeavour constantly to do to all the most possible good, without personal exceptions and without national or religious distinctions, a duty which the universal law of charity, as well as the supreme spiritual charge entrusted to Us by Christ, dictates to Us; finally, as Our peace-making mission equally demands, to leave nothing undone within Our power, which could assist in hastening the end of this calamity, by trying to lead the peoples and their heads to more moderate frames of mind and to the calm deliberations of peace, of a “just and lasting” peace.

Whoever had followed Our work during the three unhappy years which have just elapsed, has been able to recognize with ease that if We have always remained faithful to Our resolution of absolute impartiality and to Our practical policy of welldoing, We have never ceased to urge the belligerent peoples and Governments to become brothers once more, even although publicity has not been given to all which We have done to attain this most noble end.

Towards the end of the first year of war, We addressed to the conflicting nations the most lively exhortations, and in addition We indicated the way to follow in order to arrive at a lasting and honourable peace for all. Unhappily, Our appeal was not heeded; and the war continued bitterly for two more years, with all its horrors; it even became more cruel and spread over land and sea, even in the air; desolation and death were seen to fall upon defenceless cities, peaceful villages and their innocent populations. And at the present moment no one can imagine how the sufferings of all may increase and become more intense, if further months or, still worse, further years are added to these bloodstained three years. Will the civilized world then become nothing but a field of death? And will Europe, so glorious and so flourishing before, rush, as if driven on by a universal folly, to the abyss and be the agent of her own suicide?

In so agonizing a situation, in face of so great a danger, We who have no special political aim, who pay no attention to the suggestions of the interests of either of the belligerent groups, but are moved only by the feeling of Our lofty duty as common Father of the faithful and by the solicitations of Our children who beg for Our intervention and Our peace-making world, We raise anew a cry for peace and We renew an urgent appeal to those who hold in their hands the destinies of nations. But so as not to confine Ourselves any longer to general terms, as circumstances have advised Us in the past, We
now wish to descend to more concrete and practical propositions, and to invite the Governments of the belligerent peoples to reach agreement on the following points, which seem to be the basis of a just and lasting peace, leaving to them the task of making them more precise and of completing them.

First of all, the fundamental point should be that for the material force of arms should be substituted the moral force of law; hence a just agreement by all for the simultaneous and reciprocal reduction of armaments, according to rules and guarantees to be established to the degree necessary and sufficient for the maintenance of public order in each State; then, instead of armies, the institution of arbitration, with its lofty peace-making function, according to the standards to be agreed upon and with sanctions to be decided against the State which might refuse to submit international questions to arbitration or to accept its decisions.

Once the supremacy of law has been established, let every obstacle to the ways of communication between the peoples be removed, by ensuring through rules to be fixed in similar fashion, the true freedom and common use of the seas. This would, on the one hand, remove many reasons for conflict and, on the other, would open new sources of prosperity and progress to all.

With regard to reparations for damage and to the expenses of the war, We see no way of settling the question other than by laying down as a general principle, a complete and reciprocal condonation, justified by the immense benefits to be drawn from disarmament, and all the more because one could not understand the continuation of such slaughter solely for reasons of an economic nature. If, however, in certain cases there exist special reasons, let them be pondered with justice and equity.

But pacifying agreements, with the immense advantages flowing from them, are not possible without the reciprocal restitution of territories actually occupied. In consequence, on the part of Germany, there should be total evacuation of Belgium, with a guarantee of its full political, military and economic independence vis-à-vis any Power whatsoever; similarly the evacuation of French territory. On the side of the other belligerent parties, there should be a corresponding restitution of the German colonies.

With regard to territorial questions, such as those disputed between Italy and Austria, and between Germany and France, there is ground for hope that in consideration of the immense advantages of a lasting peace with disarmament, the conflicting parties will examine them in a conciliatory frame of mind, taking into account, so far as it is just and practicable, as We have said previously, the aspirations of the peoples and co-ordinating, according to circumstances, particular interests with the general good of the great human society.

The same spirit of equity and justice should direct the examination of other territorial and political questions, notably those relating to Armenia, the Balkan States and the territories composing the ancient Kingdom of Poland, for which especially its notable historical traditions and the sufferings which it has undergone, particularly during the present war, ought rightly to enlist the sympathies of the nations.

Such are the principal foundations upon which We believe the future reorganization of peoples should rest. They are of a kind which would make impossible the recurrence of such conflicts and would pave the way for a solution of the economic question, so important for the future and the material welfare of all the belligerent States. Thus, in presenting them all to You who preside at this tragic hour over the destinies of the
belligerent nations, We are animated by a sweet hope, that of seeing them accepted and thus of seeing the earliest possible end to the fearful struggle which has the ever-increasing appearance of a useless massacre. Everybody recognizes, furthermore, that on both sides the honour of arms has been satisfied. Give attention, then, to Our entreaty, accept the paternal invitation which We address to You in the name of the Divine Redeemer, Prince of Peace. Reflect on your very grave responsibility before God and before men; on your decisions depend the rest and joy of countless families, the life of thousands of young people, in short, the happiness of the peoples, whose wellbeing it is your overriding duty to procure. May the Lord inspire You with decisions agreeable to His Most Holy Will. May Heaven bring it about that, by earning the applause of your contemporaries, You will also gain for yourselves the beautiful name of peacemakers among future generations.

As for Us, closely united in prayer and penitence to all faithful souls who sigh for peace, We implore for You from the Divine Spirit light and counsel.

From the Vatican, August 1, 1917

Benedictus, PP. XV

Appendix C

President Wilson’s reply to the Pope’s Peace Note.

To His Holiness
Bendictus XV.
Pope.

In acknowledgement to the communication of Your Holiness to the belligerent peoples, dated August 1, 1917, the President of the United States requests me to transmit the following reply:

Every heart that has not been blinded and hardened by this terrible war must be touched by this moving appeal of His Holiness the Pope, must feel the dignity and force of the humane and generous motives which prompted it, and must fervently wish that we might take the path of peace he so persuasively points out. But it would be folly to take it if it does not in fact lead to the goal he proposes. Our response must be based upon the stern facts and upon nothing else. It is not a mere cessation of arms he desires; it is a stable and ensuring peace. This agony must not be gone through with again, and it must be a matter of very sober judgement what will insure us against it.

His Holiness in substance proposes that we return to the status quo ante bellum, and that then there be a general condonation, disarmament, and a concert of nations based upon an acceptance of the principle of arbitration; that by a similar concert freedom of the seas be established; and that the territorial claims of France and Italy, the perplexing problems of the Balkan states, and the restitution of Poland be left to such conciliatory adjustments as may be possible in the new temper of such a peace, due regard being paid to the aspirations of the peoples whose political fortunes and affiliations will be involved.

It is manifest that no part of this programme can be successfully carried out unless the restitution of the status quo ante furnishes a firm and satisfactory basis for it. The object of this war is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment controlled by an irresponsible government which, having secretly planned to dominate the world, proceeded to carry the plan out without regard either to the sacred obligations of treaty or the long established practices and long cherished principles of international action and honor; which chose its own time for the war; delivered its blow fiercely and suddenly; stopped at no barrier either of law or of mercy; swept a whole continent within the tide of blood, not the blood of soldiers only, but the blood of innocent women and children also and of the helpless poor; and now stands balked but not defeated, the enemy of four-fifths of the world. This power is not the German people. It is the ruthless master of the German people. It is no business of ours how that great people came under its control or submitted with temporary zest to the domination of its purpose; but it is our business to see to it that the history of the rest of the world is no longer left to its handling.

To deal with such a power by way of peace upon the plan proposed by His Holiness the Pope would, so far as we can see, involve a recuperation of its strength and a renewal of its policy; would make it necessary to create a permanent hostile combination of
nations against the German people, who are its instruments; and would result in abandoning the new-born Russian to the intrigue, the manifold subtle interference, and the certain counter-revolution which would be attempted by all the malign influences to which the German Government has of late accustomed to the world. Can peace be based upon a restitution of its power or upon any word of honor it could pledge in a treaty of settlement and accommodation?

Responsible statesmen must now everywhere see, if they never saw before, that no peace can rest securely upon political or economic restrictions meant to benefit some nations and cripple or embarrass others, upon vindictive action of any sort, or any kind of revenge or deliberate injury. The American people have suffered intolerable wrongs at the hands of the Imperial German Government, but they desire no reprisal upon the German people, who have themselves suffered all things in this war, which they did not choose. They believe that peace would rest upon the rights of peoples, not the rights of governments,—the rights of peoples great or small, weak or powerful,—their equal right to freedom and security and self-government and to a participation upon fair terms in the economic opportunities of the world,—the German people of course included, if they accept equality and not seek domination.

The test, therefore, of every plan of peace is this: is it based upon the faith of all the peoples involved or merely upon the word of an ambitious and intriguing government, on the one hand, and of a group of free peoples, on the other? This is a test which must goes to the root of the matter; and it is the test which must be applied.

The purposes of the United States in this war are known to the whole world, to every people to whom the truth has been permitted to come. They do not need to be stated again. We seek no material advantage of any kind. We believe that the intolerable wrongs done in this war by the furious and brutal power of the Imperial German Government ought to be repaired, but not at the expense of the sovereignty of any people,—rather a vindication of the sovereignty both of those that are weak and of those that are strong. Punitive damages, the dismemberment of empires, the establishment of selfish and exclusive economic leagues, we deem inexpedient and in the end worse than futile, no proper basis for a peace of any kind, least of all for an enduring peace. That must be based upon justice and fairness and the common rights of mankind.

We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure, unless explicitly supported by such conclusive evidence of the will and purpose of the German people themselves as the other peoples of the world would be justified in accepting. Without such guarantees treaties of settlement, agreements for disarmament, covenants to set up arbitration in the place of force, territorial adjustments, reconstitutions of small nations, if made with the German Government, no man, no nation could now depend on. We must await some new evidence of the purposes of the great peoples of the Central Powers. God grant it may be given soon in a way to restore the confidence of all peoples everywhere in the faith of nations and the possibility of a covenanted peace.

Robert Lansing, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Appendix D

Copy of Letter sent to the Archbishops and Bishops who answered the enquiry of the Editor of the Universe

The Universe,
Effingham House,
Arundel Street, W.1
14th May, 1918.

My Lord,

I am writing to inform your Lordship what has been done in the matter of the answers sent by eleven of the Archbishops and Bishops to my questions about the Catholic Union. I enclose a paper, showing the form of my question and the answers received.

I moved in the matter in consequence of strong representations made to me by important English Catholic laymen, and also in consequence of my own strong feeling as, I believe, a fairly typical member of the lay rank-and-file. But in a matter involving such possibilities of trouble, it was only proper that my Directors should be consulted. In willing deference to their wish I held the matter over.

Since then I have had the advantage of consultation with my Directors, the London members of my advisory Editorial Board, the gentlemen who moved in the matter, and others, and on Saturday a conference took place at which my Directors, the gentlemen in question, some others who were in a position to give us very intimately informed advice, and myself were present. During the same period efforts were made, with no great success, to find out the facts about the Union – its members, its conditions of admission to membership, its constitution and the like.

The outcome was a decision, in which both I and the gentlemen who originally moved concurred, that it was impossible to proceed on the lines contemplated. The governing reason is that we discovered a fact of which we were all previously ignorant – and possibly your Lordship is too – that the Union enjoys an old mandate, 47 years old, from the English Hierarchy and the Scottish Vicars Apostolic, confirmed by Pope Pius IX, to act for certain purposes and under certain conditions as a representative body such as its title implies. The facts will be found in the Catholic Encyclopaedia, Vol. V, at pp. 457 and 458. It follows that
had I printed my question and the episcopal answers – which had been carefully restricted to the question of the representative nature of the Union – the Union would immediately have confronted us with an unrevoked mandate, and all concerned would have found themselves in an extremely difficult position.

If we rejoined that the Union is not in fact (as we all know it is not) a representative body, we should be answered (1) certainly by the retort that it is for those that gave the Union its mandate to revoke it, and (2) possibly by a challenge to test English catholic opinion, which would raise a most difficult controversy, very hard to keep free from irrelevancies of a political and racial kind.

If, indeed, we challenge the substance of the Union’s resolutions, or attacked them as ultra vires, we should be immediately thrown into the mist of a confused and heated controversy. It would be useless to attempt to keep the circumstances of the question separate in the public mind from its principles. Also if we challenged the impudent pretensions, in the Union’s third resolution, of a group of laymen to dictate to a whole Hierarchy what subjects the latter may and may not be allowed to deal with, it would be retorted that such a matter was for the Hierarchy and not for laymen to take up.

For these reasons it was agreed not to go further as far as the Universe is concerned, though all concerned are most grateful for the very valuable guidance the Archbishops and Bishops who replied to my letter have given. They have, by their replies, given encouragement and countenance to representative laymen who are interested in the matter, which is highly valued and appreciated.

In what follows I am not speaking for my Directors or for those who attended our Conference, but I know I am voicing a very widely-spread conviction. Firstly, the unrepresentative character of the Union, and the use made of its pretensions by the secular Press, are an intolerable offence to thousands of lay Catholics, quite non-political and non-Irish, who are thus misrepresented to the public. Secondly, not only are the laity misrepresented but grave harm is done to the Church and embarrassments possibly brought upon the Bishops and even upon the Holy See by the activities of an unrepresentative body like this. Thirdly, the manner and the moment and the apparent object of this Union’s interventions in public affairs constitute in the eyes of such Catholics, a gross abuse of its mandate. Fourthly they feel that this matter should be brought to an issue once and for all if it can be done without incurring worse evils. The matter is not being allowed to drop. The gentlemen who originally moved in it are considering alternative courses of action, and will be greatly fortified by the knowledge of your Lordship’s opinion. As
for the Universe I need hardly say that it will print whatever matter reached it as news, properly authenticated, upon the subject, as also it will print of course any pronouncement that might be sent with a request for publication by persons of authority.

Trusting that the importance of this matter may condone this lengthy intrusion upon your Lordship’s time and patience.

I am,
Your very faithful servant,

Editor, the Universe.
CATHOLICS AND THE CATHOLIC UNION.

Opinion of English Archbishops and Bishops.

With regard to the action of the Council of the Catholic Union, which met in a committee room in the House of Commons on April 30 and passed a series of resolutions which we printed in our last issue, a situation has arisen which undoubtedly requires elucidating.

Immediately upon the publication of these resolutions they went the round of the Press as an expression of the views of the British Catholic community. Of the claim so to regard them there can be no manner of doubt. The Times welcomed them as such. The Daily Telegraph congratulated “the British Catholic community” upon them. The Morning Post welcomed a “prompt repudiation of the attitude of the Irish Bishops by the English Roman Catholics.” The Outlook hailed it as “a clear declaration that English Catholics are patriots before they are sectarians.” And we might fill a couple of pages of this paper with cuttings from the Press to the same effect.

It was hardly possible that such a position should fail to arouse protest. Such protest was immediately voiced in the Daily Telegraph by Lord Braye in the following incisive terms:—

“Sir,—Allow me space in your next issue to dissociate myself from the attitude assumed by a few English Catholics against our bishops in Ireland, and to protest against their recent manifesto, as well as their contention that, calling themselves ‘The Catholic Union of Great Britain,’ they represent Catholic feeling in Great Britain. In this they are mistaken.—Your obedient servant, BrayE.”

The English and Scottish Bishops.

We ourselves received so many similar protests at this office that we felt that the only possible course was the strong and somewhat unusual one of troubling the English and Scottish Bishops with an inquiry as to their opinion upon any claim that might be raised by or in respect of the Catholic Union of Great Britain to be regarded as the exponent of British Catholic opinion. Up to the time of going to press we have received the following replies:—
His Grace the Archbishop of Birmingham.
“Catholic Union not authorised to represent this archdiocese.—ILSELEY.”

His Grace the Archbishop of Liverpool.
“Cannot ascertain public opinion; surmise decidedly against claim.—ARCHBISHOP.”

His Grace the Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh.
“No right to speak for this diocese.—ARCHBISHOP SMITH.”

His Grace the Archbishop of Cardiff.
“The claim is preposterous.—ARCHBISHOP CARDIFF.”

His Grace Archbishop McIntyre.
“Enquiry has discovered strong resentment and repudiation.—McINTYRE.”

The Bishop of Clifton.
“Have had no expression of opinion from diocese except an anonymous vulgar anti-Irish letter. The Irish Bishops know their business, and I hold with them.—BISHOP OF CLIFTON.”

The Bishop of Northampton.
“Catholic Union has no diocesan standing.—KEATING.”

The Bishop of Nottingham.
“A private society of estimable Catholic laymen expressing their own views.—BISHOP OF NOTTINGHAM.”

The Bishop of Portsmouth.
“Most emphatically repudiate Union’s claim represent Catholic public opinion in this diocese.—COTTER.”

The Bishop of Salford.
“Bishop, Chapter, and Federation protested against Union’s claim immediately on publication.—CASARTELLI.”

The Bishop Auxiliary of Edinburgh.
“The Union has no claim to speak for Catholic opinion here.—GRAHAM.”

Conclusion

This study has sought to explore the role played by the leadership of the Catholic Church in Britain during the Great War, and that leadership’s reaction and contribution to the chief political events thrown up by the crisis of war. In doing so, this thesis has investigated the “Catholic side” of some of the key British political issues arising from the conflict and has ventured into territory that has hitherto been sketched only swiftly by other historians. One may readily concede that more study needs to be undertaken to understand all aspects of British Catholicism’s involvement in the principal political questions of the day. In particular, such study needs to examine the immensely complicated relationship between Church and State in the emotionally charged political environment created by the prolonged conflict. On this issue, as a general rule, some Church historians argue that, if the Catholic Church is to be a political force at all, it can do so only by not engaging itself directly in politics. However, it must be recognised that war involves issues that are at once both intensely political and deeply moral – and the two are closely intertwined. In times of war, therefore, it becomes very difficult for the Church to remain politically aloof, particularly in a national setting. Within a state at war, and especially in the case of Britain where Catholics formed a minority Church, it was an increasingly complex and perturbing matter for Catholics to share, as it were, their innermost loyalties between two authoritative forces. Nevertheless, Catholics in Britain managed to balance these loyalties, albeit at times precariously, and the religious minority emerged from the war with a more enhanced reputation.
Few studies have grappled with such problems, and historians have simply skimmed over the subject of the Catholic Church in Britain during the First World War. Even the latest book by Kester Aspden, which, in comparison with other major studies, is relatively close to the subject of this thesis, makes no systematic survey of the hierarchy’s response to the war. Admittedly, Michael Snape touches upon some of the issues that are explored here in his article on Catholicism in the British army during the war. But since the precise focus of the article is upon British Catholics and the army, his treatment of the wider political issues is necessarily very brief. Most other works that have made reference to the position of the Catholic Church in Britain in that period have simply pointed out that the Church did not adopt a different position from the rest of British society and that it exhibited a dedicated “patriotism”.

At first glance, it may appear that the Catholic leadership did not indeed react very differently to the war compared with the rest of non-Catholic Britons. A considerable number of Protestants assumed Catholics to have been set apart – a distinct minority whose conspicuous survival in Protestant Britain they begrudged with a sting of resentment. But most Catholics do not seem to have been different politically, nor to have been imbued with an instinctive suspicion of the British governing class which, for many years, had impugned the Holy See and denied Irish Catholics self-government. In fact, most British Catholics appear to have been integrated and did not exhibit a distinctively “Catholic” political allegiance. Most prominent Catholics, whether they were laymen or clergymen, seem to have diverged very little in their reaction to the war from mainstream British Liberals and Conservatives. British Catholics, as a whole, appeared to see the

conflict in much the same light as the established Anglican Church. In large measure, conventional Catholics appear to have adopted conventional political views. The very few leading Catholics, such as Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, who did emerge as having an emphatically and self-styled “Catholic” view of the war, were not taken very seriously, even by other Catholics, because they were seen to hold such extreme positions.

On closer examination, however, important shades of difference can be perceived. A key characteristic that was displayed throughout the war by prominent British Catholic laymen and clerics was an emphatic nationalism. Here, it may be tempting to pause and ask why the Catholic leadership – those who were supposed to show the way for the Catholic Church in Britain – manifested such nationalist sentiments. Although many non-Catholics were also excessively nationalistic, the nationalism of most Catholics was buttressed by a number of uniquely Catholic considerations. Firstly, their instinctive nationalism incorporated a response to Catholic Europe in a way that other Britons generally did not share. This was particularly evident in the cases of Belgium and Poland, two Catholic Kingdoms that were experiencing increasing hardship in the face of war. In particular, Belgium provided a rallying point for British Catholics and served both to excite their ultra-patriotism and give it a religious flavour. The stories of alleged atrocities by the Germans in Belgium contributed to the hardening of British Catholic attitudes. More importantly, British Catholics took pride in the vision of little Catholic Belgium defying the might of the powerful (and overwhelmingly Protestant) German army for the sake of an ideal: her right to maintain her neutrality. As British Catholics perceived it, David had stood up to the intimidation of Goliath and it was their duty to
offer all conceivable assistance, material as well as moral, to Catholic Belgium. Other Britons, of course, celebrated “brave little Belgium” also, but British Catholics’ identification with the cause of Belgium had a special resilience which derived from the sense of common religion. Secondly, a part of the Catholic body saw the wider European conflict as a struggle between civilised Catholicism, and all the good that it embodied, and Protestantism, depicted as the usurper, born of the German Lutheran revolt, that was trying finally to destroy Catholicism. Although it is clear that the war was not a Catholic-versus-Protestant struggle, some Catholics chose to portray it as such, but only at the cost of overlooking a great many uncomfortable facts; that is, among other things, they chose to ignore the essential fact that Austria-Hungary, the heart of Catholic power in Central Europe, was the chief ally of Protestant Germany. As for Protestant Britain’s intervention in the European war on the side of the Entente, the explanation was that she had found herself fighting on the Catholic side almost by accident. When Italy, a “Catholic” power, entered the war on the side of the Entente in May 1915, the theory that the war was at its heart a Catholic crusade seemed to have been vindicated, at least in the eyes of the Catholic pro-war propagandists. Nevertheless, there was to a large extent a soft deception, and even a degree of self-deception, on the part of those Catholics who chose to promote this theory.

Another reason for this descent into nationalism was that some of the key figures among Catholic leaders had a nationalist cast of mind in any case. Cardinal Bourne, for example, had supported compulsory military training for men in the years before the war. Once the war started, his devotion to all the unremarkable nationalist verities was magnified. Thus, he failed to criticise the government even when criticism, from a
Catholic viewpoint, was surely warranted. For example, when Article 15 of the secret Treaty of London, which was especially offensive to Catholics, was published in late 1917, Bourne made some feeble protests but took no decisive action to pressure the government into revoking the offensive clause. It must be remembered, however, that the nationalism of the Church of England, and of the majority of Nonconformist Church leaders too, no doubt provided a fortifying atmosphere for those Catholics whose emotional commitment to nationalism always threatened to eclipse their loyalty to the universalism of the Catholic Church.

Yet another key reason for leading Catholics’ nationalism was that, at that time, the theology of sacrifice overwhelmed other theological interpretations within almost all the Christian Churches; that is, the interpretation that stresses Christ’s laying down of His life in humble submission for the service of humankind. There are, of course, a number of verses in the Gospels that will always be cited in order to show that the defining characteristic of Christianity is that it is a neighbour-centred religion emphasising service to others. The highest form of service is to give one’s life for another. This theme of self-sacrifice, as the central ideal of Christianity, encouraged Catholics, because they saw it as their duty to fulfil this demand for ultimate service. Bourne himself recognised on a number of occasions the change that men experienced in the face of this imminent sacrifice. In 1915, Bourne asserted that the resolute actions of soldiers under fire proclaimed their belief in another greater life. The war, Bourne contended, had shown

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that men with heroism, a sense of duty, a strong love of country, and a willingness to
offer their lives, had come forward in vast numbers to preserve their country. On another
occasion, the Cardinal expressed pride in the calm countenance of Catholic soldiers
facing possible death. In his interview with the *Corriere d'Italia* in February 1917, he
said: “The soldiers of other religious opinions see with what calm trust the British
Catholic soldiers…go to meet death, having fulfilled their duty to their country and to
mankind.”

In addition, the war illustrated the sad fact that the Church’s definition of a just
war was of little practical use in complex situations. This was especially the case in the
European War, where the origins of the war were shrouded in the secrecy of the pre-war
“old diplomacy”, and where both sides stoutly maintained that they were fighting a war
of self-defence. In 1914-1918, the tests incorporated within the just war theory proved to
be so loose and so open to subjective judgement that, almost without fail, the Christian
Churches in every belligerent nation supported whatever war their state leaders asserted
was just. In the First World War, the theory of just war did not moderate the British
Catholic leadership’s nationalism. On the contrary, it was eagerly exploited in the making
of the case for war, ordinary Catholics being assured by their leaders that they were
indeed fighting so that the primacy of right and justice should prevail.

Such ultra-patriotism was hardly unique to British Catholics, however. Catholics
in other belligerent nations were just as nationalistic. In France, for example, there was a

3 Pastoral Letter (166, no. 5), Bourne Pastoral, 1905-1935, Set I, Bourne Papers.
5 The debate that preceded the recent war on Iraq provides a similar example. See J. White, “Catholic
‘Hawks’ Argue ‘Justness’ of War with Iraq”, (10 Mar. 2003),
rise in religious enthusiasm among Catholics and “Patriotic fervour and religious fervour were heightened and intertwined.” In the U.S., the Catholic archbishops assured President Wilson that they would do whatever was in their power to contribute to the triumph of their country once war was declared on Germany.

The nationalism of key Catholic leaders persisted even after Britain and her allies achieved total victory over a crushed enemy. Even when the laurels of victory rested on the heads of the Allies, very few among prominent Catholics, particularly the clergy, were willing to uphold the central Christian virtue of forgiveness, urging instead that a victorious peace – a dictated peace, which they had advocated throughout the war – be imposed on vanquished Germany. Bishop Keating, for example, was able to glory in the fact that the German nation had been utterly defeated. When victory was finally attained in November 1918, Keating triumphantly declared that it was a remarkable achievement for Britain to have played such a leading part in securing victory – “the most resounding victory ever achieved” – and in procuring a dictated peace, a peace “on our own terms over an enemy that can never rise again.” Bishop Dunn, too, demanded retribution for the destruction and the sorrow caused by “those responsible” in his Advent pastoral. He expressed the hope that “our rulers will be firm in passing sentence on the day of reckoning.”

One of the reasons for the dominance of this fervid nationalism throughout the war was that once the first battle was under way, and people got warm blood on their faces, figuratively speaking, then the familiar politics of war took over – the politics of

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7 J. Hennesey, op. cit., p. 225.
8 Sermon: “Peace I Leave with You”, [Nov.] 1918, S7, III, A/218, Keating Papers, AAL.
loyalty and disloyalty. By then diplomacy was deemed to have failed and those who doubted the government’s intentions in war were smeared as disloyal subjects who gave “aid and comfort” to the enemy. As the leader of an historically vulnerable minority, Cardinal Bourne may have been quite literally intimidated by the politics of war and dared not deviate from his unstinting support for the government. The war gave British Catholics the chance to prove their absolute loyalty to their country. And yet, below the surface, most leading British Catholics experienced moments of deep ambivalence. On the one hand, they were firmly rooted in the “patriotic” camp and never wished to give even the appearance of entertaining doubts, let alone voicing them, which would inevitably have led to accusations that Catholics were hindering the war effort. Their desire was to show that British Catholics were absolutely loyal. On the other hand, the Pope embarrassed them and they adopted either a polite silence or offered only the most qualified support when he defiantly opposed the war.

To show their definite commitment to the British government, the majority of leading British Catholics avidly supported Britain’s entry into the war and continued to exhibit an effusive and resolute loyalty until the end of the struggle. From the beginning, they made their position clear by drawing up a public manifesto in late 1914 which expressed British Catholics’ solidarity with the government and declared their firm belief that Britain was engaged in a just war. The government, therefore, gained the valuable stamp of moral approval for going to war from the Catholic part of the British Christian body from the outset. In its enthusiastic support for the war, however, the Catholic leadership was virtually supine in its attitude towards the government. Encouraged no doubt by the entirely predictable behaviour of the Catholic leadership, the government

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responded by taking the support of the Catholic body utterly for granted. Despite the valuable political services rendered to the wartime governments in the unaltering Catholic commitment to the war, these same governments paid Catholics little regard and treated them as a minority with no real weight. In spite of insensitivity and provocations on the part of the various wartime governments toward Catholics, Catholics in turn made no real resistance and continued to support these governments unconditionally. Catholics mounted no sustained challenge to the governments’ ill-treatment of Ireland nor to their oft-implemented diplomatic policies of disregard for, and cold-shouldering of, the Holy See.

In contrast to this record of absolute support for the government during the war, most prominent Catholics were willing to voice only qualified loyalty to the Pope. It was clear that some were opposed outright to his position regarding the war. Most offered only a show of solidarity with their Pontiff and opportunities to cement a true unity of purpose with him were missed. British Catholics were instinctively loyal to the person of the Pope in a sectarian sense, and would defend him whenever he was perceived to be the victim of Protestant calumny. However, this defence of the Pope against his “enemies”, and the fact that British Catholics were meant to be theologically united with Benedict XV, was not complemented by tangible examples of positive moral and political support. Here, it may be objected that Catholics, according to the precepts of their faith, were under no obligation to obey the Pope in his pronouncements upon political issues. Strictly speaking, this is true. However, it may be observed that when the Pope speaks against a particular war as immoral, by virtue of his office he is speaking from an
ethically authoritative viewpoint. He does so after the circumstances surrounding a war have been thoroughly examined and weighed. Few British Catholics appear to have been perturbed by their Pope’s denunciation of the 1914-1918 war as immoral, his condemnation of conscription, his refusal to endorse either side as morally righteous, and his clearly expressed preference for a diplomatic settlement over a military outcome.

But amid the tempests of passion excited by the war, there were decisive moments during the conflict when the stance of the Pope was manifestly and emphatically contrary to that of most British Catholics and indeed caused them deep embarrassment. One of those decisive moments came when Italy entered the war in May 1915. In the last phase of negotiations before Italy declared war, the Papacy took a diplomatic position which conflicted directly with that of Britain. The Holy See was unsuccessful in preventing Italy from joining the conflagration. Among the British, this episode was especially significant for British Catholics. They could feel the significance of Italy’s involvement in a way that other British Christians could not – the nation in which the seat of the Catholic Church was to be found had entered the war. The silence of many Catholics on the issue was very telling because they knew full well that their welcoming of Italian intervention stood in stark contrast to Benedict’s public struggle against it. This was a key moment when their dissidence was absolutely apparent. On the issue of conscription, too, the Catholic hierarchy’s difference of opinion with Benedict XV was palpable. Benedict clearly opposed conscription in principle in a statement issued and made public in the wake of the Papal Peace Note of August 1917. This presented an auspicious opportunity, at least for the Catholic hierarchy, to manifest its solidarity with the Pope. Yet, the

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10 The issue of Catholics supporting a certain war while the Pope opposed it has been discussed recently in a number of articles on the outbreak of the recent war on Iraq. See, for example, J. Steinmetz, “Is the Iraq
hierarchy remained silent when a simple but solemn statement would have advanced considerably Benedict XV’s proposal to abolish conscription.

The dominating issue on which disagreement with the Pope was evident and which could not be met with mere silence was the deeply controversial issue of peace by negotiation. Should the war be settled by a compromise peace short of military victory for both sides, or should there be a “fight to the finish”? Benedict, in his solicitude for peace, had continually urged that the current conflict should be resolved by diplomatic negotiation. The reaction of most British Catholics in shunning the Pope’s endeavours to achieve a negotiated peace is astonishing. From September 1914, the Pope had declared that war was a poor way to resolve conflict and had explicitly called for a negotiated end to the war. Other secular leaders, most famously President Wilson, expressed the same ideal. Yet, Catholics poured scorn upon Wilson and the German and American peace diplomacy in December 1916. The Catholic press quite openly supported the prolongation of war to a victorious conclusion, to a “knock-out blow”. Prominent Catholics denounced the prospect of a diplomatic settlement as a “premature peace.” The Pope, of course, had on a number of occasions committed himself also to a peace without victory and had urged the Catholic clergy to support a negotiated settlement. In reacting to Wilson’s “Peace without Victory” speech in January 1917, Catholic editorialists wrote as if Benedict XV had never made such statements. Indicating their capacity for the most crude “compartmentalisation” in their thinking, Catholic editorialists eliminated the Pope altogether from their editorials, because peace without victory certainly did not correspond with the vision of a “knock-out blow”. In other words, Catholics implicitly opposed the Pope’s calls for a negotiated peace through their explicit antagonism to

Wilson’s formula of “Peace without Victory” – a formula that was very similar to that of the Pope.

Although no direct empirical evidence is available, the Jesuits nevertheless appeared to have been among the very few British Catholics who remained truly loyal to the Pope. The Jesuits had always prided themselves in their almost ineffable loyalty to the Vicar of Christ. In First World War Britain, the few prominent Jesuit nationalists, such as Bernard Vaughan, whose views obviously collided with those of Benedict, were an aberration. On the whole, the Jesuits refused to capitulate to the nationalistic crowd and the majority retained their traditional loyalty to the Holy See and supported the Pope’s outlook. Along with the Guild of the Pope’s Peace, the Jesuits appear to have supported and promoted the Pope’s peace initiatives, particularly his Peace Note of August 1917. C. D. Plater and C. C. Martindale united their efforts to produce two pamphlets, published consecutively, about the Peace Note: the first, The Pope’s Peace Note, reproduced and publicised the Note, while the second, The Replies to the Pope’s Appeal, presented and explained the disappointing replies of the various governments to the Peace Note.

In contrast, other leading Catholics were clearly not supportive of the Pope’s peace efforts and other peace initiatives in general. Cardinal Bourne, the leader of British Catholics, was himself extraordinarily reluctant to support peace measures that hinted at anything short of a victorious peace. Thus, in 1916 he was a primary mover in suppressing the Guild of the Pope’s Peace. Undoubtedly this stifling of the Guild was undertaken in part because of the fear of such demonstrations of lay independence from episcopal authority. But the Guild was suppressed because, above all, as the Catholic
hierarchy saw it, its advocacy of a negotiated peace would scandalise the Catholic community. The Guild promoted the Pope’s peace – a negotiated peace – to be implemented immediately. As a result, it was denounced by Bourne and other influential Catholics. In doing so, Cardinal Bourne blatantly rebuffed the policy at the heart of the Pope’s Peace Note, demanding instead a total victory of “right over might.” This defiant declaration by the leading British Catholic contributed to the defeat of the diplomatic thrust of the Papacy and the triumph of the language of victory by force. The Cardinal, who was called to be a sentinel of peace, must have appeared to have abandoned his post temporarily. Similarly, in 1917, when other Christian denominations began to lend their support to the League of Nations Society, Bourne initially supported the scheme of a league of nations; but this was achieved only after much prompting from the Jesuits, namely Joseph Keating, and Bourne gave every indication of reluctance. In the end, he seemed too distrustful of the idea and withdrew his personal support for the scheme primarily because he was determined not to be seen supporting any “peace movement” in wartime.

In the end, the verdict of history may be said to have vindicated Pope Benedict XV and to have refuted those who upheld so unshakably the attainment of peace through complete military victory. A lasting peace did not follow. Since wisdom involves the anticipation of consequences, Pope Benedict proved his wisdom and foresight by anticipating the consequences of a peace whose ominous foundation was a total victory. For such a peace was but another step along the road to fresh confrontations between European nations and a renewal of hostilities. That the policies Benedict pursued during the war, his appeals for the cessation of hostilities and his advocacy of arbitration, were
made from the highest of motives was attested to upon his death in January 1922. Non-Catholics and even non-Christians recognised his contribution to the cause of peace and paid him tribute. It may have been mere diplomatic courtesy, but even Lord Curzon, a resolute “knock-out blower” during the war, praised the deceased Pope who, during his short tenure, “showed himself so consistent a friend of peace, so firm an advocate of the moral brotherhood of mankind.”\(^\text{11}\) The Muslim Turks erected a monument in Istanbul to the late Pope on which were inscribed the words: “The Benefactor of Humanity, The Pope of Peace.”\(^\text{12}\) Even *The Times*, which had been a long-standing critic of the Pope during the war, found a few charitable words for Benedict, acknowledging his “difficult position” during hostilities. *The Times*, while still accusing the Pope of having been pro-German during the conflict, observed: “Looking back in calmer times on those days of national suffering and national passion, it has become easier to admit the difficulties with which he was faced and to remember the good which he tried to do…”\(^\text{13}\)

Unfortunately, such praise can hardly be lavished on the leaders of British Catholics during the First World War. For one thing, there were various inconsistencies in the positions adopted by the British Catholic leadership during the conflict which at times suggested either self-deception or hypocrisy. The British Catholic position on papal representation at the peace conference will serve to highlight this propensity for debilitating inconsistency. Throughout the latter years of the war, Catholics demanded that the Pope should be included in any peace conference to follow military victory. One theme which was constantly repeated was that the papacy was a moral and spiritual power, a patent force for social and political regeneration, and the Pope the greatest moral

\(^{11}\) Quoted in D. A. MacLean, op. cit., p. 4.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\)
authority in the world. To exclude this moral power from the peace conference, it was argued, was to ensure that peace would be morally void and to achieve the same inevitable result as the Hague Convention, from which the Pope had also been excluded – failure. On the other hand, British Catholics insisted, a peace contributed to and blessed by the Pope would prove to be a just and lasting peace. Leading prelates even made an effort at the end of the war in support of the admission of a Papal representative to the conference. Bishop Dunn wrote to Cardinal Bourne in November 1918 encouraging him to take concerted action with other Catholic prelates throughout the world supporting the representation of the Holy See in the conference. With military victory secured, the Pope’s wisdom was now apparently indispensable. And yet, throughout the war most British Catholics disparaged exactly the kind of peace that the Pope advocated and sternly denounced any negotiated peace as “premature”. If British Catholics sincerely believed that a just peace could only be achieved by the Pope, then logic demanded that they support Benedict in his efforts to attain such a peace, even a peace without victory. But in war logic is at a discount. For throughout the conflict, British Catholics were at odds with the Pope’s calls for a negotiated peace and energetically supported instead the policy of the “knock-out blow”. The inconsistency is obvious.

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13 *The Times*, 23 Jan. 1922, p. 11.
14 See, for example, Bishop Keating’s “The Papacy and the War”, 1918, S7, III, A/224, Keating Papers, AAL. Keating urged the government to consider the Holy See’s virtuous motives and not to slam the door in the Pope’s face in seeking an honourable peace.
15 In another sermon, Bishop Keating warned that “unless the maneuvering of shifty politicians is redeemed by association with a Moral Authority above suspicion,” the victory of arms would be useless without the victory of ideals. The papacy was a sovereign and religious power. Thus, Keating declared, the Allies would have a just peace instead of an armed peace – a peace which would leave the world on the brink of another conflict. Sermon: “‘Room for the Pope’ in the Peace Question”, 17 Feb. 1918, S7, III, A/209, Keating Papers, AAL.
16 Dunn to Bourne, 19 Nov. 1918, G.02.01, Correspondence with Westminster, Dunn Papers. Dunn wrote: “I think the right of the Holy See to have an officially recognised voice…could now be successfully vindicated if the Episcopate throughout the whole Catholic world could be made articulate in demanding it.”
Another glaring inconsistency, particularly among the clergy, was manifested when conscription was implemented in 1916. The hierarchy was eager and active to exempt Catholic seminarians from being conscripted. Although it succeeded in obtaining exemption for advanced seminarians, the fact that there was no definite statement for or against conscription on principle when it was announced, left the Catholic hierarchy open to the charge of hypocrisy. While politicians agonised over the wisdom or folly, the morality or immorality of the measure – the Liberal party was torn in two over the moral dilemmas provoked by this issue – the British Catholic hierarchy remained silent. The hierarchy did not even support Catholic C.O.s or those who sympathised with them. Thus, while there was a whirl of activity on the part of clerical leaders to secure exemptions for seminarians, little leadership on the wider issue of conscription was offered.

Indeed, a real capacity for courageous leadership in a time of immense moral challenge was notably lacking in the Catholic Church in Britain during the war. This weakness of leadership contributed to a lack of political creativity and imagination among prominent Catholics. The Irish situation suffices to illustrate this point. Ireland had long been struggling to free herself from British rule. Upon the commencement of war, she felt it her duty to fight on the side of Britain during the struggle, and Home Rule (on the statute book, but suspended) was to be granted to her at the end of the war. At certain intervals throughout the war, however, Ireland had been treated brutally by Britain. And yet, leading Catholics in Britain made no decisive move in support of their Irish co-religionists. Indeed, Cardinal Bourne exchanged no more than two or three letters with Cardinal Logue through the course of the whole war. These two men, at the pinnacle
of the Catholic Church in the British isles, and motivated by the religion of Christ, found nothing to talk about regarding the larger issues of the war. Even though they were supposed to be driven by one loyalty above all others, that single loyalty appeared to inspire no meaningful exchange of opinion about a great war involving their nations. This failure to offer guidance to ordinary British Catholics emerges decisively from what must be judged to be a terrible record of want of leadership.

Another feature which emerges strikingly from this period is the political incoherence and disunity among British Catholics. Their political solidarity in August 1914, a time of great excitement and enthusiasm, was superficial and soon disintegrated. There were numerous issues which divided the Catholic body. Catholics, for example, rejoiced in Ireland’s decision to join Britain in the struggle when the war commenced and agreed that she must be granted her Home Rule. Soon, however, the political truce on the Irish Question ended and the Irish predicament, which had plagued British politics for so long, exasperated Catholic Liberals and Conservatives also. Ironically, the one issue which did briefly unite the Catholic hierarchy in Britain, the 1918 Irish conscription crisis, divided the wider Catholic community. Even this unity of the hierarchy was more apparent than real. Bourne was very clearly reluctant to join his brother bishops and condemn the C.U.G.B. for its denunciation of the Irish Catholic hierarchy. Furthermore, one of the main reasons the bishops in Britain were united on this issue was their common desire to stifle what they saw as a gross example of a lay challenge to episcopal authority.

Other issues over which Catholics were disunited included the position of Austria-Hungary as a great Catholic power in enmity with Britain and the scheme for a
league of nations. Their division over Austria was readily discerned in the tendency of some Catholics, no doubt influenced to a certain degree by her Catholicism, to look upon Austria as a friend of Britain merely led astray by Germany and quite capable of a positive post-war future. Other Catholics, however, considered her a malevolent power, more “Prussian” than truly Catholic in spirit, a power that subjugated European races; these “New Europe” Catholics looked forward to the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Regarding a league of nations, although most Catholics favoured its creation after the war, always insisting that the Holy See must be involved,¹⁷ this had not always been the case. During the war, British Catholics were divided over the scheme of an association of nations. While some were in favour of the creation of such an organisation, others opposed it as a radical or utopian scheme, and certainly a distraction that ought not be promoted while the war was still being fought. Consequently, this disunity among British Catholics with regard to key issues arising from the war makes it difficult to generalise or to place them all in one political category.

By the end of the First World War, the Catholic community in Britain had made great progress towards a major long-standing social goal, that of being accepted as equally loyal citizens. Although only two Catholics were elected to the government in the 1918 election, the number of Catholics who campaigned for election to the House of Commons numbered approximately thirty. This was larger than the usual number of Catholics who normally contested constituencies. However, the reason that such a small number of Catholics was elected was that many of the candidates campaigned for the

Labour party and Labour faced many difficulties. In addition, Catholic organisations and individuals were gaining in influence and prominence. The C.S.G., for instance, reached the peak of its influence in the post-war years. The membership of the Guild had almost doubled in the year following July 1918, and, notably, some ninety soldiers were recruited in just one of its branches in only a few weeks in 1919. Of more significance, Eric Drummond, the private secretary to Arthur Balfour, was appointed to the internationally renowned position of first Secretary-General of the newly formed League of Nations in 1919. Some British non-Catholics, however, disapproved of his appointment because of his Catholicism. Nevertheless, Catholic historians are correct in asserting that anti-Catholic prejudice was breaking down after the war. Anti-Catholicism as an instinctive prejudice in the corridors of power was fading in the immediate aftermath of the war.

Still, in spite of these gains, the Catholic leadership’s record during the war can be said to have been less than admirable. Huge moral conundrums were generated by the war and the slaughter and carnage are considered to have been a devastating blow to the human spirit. A number of critical questions for humanity were thrown up by the conflict, and these make stark the moral quagmire produced by the war. What right, for example, did the state have to coerce its citizens in the business of organised killing? Was it not the

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18 Catholic Times, 4 Jan. 1919, p. 4.
19 K. Aspden, Fortress Church, p. 122.
20 Evidently, some non-Catholics seemed still to have clung to their anti-Catholic sentiments. Thus, Eric Drummond’s appointment as Secretary-General was met with resentment from a number of quarters. James Ramsay MacDonald, for one, disapproved of his appointment because, among other reasons, he had disliked Drummond, a fellow-Scotsman, since his conversion to Catholicism. See J. Barros, Office without Power: Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond, 1919-1933, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 15. In addition, other eminent personages in Britain continued to be hostile to the Catholic Church. Balfour and Asquith, for instance, dreaded the idea that a Papal representative might have been admitted to the League of Nations. As A. Hastings has observed, “Not without reason they saw the Catholic Church as a particularly retrograde force, and yet they were just a little out of date.” A. Hastings, op. cit., p. 29.
21 See, for example, K. Aspden, Fortress Church, p. 116.
government’s duty to protect the rights of all of its citizens, even those who opposed the war, without resorting to the imprisonment of dissenters? Was it permissible for the government to censure the press and suppress free speech? Did the government have the right to carry out diplomacy, prolong the war, and conclude treaties in secrecy, without the knowledge of the people? In the drift to “total war”, where no distinctions were made between soldiers and civilians, was it right to declare even food contraband and set out to starve whole nations? Was it right to blockade whole peoples and wreck civilian economies? Politicians, poets, philosophers, and even atheists underwent immense soul-searching and expressed profound anxieties on these vital questions. What spiritual solace or comforting guidance on these huge questions, then, was offered by those who were at the heart of a great institution with two thousand years of Christian history and tradition behind it? Sadly, there is little evidence that the leading members of the British Catholic community agonised over these same issues, and little guidance was offered to ordinary Catholics apart from the most trite moral verities and obvious patriotic certainties. On reflection a few years after the war, some of those who had taken part in the conflict wondered: “[H]ad the parsons really nothing to say of their own about this noisome mess in which the good old world seemed to be foundering?”22 The Church had stood on the edge of a century which would see a second “total war” in which, increasingly, there was no discrimination between combatants and civilians and whole cities were obliterated by fire-storms and nuclear weapons. Thus, the Church missed a great opportunity; indeed, there appeared to be a degree of moral evasion among British Catholic leaders of the 1914-18 era. One must feel a great sense of disappointment that the leaders of the

22 C. E. Montague, Disenchantment, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934 edition), p. 73. This was first published in 1922. Although Montague was here referring to Anglican chaplains, it would not be out of
Catholic Church in Britain had so little to say on the crucial moral issues produced by the war. In almost all instances, they took the path of safety, but in so doing, they left great moral questions unresolved. The fact that such questions were unresolved was surely full of menace for the future.