WAR
as Viewed by Jesus and the Early Church

A Body of Evidence prepared by
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Published By The No More War Movement
11 Doughty Street - London, W.C.1
INTRODUCTION

I suppose that most Christians would say they disbelieve in war, yet would they mean anything more by this than that they dislike war? If they really disbelieved in war, could they possibly take part in it, or allow others to take part in it on their behalf?

During the foundation years of the Christian Church, Christians repudiated war and all violence, and relied wholly and under all circumstances on spiritual weapons. Yet to-day, no Christian who took up such a stand would be popular, any more than he was during 1914-1918.

The fact will be obvious to all that during the progress of the centuries, a radical change has taken place in Christian faith and practice regarding this question, and hence it is the clear duty of Christians to make searching inquiry into the attitude of Jesus and the early Church to war.

Nothing can be more unsatisfactory to Christians, or more disastrous to the Christian Church and the cause of Peace for which she professes to stand, than the utter uncertainty which exists within her borders, with respect to the teaching of Jesus, her founder, and the attitude she herself ought to take up, in regard to war. The confusion of thought which prevailed during the recent war, leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the Church has no pronouncement to make upon this issue, and thus that it would be fatal to rely upon her to give a lead, in the event of a similar crisis.

We shall remember that one set of ministers maintained that if Jesus had been on earth in 1914, he would have led the march to the trenches—"against the Central Powers," said the ministers of the Allies; "against the Allies," said the ministers of the Central Powers.

A second group frankly acknowledged that war is un-Christian, but held that in the case of that particular war there was no alternative but to take up arms.

A third group argued that war is not necessarily un-Christian, if entered into with the right motive.

A fourth group, moreover, emphatically declared that war is anti-Christian, and therefore that Christians can have nothing to do with it under any circumstances.

The confusion was intensified by the acceptance by Christian ministers, who devoutly believed in the righteousness of war, of exemption from service which involved the killing of their fellows.

Until the Church has made up her mind as to the teaching of her founder and her unconditional duty to obey that teaching, she is in no position to guide the nations out of the morass of militarism, suspicion and fear in which they are now engulfed.
Guidance will naturally be sought elsewhere; and if other institutions take the lead in the endeavour to banish warfare, the Church will have no right to be surprised if her power continues to wane, and she rapidly becomes a backwash of civilization.

A deeper thinking is urgently called for, a bolder facing of the facts, whilst a serious endeavour must be made to ascertain the real mind of Jesus upon this profoundly important question.

It is with the object of assisting Christians and others towards this end that this booklet has been compiled.

The No More War Movement is responsible for its production, and the Churches' Committee of that organization has asked me to try to put into the compass of a booklet, some of the fruits of valuable research on the witness of Jesus and the early Church for peace, which has been made during recent years.

Particular mention was made of Dr. C. J. Cadoux's book, "The Early Christian Attitude to War." Consequently, I have taken this book as a basis, and in many cases I have found it impossible to avoid using Dr. Cadoux's fitting, precise and well-chosen phrases.

The only instance where I have departed from his interpretation is with respect to Jesus' injunction to Peter, etc., to take their purse and buy a sword.

Other good work has been done in this field, however, and towards the end of the booklet, I have given a few quotations from various sources.

Should readers desire to pursue this study, as I am sure many will, I can strongly recommend Dr. Cadoux's book, which is an invaluable contribution to this very important branch of Christian thought and practice. Dr. Cadoux's book is published by the Swarthmore Press, Ltd., at 10s. 6d. Shortly, Messrs. T. & T. Clark will publish "The Early Church and the World," by the same author, at 21s. This work contains all the material in the earlier book, and much more. Our thanks are due to Dr. Cadoux and to the Swarthmore Press for their kind permission to allow us to publish the extracts, and to the former we are particularly indebted for much help and advice.

Owing to limitations of space, it has been found impossible to deal in this booklet with the teaching of Jesus on the use of force in civil administration. But I think most people will agree that the nation that is capable of rising to the moral altitude whence it can abolish its army, navy and other military arms, would have little difficulty in arranging its internal affairs without resort to violence.

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I.—THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TO WAR.

Perhaps the first fact to be noted is that Jesus gave no systematic teaching against war, just as he made no definite declarations against slavery. Probably this was because there was no conscription in Palestine, the Jews enjoying exemption from service in the Roman legions. Nevertheless, the Gospels contain many references to the subject which, taken together, constitute powerful evidence in support of the view that Jesus was an uncompromising opponent of all violence and war. The chief items in this evidence are:

(a) The non-resistance teaching in the Sermon on the Mount:

Ye have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” : but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it was said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy”: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may become sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have you? do not even the tax-collectors the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others, do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

We need not be in doubt here as to the meaning of the passages which deal with the treatment of enemies, when we realise that not only this portion, but practically the whole of the Sermon on the Mount is a frontal attack upon conventional morality, the accepted codes of conduct regarding property, violence, and social relations generally. Whether we have regard to the “letter” or “spirit,” these passages, as indeed the entire Sermon, are wholly incompatible with the spirit and practice of war.

(b) The occasions on which Jesus refused to advance his cause by coercive means.

At his temptation Jesus rejected the idea of taking possession of the kingdoms of the world, which apparently could only be done through violence, and thus through bowing the knee to Satan. There was every reason why a ruler of his mind should govern the people, but how was he to gain power? He rejected the way of violence as being opposed to the law of love, which he was seeking to establish. How was it possible to establish love by a method which destroyed love?

Similarly he refused to be made a king by the Galilaeans, and fled into solitude at the very mention of the idea (John vi. 15). Further, Jesus took no action to compel Herod to release John the Baptist, or to punish him for John’s death, nor did he seek to protect himself by force against Herod. Moreover, he did not exact from Pilate a penalty for those Galilaeans “Whose blood he had mingled with their sacrifices.” (Luke iii. 19; xiii. 1-3; 31; Mark i. 14; vi. 14-29). Furthermore, Jesus pronounced the peacemakers blessed, and declared that the gentle should inherit the earth (Mat. v. 9). He also lamented Jerusalem’s ignorance of the things which belonged to her peace (Luke xix. 42); demanded the forgiveness of all injuries, even in cases where the wrongdoer does not ask for it (Mat. vi. 12 and Luke xxii. 34), as the condition of receiving the divine pardon for oneself (Mat. vi. 12, 14; Mark xi. 25). Finally, in the last days of his life he offered no resistance to the cruelties and indignities inflicted upon him, and forbade his followers to strike a blow on his behalf. Had he not taken this course, but permitted the use of violence, there would never have been any “Cross of Christ” whereby, as all Christians declare, salvation is obtained. At the moment of crucifixion he prayed for his enemies: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke xxii. 34).

(c) Jesus expressed disapproval of Gentile authority:

Ye know that those who are reckoned to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men overbear them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark x. 42-45).

(d) Other utterances in which evidence to the same effect is to be found are (1) his words in answer to the demand for the death penalty, which was due, according to Mosaic law (which Jesus held in great respect), in the case of the woman taken in adultery: “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” (2) His rebuke to Peter when the latter used his sword in defence of Jesus against his persecutors in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Put back thy sword into its place: for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword.” In these passages, all of which relate to those very occasions on which violence is commonly believed to be justified, Jesus uncompromisingly condemns its use.

(e) The doings and statements of Jesus which appear to legitimize warfare. These present little difficulty.
The expulsion of the traders from the Temple Courts is often appealed to as a proof that Jesus recognised there were exceptional occasions on which it was legitimate to use physical force. But even if John's version of the incident, which alone mentions the whip and warrants us in concluding that it was used only on the sheep and cattle, be rejected, would anyone dare to presume that a spiritual reformer, an idealist who was coming into fame as a public teacher, would pit himself in physical combat against a body of traders? The very suggestion is ludicrous in the extreme. Manifestly either the use of the whip was confined to the cattle, or was intended as a sign of disapproval. Jesus' really effective weapons were his commanding personality and his faith in love and forgiveness.

As to the use of military terms, Jesus, like all fighters for truth and righteousness, found them very effective. But there was no doubt at the time as to his meaning. This practice is natural, as physical combat is symbolic of spiritual combat, by which it will eventually be superseded. There can be no doubt as to the purely metaphorical character of his picture of the two kings at war with unequal forces (Luke xiv. 31-33); of his allusion to violent men snatching the Kingdom or forcing their way into it (Luke xvi. 16; Matt. xi. 12); of the description of the king sending his armies to avenge his murdered slaves (Matt. xxii. 6), or of the passage in which Jesus states that he was sent not to bring peace but a sword. In regard to the last of these instances, Jesus is clearly referring to the fierce antipathies which his teaching had already created and would continue to create (Matt. x. 34; Luke xii. 49).

A more difficult passage, and one whose meaning seems to have escaped most students and commentators, including pacifist investigators, is that contained in Luke's narrative of the Last Supper (Luke xxii. 35-38):

And he said unto them, when I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloke, and buy a sword. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, and he was reckoned with the transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment. And they said, Lord, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

These words are the expression of a sudden realisation by Jesus that the message for which he was about to give his life had not been grasped by his chief disciples, upon whom the burden of completing the work he had begun must fall. Grasping the situation in its entirety one can hear the cry of despair in these words, modified, perhaps, by a note of irony. The end is approaching; Jesus clearly sees it, and all that it means. He naturally expects that his disciples, those who have been with him through the three years' struggle, will see it too; but they do not see it: they do not understand. The situation is full of tragedy. The great cause for which Jesus has been labouring is in jeopardy, and confronted with his disciples' failure in the hour of crisis, he realises there is little he can do but accept the inevitable. Nevertheless, it is imperative he should try and impress his disciples' minds with the realities of the situation, and in particular with the fact of their lamentable failure at the crucial moment. That failure is so complete that Jesus would appear to have despaired of averting disaster at that late hour. Obviously he must face persecution alone, conscious that his right hand men had not fully grasped the inner significance of his gospel, his teaching concerning the Kingdom of God. Already he had warned Peter, and had no doubt startled that disciple by his rebuke: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." When thou art converted! to Peter, above all men! Then there had been the disputation between the sons of Zebedee as to the places they should occupy in the Kingdom! A little later was to come the warning to Judas. Later still, during the final struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, the most beloved of his disciples were to reveal their obliviousness to the dangers at hand by repeatedly falling asleep even in spite of reproaches. Indeed, while they slept Jesus' persecutors were already on their way. Very soon all that Jesus had felt, all his worst fears, were to be justified by painful fact, betrayal following betrayal, his cause thus suffering a temporary collapse. Realising perfectly the situation, and seeing so clearly what was coming, Jesus offered rebuke after rebuke, no doubt with the object of awakening in the minds of his disciples, either then or later, a consciousness of their shortcomings. One of the chief of these rebukes was the following: "When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse let him take it. and he that hath none, let him sell his cloke and buy a sword." In other words, he was telling them that they had not yet grasped his teaching, that they still belonged to the old order founded on the greed of gold and the sword. No wonder that, a little later, Jesus should say to the disciple who had taken him at his word, bought a sword and with it cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest: "Put back thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

With respect to the passage: "Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar," it should be remembered that Caesar had formally exempted the Jews from service in his legions. Moreover, this statement is modified by the sanctioning on the part of Jesus of disobedience to Caesar, as when he forbade his followers to deny him before kings and governors. (Matt. x. 17, 28-33).
To sum up, one is compelled to admit, after a careful survey of the facts, of the life and teaching of Jesus, that the cumulative evidence in support of the view that he was fundamentally opposed to all violence, and that his conduct was in accord with that attitude, is so strong that no other view is possible.

2.—THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WAR.

Striking justification of this conclusion is to be found in a study of the attitude of the early Christians towards warfare and military service, etc. We will take first the evidence which shows the early Christian disapproval of war in the abstract.

Clement of Alexandria (190-205 A.D.) casts aspersions on the multifarious preparation necessary for war, as contrasted with peace and love, and on the type of music patronized by "those who are practised in war and who have despised the divine fear." (Paedagogus I. xii. 99, II. iv. 42). He likens the Christian poor to an army without weapons, without war, without bloodshed, without anger, without defilement. (Quis Dives Salvetur 34).

In the Apocryphal Acts of John, the apostle tells the Ephesians that military conquerors, along with kings, princes, tyrants and boasters, will depart hence naked, and suffer eternal pains. (Acts of John 36 fini 169).

Tertullian (158-203 A.D.) says that when Peter cut off Malchus' ear, Jesus "curse[d] the works of the sword for ever after." (De Patientia 3.) He also criticises the Gentiles' greed of gold in hiring themselves out for military service. (Pat. 7).

Hippolytus (203 A.D.), in viewing the Roman Empire as the Fourth Beast and as a Satanic imitation of the Christian Church, gives as one of its features its preparation for war, and its collection of the noblest men from all countries as its warriors. (Comm. on Daniel IV. viii. 7; ix. 2).

Cyprian (257 A.D.) declaims about the "wars scattered everywhere with the bloody horror of camps. The world," he says, "is wet with mutual bloodshed: and homicide is a crime when individuals commit it, but it is called a virtue when it is carried on publicly. Not the reason of innocence, but the magnitude of savagery, demands impunity for crimes." (Ad Donatum 6, 10f.)

Commodus (250 A.D.) asks: "What use is it to know about the vices of kings and their wars?" (Carmen, Apolog.: 585f.)

Gregory Thaumaturgus (254 A.D.) censures certain Christians for seizing the property of others in compensation for what they had lost in a raid made by the barbarians: just as the latter, he says, had "inflicted the havoc of war" on these Christians, they were acting similarly towards others. (Epistola Canonica 5).

The Didascalia (250 A.D.) forbids the receipt of monetary help for the church from "any of the magistrates of the Roman Empire, who are polluted by war." (Funk's Didas. et Constitutiones Apostolorum IV. vi. 4).

Methodius (270-300 A.D.) says that the nations, intoxicated by the devil, sharpen their passions for murderous battles. (Symposium v. 5).

The Treatise of Arnobius (304-310 A.D.) abounds in allusions to the moral iniquity of war. Contrasting Christ with the rulers of the Roman Empire, he asks: "Did he, claiming royal power for himself, occupy the whole world with fierce legions, and (of) nations at peace from the beginning, destroy and remove some, and compel others to put their necks beneath their yoke and obey him?" (Adversus Nationes ii. i.). "What use is it to the world that there should be... generals of the greatest experience in warfare, skilled in the capture of cities (and) soldiers immovable and invincible in cavalry battles or in a fight on foot?" (id ii. 38). Arnobius roundly denies that it was any part of the divine purpose that men's souls, "forgetting that they are from one source, one parent and head, should tear up and break down the rights of kinship, overturn their cities, devastate lands in enmity, make slaves of freemen, violate maidens and other men's wives, hate one another, envy the joys and good fortunes of others, in a word all curse, carp at, and rend one another with the biting of savage teeth." (id ii. 45). He rejects with indignation the pagan idea that divine beings could patronise, or take pleasure or interest in, human wars. (id iii. 26).

Lactantius (305 A.D.) also, again and again alludes to the prevalence of war as one of the great blots on the history and morals of humanity. I will quote two only of the numerous passages. Speaking of the Romans, he says: "They despise indeed the excellence of the athlete, because there is no harm in it, but royal excellence, because it is wont to do harm extensively, they so admire that they think that brave and warlike generals are placed in the assembly of the gods, and that there is no other way to immortality than by leading armies, devastating foreign countries, destroying cities, overthrowing towns (and) either slaughtering or enslaving free peoples... he who has slaughtered endless thousands of men, deluged the fields with blood... is admitted not only to a temple, but even to heaven. (Divinae
Institutiones I. xviii. 8-10). Criticising the view that "patriotism," or the extension of the national boundaries is the chief virtue, he speaks of the aggressive wars which this virtue entails as follows: "All which things are certainly not virtues, but the overthrowing of virtues. For, in the first place, the connection of human society is taken away; innocence is taken away; in fact, justice itself is taken away; for justice cannot bear the cutting asunder of the human race, and, wherever arms glitter, she must be put to flight and banished... For how can he be just, who injures, hates, despoils, kills?" (id VI. vi. 18-24).

This collection of passages unmistakably shows the strength of the early Christian disapproval of war, both on account of the dissenion it represented and of the infliction of bloodshed and suffering it involved.

I will now give a few quotations to show that the early Christians conceived Christianity as a gospel of peace. Peter described the Christian gospel to Cornelius as "the word which God sent to the sons of Israel, giving the good news of peace through Jesus Christ." (Acts x. 36, 48).

From the first, Christianity has been associated with the phrase: "The God of Peace." The author of Hebrews tells the adherents to pursue peace with all men. (Heb. xii. 14).

Matthew (70-80 A.D.) quotes the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the peace-makers." (Mat. v. 9).

Luke (70-80 A.D.) tells us that at the birth of Jesus the host of angels sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." (Luke ii. 14).

Zacharias prays God "to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke i. 79).

Clement of Rome (about 150 A.D.) prays for the rulers: "... Do Thou, Lord, direct their counsel... in order that they, administering piously with peace and gentleness the authority given them by Thee, may find favour with Thee." (Epistle of Clement of Rome vii. 1).

Ignatius (110 A.D.) exclaims: "Nothing is better than peace, by which all war of those in heaven and those on earth is abolished." (Epistle to the Ephesians xiii. 2).

Dr. Cadoux states that the prophecy, found both in Isaiah and Micah (Is. ii. 3, etc.; Mic. iv. 2, etc.), which ends with the words: "And He shall judge among the nations, and convince many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," was appropriated by the Christian Church, and quoted, in whole or in part, by a succession of Christian writers, who all urge that it is being fulfilled in the extension of Christianity, the adherents of which are peace-loving people, who do not make war. (E.C.A. p. 60). Among their number may be mentioned Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius. It is also quoted in the Pseudo-Cyprianic treatise "Against the Jews." I will give four quotations only from the comments of these writers upon the above-mentioned prophecy.

Justin Martyr (153 A.D.) comments as follows: "And that this has happened, ye can be persuaded. For from Jerusalem twelve men went out into the world, and these were unlearned, unable to speak; but by the power of God they told every race of men that they had been sent by Christ to teach all men the word of God. And we, who were formerly slayers of one another, not only do we not make war upon our enemies, but, for the sake of neither lying nor deceiving those who examine us, gladly die confessing Christ." (I. Apology xxxix. 1-3). The same writer, in his Dialogue with Tryphon the Jew (p. 105, etc.), states: "And we, who had been filled with war and mutual slaughter and every wickedness, have each one—all the world over—changed the instruments of war, the swords into ploughs and the spears into farming instruments, and we cultivate piety, righteousness, love for men, faith, and the hope which is from the Father Himself through the Crucified One."

Tertullian (198-203 A.D.) comments thus: "Who else, therefore, are understood (in this passage) than ourselves, who, taught by the new law, observe those things... For the old law vindicated itself by the vengeance of the sword, and plucked out eye for eye, and requited injury with punishment; but the new law pointed to clemency, and changed the former savagery of swords and lances into tranquility, and re-fashioned the former infliction of war upon rivals into tranquility, and re-fashioned the former infliction of war upon rivals and foes of the law into the peaceful acts of ploughing and cultivating the earth." (Adversus Judaecos 3).

Origen (248 A.D.) is no less emphatic: to those who ask us whence we have come or whom we have for a leader, we say that we have come in accordance with the counsels of Jesus to cut down our warlike and arrogant swords of argument into ploughshares, and we convert into sickles the spears we formerly used in fighting. For we no longer take a "sword against a nation," nor do we learn "any more to make war," having become sons of peace for the sake of Jesus, who is our
leader, instead of following the ancestral customs in which we were strangers to the covenants.” (Contra Celsum v. 33).

Clement of Alexandria (190-200 A.D.) says of the Christians: “We are being educated, not in war, but in peace”; “We, the peaceful race... have made use of one instrument, the peaceful word only, wherewith we honour God.” (Paedagogus I. xii. 98 fin, II. ii. 32, iv. 42).

Tertullian (197 A.D.) describes Christians as “the sons of peace” (De Corona 11), and says that “what we are as individuals, that we are as a body, hurting no one, troubling no one.” (Apol. 39).

“The devil,” says Hippolytus (203 A.D.), “knows that the prayer of the saints produces peace for the world.” (Comm. on Daniel III. xxiv. 7).

Commodus (250 A.D.) says to the Christian: “Make thyself a peacemaker to all men.” (Instructiones ii. 22).

Arnobius (304-310 A.D.) tells the pagans: “Since we—so large a force of men—have received it from his teachings and laws, that evil ought not to be repaid with evil, that it is better to endure a wrong than to inflict it, to shed one’s own blood rather than stain one’s hands and conscience with the blood of another, the ungrateful world has long been receiving a benefit from Christ, through whom the madness of savagery has been softened, and has begun to withhold its hostile hands from the blood of a kindred creature.” (Adv. Nat. i. 6).

The next series of passages deals with the Christian treatment of enemies and wrongdoers.

St. Paul: “See that no one renders to any evil in return for evil, but always pursue what is good towards one another and towards all.” (1 Thess. v. 15).

“What business is it of mine to judge outsiders... outsiders God will judge.” (1 Cor. v. 12, etc.).

“Render to no one evil for evil... If possible, as far as lies in your power, be at peace with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for the wrath (of God); for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, said the Lord.’... Be not conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.” (Rom. xii. 17-21).

“Let your forbearance be known to all men.” (Philip. iv. 5).

“The servant of God ought not to fight, but to be mild to all, a teacher, patient of evil, gently admonishing his opponents.” (2 Tim. ii. 24, etc.).

St. Peter: “Finally, let all be humble, not rendering evil in return for evil.” (1 Pet. iii. 8, etc.).

Ignatius (?110 A.D.) writes to the Ephesians: “And on behalf of the rest of men pray unceasingly. For there is in them a hope of repentance... Towards their anger be ye gentle; towards their boasting be ye meek; against their railing oppose ye your prayers; against their error be ye steadfast in the faith; against their savagery be ye mild, not being eager to imitate them.” (Ep. to Eph. x.).

“I need gentleness, by which the Ruler of this age is brought to nought.” (Ep. to the Trallians iv. 2).

Polycarp (110 A.D.) tells the Philippians that God will raise us from the dead “if we do His will... not rendering evil in return for evil, or reviling in return for reviling, or fisticuff in return for fisticuff, or curse in return for curse.” (Ep. to Phil. ii. 2).

Aristeides (about 140 A.D.) says of the Christians: “They appeal to those who wrong them and make them friendly to themselves; they are eager to do good to their enemies; they are mild and conciliatory.” (Arist. 15 iii.).

The Epistle to Diognetus (215 A.D.) declares that the Christians “love all men, and are persecuted by all... they are reviled and they bless; they are insulted, and are respectful.” (Diog. v. II., 15).

Hermas (140 A.D.) includes in his enumeration of Christian duties those of “bearing insult, being long-suffering, having no remembrance of wrongs.” (Mandata VIII. 10).

Justin (153 A.D.) says: “... we must not resist: nor has God wished us to be imitators of the wicked, but has hidden us by patience and gentleness lead all men from the shame and lust of the evil things.” (i. Apology xiv.).

Athenagoras (177-180 A.D.) says: “We have learnt not only not to strike back and not to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but with some, if they buffet us on the side of the head, to offer the other side of the head to them for a blow, and with others, if they take away our tunic, to give them also our cloak.” (Legat. I. 893).

Speratus, the martyr of Scilli, told the pro-consul: “We have never spoken evil of others, but when ill-treated we have given thanks—because we pay heed to our Emperor” (i.e., Christ). (Passio Scillitii 2—180 A.D.).
IRENAEUS (180 A.D.), defending Christian practice and doctrine says: The Lord bade us “love not neighbours only, but even enemies, and be not only good givers and sharers, but even givers of free gifts to those who take away what is ours.” In another place he says: “And if anyone impress these to go a mile, go two more with him, so that thou mayest not follow as a slave, but mayest go in front like a free man, showing thyself ready in all things and useful to thy neighbour, not regarding their badness, but practising thy goodness, conforming thyself to the Father, who makes His sun to rise on bad and good, and rains on just and unjust.” (Iren. III. xviii.; IV. xiii.).

APOLLONIUS (180-185 A.D.) told the Roman Senate that Christ “taught us to allay our anger. . . to increase our love for others. . . not to turn to the punishment of those who wrong us. . .” (Acts of Apol. 37).

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (150-210 A.D.) says the true Christian “never bears a grudge nor is vexed with anyone, even though he be worthy of hatred for what he does.” (Stromateis VII. ii. 62). Elsewhere he says: “Above all, Christians are not allowed to correct by violence sinful wrongdoings.” (Fragment—of doubtful origin—in Maximus Confessor, Serm. 55).

TERTULLIAN (157 A.D.) adverting to the command to love enemies and not to retaliate asks: “For what war should we not be fit and eager, even though unequal in numbers, we who are so willing to be slaughtered—if according to that discipline of ours it was not more lawful to be slain than to slay?” (Apol. 37).

ORIGEN (248 A.D.), dealing with the difference between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, says: “It would not be possible for the ancient Jews to keep their civil economy unchanged, if, let us suppose, they obeyed the constitution laid down according to the gospel. For it would not be possible for Christians to make use, according to the Law of Moses, of the destruction of their enemies or of those who had acted contrary to the Law and were judged worthy of destruction by fire or stoning.” (Contra Celsum vii. 26).

CYPRIAN (247-252 A.D.) lays it down that when an injury has been received one has to remit and forgive it, “reiquital for wrongs is not to be given,” “enemies are to be loved,” “when an injury has been received, patience is to be kept and vengeance left to God.” (Testimonia iii. 22, 49, 106). In Ad Demetrianum (17, 25), he says “None of us offers resistance when he is seized, or avenge himself for your (he was speaking of the law-courts) unjust violence, although our people are numerous and plentiful. . . it is not lawful for us to hate, and so we please God more when we render no requital for injury. . . we repay your hatred with kindness. . .”

The Didascalia (250 A.D.) lays it down: “Those who injure you, injure not in return, but endure it.” (Didask. I. ii. 2, etc.).

LACTANTIUS (305 A.D.) refers to Christians as those who are ignorant of wars, who preserve concord with all, who are friends even to their enemies, who love all men as brothers, who know how to curb anger and soften with quiet moderation every madness of the mind. (Institutiones V. x. 10).

The Didascalia forbids the acceptance of money for the church from soldiers who behave unrighteously or from those who kill men or from executioners or from any of the magistrates of the Roman Empire, who are stained in wars and have shed innocent blood without judgment, who pervert judgments, etc. (Didasc. IV. vi. 4).

EARLY CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE TO WAR.

We now come to what is, for our purpose, the most important series of quotations, those dealing with the early Christian refusal to participate in war. From the foregoing quotations one would naturally expect that the early Christians would refuse to serve as soldiers. “With that expectation,” says Dr. Cadoux, “the little information that we possess is in almost entire harmony. Harnack supports the view that no Christian became a soldier of his own will before the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180). Speaking of this period he says: ‘The position of a soldier would seem to be still more incompatible with Christianity than the higher offices of state, for Christianity prohibited on principle both war and bloodshed.” (The Mission and Expansion of Chy. in the 1st 3 Cents. II. 52). “We shall see that the Christian ethic forbade war absolutely to the Christians.” (Militia Cristi p. II). “Had not Jesus forbidden all revenge, even all retaliation for wrong? Certainly: and from it followed without question, that a Christian might not of his free will become a soldier. It was not, however, difficult to keep to this rule, and certainly the oldest Christians observed it.” (id 47, etc.). Dr. Cadoux further says: “Apart from Cornelius and the one or two soldiers who may have been baptised with him by Peter at Caesarea (?40 A.D.), and the gaoler baptized by Paul at Philippi (circa A.D. 45), we have no direct evidence for the existence of a single Christian soldier until after 170 A.D.”
Strong evidence for the view that Christians were opposed to fighting is afforded by "the heathen philosopher Celsus in the "True Discourse," which he wrote against the Christians about 178 A.D. He exhorts the Christians to assist the Emperor with all their strength, arguing that if all did as the Christian, nothing would prevent the Emperor being left alone and deserted and earthly affairs getting into the hands of the most lawless and savage barbarians, so that the glory neither of Christianity nor true wisdom would be left among men.

In the PSEUDO-JUSTINIAN (170-200 A.D.) Address to the Greeks is the exhortation: "Learn about the incorruptible King, and know his heroes who never inflict slaughter on the peoples." (Oratio ad Gentiles 5).

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (190-210 A.D.) remarks in his "Stromateis" (IV, viii, 61): "We do not train women like Amazons to be manly in war, since we wish even men to be peaceable."

"The first reliable evidence for the presence of Christians in any number in the Roman army belongs," says Dr. Cadoux, "to the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.)." He adds: "The writings of Tertullian make it abundantly clear that in his time there were considerable numbers of Christians serving in the Roman army... He (Tertullian) testifies not only to the willingness of many to serve, but also the unwillingness of many others; and the views he expresses on the question... represent the convictions of a very large proportion of his fellow Christians." (Early Christian Attitude To War, p. 106).

In "De Corona Militis," written in 211 A.D., in defence of a Christian soldier who had refused to wear a garland on the Emperor's birthday, TERTULLIAN deals with the prior question, whether a Christian ought to be a soldier at all.

"... will it be lawful for him to occupy himself with the sword, when the Lord declares that he who uses the sword will perish with the sword? And shall the son of peace, for whom it will be unfitting even to go to law, be engaged in a battle?... Shall he now go on guard for another more than for Christ?... Of course, the case is different, if the faith comes subsequently to any who are already occupied in military service, as was the case with those whom John admitted to baptism, and with the most believing centurions whom Christ approves and whom Peter instructs: all the same, when faith has been accepted and signed, either the service must be left at once, as has been done by many... The state of faith does not admit necessities...."

THE CANONS OF HIPPOLYTUS afford valuable testimony to the opposition of the early Church to Christians joining the army. Hippolytus was a learned Roman Christian, who flourished during the first thirty years of the third century. He was the critic and rival of Pope Calixtus, and for a time headed a separate congregation, as opposition bishop. He interested himself in ecclesiastical regulations, and is known to have written a treatise on the subject. This work, says Dr. Cadoux, has never been identified with certainty, and of three documents: (1) the so-called "Hippolytean Canons," (2) the so-called "Egyptian Church Order," usually assigned to the first half of the fourth century, and (3) "The Testament of our Lord," a Syrian or Cilician version of the same general collection of rules, dating about the middle of the fourth century, much disputation has taken place in regard to the use of Hippolytus' works in the compilation of them. Be the verdict of that dispute what it may, the evidence of the documents, as representing a considerable body of Christian opinion, is most valuable. The quotations are from the portions of the documents which deal with the question under consideration.

THE EGYPTIAN CHURCH ORDER, according to Funk (Latin, based on Coptic):

xi. 9. The soldier, who is under authority, thou mayest not allow him to kill men; if he is ordered to do so, thou mayest not allow him to thrust himself forward, nor to swear; if, however, he is unwilling to comply, let him be rejected.

xi. 10. He who has the power of the sword or is ruler of a city, clad in purple, let him either leave off or be rejected.

xi. 11. If a catechumen or a believer wishes to become a soldier, let him be rejected, for they have despised God.

THE HIPPOLYTEAN CANONS, according to Achelis (Latin, based on Arabic):

xiii. 71. A man who has accepted the power of killing, or a soldier, may never be received at all.

xiii. 72. But those who, when they were soldiers, were ordered to fight, but otherwise have abstained from all evil speech, and have not placed garlands on their heads, but have acquired every mark of distinction (may be received).

xiii. 73. But every man, who, having been raised to the rank of prefecture or precedence or power, is not clothed with the adornment of justice which is according to the gospel, let him be separated from the flock, and let not the bishop pray in his presence.

xiv. 74. Let not the Christian become a soldier of his own will, unless he is compelled by a commander. Let him have the sword; but let him beware lest he become guilty of the charge of shedding blood.

xiv. 75. If it be found out that blood has been shed by him, let him abstain from participation in the mysteries, unless perchance he shall be corrected by a singular change in his manners, accompanied by tears and lamentation. Nevertheless, let his gift be, not a mere sham, but given with the fear of God.
THE TESTAMENT OF OUR LORD contains the following:
If any one be a soldier or in authority, let him be taught not to oppress or to kill or to rob, or to be angry or to rage and afflict anyone. But let those rations suffice him which are given to him. But if they wish to be baptized in the Lord, let them cease from military service or from the post of authority, and if not let them not be received.

Let a catechumen or a believer of the people, if he desire to be a soldier, either cease from his intention, or if not let him be rejected. For he hath despised God by his thought, and leaving the things of the Spirit, he hath perfected himself in the flesh, and hath treated the faith with contempt.

Dr. Cadoux comments on the above as follows:
That some such regulations as these should have emanated—as they probably did—from so influential and representative a churchman as Hippolytus of Rome, that the document embodying them should have been made the basis of virtually all subsequent Church Orders, including some that were apparently highly esteemed and closely followed throughout whole regions of eastern Christendom, and that these particular rules should have survived unmodified in at least one such Church Order until late in the fourth century and should still be so clearly visible as they are, under the moss-growths of successive editions, in other Church Orders of approximately the same date—are facts of the first importance in the history of our subject, and facts, too, which as yet have not received anything like the attention they deserve.”

Further:
“... in the third century the conviction that Christianity was incompatible with the shedding of blood, either in war or in the administration of justice, was not only defended by eminent individuals like Tertullianus of Carthago, Hippolytus of Rome, and Origenes of Palestine and Egypt, but was widely held and acted on in the Churches up and down Christendom.” (p. 128).

MINUTIUS FELIX (238-258 A.D.) says:
It is not right for us either to see or hear of a man being slain; and so careful are we to abstain from human blood, that we do not even touch the blood of eatable animals in our food... Even though we refuse your official honours and purple, yet do we not consist of the lowest dregs of the population. (Octavius xxx. 6, xxxi. 6).

The most important writer upon this question is ORIGEN, “the prince of early Christian thinkers... whose defence of the early Christian refusal to participate in war is the only one that faces at all thoroughly or completely the ultimate problems involved.” (Cadoux p. 129).

Replying to the pagan philosopher, Celsus, who had complained that if everyone refused to fight, the Emperor would be deserted, ORIGEN (248 A.D.), pointed out that the Emperor certainly would not be deserted, seeing that the barbarians also, coming to the word of God, will be most law-abiding and mild; and every religious worship will be abolished, and that alone of the Christians will hold sway; and, indeed, one day it shall alone hold sway, the Word ever taking possession of more and more souls. (Celsus viii. 68). Continuing, he says that should the Romans accept the argument of the Christians, and adopt the principle of non-resistance, “The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall be silent”; and, praying with all accord, they will be able to overthrow far more enemies who pursue them than those whom the prayer of Moses—when he cried to God—and of those with whom he overthrew. (Cels. viii. 69). For the men of God are the salt that preserves the earthly order of the world; and earthly things hold together only as long as the salt is not corrupted. (Cels. viii. 70).

To the appeal of Celsus that Christians should serve in the army, he replies:
... we do help the Emperors as occasion requires with a help that is, so to say, divine, and putting on “the whole armour of God.” And this we do in obedience to the apostolic voice which says “I therefore exhort you first that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men, for Emperors and all who are in high station”; and the more pious one is, so much the more effectual is he in helping the Emperors than are the soldiers who go forth in battle array and kill as many as they can of the enemy... We labour with him in the public affairs—we who offer up prayers with righteousness, with exercises and practices that teach us to despise pleasures and not to be led away by them. And we fight for the Emperor more than others do; and we do not serve as soldiers with him, even though he require it; but we do serve as soldiers on his behalf, training a private army of piety by means of intercessions to the Deity. (Cels. viii. 73).

Further, he says:
And Christians benefit their countries more than do the rest of men, educating the citizens and teaching them to be devout towards the God of the State, and taking up into a sort of divine and heavenly State those who have lived well in the smallest states... (Cels. viii. 74).

In reply to Celsus’ appeal for Christians to participate in governing the country, he says:
But we, knowing in each state another organisation of a “country”—an organisation founded by the Word of God—exhort those who are powerful in speech and who lead a wholesome moral life to rule over the churches, not accepting those who are fond of ruling,
but constraining those who through their great modesty are unwilling rashly to accept the public charge of the Church of God... and rightly taking the lead for the salvation of men... (Cels. viii. 75).

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (249 A.D.) says many strong things about war:
God wished iron to be for the cultivation of the earth, and for that reason acts of homicide ought not to be committed. (De Habitu Virginum ii).
... after celebrating the Eucharist, the hand ought not to be spotted with the use of the sword and with blood. (Bon. Pat. 14).

In 295 A.D. Maximian, a Numidian Christian, was martyred at Teveste for refusing to allow himself to be enrolled as a soldier. He was buried near the tomb of Cyprian, which is not without significance for our view of the latter’s sympathies. Dion, the Roman Governor, tried to overcome his objections, but without success, the young man of twenty-one repeatedly saying he could not serve in the army as he was a Christian and served Christ. His words were: “I cannot serve as a soldier; I cannot do evil; I am a Christian.” To the remark that there were Christian soldiers, Maximian replied: “They know what is fitting for them; but I am a Christian, and I cannot do evil.” He was ultimately received among the saints of the Church, which shows the large measure of sympathy that his action evoked. Dr. Cadoux remarks: “It is probably true that such instances of refusal were sufficiently numerous to have helped to bring about that imperial suspicion and dislike, out of which sprang the great persecution of 303 A.D.” (p. 151).

Another martyr was Marcellus, the centurion, who suffered death in 298 A.D. for refusing military service. He took the initiative, and on the occasion of the Emperor’s birthday cast off his military belt before the standards, calling out: “I serve Jesus Christ, the eternal king.” Then he threw down his vine-staff and arms and added:

“I cease from this military service of your Emperors, and I scorn to adore your gods of stone and wood, which are deaf and dumb idols. If such is the position of those who render military service, that they should be compelled to sacrifice to gods and emperors, then I cast down my vine-staff and belt, I renounce the standards, and I refuse to serve as a soldier.

His last words to the judge were:

“I threw down my arms; for it was not seemly that a Christian man, who renders military service to the Lord Christ, should render it also by inflicting earthly injuries. (Ruinart 344).

When Marcellus was sentenced to death, Cassian, the clerk of the court, protested, and flung his writing materials on the ground, declaring that the sentence was unjust: he suffered death a few days after Marcellus. (Ruinart 345).

There are several other cases of martyrdom recorded which happened about this time, viz., Tympanius, a soldier of Mauretania, who left the army and refused to re-enter it; Nereus and Achilleus at Rome who, according to Pope Damasus (366-384 A.D.), “had given their names to military service, and were carrying on their cruel duty,” but “suddenly laid aside their madness, turned round and fled; they leave the general’s impious camp, cast down their shields, helmets, and blood-stained weapons; they confess, and bear along with joy the triumph of Christ”; they were put to death with the sword.

Seleucus, a stalwart Cappadocian, who held a distinguished position in the army, obtained his discharge after enduring scourging, while Tarachus, of Cilicia, told the governor at his trial at Tarsus, after his discharge, which took place on the outbreak of persecution, that he had been a soldier, “but because I was a Christian, I have now chosen to be a civilian.” (Eusebius’ Martyrs of Palestine VIII.).

“Tertullian,” says Dale, “enumerates acts which, though part of the common experience of all magistrates and rulers during that age, were inadmissible in the true servant of Christ. As to the duties of civil power, the Christian must not decide on any one’s life or honour... he must bind no one, nor imprison and torture any.”

Arnobius, in his Adversus Nationes (304-310 A.D. i. 6), speaks as if abstinence from warfare had been the traditional Christian policy ever since the advent of Christ, and avers that warfare has diminished owing to the influence of Christianity and the large number of people who had embraced Christ’s teaching: that evil ought not to be repaid with evil, that it is better to endure a wrong than to inflict it, to shed one’s own blood rather than stain one’s hands and conscience with the blood of another, the ungrateful world has long been receiving a benefit from Christ, through whom the madness of savagery has been softened, and has begun to withhold its hostile hands from the blood of a kindred creature. But if absolutely all... were willing to lend an ear for a little while to his healthful and peaceful decrees... the whole world would long ago have turned the uses of iron to milder works and be living in the softest tranquillity, and would have come together in healthy concord without breaking the sanctions of treaties.”
LACTANTIUS is still more definite and uncompromising:
If God alone were worshipped, there would not be dissensions and wars; for men would know that they are sons of the one God, and so joined together by the sacred and inviolable bond of divine kinship; there would be no plots, for they know what sort of punishments God has prepared for those who kill living beings. (Divin. Inst. V. vii. 6).

The Gentiles had banished justice from their midst, Lactantius explains, because they had persecuted the good; but even “if they slew the evil only, they would not deserve that justice should come to them; for justice had no other reason for leaving the earth than the shedding of human blood.” (Divin. Inst. V. ix. 2).

Answering the question: What sort is piety? he replies: Assuredly it is among those who are ignorant of wars, who keep concord with all, who are friends even to their enemies, who love all men as brothers, who know how to restrain their anger, and to soothe all fury of mind by quiet control. (Divin. Inst. V. x. 10).

Let me give a further passage: When God prohibits killing. He not only forbids us to commit brigandage, which is not allowed even by the public laws; but He warns us that not even those things which are regarded as legal among men are to be done. And so it will not be lawful for a just man to serve as a soldier—for justice itself is his military service—not to accuse anyone of a capital offence, because it makes no difference whether thou kill with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden. And so, in this commandment of God, no exception at all ought to be made to the rule that it is always wrong to kill a man, whom God has wished to be regarded as a sacrosanct creature. (Divin. Inst. VI. xx. 15-17).

I do not think I can do better than quote a paragraph from Dr. Cadoux's book (p. 245-246), which most admirably sums up the situation:
The early Christians took Jesus at his word, and understood his inculcations of gentleness and non-resistance in their literal sense. They closely identified their religion with peace; they strongly condemned war for the bloodshed which it involved; they appropriated to themselves the Old Testament prophecy which foretold the transformation of the weapons of war into the implements of agriculture; they declared that it was their policy to return good for evil and to conquer evil with good. With one or two possible exceptions no soldier joined the Church and remained a soldier until the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.). Even then, refusal to serve was known to be the normal policy of the Christian—as the reproaches of Celsus (177-180 A.D.) testify. In the time of Tertullian (say 200-210 A.D.), many soldiers had left the army on their conversion; and his writings are the earliest record we possess of any Christians joining the army when already converted. While a general distrust of ambition and a horror of contamination by idolatry entered largely into the Christian aversion to military service, the sense of the utter contradiction between the work of imprisoning, torturing, wounding, and killing, on the one hand, and the Master's teaching on the other, constituted an equally fatal and conclusive objection. The Church Order framed probably by Hippolytus, of Rome, early in the third century and widely circulated in the East, required magistrates and soldiers to abandon their calling before baptism, and excommunicated the Christian who insisted on joining the army. Origen, the finest thinker the Church possessed for many generations... took it for granted that Christians generally refused to serve in the army, and that they did so, not in fear of idolatrous contamination, which does not seem to have been a difficulty when he wrote (248 A.D.), but on the score of bloodshed; and he defended them for doing so in a series of acute arguments that have never since been answered. Cyprian, a highly influential and thoroughly loyal Churchman, appears to have held the same views on the matter as his "master" Tertullian. Arnobius almost certainly disapproved of Christians fighting, and his contemporary Lactantius (early fourth century) unequivocally pleaded for the same conclusion. No Church writer before Athanasius ventured to say that it was not only permissible, but praiseworthy, to kill enemies in war, without the qualification—expressed or implied—that he was speaking of pagans only.


PACHOMIUS (252-346 A.D.) became a conscript in Constantine's army in Egypt. Being delayed near a city, probably Esneh, the inhabitants brought his men food. Pachomius was astonished at this act to enemies done, and found that these people called themselves "Christians," and "did good to all men." This converted Pachomius to Christianity, and after the campaign he left the army and became a monk, and a founder of monasteries in Egypt. His "Life" was written in Greek and translated into Latin by Dionysius Exiguus (see Migne: "Patrologia").

The story of St. Martin of Tours (baptised 334 A.D.) is given by his friend and admirer Sulpicius Severus (362-420 A.D.), in these words: "Martin was brought up in Italy. In his youth he followed military pursuits, then under Julian Caesar... At 18 he received baptism, and a little later "when the barbarians were rushing within Gaul, Martin said to Julian Caesar: "Hitherto I
have served you as a soldier; allow me now to become a soldier of God. I am the soldier of Christ: it is not lawful for me to fight.” He was thrust into prison, but later released. The story goes on to tell how Martin converted a robber who threatened him with an axe. (Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers: Oxford: Vol. XI.) The Dictionary of Christian Biography, Vol. III. p. 875, says “The taunt of cowardice was met by Martin with an offer to stand unarmed in front of the ranks.”

3.—THE REASONS FOR COINCIDENCE ON THE EARLIER PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH, AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR TO-DAY.

No one can deny, I think, after a careful study of the case, that the non-resistance teaching of Jesus was firmly upheld by his followers after His death, and that their refusal to join the army or participate in the use of violence was one of the distinguishing features of their sect. In would also appear that this attitude was maintained in something like its pristine vigour for a century and a half. The evidence would indicate, however, that it began to weaken towards the end of the second century, and continued to do so during the third century and until the reign of Constantine, when to all intents and purposes it largely broke down. But it is probable that the abandonment of resistance to war and the acceptance of soldiers into the Church did not take place without a struggle, for it must be remembered that the Church Orders, already quoted—“The Testament of our Lord,” which originated in Syria, the “Egyptian Church Order,” and the “Hippolytean Canon,” all of which were compiled during the fourth century—reveal the strength of the feeling which existed at that time against Christians taking part in war. It is possible, of course, and very likely, that the early Christian attitude to war was more firmly upheld in some parts of the Empire than in others.

But it is beyond dispute that after Constantine’s recognition of Christianity a decided change took place in the attitude of the Church and of Christians generally towards war. Having more or less identified itself with the State and adopted a sympathetic if not submissive attitude towards the Emperor, it was very easy for the Church to find excuses for war and to give reasons why Christians, who desired to, might render military service to the Emperor. When bishops become the servants of the State, or owe some allegiance to it, to act contrary to the State’s demands becomes exceedingly difficult. Within a century of the union of Church and State, it was possible for a divine of the eminence of St. Augustine to say that “War may be sometimes a necessity in this sinful world.”

The following quotations dealing with this important period may not be without value:

Under the pagan Emperors Christians refused military service. The advent of Constantine the Great, and the radical transformation in the relation between Church and State to which it led, called forth a reaction against this attitude. Above all St. Augustine declared that war was legitimate. (Les Origines du droit Internationale pp. 44/45), quoted by Gilbert T. Sadler in the book above referred to.

Dr. Cadoux (p. 258) quotes the following passage from Lecky (II. 250):

When a cross was said to have appeared miraculously to Constantine, with an inscription announcing the victory of the Milvian bridge; when the same holy sign, adorned with the sacred monogram, was carried in the forefront of the Roman armies; when the nails of the cross... were converted by the Emperor into a helmet, and into bits for his warhorse, it was evident that a great change was passing over the once pacific spirit of the Church.

On the same page Dr. Cadoux quotes the observation of Bigelmair:

It was a long way from the cross, at the foot of which Roman soldiers had once cast lots for the garment of the Jewish miserader of the people, to the cross which hovered at the head of the Roman legions as a military standard.

Dean Milman makes the following comment:

And so for the first time the meek and peaceful Jesus became a God of battle, and the cross, the holy sign of Christian redemption, a banner of bloody strife. (History of Christianity, ii. 287).

Dr. Cadoux describes, with commendable clearness and discrimination, the situation as affected by the settlement between Church and State under Constantine. After remarking that the settlement was accepted in many quarters “only gradually and with an uneasy conscience,” he goes on to say that it was itself the result of a more or less fortuitous combination of circumstances... The consequence was that when the triumph of Constantinus suddenly called upon the Church to come down definitely on one side of the fence or the other, she found that a free decision was no longer open to her. Her joy at the deliverance Constantinus had wrought for her was so great that it put her off her guard. She found herself compelled by the eagerness with which she had welcomed him, and by her own immaturity of thought and inconsistency of practice, to make his standards of righteousness in certain respects her own. Henceforth it was out of the question for her to insist on an ethical view and practice, on which her own mind was not completely made up, and which her great protector would inevitably regard as dangerous dis-
loyalty to himself. Official Christianity was now committed to the sanction of war, so far as the practical conduct of Christian men as citizens was concerned, not only when they were convinced that the maintenance of righteousness demanded war—that in itself would have been a great and fundamental compromise—but in any case, good, bad, or indifferent, for which the secular ruler might wish to fight. Further than that, the decision...tied up the freedom of Christian thought and made any unfettered discussion of the problem on its merits next to impossible for centuries to come. (pp. 261-262).

There were, however, other causes of the transition we are considering, but although these are extremely illuminating they can only be touched upon here.

In the first place it must be remembered that the Roman Empire, within which Christianity had been born, depended upon force, and was still growing. As might be expected, the authorities had naturally looked askance at a society growing up within its borders which refused to serve in the Emperor’s legions or bow before his glory. This sect, regarded as a hybrid growth, was at first ignored or merely tolerated. But later on, as its numbers grew, a more aggressive attitude towards it was felt to be necessary. Hence by and by the introduction of persecution, which at times was fierce and prolonged, as under Decius (250 A.D.), and later, under Galerius (303 A.D.). But as always happens in the case of minorities who stand for a great ideal, persecution but increased the influence and numbers of the Christians. Consequently it was necessary either to intensify the persecution or win over the offending sect. Constantine chose the latter alternative. Thus instead of persecuting the Christians, as his predecessors had done, he began to shower benefits upon them. He not merely recognised their religion; he defended it. Hence he put the Christians in a dilemma: if the Emperor was willing to serve the Christians, should not the latter be equally ready to help the Emperor? Many of the Church dignitaries succumbed at once. Notable divines and bishops—St. Augustine, Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan—backed up by the Synod of Arles (314 A.D.), supported their action later on. Thus did the Church change its ground, go back on the teaching of Jesus, the established practice of the early Church, the advocacy of all the outstanding Christian thinkers and divines prior to Constantine, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Cyprian, Lactantius—and the Church Orders of the third century. The moorings of the early faith having thus been loosened, it was not very long before the non-resistance teaching of Jesus ceased to be an essential part of Christian faith and practice. As Dr. Cadoux well points out (p. 250), the change was undoubtedly assisted by a mutual decline in the moral vigour of the early Christians, and by the fact that

at no time had the Apostolic counsel: “Let every one remain in the calling wherein he was called,” been adequately defined. It thus became easy for the converted soldier to defend his remaining in the army. As Dr. Cadoux says, the admission of soldier converts into the Church was the thin end of the wedge, and prepared the way for the collapse which took place in the reign of Constantine.

Constantine’s triumph occurred about the year 313 A.D. Not long afterwards the invasions of the Goths commenced, which ultimately resulted in the fall of the Roman Empire. After that event the task of building up a great civilisation in Europe had to be begun all over again, and although Christianity survived, and became part of the fabric of the new civilisation, it had little in common with the idealism and the practice which had characterised the early faith. The Church Fathers adapted their creed to the new conditions, introduced an elaborate ritual, blessed the sword and co-operated with the emperors, even in the quest for power, till one wonders why the Church should or could be called Christian at all.

We can never estimate the greatness of the tragedy that was enacted when at this critical juncture the sword was allowed to triumph, for by reason of it an unparalleled opportunity was lost of testing the refining and civilising effects of a highly spiritual principle and code of morals upon a people still in a condition of semi-barbarism. As it was, Roman culture and Christian morality and idealism were put on one side, and the methods and morals of the barbarians permitted to prevail. Hence from that time on Western civilisation has, broadly speaking, passed through the same stages that the Greek and the Roman civilisations passed through, with the exception that in certain directions slight modifications have taken place as a result of the influence of Christianity. But the lamentable fact is that even to-day the Christian Church, qua Church, is a stalwart defender of a civilisation that can only be described as largely pagan, and that, as was the case with the Roman civilisation some fourteen centuries ago, is topping to ruin by virtue of a materialism whose militarist foundations, class divisions, and imperialist tendencies only a spiritual outlook upon life and a spiritual law, to wit such a law as Jesus laid down, can remove or change.

But a change is taking place, and among the younger generation a persistent demand for the recognition and application of the fundamental principles enunciated by Jesus is being made with increasing emphasis. Both within and without the Church, opinion is rapidly swinging in the direction of non-resistance. The refining process of civilisation—the rise and development of the Fine Arts, the growth of liberty, the spread of culture, free speech, the production of cheap literature, the facilitating of social intercourse
through the newspaper and cheap travel, the phenomenal development in the mass production of wealth, together, be it said, with the increasing brutality and destructiveness of modern warfare—these and many other factors have made war unutterably revolting to the modern consciousness, and forced to the front the necessity of discovering the conditions of permanent peace. Thus during recent years a considerable output of literature has testified to a very serious desire to find historical and psychological proof of the practicability of non-resistance. Nor is it without significance that during the last two decades Gandhi has applied this principle in a mass direction in Africa and India, and has provided some wonderful examples of its immense possibilities as an instrument of social emancipation.

These and other facts that might be adduced reveal a tremendous advance upon the state of affairs that existed before the war, when opposition to war took the form of vague sentiment rather than reasoned conviction. The last-named fact explains why the Church failed in 1914. And it was chiefly for the same reason that the Church failed in the age of Constantine. The belief in gentleness and forgiveness as a means of overcoming evil, upheld so nobly by the early Christians, rested more on faith than reason. Men felt the unity of non-resistance with the entire teaching of Jesus, but were not able to demonstrate its truth, its power to abolish war, establish real peace and regenerate the world. Attempts were just beginning to be made in this direction, as is evidenced by the writings of Origen, but the collapse came before this development had proceeded very far.

Another reason why the Church changed its attitude to war during the third and fourth centuries, was that there existed at the time no adequate conception of development, such, e.g., as that with which the scientific progress of the last century has made us familiar. The early Christians could not understand why there should be two Dispensations in the history of the Jewish nation: one Dispensation founded on violence, the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and a new Dispensation founded on love, the law of forgiveness and service. Had the conception of evolution been present to their minds, and had they realised that living beings possess the power of improving their type, and in the highest order of beings, the human species, of doing so by the conscious adoption of finer moral principles, the practicability of and the necessity for non-resistance or the overcoming of evil with good, would have been recognised. The evolution of institutions, which marks the course of progress, makes possible that moral and spiritual improvement which constitutes progress, causes customs like cannibalism, private revenge, the duel, hanging for petty theft, and ultimately for any cause whatsoever, to give place to customs which make possible and help to create a higher order of spiritual relationships and a nobler humanity. It is precisely because we in the West have now reached a stage of development similar to that which the Jews had reached at the time of the advent of Jesus, that the idea of non-resistance is coming to the fore. It must come to the fore for the reason that civilisation cannot make further progress without it. One of the objects of this pamphlet is to help clear the way for a bolder application of Christian teaching. The time has now come when the West must choose between paganism and Christianity, between the era of empires founded on greed and the sword, and the era of brotherhood, the formation of a world-wide society founded on co-operation and goodwill. Western civilisation is at the cross roads. The paganism which now passes for Christianity, with all the social and international antagonisms to which it gives rise, foreshadows a catastrophe which, if it be allowed to take place, will bring what there is of civilisation in the world to an end. The only hope of salvation is the whole-hearted acceptance of the great spiritual principles taught by Jesus 1900 years ago, for teaching which he was put upon the cross. The Church professes to glory in the “Cross of Christ.” Yet, as already stated, there would have been no such Cross had Jesus not been a pacifist. If Christians verily believe that the way of the Cross is the way of salvation, now is the time to put their faith to the test and to walk in that way.

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WHAT IS THE NO MORE WAR MOVEMENT?

The No More War Movement seeks to abolish war primarily by means of personal resistance. It is part of an International movement whose aim is to encourage and organise individual resistance to war, and to make personal resistance an integral part of all pacifist advocacy. Its supporters realise that, however necessary machinery may be for the maintenance of peace, it cannot bring or guarantee peace, and thus that only when the people say clearly and firmly that they will no longer participate in war, will Governments cease to perpetrate wars, and discover other means of settling their disputes. They further believe that it is faith in spiritual force—in love, goodwill, moral suasion—that will ultimately overthrow war, make it possible for Governments to outlaw war as they have outlawed slavery, highway robbery, the duel, private murder, etc. But faith is a personal matter. Thus only by the multiplication and co-operation of men and women who possess the will to peace can peace be achieved.

To become a member of the No More War Movement it is necessary to sign the following Affirmation. It will be observed that this Affirmation is not a pledge, but a declaration of intention:

Believing that all war is wrong, and that the arming of the nations, whether by sea, land or air, is treason to the spiritual unity and intelligence of mankind, I declare it to be my intention never to take part in war, offensive or defensive, international or civil, whether by bearing arms, making or handling munitions, voluntarily subscribing to war loans, or using my labour for the purpose of setting others free for war service. Further, I declare my intention to strive for the removal of all causes of war, and to work for the establishment of a new social order based on co-operation for the common good.

If as Christians you feel that war is wrong and that you ought to have no part or lot in it, will you not join the No More War Movement, and clasp hands with those in this and other lands who have made up their minds that so far as they are concerned "there shall be no more war"?

If you would like to do this, or desire further information about the Movement, please write to the Secretary, Miss Lucy A. Cox, 11, Doughty Street, London, W.C.1, or to the Hon. Secretary of the Churches Committee, Rev. Percy S. Carden, at the same address.

The Blackfriars Press, Ltd., 17-23 Albion Street, Leicester—1952

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