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AMERICAN PROTESTANT REACTION TO THE APPROACH OF WORLD WAR II

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AMERICAN PROTESTANT REACTION TO THE APPROACH OF WORLD WAR II

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1960

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of
the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
August, 1963

PREFACE

This work treats American Protestant reaction to the events, both domestic and international, that foreshadowed the outbreak of World War II in September, 1939. Since American Protestantism is so diverse, it is impossible to survey the entire scope of the reaction. Therefore, the materials used for this study are selected as representative of the better known church leaders. The Christian Century, an undenominational weekly periodical which reflects a liberal Protestant viewpoint, has been relied on heavily in view of the fact that it is the most widely circulated and most influential voice of American Protestantism. This, coupled with the frequent use of The New York Times, tends to place greater emphasis on the eastern point of view. Thus, the study is selective, rather than comprehensive, but I believe that the selection is representative of the major American Protestant groups.

I wish to express my gratitude to those who have aided me in the completion of this study. I am grateful for the confidence expressed in me by Dr. Homer L. Knight which made my study here possible. I want to thank Dr. Theodore L. Agnew for the many unselfish hours he devoted in the supervision of this study, and Dr. Sidney D. Brown and Dr. O. A. Hilton for their helpful suggestions. I am most deeply indebted to my wife for her patient endurance and constant encouragement during the preparation of this manuscript.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the close of World War I, the American Protestant churches were thoroughly disillusioned with war. The churches had supported the war enthusiastically after becoming convinced that the conflict was just, truly a "war to end wars." Ministers had even depicted every soldier as Jesus Christ in khaki. When the coming of peace did not secure the desired results, many clergymen of the nation vowed never to support another armed conflict, and many of the churches resolved that the church as an institution would never again sanction war.¹

Throughout the nineteen-twenties the churches supported all activities that would decrease the possibility of armed conflict or which would serve as an alternative to war. In 1922 the Protestant churches of America welcomed the Four-power Treaty calling for the reduction and limitation of naval armaments. The churches even more joyously received the Kellogg-Briand Pact in which fifty-nine nations renounced war "as an instrument of national policy." A majority of the clergy during the same years gave support to the League of Nations and the World Court. The churches were anxious to build a world where war would not exist.

The prevalence of an anti-war spirit continued in the nineteen-thirties. Thousands of resolutions which condemned war were passed by the various denominations in national, state, and local gatherings, and

¹ Robert Moats Miller, American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919-1939 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1958), pp. 331-332.

by inter-denominational meetings of all kinds. New church peace groups were formed, while those already established increased in their memberships and activities, and carried out their programs with renewed vigor. National polls indicated that a majority of the Protestant clergy had pacifist sentiments, with most of those who did not claim to be pacifists being otherwise devoted to the cause of world peace.

In the latter half of the nineteen-thirties, the peace of the world was disrupted by the outbreak of hostilities in various sectors. In October, 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia. In July, 1936, civil war broke out in Spain. In July, 1937, the Japanese began an assault on China. In 1938, Hitler transgressed the peace by attacking Austria and Czechoslovakia. The churches were now faced with the problem of applying the theology of peace to a world at war. Their reaction to the approach of the second general conflict of the twentieth century is the basis of this study.

The imminence of another world conflict in the late nineteen-thirties caused the churches seriously to rethink their stand on the relationship of Christianity to war. Many of the churchmen could well remember how the church entered into World War I with such religious fervor that at times the struggle had the appearance of a "holy war." That haunting memory led many to think what Ralph W. Sockman, pastor of the Christ Methodist Church in New York, voiced so forcefully before the biennial session of the Federal Council of Churches: "Let us hope that the church of Christ can never again be made the ally of wars, but it must sustain the sacrifices for peace."²

Likewise, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America struggled to change its three-century-old Confession of Faith, which

²The New York Times, December 8, 1938, p. 31.

sanctioned war. The confession read, "It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate when called thereunto, in the managing whereof they ought especially to maintain piety, justice and peace, according to the wholesome law of each commonwealth. So for that end they may lawfully now under the New Testament wage war upon just and necessary occasions."³ At the Presbyterian General Assembly, meeting in Philadelphia in late May of 1938, the special committee on amendments to the Confession of Faith, under the chairmanship of Paul C. Johnston, offered an amendment condemning war. The amendment described war as "a manifestation of sin in the world," and declared that "it is the duty of the church to uphold the civil and religious liberties of all citizens and to support the policies of government when they are in accord with the standards of righteousness revealed in the Word of God and to bear witness against such policies as depart from these standards."⁴ The amendment was overwhelmingly accepted, and sent to the presbyteries for ratification, the final action to be taken in the General Assembly in 1939.

A minority report was presented by Clarence E. Macartney. This would have had the confession read that "on occasions, when all peaceable means have been exhausted, the government may find it necessary to employ force for the maintenance of public order and justice."⁵ The assembly decisively rejected this report.

Although the majority of the delegates at the General Assembly and a majority of the presbyteries favored amending the Confession to include

³Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 715.

⁴Ibid., p. 716.

⁵Ibid., p. 737.

the condemnation of war, the amendment failed. According to the Presbyterian constitution a proposed amendment had to receive approval from two-thirds of the presbyteries within a year, and then pass the general assembly again the following year. When the General Assembly met in May of 1939 only 169 of the 276 presbyteries had acted favorably on the amendment, falling fifteen short of the 184 required for the amending process. The cause of the failure was apathy rather than opposition, as many of the presbyteries took no action at all, and the Presbyterians thus could not take the stand against war that so many of them so urgently desired.⁶

The same, however, could not be said about the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, generally known as the Southern Presbyterian Church. Meeting in Meridian, Mississippi, at the same time as their northern brethren, the southern body refused to consider any softening of the claim that under the New Testament the magistrates may wage war on just and necessary occasions. One of the more vociferous delegates even declared in a loud voice that six generations of his name had worn the country's uniform in war and that he was ready to fight at the call of Congress. A more peace-loving bystander asked if he was ready to be a polygamist or a pirate or a slave holder because sixty generations of his ancestors were. There was no reply.⁷

Although the Methodists were primarily concerned during these years with uniting the three branches of Methodism, they did not overlook the war issue. Their Uniting Conference, at its meeting in Kansas City in early May, 1939, adopted a social creed which condemned war. The creed read, "We insist that the agencies of the church shall not be used in the

⁶Ibid., LVI (1939), pp. 645-646.

⁷Ibid., LV (1938), pp. 741-742.

preparation for war, but in the promulgation of peace. We believe that war is utterly destructive and is our greatest collective social sin and a denial of the ideals of Christ. We stand upon this ground, that the Methodist Church as an institution cannot endorse war nor support or participate in it."⁸ The church recognized the right of the individual to serve the government in time of war according to the dictates of his Christian conscience.

Meeting in Los Angeles in late June, 1939, the Northern Baptist Convention declared its opposition to war. The delegates passed a resolution declaring that "war is utterly contradictory to the spirit and ideals of Christianity and carries with it destruction of spiritual and moral values, and is always accompanied by propaganda, unbridled lust and other forms of evil, therefore we declare our emphatic opposition to the whole war system and all things related thereto."⁹

Several other denominations made pronouncements on war. The General Conference of the Evangelical Church in November, 1938, denounced war and urged its outlawry.¹⁰ The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America did not take an official stand on the issue but recognized the right of any member to "follow the leading of his conscience before God concerning his support and participation in any armed conflict."¹¹ The Friends General Conference maintained the traditional Quaker position on war, and expressed its confidence that nations could find a way to cooperate by nonviolent

⁸Walter G. Muelder, Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1961), p. 156; The New York Times, May 11, 1939, p. 11.

⁹Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 858-859.

¹⁰Ibid., LV (1938), pp. 1441-1442.

¹¹The New York Times, June 13, 1939, p. 6.

means.¹² Although some of the denominations did not make known their position on the war issue, it is evident that there was a conscious effort by a large part of Protestantism to align the church with the forces of peace against the forces of war and destruction.

It was somewhat easier for the church as an institution to take a stand against war than it was for the minister and parishioners as individuals, as most of the denominations still left the individual a choice. The dilemma that many Protestants faced was graphically spelled out by John Coleman Bennett, professor of theology at the Pacific School of Religion:

In international affairs the difficulty of decision is greatest. I am torn between the conviction that a general war would not save the world from fascism but would spread the seeds of fascism, and strong suspicion, which goes against my habits of thought, that the democratic nations must arm in order to make possible the balance of power without which, in the present situation, there can hardly be negotiations at all, but only withdrawals before the threat of force. But there is no decision in regard to next steps in this area which the Christian can make, as a Christian, with much confidence. The absolute pacifist should know that his policies are not without great risk of encouraging violence. But any other policy will have constructive value only if it is counteracted. Even those who are most certain that armaments and boycotts are necessary, must know that no nation can embark on such policies without the danger of being militarized and of being intoxicated with selfrighteous passion. The message of the church may keep alive influences which will counteract the necessary but one-sided decisions of its members.¹³

Many of the churchmen decided that under no circumstances was war profitable and assumed a pacifist position. The roster of pacifists contained a majority of the more eminent names of the Protestant clergy, including: Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of the Riverside Baptist Church in New York; Ernest Fremont Tittle, minister of the First Methodist

¹²Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1020.

¹³John Coleman Bennett, "A Changed Liberal -- But Still a Liberal," Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 181.

Church, Evanston, Illinois; Kirby Page, professor of social ethics at Yale Divinity School; Halford E. Luccock, professor of preaching at Yale Divinity School; Albert W. Palmer, president of Chicago Theological Seminary; A. J. Muste, pastor of Labor Presbyterian Temple in New York; E. Stanley Jones, missionary to India; and Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the Christian Century.

There were those, on the other hand, that felt that under certain conditions war was the lesser of two evils, and that a pacifist stand encouraged rather than discouraged evil. The most well-known non-pacifist was Reinhold Niebuhr, but the group included other eminent Protestants such as William Adams Brown, John C. Bennett, Henry Sloane Coffin, Henry P. Van Dusen, Sherwood Eddy, and Bishop Francis J. McConnell. Many in this group were as earnest in their desire for peace as the pacifists and labored toward that end. The position of these men was stated pungently by Bishop William Manning on the eve of war, "We all desire most earnestly to see war abolished...we are all of us earnest pacifists, but there is a point beyond which injustice and aggression cannot be permitted to go."¹⁴

Although the absolute pacifists were probably in the minority, they were vociferous in the months prior to the outbreak of World War II. Hundreds of articles and tens of books were penned by the advocates of non-violence.¹⁵ Two of the most outstanding pacifist books published in this period were A. J. Muste's Non-Violence in an Aggressive World and

¹⁴The New York Times, September 26, 1938, p. 6. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the development of the philosophical positions of the pacifists and non-pacifists. This has been adequately done by Donald B. Meyer in The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919-1939 (Berkeley: California, 1960), pp. 349-403.

¹⁵This observation has been made from a reading of the Christian Century book review section from January, 1938 to September, 1939.

Ernest F. Tittle's Christians in an Unchristian Society.

The pacifists also used more colorful means of presenting their position to the public. In New York on May 21, 1938, the United Pacifist Committee staged a two hour silent "poster walk" to protest against war. Down Fifth Avenue Muste led eighty persons carrying green colored posters which bore the following slogans: "Today Blackouts: Tomorrow--Black Plague of War," "2 Plus 2 Make 4, Gun Plus Gun Make War -- Disarm," "War Means Fascism," "Economic Cooperation, Not War," and "Thou Shall Not Kill."¹⁶ The United Pacifist Committee sponsored a similar event in April, 1939. While an Army Day Parade was in process, fifty-two pacifists, once again led by Muste, walked on the sidewalk alongside the parade carrying posters denouncing war.¹⁷

The approach of the war did not keep ministers from signing pledges not to condone or participate in war. On March 1, 1938, a group of New York clergymen gathered in the Broadway Tabernacle Church and subscribed to a covenant of peace. At the conclusion of the meeting, over which Allan Knight Chalmers presided, 216 ministers signed the pacifist pledge, 149 being the same who had signed a similar pledge at the Riverside Church several years before. The pledge stated that:

In loyalty to God I believe that the way of true religion cannot be reconciled with the way of war. In loyalty to my country I support its adoption of the Kellogg-Briand Pact which renounces war. In the spirit of true patriotism and with deep personal conviction, I therefore renounce war and never will I support another.¹⁸

The largest and most comprehensive drive to secure pacifist pledges was inaugurated in March, 1939, by the Ministers Peace Covenant group of

¹⁶The New York Times, May 22, 1938, p. 28.

¹⁷Ibid., April 9, 1939, p. 29.

¹⁸Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 346.

New York, under the chairmanship of Chalmers. A drafting committee of this group drew up a fifteen-hundred word statement of the pacifist position, using as a model a similar statement that had come from pacifist ministers of the Church of Scotland several months earlier. After revising the document a number of times, the committee sent mimeographed copies to nearly four hundred men and women over the nation. When one hundred signatures had been received, the statement was made public. The central message of the statement was that "the gospel leaves us no other choice but to refuse to sanction or participate in war."¹⁹ By the end of April 500 persons had signed what had come to be known as the "Pacifist Affirmation," and by June over 1,000 clergymen over the country had affixed their signature to the absolute pacifist document. In the course of events, only one person ever withdrew his signature.²⁰

Although very few of the convinced pacifists defected from their belief in the closing months before the war, there was nevertheless a decline in the pacifist sentiment. A number of polls taken between 1931 and 1937 indicated that the number of pacifists among the clergy was great, at least exceeding fifty percent.²¹ Though no polls are available for the years 1938 and 1939, a number of incidents tell of the gradual decline of pacifism. As early as May, 1938, Morrison lamented in an editorial in the Christian Century that the churches' efforts in the peace movement were declining.²² In summarizing events of 1938 Morrison wrote:

¹⁹The New York Times, March 6, 1939, p. 6. Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 775.

²⁰Ibid., p. 709; *ibid.*, p. 775.

²¹Miller, American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919-1939, pp. 337-339.

²²Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 648-649.

The shock administered to man's political and social institutions by the rise of Hitler, and what Hitler represents, to European power has been felt deeply in the churches. Perhaps it indicates its presence most clearly among American communions by the recession in pacifist sentiment. Clergymen whose names were at the very top of the...pacifist poll ten years ago now find their eyes riveted on Munich. As they watch they question whether there are limits to pacifist faith in such a world as this.²³

Further indications of decline were apparent during the months of 1939. In April Bradford Young, Christian Century correspondent from New York, reported that more of the New York clergy lined up with the pacifist position of Harry Emerson Fosdick than with the more militant group of Guy E. Shipler. But, he added, "most of them are confused, with leanings in both directions."²⁴ Likewise the excerpts of sermons in The New York Times seem to indicate a decline in the number of pacifists' pronouncements during the spring of 1939. At the annual session of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, representing sixty denominations, which met in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania in June, the opponents of pacifism were more outspoken than earlier, and more persons were siding with those who felt that war was the lesser of two evils.²⁵ In August, only 4,000 turned out for the annual peace parade down Fifth Avenue, sponsored by the American League for Peace and Democracy. This was less than one-third the attendance of the previous year.²⁶

Although the general pacifist sentiment declined as the world raced toward war, the American Protestant desire for peace was unquenchable. The ministers who assumed a non-pacifist position did so in the belief

²³Ibid., p. 1600.

²⁴Ibid., LVI (1939), p. 459.

²⁵Ibid., p. 861.

²⁶Ibid., p. 1079.

that it was a better tool to secure peace. In the unity among diversity so characteristic of American Protestantism, the religious leaders in 1938 and 1939 sought to preserve peace in a world bent on war.

CHAPTER II

REACTION TO AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

In the twenty months before the outbreak of World War II many of the foreign policy issues before Congress reflected the world tension. If the world was drifting toward war, the American Protestant leadership wanted to be careful that the United States did not hasten or encourage the trend. Although some of the clergymen, and others who did not care for the churchmen's opinions, were insistent in demanding that the church ought to stay out of politics, many Protestants demanded disarmament, a more neutral neutrality act, and the end of the sale of war materials, and opposed any issue that had the appearance of preparation for war. Although opinion was divided on some issues, the difference was almost always over method. The churchmen unerringly strove for those proposals that would further the cause of world peace.

The first issue that aroused a reaction from the church was a proposed expansion of the Navy, which President Roosevelt recommended to Congress on January 29, 1938. This recommendation called for an increase in appropriations by twenty per cent and the expansion of the Navy so that it could defend both coasts simultaneously.¹ In almost every instance the churches were opposed to this expansion, feeling it an unnecessary and belligerent policy. Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the Christian Century, an undenominational weekly which reflects a liberal Protestant

¹Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VII (New York, 1941), pp. 66, 70.

opinion, attacked Roosevelt's navy policy even before it was presented to Congress. Insisting that such a policy would lead to another war, Morrison declared, "it is impossible to see any reason for this sudden rush toward armament except in terms of a possible clash with Japan.... The navy is large enough to defend American shores."²

On the day Roosevelt presented the recommendation to Congress, the executive committee of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, representing twenty-four denominations, issued a statement condemning the expansion proposal on the same grounds. It declared the increase of naval expenditures as "unwarranted by any evidence thus far presented and calculated to stimulate the spirit of fear and unrest which is the parent of war."³

In early February letters and telegrams poured into Washington protesting the naval bill. The Commission on International Justice and Good-Will of the Brooklyn Church and Missionary Federation unanimously opposed the expansion in a resolution that was sent to Roosevelt.⁴ Many churchmen were among the fifty-three peace leaders of the National Peace Conference that urged the administration to consider well before pushing a program that would be an incentive to war. Conspicuous among the signers were such notables as Henry A. Atkinson of the Church Peace Union, Roswell P. Barnes of the Federal Council of Churches, Harry N. Holmes of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and Alfred Schmaiz of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational and

²Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 38-40.

³The New York Times, January 29, 1938, p. 18; Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 188.

⁴The New York Times, February 6, 1938, p. 37.

Christian Churches.⁵ Morrison urged his readers to protest in large numbers, while Clarence E. Pickett, executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, called for a barrage of protest when he returned to Philadelphia after a short stay in Washington.⁶

Protests were also forthcoming from the pulpit and from denominational meetings. A. J. Muste of the Presbyterian Labor Temple in New York urged the defeat of the Navy bill and Arthur M. Crawford of the Plymouth Congregational Church prophesied that the building of more battleships was the road to war and chaos.⁷ In both the Northern and Eastern New York Methodist Episcopal Conferences, representing a total of 570 churches, resolutions were passed opposing the naval expansion. The Northern Conference discussed the issue for an hour, but the vote produced only three negative voices.⁸ The 243rd yearly meeting of the New York Society of Friends also adopted a resolution of protest, contending that so strong a navy was not necessary.⁹

The churches' protest was likewise heard before the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs. Frank Littell, a twenty year old student of Union Theological Seminary from Mount Vernon, Iowa, and Social Action Chairman of the National Council of Methodist Youth, vigorously attacked the proposal and declared that the Methodist youth would not fight in the war that this policy would bring.¹⁰ The official lobbyist of the various

⁵ Christian Century, L (1938), p. 213.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 195-196; ibid., pp. 343-344.

⁷ The New York Times, March 7, 1938, p. 11; ibid., April 18, 1938, p. 16.

⁸ Ibid., May 18, 1938, p. 6.

⁹ Ibid., April 3, 1938, p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibid., February 15, 1938, p. 8.

church peace societies, Walter W. Van Kirk, told the committee that the naval expansion would be a tax burden, that the maintenance cost would be unparalleled, and that so large a navy was not necessary to the preservation of democracy. Claiming that there was more danger to our society within America than without, Van Kirk suggested that the money be used to stabilize the domestic economy and give the youth of the country some economic security.¹¹

Although the campaign to defeat the Naval Expansion Bill failed, the voice of the church made an impression on those who supported the measures. This is best illustrated by an excerpt from a speech delivered to a New York chapter of army chaplains by Rear Admiral Clark H. Woodward. He declared that "some well known ministers of the gospel and many religious journals...go so far afield from their recognized sphere of activity as to bitterly [sic] denounce...the administration's...plan to provide an adequate...navy."¹²

Even after the President signed the bill on May 17, disapproval continued to come from several places. An editorial in the Christian Century repeated the conviction that the administration had shown no need for naval expansion for defensive purposes, and lamented the lethargy of the American public toward taking a stand of any kind on the bill.¹³ Early in June a meeting of the New England Southern Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church adopted a resolution that charged the naval expansion program was an obstacle to international unity, and a few days later the general synod of the Reformed Church in America urged a cut in naval

¹¹Ibid., April 9, 1938, p. 10.

¹²Ibid., February 15, 1938, p. 8.

¹³Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 613.

appropriations for the next year.¹⁴

The churches protested not only the expansion of the navy but also its presence in Far Eastern waters. Early in January of 1938, seven prominent Brooklyn ministers addressed an open letter to Secretary of State Hull warning him that the United States could not keep warships in the war area without becoming involved.¹⁵ Several of these same men were responsible for calling a mass meeting at the Hippodrome on March 6, to protest the trend to war and to demand the withdrawal of American ships from the war zone.¹⁶ When the government announced the sending of three cruisers to the British naval base at Singapore, the Christian Century interpreted the action as an intimidation to Japan and condemned it.¹⁷ Throughout 1938 various Methodist organs protested the use of American warships to protect American business interests and asked for the withdrawal of naval detachments from the China area.¹⁸

After many of the churches turned to the broader question of general disarmament, Morrison continued to combat naval expansion. When Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn proposed to Congress in January of 1939 a number of new naval bases, including the fortification of Guam, Morrison labeled the proposal as "a megalomaniac plan."¹⁹ When the bill was defeated in the House of Representatives, Morrison suggested that there had been a sudden

¹⁴The New York Times, June 7, 1938, p. 24; *ibid.*, June 5, 1938, p. 19.

¹⁵Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 60.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 213; The New York Times, May 3, 1938, p. 8; T. T. Brumbaugh, "Toward a New Far Eastern Policy," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 129-130.

¹⁹Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 75.

uprising of good sense,²⁰ but when the Navy asked for two more large battleships in July, he bitterly denounced the naval policy: "How long is this folly to continue Encouraged by Mr. Roosevelt's obsession with sea power the navy has become the Oliver Twist of the government; its appetite is never satisfied."²¹

Although the churches expressed their greatest opposition concerning the naval expansion bill, they also pronounced a dissatisfaction with the armament program in general. The churchmen believed that the armament program was inconsistent with the ideals of a peaceful nation and that so large a military power was not needed for defensive purposes.

When the administration asked for increased appropriations for the Army in late March, 1938, Morrison again was among the first to declare against such action, and he maintained that position throughout 1938 and 1939.²² A few weeks after Morrison spoke out, John Howard Melish, of the Holy Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church, Brooklyn, New York, accused the United States of slavishly imitating other nations by squandering its wealth on armaments, and prophesied that this policy would cause national bankruptcy, financial inflation, hatred, and ultimately war.²³

Later that year at least two major denominations publicly denounced the armament program. The Northern Baptist Convention, meeting in Milwaukee in late May, passed a resolution asking Baptists everywhere to use their influence against American participation in the armaments race.²⁴

²⁰Ibid., p. 272.

²¹Ibid., p. 915.

²²Ibid., LV (1938), p. 419; *ibid.*, LVI (1939), pp. 110-112; *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

²³The New York Times, April 15, 1938, p. 11.

²⁴Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 767-768.

In October, a meeting of the Methodist World Peace Commission at Evanston, Illinois, proposed to offer to all ministers for use on Armistice Day a statement which called for the United States to abandon its policy of armament.²⁵ The following year, the General Association of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America joined the Methodists and Baptists and condemned armament by action of their annual meeting at Cleveland in late May.²⁶

Many of the nation's noted ministers also spoke publicly against the armament program. Ralph W. Sockman of the Christ Methodist Episcopal Church in New York declared that the people of the United States were becoming puppets of dictators and had "gone armament mad."²⁷ Harry Emerson Fosdick of the Riverside Baptist Church in New York echoes the same sentiment in somewhat more colorful language by pronouncing that "we ape the foes we hate....They say vast armaments; so we say vast armaments."²⁸ Asserting the idea that the Germans were at least honest, John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church in New York avowed that the United States was a hypocritical nation, pretending to be faithful to its religion, peace, and good-will, but continuing to arm for war.²⁹ The President of Union Theological Seminary, Henry Sloane Coffin, called for more "Davids" to fight against the armament program,³⁰ and A. J. Muste in a United Pacifist Conference at Labor Temple denounced the armament program of the

²⁵Ibid., pp. 1221-1222.

²⁶The New York Times, May 31, 1939, p. 20.

²⁷Ibid., January 31, 1938, p. 20.

²⁸Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 307.

²⁹The New York Times, December 12, 1938, p. 27.

³⁰Ibid., November 7, 1938, p. 15.

Roosevelt administration as being "provocative."³¹

Many church-oriented organizations placed their influence in behalf of disarmament. Seven peace groups, among them the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which was made up nearly entirely of pacifist ministers, described the armament program as "hysteria" and compared it to the Martian invasion radio program of Orson Welles. The same group called on Congress to determine the defense needs of the country before making appropriations.³² A joint committee of Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches opposed military preparedness throughout the period, appearing before various House committees and petitioning the President and Congress to work for disarmament.³³

Not all churchmen, however, were for disarmament. Walter Marshall Horton, professor of theology at Oberlin College, wrote that "the harm comes when Christians conclude that it is their business to urge governments to imitate the Christian way before they are morally prepared for it....National disarmament, unreadiness to use any form of force in international relations, are more likely to involve a nation in shameful betrayal and moral cowardice than to enable it to express a truly Christian attitude."³⁴ Atkinson, general secretary of the Church Peace Union, lamented that it was impossible for the United States to disarm alone, and declared that he was in no position seriously to oppose the nation's expenditures for armament.³⁵ His primary interest, along with many others,

³¹Ibid., March 13, 1939, p. 4.

³²Ibid., November 21, 1938, p. 2; *ibid.*, January 2, 1939, p. 18.

³³Church Peace Union, "Report of the General Secretary and the Auditors," (New York, 1939), pp. 28-29.

³⁴Walter Marshall Horton, "Between Liberalism and New Orthodoxy," Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 640.

³⁵Church Peace Union, "Report of the General Secretary and the Auditors," 1938.

was in a world economic and disarmament conference which will be taken into consideration later.

The churches also opposed military demonstrations of various kinds. Several ministers' names appeared in a list of fifty peace leaders who protested the plan to open the 1939 New York World's Fair with a military exhibition. This opposition secured a response, and the exhibition was opened with a program in the Temple of Religion which stressed international peace.³⁶ In Ohio, the Cincinnati Council of Churches was responsible for the calling off of a mock air raid that the Hamilton County National Defense Council had planned for the area.³⁷ When a mock air raid and black-out was staged by army fliers over Farmingdale, Long Island, Phillip P. Elliott, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, condemned the actions from the pulpit, and the New York East Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, meeting a few days later, passed a resolution denouncing the affair.³⁸

In Seattle, Washington, a three day military observance to celebrate fifty years of statehood as well as to dedicate what was described as a new field armory, created a considerable reaction from the churches. The committee in charge of the final patriotic mass meeting had been announced to include several of the Seattle clergymen. The local Fellowship of Reconciliation circulated a resolution condemning the meeting and protesting against the participation of the clergy. Although the Congregational and Baptist ministers approved this resolution by overwhelming majorities,

³⁶Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 674; *ibid.*, LVI (1939), p. 496. The New York Times, May 9, 1938, p. 19.

³⁷Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 536.

³⁸The New York Times, May 18, 1938, p. 8; *ibid.*, May 30, 1938, p. 9.

the event came off as scheduled. An interesting incident occurred at the conclusion of the meeting. Louis E. Scholl, a Congregational minister, arrived on the platform several steps ahead of the president of the local council of churches, who was slated to pronounce the benediction. Scholl began a benediction in the customary fashion, taking favorable notice of the address, but turned the prayer into a tirade against the whole meeting. He thanked the Lord that the ministers of the city had "invited the people to come from their worship to give their blessing to the doctrine of war and violence as represented by this armory," and for battleships and bombs, and for airplanes and poison gas, and for those blessed words, "suffer the little children to come unto me that I might drop bombs upon them and blow them into kingdom come." The entire audience was embarrassed, but Scholl had found a way to express vividly his opposition to the affair.³⁹

When President Roosevelt made a recommendation in March of 1939 to train 20,000 pilots a year in the civilian colleges and universities, the churches, led by the Federal Council, expressed grave misgivings over the proposal. The Federal Council saw this not only as a demonstration of growing militancy in the United States, but also as an invasion of the education system for military purposes.⁴⁰

A further evidence of concern came in the summer of 1939, when the First Army, consisting of 52,000 men, went on maneuvers in northeastern New York. The project happened to be scheduled in the area of the residence of Georgia Harkness, professor of applied theology at Garrett Seminary. Miss Harkness wrote a detailed account of the action and submitted

³⁹Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 520; *ibid.*, p. 565.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 459. The New York Times, March 26, 1939, p. 31.

this to the Christian Century, along with a scathing denunciation of the whole business.⁴¹

During the same time, the arms trade with Japan was looked on unfavorably by the majority of the churches. Almost every leading denomination passed resolutions concerning this traffic. The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, for example, called for a complete ban on the export of all munitions.⁴² The Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church petitioned the administration to take whatever steps that might be necessary to stop the "disgraceful traffic," and the International Christian Endeavor Society, meeting in Cleveland with over 6,000 delegates from every state in the union present, passed similar resolutions.⁴³ The General Council of Congregational and Christian Churches at a meeting in Beloit, Wisconsin, condemned the sale to Japan of all goods that were "indispensable" in war.⁴⁴ Broadening their resolution, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America favored forbidding the shipment of arms and munitions to any nation that "crossed the territorial boundaries of any other nation."⁴⁵ The Baptists of the Washington Conference called upon the churches to take all necessary steps to prevent further shipment of war materials to Japan.⁴⁶

Several municipal interfaith organizations also took a stand against

⁴¹Georgia Harkness, "Maneuvers in the Back Yard," Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 1023-1024.

⁴²The New York Times, June 7, 1938, p. 24.

⁴³Ibid., November 20, 1938, p. 31; Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 956.

⁴⁴The New York Times, June 22, 1938, p. 14.

⁴⁵Ibid., May 31, 1939, p. 20; Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 777-778.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 806.

the arms and munitions trade. The local federation of churches of Rochester, New York, obtained 4,000 signers to a petition asking that the shipping of munitions be discontinued.⁴⁷ In Hastings, Nebraska, ministers of more than a dozen denominations went on record as opposing the United States' participation in the arms trade, and sent copies of the resolutions to President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Hull, and the Nebraska senators and representatives.⁴⁸ The Seattle Council of Churches passed a similar resolution and circulated it among the churches as a petition, obtaining many signers. The petition was then sent to Secretary Hull.⁴⁹ Opposition by the ministers nearly closed the port of Seattle, which was the embarking point for a large number of shipments of scrap iron bound for Japan. In March, 1939, a picket line, organized under the leadership of E. L. Carter, pastor of the Findlay Street Christian Church, assembled at Pier 41, where a Japanese freighter, the India Maru, was loading scrap. Five gangs of longshoremen quit work, and for six days other gangs refused to pass the line.⁵⁰

Individual clergymen also denounced the sale of war materials to Japan. Francis J. McConnell, Methodist Episcopal Bishop of New York, declared against the arms trade, and Wesley Megaw, of the Fort Washington Presbyterian Church in New York avowed that without American money, munitions, and meat, no major war could be waged. Therefore, he maintained, America held "the keys to the hells of war or the heavens of peace."⁵¹

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 134.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 520.

⁵¹Francis J. McConnell, "From Lausanne to Munich," Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 510-512; The New York Times, February 13, 1939, p. 11.

A professor of systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary, Henry P. Van Dusen, argued that the Christian investment in companies involved in arming Japan was large enough to permit individual Christians to bring pressure that would stop a great amount of the traffic.⁵² In Chicago, Emory W. Luccock, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and Walter H. Judd, returned missionary from China and later a congressman, preached against the arms trade. When Dr. Judd, speaking at the Hyde Park Baptist Church, called on his hearers to write to the President insisting that America cease selling the "instrumentalities" of war, applause broke out from the congregation, which usually worshipped in great solemnity.⁵³

Morrison of the Christian Century was not idle on the munitions question. He asserted in an editorial in June, 1938, that the United States should not trade war goods with Japan, that American capital should not be used to help Japan exploit Manchuria and north China, and that the United States should readjust its economy in view of a highly industrialized Orient. Later in 1938 he gave facts and figures demonstrating the phenomenal growth in the arms industry and called Uncle Sam the "world's champion death peddler." In January of 1939, Morrison softened his stand on this vital question, stating that the flow of war materials had nearly stopped since Hull's appeal of June 1938 to airplane manufacturers to cease selling planes to the Japanese. Yet Morrison indicated that he feared formal governmental sanctions would hasten war. In this same editorial he favored action as suggested previously by Van Dusen.⁵⁴

⁵²Henry P. Van Dusen, "Stop Arming Japan," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1601-1603.

⁵³Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1586.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 719-720; *ibid.*, p. 835; *ibid.*, LVI (1939), pp. 6-7.

Various interdenominational organizations also took a stand against the sale of war materials. In December, 1938, the Federal Council of Churches asked American business corporations to volunteer with the airplane manufacturers to discontinue sales of war goods to Japan.⁵⁵ The Fellowship of Reconciliation announced as one part of its two-point program for 1939 the elimination of trade in munitions.⁵⁶ The Church Peace Union cooperated with the American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression to attempt to halt the flow of war materials from this country. Committees were set up in twenty-eight cities in twenty-six states to this end.⁵⁷ A statement issued by Bishop B. Ashton Oldham, president of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, and signed by two hundred religious leaders, asked the United States to adopt a foreign policy of non-participation in aggression by refusing to supply the sinews of war to aggressor states.⁵⁸

Closely connected with the movement to stop the munitions trade with Japan was the demand for the revision of the Neutrality Act. In effect since June, 1937, this law gave the President the power to determine whether a state of war existed. Upon such determination, an arms embargo would be imposed, and other materials useful in war would be sold to belligerents only on a "cash and carry" basis.⁵⁹ On the technicality that war had not been declared in the Far East, Roosevelt had not put the

⁵⁵Ibid., LV (1938), pp. 1583-1584.

⁵⁶The New York Times, February 26, 1939, p. 14.

⁵⁷Ibid., March 12, 1939, p. III, 6; Church Peace Union, "Report of the General Security and the Auditors," 1938.

⁵⁸The New York Times, July 12, 1939, p. 9.

⁵⁹U. S. Statutes at Large, L, part 2, p. 1831.

Neutrality Act in force. This allowed Japan to continue to purchase war materials in the United States, which was unsatisfactory to many churchmen. On the other hand, the President had imposed the act on both sides in the Spanish Civil War,⁶⁰ and some of the religious leaders desired that the United States furnish munitions to Loyalist Spain. Rev. Herman F. Reissig, executive secretary of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, estimated that more than 150,000 organizations protested the existing neutrality law, and that 250,000 telegrams had been sent to the government in protest, representing every religious group.⁶¹ Bishop McConnell summed up the most common feeling when he wrote, "As for myself, I would do away with the sale of war materials to Japan. As long as we are selling them to anybody I would not have denied them to loyalist Spain." He would, moreover, have nothing to do with Germany.⁶²

Desiring either to withhold aid from Japan, Germany, and Italy, or to give aid to Loyalist Spain, various church organizations demanded that the Neutrality Act be revised to provide for a distinction between aggressor states and victims of unlawful attack. Ten thousand people went to Madison Square Garden for a meeting sponsored by the Committee of Peace through World Cooperation, passing a resolution calling for such a distinction after hearing speeches by ministers including McConnell, Harry F. Ward, and Bishop Oldham.⁶³ Ward continued demanding such a policy in Washington in a speech before the 2,000 delegates to the Conference of the American League for Peace and Democracy, of which he was

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 1832.

⁶¹The New York Times, May 29, 1938, p. 16.

⁶²McConnell, "From Lausanne to Munich," p. 512.

⁶³The New York Times, April 5, 1938, p. 11.

president.⁶⁴ The Committee for Concerted Peace Efforts, composed of the leaders of fifteen national peace organizations, about a third of them church related, called for revision along the same lines. This committee employed a group of legal experts to work on the problem of neutrality for nine months and to make recommendations for changes.⁶⁵ Other organizations actively seeking a revision of the Neutrality Act along these same lines were the Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches.⁶⁶

The Methodist Episcopal Church took the lead among the denominations in protesting the Neutrality Act. The 139th New York Annual Conference declared the existing law useless and called for a positive policy based on collective security with other democracies. The same sympathy was echoed by the Central New York Conference and the New York East Conference.⁶⁷ The Methodist Federation of Social Service, an unofficial agency of the church, took a poll among the membership to determine its position on foreign policy. On the basis of this poll the federation approved an embargo against aggressor nations but would trade with the victims of aggressive warfare on a cash and carry basis. The method of identifying the aggressor was not specified. This policy was not in any way to lead to war.⁶⁸

⁶⁴Ibid., January 7, 1939, p. 3.

⁶⁵Ibid., December 3, 1938, p. 10.

⁶⁶The Church Peace Union, "Report of the General Security and the Auditors," pp. 14-15; Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 302.

⁶⁷The New York Times, April 23, 1938, p. 9; Ibid., May 18, 1938, p. 6; Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 704; Walter B. Muelder, Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century, Vol. II (New York, 1961), p. 154.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 156.

On this issue there was not absolute agreement. Many churchmen feared that such actions calling for collective security and embargo would tend toward conflict. The Genesee (New York) Methodist Episcopal Conference in October, 1938, petitioned the President to take measures to prevent the shipping of all material and financial resources useful in war to all countries, including Spain.⁶⁹ William Oston, a visiting minister at the Community Church in New York, told the congregation to stop dividing the world into good and bad nations, and to end the exports of arms of any kind.⁷⁰

When the government began to consider a revision of the Neutrality Act in February, 1939, the churchmen were sharply divided on the issue, those opposed to a distinction between aggressor and victim nations becoming more outspoken. Senator Elbert Duncan Thomas of Utah proposed an amendment which would make the distinction that many of the religious leaders desired. This amendment had the support of the sixteen peace groups which were represented by Van Kirk before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.⁷¹ The Christian Century vigorously protested, however, saying that such a change would give the president a right to choose sides in any foreign war, pouring the nation's resources in to the favored side; in short, the change would permit the chief executive to lead this country into any war.⁷²

The majority sentiment, nevertheless, seems to have remained with

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 153-154.

⁷⁰Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 302.

⁷¹The New York Times, April 15, 1939, p. 3.

⁷²Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 267.

those desiring a distinction. The 140th Annual New York Methodist Episcopal Conference reaffirmed its stand of the year before.⁷³ Charles G. Fenwick of Bryn Mawr College, one of the legal experts for the Committee for Concerted Peace Efforts, testified before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. He favored the Thomas Amendment on the ground that the United States had sufficient strength to prevent the outbreak of war anywhere in the world, if that strength were used as suggested by the amendment.⁷⁴ Atkinson of the Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches favored the bill for the same reasons.⁷⁵ That there was great dissention, however, is revealed by the fact that the National Conference of the Protestant Episcopal Church debated a resolution calling for the approval of the measure, but was forced to table it.⁷⁶

An administration bill, introduced by Senator Key Pittman, was presented to Congress on March 20, calling for an extension of the cash-and-carry principle to arms, ammunition and implements of war. This law would recognize no belligerents, aggressors or victims, but would sell to all who could pay; this meant France, Britain, and Japan.⁷⁷ This bill received no support from the churches. Van Kirk declared before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee that the church peace groups preferred outright repeal of the Neutrality Act to the Pittman Bill. Van Kirk, and most others having a preference, stood by the Thomas proposal.⁷⁸ The

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⁷⁴Ibid., April 13, 1939, p. 10.

⁷⁵Ibid., April 23, 1939, p. 32; Christian Century LVI (1939), p. 651.

⁷⁶The New York Times, April 27, 1938, p. 27.

⁷⁷U.S., Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1939, LXXXIV, part 3, p. 2923.

⁷⁸The New York Times, April 15, 1939, p. 3.

Christian Century, however, having denounced the Thomas Amendment, remained uncommitted on the Pittman Bill.⁷⁹

As the threat of war became more imminent and the administration became more determined to eliminate the arms embargo in order to aid France and Britain, the churchmen began to defend the Neutrality Act they had once condemned. Representative Sol Bloom on May 29 introduced the administration bill, calling for a removal of the arms embargo and the establishment of a cash and carry system.⁸⁰ This proposal the Christian Century bitterly denounced, contending that it would turn the United States into a munitions base.⁸¹ Five peace groups with a large representation of churchmen also came out for the preservation of the current neutrality legislation,⁸² while Jacob S. Payton, pastor of the Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in New York, declared in a sermon that such a policy as suggested by the Bloom Bill would change the United States from a peaceful neutral nation to the munition maker of the world,⁸³ Thus, when the changing of the neutrality legislation took on the atmosphere of belligerency, the church leaders shied away and defended the existing legislation.

If the religious leaders of the nation were anxious to keep the United States from furnishing munitions in wars in which we did not participate, they were also concerned about the possibility of this nation being drawn into conflict. In order to prevent this government from

⁷⁹Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 375-377; *ibid.*, p. 403; *ibid.*, p. 467.

⁸⁰U.S., Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1939, LXXXIV, part 6, p. 6309.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 812.

⁸²The New York Times, July 18, 1939, p. 3.

⁸³*Ibid.*, July 24, 1939, p. 14.

hastily entering a war, many of the ministers supported the Ludlow Amendment, which would require a popular referendum before Congress could declare war, except in case of an invasion. This measure came up for consideration in the House in early January, 1938.⁸⁴ On January 9, fourteen prominent church leaders made public their support for the measure. Among the signers were representatives from Methodist, Episcopal, Congregational and Unitarian Churches, and the list included names of such noted men as Tittle, Muste, Holmes, Albert Palmer, and Harold E. Fey. The statement began, "As Christian ministers...we are impelled to make public our support of the...Ludlow...war referendum," and avowed that the right to decide whether to send their sons to war was one of the inalienable rights.⁸⁵ The following day a letter favoring the amendment was sent to both houses of Congress. This letter was endorsed by more than 1,000 persons, including a number of ministers.⁸⁶ The Fellowship of Reconciliation announced its support of the measure on the same day.⁸⁷ When the House gathered to discuss the Ludlow Amendment, the organized American Protestants stood clearly in favor of the proposal.

In spite of the large support the Ludlow Amendment received throughout the country, the House by a narrow margin voted against consideration of the bill on January 10, after President Roosevelt had made known his opposition to the proposal.⁸⁸ Many of the Christian leaders over the

⁸⁴U.S., Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1938, LXXXIII, part 1, p. 276.

⁸⁵The New York Times, January 9, 1938, p. 24.

⁸⁶Ibid., January 10, 1938, p. 4.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Rosenman, Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VII, p. 37.

nation continued, however, to give their support to the measure. In the January 19 issue of the Christian Century there appeared nine letters, representing all parts of the nation and many different denominations, favoring the war referendum.⁸⁹ In early February the executive committee of the National Council of Methodist Youth criticized the part of the President in defeating consideration of the measure.⁹⁰ As late as May, a number of ministers representing several religious bodies participated in a Keep-America-Out-of-War Congress at Washington, D. C., which expressed its determination to raise the war referendum question in every congressional election in the fall of that year.⁹¹

Morrison had opposed passage of the amendment from the beginning, and as the international situation worsened, he was joined by others. In two editorials Morrison gave the arguments against the war referendum. He claimed that such legislation would weaken the authority of democracy and would subject our dealings in foreign affairs to greater passion.⁹² A poll by the American Institute of Public Opinion demonstrated that the country as a whole was less in favor of a war referendum in late 1938 and early 1939 than it had been in earlier years.⁹³ Bishop William T. Manning of New York was among those opposing such a measure. In the early summer of 1938 he wrote a letter to the editor of The New York Times, in which he stated that a war referendum would injure rather than aid the cause of

⁸⁹Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 85-86.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 213.

⁹¹The New York Times, September 25, 1938, p. LV, 6.

⁹²Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 7-8; ibid., p. 67.

⁹³The New York Times, October 2, 1938, p. 38; ibid., March 8, 1939, p. 10.

peace.⁹⁴ The waning interest in the Ludlow Amendment is graphically illustrated by the refusal of the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church to endorse the bill in its annual meeting in 1939.⁹⁵ Just as pacifism was waning over the nation, so the churchmen gradually withdrew their support of the war referendum as a method to keep the United States out of war.

Although the church leaders were divided on many issues, they nearly unanimously opposed legislation for the conscription of men and materials. In the spring of 1938 two such bills, designed to take the profits out of war, were considered by Congress. The first of these, the Hill-Sheppard Bill, authorized the President to determine and take control over all material resources, industrial organizations, services, and business relations that he felt were necessary to the successful termination of a war, and called for the registration of all men between twenty-one and thirty-one for armed service.⁹⁶ The most outstanding critic of this proposal was Harold E. Fey, a one-time missionary to the Philippines, who was then executive secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In an article in the Christian Century he scathingly denounced the plan as setting up a dictatorship, and declared that it would take 150,000 office workers to put the operation into effect. He favored raising an army by volunteers, and avowed that it could be done adequately. The article ends with the dramatic pronouncement, "Our well-oiled war machine, like an unblinking Frankenstein monster, rolls relentlessly...crushing beneath its

⁹⁴Ibid., July 25, 1939, p. 18.

⁹⁵Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 427.

⁹⁶U.S., Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1938, LXXXIII, Part 4, p. 3697.

iron shoes every democratic principle."⁹⁷

Fey was not alone in his criticism of the measure. A mass meeting of prominent New York churchmen called for the defeat of the bill,⁹⁸ and eight hundred students from the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church announced their opposition to the proposal in a meeting at St. Louis.⁹⁹

By March the plan reached the floor of Congress under the nomenclature of the May Bill,¹⁰⁰ but it retained substantially the features of the original Sheppard-Hill Bill. Although there was some sentiment among the churches to take the profits out of war,¹⁰¹ it was commonly believed that this bill would not do so, and the proposal was universally condemned.

Once again the Methodist Episcopal Church was more articulate in expressing its opposition than were other denominations. The New York East Conference opposed the May Bill in a resolution which expressed fear that the bill would give dictatorial powers to the President.¹⁰² The Northern New York Conference passed a resolution which made a blanket condemnation of all wartime mobilization and conscript bills.¹⁰³ When the annual New York Conference met in April, it too declared against the May Bill.¹⁰⁴

In other parts of the country the Methodists offered nationalization

⁹⁷Harold E. Fay, "M-Day Marches On," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 43-45.

⁹⁸Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 213.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁰U.S., Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1938, LXXXIII, part 3, p. 2727.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 1309.

¹⁰²The New York Times, March 28, 1938, p. 18.

¹⁰³Ibid., May 3, 1938, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., April 24, 1938, p. 18.

of the munitions industry as an alternative to the May Bill. The Pacific Northwest Conference declared in June, 1938, "We oppose all so-called war-profits legislation which rather guarantees than destroys the profits in war, and favor instead nationalization of the munitions industry and taking the profits out of war."¹⁰⁵ Similar views were expressed by the Erie Conference and the Central Pennsylvania Conference.¹⁰⁶ Feeling was still running high among the Methodists as late as 1939 when the National Council of Methodist Youth met for its third biennial session. This body opposed the May Bill or any similar bill that might be brought up in the future.¹⁰⁷

Dissatisfaction with the provisions of the May Bill was expressed in other areas. Fey produced another article in the Christian Century in which he continued his denunciation of the conscription and allegedly dictatorial features of the measure, and suggested a steeply graduated income tax rate of ninety-three per cent of incomes above \$20,000 as a better way of taking profits out of war.¹⁰⁸ Morrison devoted a two-page editorial to the subject, characterizing the measure as a "liberty-destroying bill."¹⁰⁹ The next issue of the Christian Century carried an article by Edward W. Stimson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Sioux City, Iowa, which demonstrated an emotional objection to the bill. Stimson vividly portrayed

¹⁰⁵Muelder, Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century, p. 153.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 153, 155.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁰⁸Harold E. Fey, "Use Democracy or Lose It!" Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 299-301.

¹⁰⁹Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 326-327.

the plight of Pastor Martin Niemöller in a German concentration camp, and declared that if the May Bill were passed, "the prospect of Christian ministers going to prison for preaching Christian truth as they see it is not improbable or remote." He went on to recommend that the churches make provisions immediately to care for the families of ministers "in the event of their forcible detention by the state."¹¹⁰

Still more criticism of the May Bill came from New York. The Society of Friends, in the 243rd session of the New York yearly meeting, unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the measure. The Friends expressed the opinion that economic appeasement to underprivileged nations was a better way of attaining peace.¹¹¹ Fosdick and Bishop McConnell were among 500 religious and educational leaders who signed an open letter to the President opposing the mobilization proposal,¹¹² and Muste devoted a portion of one of his sermons to the congregation at Labor Temple in urging that the May Bill be defeated.¹¹³ The church leaders may have been divided on other issues, but in every instance they opposed the proposals to mobilize this country into a military state in time of war.

The religious leaders were not always critical of happenings around Washington. When President Roosevelt made an appeal to Germany, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, France, and Italy at midnight, September 25, 1938 for peaceful negotiations to settle their problems, many churchmen commended him for this action. The Baptist Ministers Conference of

¹¹⁰Edward W. Stimson, "If It Should Happen Here," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 362-363.

¹¹¹The New York Times, April 3, 1938, p. 8.

¹¹²Ibid., March 28, 1938, p. 4.

¹¹³Ibid., April 18, 1938, p. 16.

Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Methodist Preachers' Association adopted resolutions which praised Roosevelt's appeal.¹¹⁴ Morrison wrote that this action reflected the desire of the American people, and called on the President to continue such policies.¹¹⁵

A mixed reaction greeted Roosevelt's message to the opening session of the 76th Congress in January, 1939. In this message, the President pointed to the brutality of the totalitarian states and declared that they posed a threat to religion and democracy. He called on the people of the country to prepare to defend not only their own homes but also the tenets of their faith.¹¹⁶ One section of the religious element saw this as the President's bid for the support of the churches for another war, while others viewed the speech as a recognition of religion as a basis for the solution of man's problems. The Christian Century considered the speech an invitation to a "holy war," and called upon the churches to take action to repudiate the invitation.¹¹⁷ Fosdick expressed the idea that the emotional climate of the country was such that it would be easier to carry America into a new world war than it had been in 1917,¹¹⁸ and Holmes warned his congregation against the "holy war" implications of the message.¹¹⁹

On the other hand, the National Committee for Religion and Welfare Recovery, composed of 700 religious leaders from various faiths, sent a telegram to Roosevelt praising the State of the Union address for its

¹¹⁴The New York Times, September 27, 1938, p. 16.

¹¹⁵Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1181-1182.

¹¹⁶Roosevelt, Public Papers, Vol. 8, 1939, p. 1.

¹¹⁷Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 78-80.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 132.

¹¹⁹The New York Times, January 30, 1939, p. 6.

"recognition and proclamation of religion as basic in the solution of the problems of our present-day civilization."¹²⁰ John Sutherland Bonnell, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, praised Roosevelt for giving primacy to faith in God, but did not associate himself with the argument to arm for the defense of religion.¹²¹ The correspondence to the Christian Century demonstrated the mixed feelings throughout the country, but in general letters criticising Roosevelt's message outnumbered those praising it.¹²²

More praise was forthcoming from the churchmen when Roosevelt on April 14, 1939, sent messages to Hitler and Mussolini asking them to insure peace by pledges for ten years not to attack the territory or possessions of thirty-one specified nations.¹²³ Morrison commented that such action was in line with what the Christian Century had advocated for months. His only regret was that he feared the step might involve the United States too deeply in European affairs.¹²⁴ The World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches praised the "11th hour attempt" and expressed the hope that the "bold appeal...may turn the tide to peace."¹²⁵ Meeting two days after Roosevelt's message, the New York Methodist Conference passed a resolution approving the President's attempt to insure peace.¹²⁶

¹²⁰Ibid., January 14, 1939, p. 14.

¹²¹Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 132.

¹²²Ibid., pp. 189-190.

¹²³Roosevelt, Public Papers, VIII, 1939, pp. 209-216.

¹²⁴Ibid., pp. 535-536.

¹²⁵The New York Times, April 23, 1939, p. 32.

¹²⁶Ibid., April 17, 1939, p. 2.

If at times the Protestant leadership of America differed on specific foreign affairs issues, it was always on the side of peace. Some leaders favored economic sanctions of various kinds and to varying degrees as the best means to secure peace, while others opposed such action, fearing that it might bring war. While some favored armaments programs and collective security and others strove for disarmament and isolation, all were calculating a program that would best serve the interest of peace. Church leaders unanimously opposed the mobilization of the United States in the event of war. In seeking a foreign policy for the United States, the majority of the religious leaders were anxious to support anything that would bring about peace, while they hesitated to condone any warlike activities.

In their efforts to influence the formulation of a foreign policy for the United States that would best insure world peace, the American Protestant churches did not always have great success. The struggle against an enlargement of the Navy and increased military expenditures, an effort which had the support of a large majority of the Protestant clergy, was futile. The churches were only partly successful in their attempts to stop the flow of war materials to Japan. The process of events changed the desire for an amendment to the Neutrality Act of 1937, and to a great extent the same could be said for the war referendum. The greatest success the church leaders enjoyed was in the defeat of the May Bill.

CHAPTER III

REACTION TO EVENTS IN EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST

The American Protestant reaction to the momentous and warlike activities of the European and Far Eastern countries in the two years preceding the outbreak of World War II was as varied as was its stand on the foreign policy issues of the United States. But scant notice was taken of the civil strife in Spain, while the struggle between Japan and China was widely discussed and the atrocities of Germany were condemned with religious fervor.

A majority of the American Protestant churches favored the cause of Loyalist Spain against the forces of General Franco. Most of the reaction to this conflict was expressed in their desire to change the neutrality laws of this country so that the Loyalist forces could buy munitions from manufacturers in the United States.¹ The remainder of the efforts of the churches of America went to aid Spanish refugees and sufferers on both sides.²

Concerning the Japanese attack on China much was said. Many of the churchmen believed that the United States was a partner to aggression because of the continuous flow of war materials from this country to Japan, and so they demanded a revision of the Neutrality Act of 1937 to stop this practice. The reaction, however, went further with respect to the

¹This aspect has been discussed in Chapter II, pp. 25-29..

²This aspect will be discussed in Chapter IV in conjunction with the churches' efforts to give aid to the distressed of all countries.

conflict between Japan and China. Throughout the country there was a widespread agitation for a boycott of Japanese goods. In Minneapolis a Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression, formed mainly of church women, made an effort to discourage the purchase of silk stockings and all other articles either made in Japan or manufactured from raw materials obtained there.³ The American League for Peace and Democracy was the largest supporter of the boycott idea. Through the efforts of this organization, over 600,000 people, including an impressive number of clergymen, pledged to support a Japanese boycott as a protest to the militarism of Japan and to show their sympathy with the Chinese.⁴

The boycott received further support when William E. Dodd, a former ambassador to Germany, asked Christians to support such a measure at a luncheon of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, an unofficial Protestant Episcopal organization.⁵ The boycott was sanctioned by Reinhold Niebuhr at a meeting of the Fellowship of Socialist Christians, where he deplored the tendency of the United States to ignore the economic pressures they could bring to bear against Japan.⁶

Many of the religious leaders feared, however, that a boycott would have unpleasant repercussions, and the boycott was never a popular idea with the major denominations, none of which passed resolutions favoring such action. At the annual meeting of the Unitarian Church there was a vigorous discussion of the issue, the opinion being equally divided between

³Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 134.

⁴Ibid., LV (1938), p. 156; The New York Times, February 6, 1938, p. 35.

⁵Ibid., February 23, 1938, p. 19.

⁶Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 213.

those in favor of and those opposed to a boycott.⁷ William Axling, formerly a Baptist missionary to Japan, wrote an article for the Christian Century, which had consistently opposed economic sanctions, in which he explained the Japanese position and condemned the boycott idea. He called for a "nonpartisan and good neighbor attitude on the part of America in this crisis," and declared that "within the divine framework there is no room for boycotts that bring starvation upon innocent peoples."⁸

Many of the ministers who favored a boycott of Japanese goods also encouraged the repeal of the Oriental Exclusion Act. The religious section of the Pittsburg Conference of the American League for Peace and Democracy indicated that some such expression of good will for the Japanese was needed in addition to the boycott. A representative of this group declared that such a gesture would show a willingness on the part of the United States to remedy some of the grievances that had accentuated Japanese nationalism.⁹ In New York, ten ministers declared themselves in favor of combining the repeal of the exclusion act with the boycott.¹⁰

There were those, however, who took a more harsh stand of the Japanese question. R. E. McAlpine, who had served as a missionary to Japan for fifty years, declared that "force is the only argument which can be understood by the fire-eating war-crazed militarists" of Japan. "Unless Japan modifies her banditry, all sorts of force aside from war can and may be used to curb her orgy of mass-murder."¹¹ Nearly the same feeling,

⁷Ibid., p. 764.

⁸William Axling, "Behind the Far Eastern Crisis," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 171-172.

⁹Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 151.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 156.

¹¹Ibid., p. 180.

expressed in a more sophisticated fashion, was voiced by Henry P. Van Dusen, professor of systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary. He avowed that the worst thing that could happen in the Far East was a truce that would leave Japan in control of portions of China.¹² An interesting occurrence in Los Angeles may illustrate the extent of anti-Japanese sentiment in that area. In what was considered a liberal church, located close to a university, some Sunday School children hissed when their teacher passed out pictures of Japanese children.¹³

The events at home and in the Far East absorbed so much of the churchmen's attention that many of the momentous activities in Europe raised little more than a ripple of comment. Hitler's taking over of Austria in mid-March, 1938 seems to have come as a surprise, and little notice was taken of it. Morrison reflected this mood in an editorial following the event. About Hitler he wrote, "So swiftly had he reached this pinnacle that the mind finds it difficult to comprehend all that has happened, much less to compass its meaning for the future."¹⁴ He went on to comment with remarkable foresight that the ease with which Hitler had won Austria would cause him to stretch out for more power, and that would in turn meet resistance which would create another world war. At a meeting in New York called by the American League for Peace and Democracy, Rev. Herman Reising commented on the seizure of Austria, but the major appeal of his speech was for aid to China and Spain.¹⁵ Several weeks later fifty-three Protestant leaders signed a protest against Germany's actions

¹²Henry P. Van Dusen, "China's Greatest Danger," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1398-1401.

¹³Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 341.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 358-359.

¹⁵The New York Times, March 17, 1938, p. 5.

in Austria, and after that there was little discussion of the affair among Protestant circles.¹⁶

One seriously disturbing aspect to religious leaders in America was Hitler's treatment of the church in Germany. In February, 1938, the Federal Council of Churches issued a statement which condemned the Nazis' undeclared war on the church, and declared its sympathy with the ministers, making specific reference to Martin Niemöller.¹⁷ Dr. Ralph H. Long, executive secretary of the National Lutheran Church, criticized Germany for trying to adapt religion to the purposes of nationalism.¹⁸ Other denominations also joined in the protest. Nicholas Murray Butler, speaking at the First Methodist Church at South Hampton, Long Island, called for an alignment of Christian faith and ideals to combat religious persecution in totalitarian countries and declared that public opinion must force Germany to renounce its war on the church.¹⁹ A Baptist, Francis K. Shepherd, pastor of the North Avenue Church in New York, denounced the Nazi persecution of the church and expressed fear that it could happen in this country.²⁰

The stand of the Christian Century on this subject is interesting in that Morrison used the trouble in Germany as a perfect example of the inherent difficulty that the church had when it was aligned with the state. He saw in the church's crisis the "weight and strength of the golden chains by which the church is bound to the source from which all

¹⁶Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 440.

¹⁷The New York Times, February 11, 1938, p. 4.

¹⁸Ibid., August 8, 1938, p. 14.

¹⁹Ibid., August 8, 1938, p. 14.

²⁰Ibid., July 18, 1938, p. 3.

its financial blessings flow."²¹ In a later editorial he continued in the same vein, declaring, "religion must not be degraded into an implement of statehood...the church must not be put in bondage to a pagan state."²²

When Hitler occupied a portion of Czechoslovakia in early September, 1938, the clouds of war disturbed the American religious leaders, but there was no great outburst of moral indignation. Many were determined that if war came the United States should have no part of it. This idea was reflected in the isolationist stand of Morrison. He pointed to the failure of the previous intervention with its attempt to set up a rule of justice and abiding peace in Europe, and declared that there was less possibility now than had been true in 1917: "We will be fortunate enough if we can preserve an island of sanity in this Western hemisphere, until the madness has burned itself out in Europe, and the dark age there passes to give birth to a new age of promise."²³ The Czechoslovakia issue fused into and became intimately connected with the broader question of the Munich peace pact.

When news of a forthcoming conference at Munich reached this country, ministers optimistically hoped for a permanent and just settlement of the European situation. Christian F. Reisner, of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New York, hailed the proposed conference as the "most Christian thing in diplomacy for years," and the Presbyterian John Paul Jones called Prime Minister Chamberlain an ambassador of God who was trying to establish peace in the world. Christians were urged by Harold S. Miller, a

²¹Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 691.

²²Ibid., pp. 231-233.

²³Ibid., pp. 1150-1152.

Lutheran rector, to retreat into their homes and ask for divine guidance so that the conference might produce a just and lasting peace.²⁴

The religious reaction to the settlement at Munich which surrendered Czechoslovakian territory of predominantly German population to Germany, ranged from the greatest of praise to the most severe criticism. Samuel M. Shoemaker, pastor of the Calvary Park Episcopal Church in New York, measured the achievement at Munich as "something very close to a miracle," and rejoiced that loaded guns did not have to go off.²⁵ At St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, Erwin Umbach lauded the peace pact, but declared that it was a result of the prayers of the people rather than the acts of statesmen.²⁶

Many of the clergymen supported the settlement at Munich as the lesser of two evils. Bradford Young, New York correspondent to the Christian Century, affirmed that this was the position taken by the majority of the New York ministers.²⁷ A professor of philosophy at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, took this stand, stating that it was far better to sacrifice the national boundary of a country than to plunge the world into another global war.²⁸

One of the most outstanding critics of the Munich agreement was Reinhold Niebuhr, noted professor of applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary. Niebuhr said of Munich:

²⁴The New York Times, September 19, 1938, p. 20.

²⁵Ibid., October 3, 1938, p. 18; *ibid.*, October 17, 1938, p. 11.

²⁶Ibid., October 3, 1938, p. 18.

²⁷Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1277.

²⁸Harold H. Titus, "A Christian Philosophy of Compromise," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1431-1433.

In a sense, the really tragic end of a liberal culture is to be found in the peace of Munich. What was best in that culture was outraged by the peace of Versailles and what was shallowest in it came in the conclusion that the horrors of a peace of conquest could be expiated by a peace of capitulation. Thus it lost its last chance to save what is genuine and universal in its life against the threat of new barbarism. It fondly imagines that the decay of the modern world may still be healed by belatedly yielding 'justice' to Germany, when it is obvious that Germany, and the fascist world in general, is no longer interested in justice, but bent upon the display of its power and the exercise of a dominion which asks no questions about justice in either the Christian or liberal sense.²⁹

All over the country many agreed with Niebuhr. A prominent religious writer who had recently visited Czechoslovakia, Sherwood Eddy, predicted that although the agreement had postponed a world war, it had made war inevitable, while the time gained would only strengthen the fascist nations.³⁰ Theodore C. Hume of Chicago, preached an Armistice day sermon at Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, bitterly condemning Britain and France for making the Munich settlement and calling this action a collapse of international morality and the betrayal of civilization.³¹ "Very many Kentuckians are convinced that England and France should have gallantly unseated the mad rider, instead of merely getting him to slow his charger to a walk," declared E. W. Delcamp of Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky.³² J. Valdemar Moldenhawer, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New York, classed the Munich pact several levels below idealistic pacifism, and avowed that giving away another's mans goods

²⁹Reinhold Niebuhr, "Ten Years That Shook My World," Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 542-546.

³⁰Sherwood Eddy, "The Critical Hour," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1258-1260.

³¹Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1470.

³²Ibid., p. 1268.

was not Christian love in action.³³ President Roosevelt received a letter signed by notable churchmen including Edgar DeWitt Jones, President of the Federal Council of Churches, Ralph W. Sockman, and Bishop McConnell; this letter urged the President to discourage any further peace settlements such as that of Munich.³⁴ The only denominational gathering to comment was the Sixth Annual Friends Peace Conference, which met at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. This group labeled Munich as a "triumph for brigandage."³⁵

Some of the more fundamental ministers viewed the events in Europe in millennial terms. William Ward Ayer, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in New York, said that Munich was the fulfillment of the prophecy which declared that men would cry "Peace, peace," when there was no peace.³⁶ The pastor of the First Baptist Church in New York, William H. Rogers, declared that "Political leaders have sown to the wind and are reaping the whirlwind. The dismemberment of small nations and deprivations of liberties are beating the trail for the rise and rule of the Anti-Christ."³⁷ In a later sermon he continued in the same vein, seeing the European happenings as a fulfillment of the Biblical prediction of the end of Gentile rule by a government similar in power to the Roman Empire. He saw in Mussolini, rather than Hitler, the head of this state, and declared that his course of actions was "exactly the pathway that the Anti-Christ will travel in the days immediately preceding the coming of Christ to reign on the earth."³⁸

³³The New York Times, October 10, 1938, p. 16.

³⁴Ibid., November 11, 1939, p. 9.

³⁵Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1276.

³⁶The New York Times, October 17, 1938, p. 11.

³⁷Ibid., October 3, 1938, p. 18.

³⁸Ibid., October 17, 1938, p. 11.

There was sympathy among the clergy for the idea that the peace agreement at Munich, and any other like it, would be transient because the only real peace was that which was provided by Christianity. Even before the conference met, Moldenhawer had predicted that the efforts would be doomed because they would not be based on the wisdom and belief in Jesus Christ.³⁹ At Tremont Presbyterian Church in New York, Leon Merle Flanders proclaimed that Christ was still master of the tempests and that he was the only one who could bring peace to the troubled age.⁴⁰ In a sermon to the congregation at the North Baptist Church in New York, Francis K. Shephard preached this idea in most eloquent terms. He declared:

In an effort to solve his difficulties man has tried the League of Nations, World Courts, treaties, pacts and the pet theories of heaven knows how many statesmen. Still war and its horrors seemed closer to us last week than in any period in the last twenty years. When, I wonder, will we learn that it is only through the divine truth, that it is only through God that we will find the everlasting and secure peace we are seeking.⁴¹

Echoing the idea that Christianity was the only answer to the problem, John Gloss, rector of the New York Church of the Incarnation, declared that the crisis in Europe still existed, while Edmund A. Bosch, rector of the Grace Lutheran Church in New York, declared that there could be no peace in the world until "in the family of nations there are only brothers and sisters who believe in one God and obey His will."⁴²

A few clergymen defended the Munich agreement as righting a wrong done by the treaty of Versailles. Holmes viewed Czechoslovakia in this

³⁹Ibid., September 19, 1938, p. 20.

⁴⁰Ibid., October 17, 1938, p. 11.

⁴¹Ibid., October 3, 1938, p. 18.

⁴²Ibid., November 7, 1938, p. 15; *ibid.*, November 14, 1938, p. 22.

perspective, calling it a "monstrous child" created by the peacemakers to provide military barriers against Germany.⁴³ Homer H. Dubs of Durham, North Carolina, declared that the moral collapse of Europe was at Versailles, not at Munich, and called Hitler the "instrument of Europe's subconscious moral sense."⁴⁴ Similar ideas were expressed by H. Hirsch, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and E. A. Kelford, of Eaton Rapids, Michigan.⁴⁵

While most of the ministers were either praising or criticizing the Munich peace settlement, a few believed that the world had been temporarily spared from a general conflict and that it was the church's responsibility to use this time to avert a war altogether. Bishop Manning told the congregation at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York that the world would have to pray and labor for peace.⁴⁶ It was left to Albert W. Palmer, President of the Chicago Theological Seminary, to suggest a practical solution to the problem. He proposed a world economic council that would settle the economic grievances of the unfortunate nations and serve as a substitute for war.⁴⁷ Before much time had elapsed, this idea became a consuming passion with religious leaders all over the United States.

The idea of a world economic conference at this time was not original with Palmer, but he became the driving force behind the plan. Several weeks before Palmer started his campaign, T. T. Brumbaugh, head of the

⁴³Ibid., October 10, 1938, p. 16.

⁴⁴Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1235.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 1235-1236.

⁴⁶The New York Times, October 10, 1938, p. 16.

⁴⁷Albert W. Palmer, "Call a World Economic Conference," Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1368.

Wesley Foundation work in Japan, suggested as one point in a new Far Eastern policy that the United States help in convocing a world economic conference which would consider the amelioration of the "glaring injustices in the distribution of the earth's resources, markets and other economic advantages."⁴⁸

Palmer saw in Munich a "significant but dangerous" victory for pacifism, so that if the settlement was not a success pacifism would get the blame for its failure. Stating that it was axiomatic that modern wars were motivated by economic considerations, Palmer declared that "the unsatisfactory and unjust Munich agreement gives us a breathing spell in which we might call a world-wide economic conference to face realistically the economic and industrial needs and population pressures of each country and work out a substitute for war."⁴⁹ Munich left a tremendous responsibility on organized Christianity, and if the government would not call a conference, then the churches should.

The proposal received widespread acceptance almost immediately, and on November 17, 1938, Palmer carried his proposition to the President, armed with a supporting letter signed by the heads of twenty-one Protestant denominations. By this time the idea had broadened to include a discussion on the reduction and limitation of armaments. With Palmer was a committee consisting of James H. Franklin, Roswell P. Barnes, and Jones, the President of the Federal Council of Churches. The committee discussed the issue with the President for nearly an hour. The President "listened attentively," but no official action resulted from the meeting.⁵⁰

⁴⁸T. T. Brumbaugh, "Toward a New Far Eastern Policy," Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1229-1231.

⁴⁹Palmer, "Call a World Economic Conference," p. 1368.

⁵⁰Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1513; The New York Times, November 18, 1938, p. 5.

Although Palmer received no immediate results from his visit with the President, he continued to crusade for the conference. He spoke before the annual meeting of the Federal Council of Churches at Buffalo, New York, in early December, and received unanimous approval from that body for his proposal to convene a world economic council.⁵¹ Just before Christmas, Palmer published another article in the Christian Century in which he reiterated the church's responsibility to take advantage of the lull created by Munich and to assume moral leadership in the quest for peace. If governments did not act, Palmer continued, the church should hold its own world economic conference, calling forth its best economists and political scientists to outline the grievances of the various nations and suggest solutions. If governments still refused the advice of the church, then let Christianity "bear an intelligent and unified witness as to the causes of war and in behalf of a just and lasting peace."⁵²

Although Morrison had at first condemned the Munich agreement in no uncertain terms,⁵³ he was soon drawn over to Palmer's point of view and became one of the chief supporters of the world economic conference. In mid-November he wrote an editorial approving the plan, and January, 1939, he made an editorial plea for the churches to join in and support the conference proposal. By now Morrison was convinced that the government was not going to convene a conference, and he called on the Federal Council to take the lead by acting without further delay.⁵⁴

⁵¹Ibid., December 9, 1938, p. 15; Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1583-1584.

⁵²Albert W. Palmer, "What Should the Church Do Now?" Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1573-1575.

⁵³Christian Century, LV (1938), pp. 1224-1226; *ibid.*, pp. 1254-1255.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 1392-1393; *ibid.*, LVI (1939), pp. 46-47.

Other religious leaders over the country joined in the chorus of demands for a conference to settle the world's economic problems. In New York such noted ministers as Sockman, Fosdick, Muste, and Holmes advocated the idea.⁵⁵ In Kansas City, Alfred Landon, speaking at a Methodist conference over a national radio network, praised the cause.⁵⁶ Correspondence to the Christian Century ran heavily in favor of calling a conference, with approving letters coming from places as diverse as Owls Head, Maine and Newton Center, Massachusetts, Gravity, Iowa, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Greenville, South Carolina.⁵⁷

At various religious meetings in the winter and spring of 1939 resolutions were passed which gave support to the economic conference. In Tampa, Florida, in late January a group of missionary leaders from all the large denominations passed such a resolution following an inspirational message on the subject by Van Kirk.⁵⁸ Dr. Palmer spoke three times to the North Carolina Council of Churches, and that body gave his plan enthusiastic support.⁵⁹ The Fellowship of Reconciliation adopted the support of a world economic conference as a major part of its program for 1939.⁶⁰ The annual convention of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, resolved to urge the United States government to take the initiative in calling a world conference.⁶¹ The

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 35; *ibid.*, p. 195; *ibid.*, p. 612; The New York Times, December 12, 1938, p. 14; *ibid.*, January 30, 1939, p. 6.

⁵⁶Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 628-629.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, LV (1938), p. 1469; LVI (1939), pp. 60-61.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

⁶⁰The New York Times, February 26, 1939, p. 14.

⁶¹Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 430.

Annual Conference of the Society of Friends and the Christian Endeavor Convention also supported the idea.⁶²

Idealistically conceived, enthusiastically endorsed, the proposed economic conference was fruitless in results. By January, 1939, the Federal Council was busily at work formulating plans for the conference. Christian bodies in Europe were contacted, and efforts were continued to gain the support of the United States government.⁶³ Enthusiasm for the conference was frustrated when the proposal was turned down by the World Council of Churches, meeting in Paris from January 28 to 30. The European members of the Council's provisional committee unanimously held that the European crisis was no longer economic but political and psychological. The committee suggested an informal conference to canvass the world situation and make recommendations to the churches for future peace efforts.⁶⁴ Plans were further dampened in late February when it became evident to the churchmen that the United States government was not going to take any action on the matter. Demand for the conference continued, however, and Morrison suggested that the church make the best of an informal conference by securing the most qualified personnel possible. Using this as a springboard, the church could continue to demand a formal conference.⁶⁵

Since it had been rejected by the World Council of Churches and the United States government, enthusiasm for the world conference diminished with the passage of time. For the first time substantial religious

⁶²The New York Times, April 2, 1939, p. 39; *ibid.*, July 11, 1939, p. 5.

⁶³Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 171.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 235; Samuel McCrea Cavert, "Moving Toward The World Council," Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 242-244.

⁶⁵Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 311-313.

opposition to the plan developed. The outstanding spokesman for those who opposed the holding of a world economic conference was Harry F. Ward, the left-wing professor of social ethics at Union Theological Seminary and president of the American League Peace and Democracy. Ward argued that those who were threatening the peace of the world were thinking in terms of conquest and domination rather than of righting wrongs that they had suffered. He compared Germany and Italy to gangsters and racketeers, and declared that such as those were not invited to conferences. Ward suggested that Jesus' method for dealing with confirmed evildoers was "non-intercourse and willingness to cooperate when conduct...changed."⁶⁶

Hope for the success of the plan was renewed when Roosevelt promised American participation in an international conference to redress economic wrongs and to secure disarmament. This pledge came in the notes to Hitler and Mussolini on April 15, asking for pledges not to attack the thirty-one specified nations for ten years. Hitler's reply was not encouraging, but it did ask for more definite information on plans for a world conference.⁶⁷ Morrison immediately urged the President to "step back through the door which has been left open with definite proposals for a world conference."⁶⁸ The Fellowship of Reconciliation sent a letter to Roosevelt asking him to "exercise restraint, to refuse to close the gates of negotiation and to persist in the policy of world conference as the real alternative to world war."⁶⁹ A distinguished group in New York urged Roosevelt to put forward

⁶⁶Harry F. Ward, "Non-Cooperation and Conference," Christian Century LVI (1939), pp. 474-476.

⁶⁷William Christian Bullitt to Secretary of State Hull, April 18, 1939, in Foreign Affairs, 1939, I, p. 143.

⁶⁸Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 599-600.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 651.

a simple proposal in reply to Hitler. This request was signed by George A. Buttrick, Allan Knight Chalmers, Elmer McKee, John Sayre, Fosdick, Holmes, Jones, Muste, and Sockman.⁷⁰

The government did nothing, however, but the American churches were still insistent. Finally the church leaders followed the plan suggested by the provisional committee of the World Council of Churches, calling for a small informal meeting among a widely representative and highly competent body of religious leaders. The conference met in London in July and was attended by thirty-four persons representing ten denominations from various parts of the world, fifteen being from Continental Europe, eleven from America, six from Britain, and two from Eastern Asia. The Americans included Henry Atkinson, John Foster Dulles, Charles Fenwick of Bryn Mawr College, James Franklin, president of Crozer Theological Seminary, Georgis Harkness, Bishop Ivan Lee Holt of Texas, Bishop G. Ashton Oldham, John R. Mott of New York, Henry Smith Leiper of the World Council, Roswell P. Barnes, and Albert Palmer. The thirty-four met in three sessions a day for five days, and produced a "memorandum." Yet the council received little notice. Events in Europe were such that the suggestions of a handful of religious leaders were not welcome, and in America the "memorandum" was not published until war had already drowned the churchmen's cries for peace.⁷¹

The one feature on the international scene that created a unified reaction from American Protestants was the persecution of the Jews in Germany, and this was everywhere condemned. The peak of opposition to the

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 651.

⁷¹Albert W. Palmer, "A Christian Fourteen Points," Christian Century, LVI (1939), pp. 1101-1103.

German outrage came in November of 1938, following the widespread anti-Semitic riots of the preceding month. In one three-week period, according to the sermon excerpts in The New York Times, nearly every minister, representing all denominations, denounced the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany.⁷²

At about the same time mass meetings were held in several centers throughout the country to protest cruelty to the Jews and to pray for the victims. Protestants combined with the Catholics and Jews in Chicago on November 20 at the K. A. M. Temple, one of the leading Jewish synagogues of the city, for a meeting of protest and prayer. On the same day, an interfaith protest demonstration held in Detroit attracted more than 5,000 people, and was described as the greatest the city had known for many years.⁷³ A similar gathering held in Memphis under the leadership of the Episcopal Bishop, featured Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish speakers.⁷⁴ In Los Angeles nearly 1,500 persons gathered in the Grace Methodist Church on November 28 to register disapproval of German actions and pray for the persecuted Jews.⁷⁵ Over 20,000 people paid twenty-five to forty cents each to attend a meeting of protest at Madison Square Garden in New York, where Ward and Paul Tillich were the main speakers. Ward suggested that an international conference evacuate all the Jews from Germany and send Hitler the bill, forcing collection by a trade embargo.⁷⁶

At several denominational meetings in November protests were also

⁷²The New York Times, November 14, 1938, p. 22; *ibid.*, November 21, 1938, p. 16; *ibid.*, November 28, 1938, p. 12.

⁷³Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1513.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 1521.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 1582.

⁷⁶The New York Times, November 22, 1938, p. 6.

issued against the Nazi treatment of the Jews. The Board of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, representing a membership of over four and a half million, called on the United States to protest officially against German anti-Jewish riots. This body pledged itself to develop a spirit of brotherhood where anti-Semitic feelings could have no place, and expressed its intention to defend the right of Methodists to preach all over the world.⁷⁷ A few days later the Board of Foreign Missions of that church voiced its shock at the persecution of the Jews and revealed its sympathy with the oppressed.⁷⁸ In Memphis the Episcopal House of Bishops were accused of showing more compassion for the persecuted races in Berlin than for the oppressed Memphis Negroes.⁷⁹ The Georgia Baptist Convention and the Mississippi Baptist Convention each petitioned the United States to take urgent measures to protest the inhuman treatment of the German Jews.⁸⁰ Finally, the Federal Council of Churches added its protest in a document signed by former President Herbert Hoover, Bishop Manning, Fosdick, Sockman, and Jones, the president of the council.⁸¹

In the reaction to international events, just as in their stand on foreign policy, the American Protestants demonstrated their desire for peace. At first the events in Europe were overshadowed by the conflict in the Far East. The religious leaders were divided in their opinions as to the best way to bring about peace in the Orient, but they were actively engaged in seeking a solution to the problem. The ascendancy of Hitler in

⁷⁷Ibid., November 13, 1938, p. 37; *ibid.*, November 12, 1938, p. 9.

⁷⁸Ibid., November 17, 1938, p. 9.

⁷⁹Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1405.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 1476; *ibid.*, p. 1521; The New York Times, November 16, 1938, p. 7.

⁸¹Ibid., November 14, 1938, p. 6.

Europe at first caused no more than a ripple of comment, but after the peace of Munich the American Protestants quickly suppressed their individual feelings on the merits of the pact and made a gallant effort to bring about peace through a world economic and disarmament conference. Although many of the warlike events in Europe were excused or overlooked, the intolerant and inhuman persecution of the Jews, more than any thing else, roused the American Protestants to righteous indignation.

CHAPTER IV

REFUGEES, PLAYS AND PRAYER

From the discussion thus far one may be led to the false conclusion that the American Protestant churches were contributing nothing more to the world than a mass of reasonably constructive criticism. Such was not the case. The churches were actively pursuing the cause of peace, lending a helping hand to the oppressed of the world, and maintaining their traditional task of spiritual ministry.

One of the best examples of the churches' activity was their effort to care for the millions of people who were homeless and without food as a result of the various wars. The situation was particularly bad in Spain, where the civil war between the Loyalists and the forces of General Franco had devastated the countryside and forced thousands from their homes. The most active group in aiding the Spanish refugees was the American Friends Service Committee of the Society of Friends. This group gave aid indiscriminately to both sides in the conflict. By April, 1938, this committee, under its secretary, John Reich, was caring for over a million and a half refugees, most of them children and aged men and women.¹ In Barcelona alone the Quakers were feeding over one hundred thousand school children.² The usual diet for these children was porridge with sugar and milk in the morning and cocoa and milk with a piece of bread in the afternoon. The Friends could supply this diet to 5,000 children for a month at a cost of

¹The New York Times, November 15, 1938, p. 5.

²Ibid., November 29, 1938, p. 16.

\$1,000, or only slightly over one cent per day for each child.³

As the situation grew worse, the Friends increased their efforts to meet the greater need. In September the American Friends Service Committee combined with the Church of the Brethren in an effort to secure wheat for Spanish refugees. These groups appealed to the farmers of the United States to donate part of their surplus wheat for this purpose.⁴ The Quakers were able to secure wheat from the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation in late September, and on October 8 the first of several shiploads of wheat left for Spain. This shipment carried 3,812,000 pounds of flour, an amount estimated as sufficient to feed 25,000 families for ninety days. In addition the cargo included 250 cases of soap, which had been obtained from cosmetic manufacturers.⁵ A second shipment in December carried 600,000 barrels of wheat, which the Quakers had processed at a cost of \$500,000.⁶ By this time the operation had extended to include drugs and medicines secured by the Friends by means of requests to over one hundred drug and pharmaceutical manufacturers.⁷ The aid reached a peak in April of 1939, when 3,000,000 bushels of wheat were shipped to Spain to feed nearly ten million people.⁸

The victory of the Franco forces, which became apparent with the fall of Madrid in March, 1939, seriously impaired the Friends' activities in

³Ibid., February 28, 1938, p. 6.

⁴Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1142.

⁵The New York Times, October 9, 1938, p. 38.

⁶Ibid., December 30, 1938, p. 6; Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 38.

⁷The New York Times, December 21, 1938, p. 42.

⁸Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 522.

Spain. After the April shipment seven shiploads of wheat were conscripted by the Franco regime and fed to the soldiers. At one refugee station that was feeding a thousand children, the army exhausted a month's supply of food in three days, and the station was forced to close its doors.⁹ Such oppression made the work intolerable, and by August the Friends began to concentrate their efforts in caring for the 400,000 Spanish refugees who had fled to France.¹⁰

Although the Society of Friends was the most active group in aiding the Spanish refugees, they were not the only religious body interested in supplying the needs of war-torn Spain. Many religious leaders participated in the activities of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. This group, headed by Bishop McConnell and Walter B. Cannon of Harvard University, had 165 active chapters in various cities across the nation. The main station of operation for this organization was at Argels-sur-mer, France, where they maintained a refugee camp that harbored 120,000 of the victims of the Spanish civil conflict.¹¹ Another important function of this committee was the sending of refrigerated blood plasma to Spain to be used by both sides in the conflict.¹²

There was also an attempt by the American Protestants to relieve some of the suffering and misery caused by the Japanese attack on China. Unlike the aid to Spain, the efforts in China took the form of a united Protestant drive. The Federal Council of Churches and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America sponsored the Committee for China Relief.

⁹Ibid., p. 788.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 858.

¹¹Ibid., p. 495.

¹²The New York Times, April 16, 1939, p. 4.

Harper Sibley of Rochester, New York, was president, John R. Mott the vice-president, and James M. Speers the treasurer. On October 1, 1938 this committee started raising money to be used for relief in China, securing funds from churches in all parts of the United States.¹³ In Cincinnati, Ohio, a drive, culminated by a good will luncheon where each guest paid one dollar a dish for his meal, netted over \$10,000.¹⁴ Thirty-nine churches in Syracuse, New York, raised \$1,300 for the Church Committee for China Relief, and 188 churches in the Chicago area secured a total of \$26,627 in the early months of the campaign.¹⁵ During this time the New York City churches were contributing an average of over \$10,000 per week.¹⁶ Although the aid to China did not reach the quantity of that to Spain, the enterprise had the support of a larger portion of the American Protestants.

As in the case of Spain, the Society of Friends was the most active in giving aid to the victims of Nazi tyranny. The nature of the situation in Germany, however, made the type of assistance different from that to Spain. The Quakers' main purpose in Germany was to evacuate the Jews and care for them at some other place until they could be assimilated into a new culture. In November, 1938, an agent of the Friends secured permission from Hitler to station Quaker representatives in chief German cities to supervise the migration of Jews.¹⁷ The Quakers established the American Committee for German Refugees in early December, and this committee immediately set to work evolving plans for the removal of refugees from Germany and for

¹³Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1148.

¹⁴Ibid., LVI (1939), p. 62.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 618.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 490.

¹⁷The New York Times, November 11, 1938, p. 8.

securing homes and employment for them in this country.¹⁸ By March, 1939, the Friends were caring for 1,200 German refugees at West Branch, Iowa, and had secured an old academy for the extension of the operation.¹⁹ Later in the summer the Friends obtained an eleven-acre estate near Nyack, New York, and converted it into a refugee hostel which featured a co-operative division of labor and classes in the English language and in American customs.²⁰ The largest Quaker refugee center was established in Cuba, where the committee leased an estate and cared for over 5,000 refugees from Germany.²¹

There were also a few other isolated attempts to aid the German refugees. A nation-wide, interfaith campaign to raise twenty million dollars was started early in January, 1939, but did not arouse support as the China Relief fund did. This drive had its greatest success in Chicago, where the churchmen of that city subscribed to a little over half their goal.²² The Boston Peace Council, representing twenty-eight organizations and denominations, declared that the main role of American Christians was to care for the refugees, and established a committee for that purpose.²³ The Board of American Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America voted to provide for some Lutheran pastors who had been driven out of

¹⁸Ibid., December 4, 1938, p. 46; *ibid.*, December 5, 1938; Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1445.

¹⁹Ibid., LVI (1939), p. 392; The New York Times, April 2, 1939, p. 39.

²⁰Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 954.

²¹Ibid., p. 779.

²²Ibid., p. 96.

²³Ibid., p. 488.

Germany.²⁴ One of the most interesting attempts to raise funds for German refugees was undertaken by the All Religious Committee in New York, under the chairmanship of Bishop William T. Manning. This committee sponsored a performance by Marina Yurlowa, a Russian performer of Spanish dances, in Carnegie Hall.²⁵

A few attempts were made to aid those who had been subjected to misfortune because of the German military menace in Austria and Czechoslovakia. The American Committee for Relief in Czechoslovakia, with Nicholas Murray Butler as President, was formed in New York to help children and old people who had been forced to leave their homes in that land. Prominent members of this committee included Bishop Manning, Fosdick, and Sockman.²⁶ The Friends arranged and provided for the immigration of 500 people a week from Czechoslovakia.²⁷ In Vienna, Austria, the Quakers set up eight soup kitchens to provide for the hungry and homeless of that city.²⁸

One of the most constructive ways in which the American Protestants tried to aid the persecuted German Jews was to promote tolerance in this country by waging a war against anti-Semitism. During this period there were more than eight hundred anti-Semitic groups in the United States, claiming over six million members.²⁹ The Federal Council led the fight by urging the churches to make "their own distinctive contribution" to the campaign against anti-Semitism by "influencing the attitudes of their own

²⁴The New York Times, June 26, 1938, p. 20.

²⁵Ibid., December 18, 1938, p. 48.

²⁶Ibid., October 30, 1938, p. 13.

²⁷Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1407.

²⁸The New York Times, April 22, 1938, p. 12.

²⁹Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 257.

members."³⁰ The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America joined the campaign and urged the members of its congregations to rebuke anti-Semitism in all forms.³¹ The Christian Endeavor Convention, meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, condemned by resolution bigotry and intolerance, especially anti-Semitism.³²

Several individual ministers were outspoken on the anti-Semitic issue. Frederick Burckenmiller, pastor of the Connecticut Farm Presbyterian Church in Union, New Jersey, led the majority of his congregation to sign cards pledging themselves, "in an effort to combat the wave of hatred that is sweeping the world," to "refrain from saying anything that will harm any individual or any constructive organization."³³ Halford E. Luccock, professor at Yale Divinity School, devoted an entire sermon to the subject as the guest speaker at the Riverside Church in New York. He declared that democracy could never be preserved if the country persisted in movements like anti-Semitism.³⁴ Conrad Hoffman, the assistant secretary of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church, declared that the average German was no more anti-Jewish than the average American and called on the church to meet the challenge of anti-Semitism in this country with aggressive action.³⁵

It has already been pointed out that while the anti-Jewish campaign was at its height in Germany numerous interfaith agencies in this country protested such action. It is interesting further to note that as a part

³⁰The New York Times, June 12, 1939, p. 6.

³¹Ibid., June 13, 1939, p. 6.

³²Ibid., July 11, 1939, p. 5.

³³Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 399.

³⁴The New York Times, June 12, 1939, p. 13.

³⁵Ibid., May 2, 1938, p. 18.

of the drive against anti-Semitism, Protestant and Jewish congregations combined for their regular worship services. The most noted of these meetings was at Central Synagogue in New York, where the members of the synagogue, the Central Presbyterian Church, and the Christ Methodist Episcopal Church met together for a Thanksgiving Service.³⁶

The churches further tried to aid the German refugees by supporting legislation that would allow their admission to the United States over and above the existing quotas. In February, 1939, Senator Robert F. Wagner and Representative John D. Dingell introduced a bill, in its final form known as the Wagner-Rogers Bill, which authorized the admission of ten thousand German refugee children over the quota for each of two years.³⁷ This measure had the full support of the churches. The Federal Council of Churches, through its president for 1939, George A. Buttrick, urged the passage of this proposal, declaring that the United States had a "Christian responsibility" to these unfortunate people.³⁸

Although the churches had called for generous measures earlier, and continued to hint for broader allotments, they supported the Wagner-Rogers Bill. As early as April, 1939, the New York session of the Methodist Episcopal Church petitioned Roosevelt for greater efforts to care for exiles.³⁹ In November the General Council of the Northern Baptist Convention urged the President to admit political and religious refugees over the existing quota and to call an international conference to deal with

³⁶Ibid., November 23, 1938, p. 16.

³⁷U.S., Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1939, LXXXIV, part 2, p. 1278.

³⁸The New York Times, February 19, 1939, p. 32.

³⁹Ibid., April 26, 1939, p. 22.

the refugee problem.⁴⁰ After the introduction of the Wagner-Rogers Bill the New York Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends unanimously adopted a resolution in support of the measure.⁴¹ The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America called for a linking up of their efforts and agencies with all others in more adequately caring for those so greatly in need, and endorsed the Wagner-Rogers Bill.⁴² Although making no specific mention of the Wagner-Rogers Bill, the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church called on the United States to "show its spirit of generosity and hospitality in opening its doors to afflicted people."⁴³

Various churches, city-wide church groups, and denominational organizations tried a multitude of activities to promote the cause of peace. Not the least among these were the youth peace conferences. A "We Want Peace" Crusade was started in Detroit by the young people of the Highland Park Congregational Church and spread throughout the churches of the city. This crusade was inspired by a sermon on peace by the pastor, culminating with the publication of a new peace hymn and the organization of a city-wide movement.⁴⁴ The churches of Memphis formed a Youth Commission under the leadership of Marlene Eldredge to hold meetings on the causes and prevention of war.⁴⁵ In Michigan the Christian Endeavor Society, the Epworth League, the Baptist Young People, and the state Congregational groups

⁴⁰Ibid., December 1, 1938, p. 39.

⁴¹Ibid., April 2, 1939, p. 39.

⁴²Ibid., June 13, 1939, p. 6.

⁴³Ibid., April 27, 1939, p. 27.

⁴⁴Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 254.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 1211.

combined to create an annual youth peace rally known as the Christian Youth Action. At the first of these rallies, held in Lansing on November 12, 1938, young people from all over the state assembled, demanding a peaceful solution to the world's problems.⁴⁶ The annual Colorado State Christian Youth Conference turned its attention to peace in 1938, focusing the conference on the theme of "Bringing About World Peace."⁴⁷

During 1938 and 1939 religious groups sponsored several contests for the promotion of peace. The New York Church Federation, for example, staged an essay competition for all the Protestant youth in the New York area between fourteen and eighteen years of age. Each contestant was to write a 500-word essay on the contribution to world peace of a recent international event of the youth's own choosing. The author of the winning essay was to receive a trip to Toronto, Washington, Philadelphia, or two tickets to a peace play.⁴⁸ The Religious Drama Council of the Greater New York Federation of Churches sponsored a one-act peace play-writing contest. The play was to have a peace theme and was not to exceed an hour in length, and there were three prizes of two hundred, one hundred, and fifty dollars.⁴⁹ The Sunday School Board of the Epworth Methodist Episcopal Church held a combination peace essay and poster contest for the young people of Queens, New York. Although sponsored by a Protestant organization, this contest was open to Catholics and Jews as well, and the committee of judges consisted of persons from all three

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 1514.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 573.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁹The New York Times, May 9, 1938, p. 13.

faiths.⁵⁰

Two Episcopal churches in Boston tried an interesting and unusual activity to promote peace. During the observance of Lent in 1939, the Emmanuel Church and the Trinity Church staged a production of Euripides' play, "Trojan Women." The play was rendered two successive Sunday afternoons in Emmanuel and on Palm Sunday in Trinity, reaching a total audience of nearly 2,000. The ministers believed that the play depicted a great truth and was effective in the cause for peace.⁵¹

Members of the Society of Friends were as industrious in the pursuit of peace in this country as they were active in caring for the unfortunate abroad. In the summer of 1938 the American Friends Service Committee chose ninety-three college students to go on a national crusade for peace. These students contributed one hundred dollars each to participate in the program and lived on five dollars per week for the summer. After a two-week training session, these young people went out in delegations of three and four to arouse citizens to the dangers of war. In all parts of the nation these groups organized peace committees, held public assemblies, and spoke over the radio, advocating the techniques of brotherly love and urging the people to maintain peace.⁵² In addition to this student peace crusade, the Quakers combined with the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Church to sponsor peace institutes on eleven college campuses in June, 1938.⁵³

The efforts of the Protestant women to promote peace are not to be

⁵⁰Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 472.

⁵¹Ibid., LVI (1939), p. 549.

⁵²Ibid., LV (1938), p. 292; ibid., p. 1106.

⁵³The New York Times, June 5, 1938, p. 43.

overlooked. The Women's Cooperating Commission of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America actively worked for the cause of peace. In early May, 1938 this organization sponsored a series of luncheons, which were attended by over 50,000 women of the various Protestant churches in 450 communities. The main purpose of these luncheons was to emphasize the desire of the ladies to act in union to promote the peaceful solution of international problems.⁵⁴ A month previous to this, the women of Columbus, Ohio, had sponsored a similar program with 236 such peace luncheons being held in homes of the Columbus church women. The ten to twelve women in each home ate a hypothetical war-time meal and listened to a special peace broadcast on the local radio station.⁵⁵

The churches in Cleveland tried to promote peace through education. After a two-week visit by Harry N. Holmes, associate secretary of the World Alliance of International Friendship through the Churches, fifty congregations organized local parish peace education committees. These committees were to integrate the Protestant churches' efforts to further world peace and sponsor a weekly radio broadcast, "Peace in the News."⁵⁶

Nor did the ministers of the nation fail to use the media of the pulpit to foster world peace. Thousands of sermons were delivered for that cause from individual pulpits, in denominational meetings of all kinds, at interdenominational gatherings, and on almost every special occasion that could possibly be used for the purpose. The most concentrated sermonic effort was a result of the drive by Harold E. Fey, executive secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, to secure a thousand

⁵⁴Ibid., May 22, 1938, p. VI, 5.

⁵⁵Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 484.

⁵⁶Ibid., March 30, 1938, p. 406.

ministers to preach for peace on Sunday, May 29, 1938. This drive met with remarkable success, with over 100 preachers cooperating in Cleveland, Ohio, alone.⁵⁷

In the effort to promote world peace the American Protestant churches gave attention to the traditional spiritual medium of prayer. There is no adequate way to measure the number of prayers uttered in the churches, from the large stately buildings on the corners of city streets to the white frame sanctuaries of the countryside, and in the private homes of devout Christians, but from the volume of recorded pleas, it must have been large.

The first great wave of prayer came just prior to the Munich agreement in September, 1938. The executive session of the Federal Council of Churches appealed to Christians on September 23 to pray for peace and for all those suffering from religious and racial oppression, and asked the churches to set aside Sunday, November 20, as a special day for prayer. The Federal Council further recommended that all church doors be kept open during the week for private prayer.⁵⁸ On September 25, every Protestant Episcopal Church in the New York Diocese had, at the suggestion of Bishop Manning, special prayers for a peace of justice. In addition to the private prayers, each church prayed, "Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, guide, we beseech Thee, the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and grant that peace may be preserved and established with justice, righteousness and liberty, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."⁵⁹ A few days later three hundred New York preachers

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 506; *ibid.*, p. 736; *ibid.*, p. 851.

⁵⁸The New York Times, September 25, 1938, p. 29.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, September 26, 1938, p. 7.

assembled in the Marble Collegiate Church and passed a resolution calling on the churches to pray for peace.⁶⁰ At the same time, the Philadelphia Federation of Churches urged President Roosevelt to set aside a day of prayer for world peace, reminding him that "more is wrought by prayer than this old world dreams of."⁶¹ The call for prayer continued in the months after the settlement at Munich. On October 6, the biennial convention of the United Lutheran Churches in America, meeting in Baltimore, set aside November 27 as a special Sunday for prayer for the peace of the world and for the victims of persecution and oppression.⁶²

The churches' concern over the persecution of the Jews during November, 1938, has already been discussed, and it will be remembered that many of the meetings connected prayers for the victims with their protest against the oppressor. World conditions, especially the treatment of Jews in Germany, caused the Federal Council to put another emphasis on the special day of prayer in November. In action initiated on November 12, the council urged the churches to include prayers for the victims of aggression and for a united effort to combat anti-Semitism.⁶³ As a culmination of the special weekend of prayer, Joseph Sizoo, vice-president of the Federal Council, voiced a petition for the German government as well as for its victims on a national broadcast sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Dr. Sizoo prayed, "If they do these things ignorantly in unbelief, then mercifully forgive them for they know not what they do. Point them to a better way.... Show them the error of

⁶⁰Christian Century, LV (1938), p. 1214.

⁶¹The New York Times, September 27, 1938, p. 16.

⁶²Ibid., October 7, 1938, p. 23.

⁶³Ibid., November 13, 1938, p. 40.

their way.../and/ teach them that that nation is great whose God is the Lord."⁶⁴

As it became obvious that the agreement at Munich would not bring permanent peace, the churches continued to pray for peace. On the World Day of Prayer, February 24, 1939, for example, the churches of New York prayed "that the church may be empowered with love to draw together into unity and to go forth in brotherhood that justice with peace may come to all mankind."⁶⁵ From their headquarters in Chicago, the leaders of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union contacted the governors of all the states in an effort to have June 11, 1939 designated "Peace Prayer Day."⁶⁶

When war was imminent in the late days of August, 1939, the churches responded to the crisis with prayer. Once again the Federal Council of Churches took the lead. Through President Buttrick the council designated Sunday, August 27, as "A Day of Prayer for Peace." The churches were asked to pray "that nations may be spared to pay the price of peace by renouncing such considerations of national self-interest as may be necessary to achieve a larger measure of justice for all races and all nations."⁶⁷ On that Sunday Bishop Manning requested that all the clergymen of his diocese in New York offer prayers for peace at all services.⁶⁸ Another plea came from the Baptist World Alliance, which was meeting at the time of the crisis. This body asked every Baptist in the United States "to continue earnestly in prayer both privately and publicly that

⁶⁴Ibid., November 21, 1938, p. 6.

⁶⁵Ibid., February 24, 1939, p. 22.

⁶⁶Ibid., June 11, 1939, p. 48.

⁶⁷Christian Century, LVI (1939), p. 1097.

⁶⁸The New York Times, August 26, 1939, p. 2.

war may yet be averted and peace preserved."⁶⁹ The response to these calls for prayer can only be imagined, but undoubtedly thousands of American Protestants prayed earnestly that peace would prevail over war.

Throughout the months of 1938 and 1939, whether in times of crisis or in moments when war had been averted, the American Protestant ministers continued to preach the traditional message of Christianity. Men might invent various means to secure peace, but the churches proclaimed to the world that a true and lasting peace could be built only on the principles of Christianity, established by the Prince of Peace. From the reservoir of sermon extracts in The New York Times one is amazed at the constancy and unity of the message of the Protestant churches. From the most conservative and fundamental ministers to the presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church,⁷⁰ from New York to Kentucky and Oklahoma,⁷¹ the American clergymen preached Christ as the Hope of the World.

The American Protestant leadership in the early part of 1938 had found that the peace of nearly two decades was gradually disintegrating. A substantial number of the clergy possessed a pacifist outlook, and disagreed with the Roosevelt administration's policy of increasing armaments. On the international scene, the militant activities of Japan were widely condemned while Europe was largely ignored. There was some concern over the plight of the homeless of Spain, and an occasional comment on the evils of Communism and fascism, but slight attention was given to Hitler and the rising German state. The events of the spring and summer of 1938,

⁶⁹Ibid., August 26, 1939, p. 16.

⁷⁰Ibid., March 21, 1938, p. 16.

⁷¹Ibid., August 21, 1939, p. 14.

however, swiftly changed the focus, and Europe absorbed the major portion of the clergy's attention until the outbreak of the declared war in September, 1939.

The increased military activity of Germany came as a surprise to a great portion of the clergy, and few were able to comprehend the significance of the events. The peace of Munich crystallized Protestant opinion and emphasized for many the role of the church in preserving world peace. This found expression in the demand for a world economic conference to remove the grievances of the "have-not" nations. Progress was slow, however, and when early in 1939 it became evident to many of the churchmen that the peace provided by Munich was doomed to failure there was a slight defection from pacifist ranks. In the summer of 1939 the clergy tended to be less outspoken on political and international issues, and to devote more attention to the proclamation of the traditional message of Christianity.

CONCLUSION

With the German attack on Poland in September, 1939, the churches' long struggle for world peace ended. The question now was not "What can the church do to prevent war?" but "What can the church do in a world at war?" The majority of the churchmen had worked to the very eve of the fighting, and even after, to secure peace. The world economic conference, upon which so many had depended to preserve the peace, had been held too late and possessed too little authority so that any benefit that it might have wrought was lost. The American Protestant crusade for peace had failed. It had been an impossible task.

There are those who may agree with Robert Moats Miller, who declared that the Protestant churches were "pathetically confused, halting, divided, and uncertain," as they viewed the breakdown of peace in 1938 and 1939. This was not the case; in fact, the opposite seems nearer the truth. The American Protestant churches were united in their desire for peace. Just as there is a division among Protestants on the method of procuring salvation and administering the sacraments, so was there a division on the method of preserving peace. Some thought that pacifism was the best road to peace, others linked pacifism with isolationism, while still others believed that collective security and preparedness were the best ways to secure peace. But they nearly all wanted peace, and the extremes often agreed on certain issues. Niebuhr, probably the strongest in his criticism of pacifism, early opposed economic sanctions against Japan and harshly condemned the American naval policy. The division was thus over where to draw the line, for example, how bad did

those conditions necessary to preserve peace have to get before war became the lesser of two evils?

Not only did the church work to preserve peace, but it continued its traditional service to mankind. Wherever war wrought evil and destruction, some element of American Protestantism made an attempt to demonstrate love and goodwill toward men. The church continued to look beyond the present, and to point mankind to the hope of a glorious future.

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