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“The Bible is the Word of God. ... What does it tell us about war?” The use of Scripture in Professor James Cooper’s *The Soldiers of the Bible* and in his sermon on the National Day of Prayer and Intercession, 3 January 1915

Charlotte Methuen, University of Glasgow

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On 3 January 1915, the British government appointed a national day for “humble prayer and intercession” relating to the Great War. This was one in a long series of national days of prayer which dated back to the sixteenth century.¹ As Joseph Hardwick and Philip Williamson observe, “during periods of anxiety or crisis, days of fasting, humiliation, intercession or national prayer were observed to implore God’s intervention, or to seek better understanding of the divine purposes.”² On suitable occasions, days of thanksgiving were also declared. These were public holidays, on which public offices and businesses closed, were designated for attendance at special services and sermons and for private devotions.³ In contrast to earlier practices, the days of prayer marked during the First World War, were imperial and ecumenical, “a new type ... initiated by consultation among the leaders of all the main churches in Britain (including the Roman Catholic Church), announced with the King’s personal support, and then proclaimed or encouraged by governors in the colonies, dominions and India.”⁴ The day of humble prayer and intercession appointed for 3 January 1915 had been preceded by national calls for intercession in August 1914; it would be followed by days of prayer and intercession on 2 January 1916, 31 December 1916, and 6

¹ A research project investigating these forms of service has identified “eight hundred and sixty-six particular occasions of national worship: Natalie Mears, Alasdair Raffe, Stephen Taylor, and Philip Williamson (eds), *National prayers: special worship since the Reformation* (Church of England Record Society; 3 vols Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2013-), vol. 1, p. xxv. The series began in 1533 with a day of thanksgiving for the birth of Princess Elizabeth (ibid. p. 3). Unfortunately, the volume dealing with the twentieth century is still in preparation.

² Joseph Hardwick and Philip Williamson, “Special Worship in the British Empire: from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries,” in S. J. Brown, Charlotte Methuen, and Andrew Spicer (eds) *The Church and Empire (Studies in Church History 54; CUP: Cambridge forthcoming 2018)*.

³ Hardwick and Philip Williamson, “Special Worship in the British Empire.”

⁴ Ibid.

January 1918, and from 1916 until 1918 annually on 4 of August, the anniversary of the outbreak of the war.⁵

In Scotland, the Church of Scotland's "Committee on Aids to Devotion" drafted an order of service to support the marking of this day, one form which was used at St Andrew's parish church in Glasgow.⁶ The sermon at this service was preached by James Cooper (1846-1922), Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow from 1899 until 1922, and also the first chaplain to the University of Glasgow OTC.⁷ The subsequent publication of Cooper's sermon makes it possible to explore the way in which Cooper was in 1915 using Scripture to support and present his attitudes towards the War. This sermon, read in combination with Cooper's work *The Soldiers of the Bible* indicates that as early as January 1915, he had moved away from the crusading attitude that saw the war as a holy war.

Cooper was one of four professors of the University of Glasgow's Divinity Faculty; together they faced the challenge of leading the Faculty through the many challenges posed by the First World War.⁸ He had been for many years a parish minister before being appointed to the Glasgow Professorship in 1899. In 1908, the University of Glasgow's OTC

⁵ Mears, Raffae, Taylor, Williamson (eds), *National prayers*, vol. 1, p. cvi [unnumbered page]. There may have been no official national day to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of war, but local services were certainly held. A "United Service of Humble Prayer and Intercession for our Country and our Allies" took place at Fortingall Parish Church on 4 August 1915 and the sermon, by William Campbell, was published (James MacLehose and Sons: Glasgow 1915).

⁶ Mears et al. comment on the difficulty of locating the forms of service used for this and other days of special prayer in Scotland during the twentieth century: *National prayers*, vol. 1, p. xxxviii.

⁷ Cooper's sermon and the order of service were published as: *Our twofold need in the present war: a sermon, preached in S. Andrew's Parish Church, Glasgow, on Sunday, 3rd January, 1915, being the day appointed by authority for humble prayer and intercession ... : together with the form and order of divine service prepared by direction of the commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and issued by the committee on aids to devotion, by the Reverend James Cooper, D.D., D.C.L., Litt.D., Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons 1915). The service taken by Norman MacLean at the Park Church in Glasgow's West End on the same occasion shared the readings, Exodus 17 and Romans 8.18-39; Psalm 46, the hymn "To thee o Lord we fly," and the National Anthem. Both services included intercessions for King and Country, for soldiers and sailors and all involved in the war, the sick and the wounded, the bereaved, "our allies and those who are at present our enemies", and those who had died. The petitions were not in the same order and the words of the prayers differed. See Norman MacLean, *Service of prayer in time of war* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons 1915).

⁸ For an exploration of what this entailed, see Charlotte Methuen, Annika Firn, Alicia Henneberry and Jennifer Novotny, "The University of Glasgow's Faculty of Divinity in the First World War," forthcoming in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* (2018). For Cooper's life see H. J. Wotherspoon, *James Cooper: a memoir* (London: Longmans, 1926).

was formed,⁹ and by 1911 Cooper had become its first chaplain.¹⁰ Cooper served as Dean of the Faculty of Divinity from 1912 until January 1915, and would serve as Moderator of the Church of Scotland in 1917-18. He was deeply rooted in the ecclesiastical culture of Scotland, but he was also firmly committed to supporting the University of Glasgow's OTC. As Dean, Cooper played an important role in directing the Divinity Faculty's response during the early months of the War, and as chaplain to the OTC, he was in contact with many students from across the University who had joined up by January 1915. Cooper's biographer records that four hundred members of his University Company volunteered their service within the first two days of war.¹¹ Throughout the War, Cooper continued to offer his services as chaplain to the Territorial Army outwith University sessions.¹² He was also a regular preacher, signing himself in the University's preachers' register variously as "Professor of Ecclesiastical History" and "The University Chaplain GUOTC".¹³

Congruent with the findings of studies of preaching in both Britain and Germany during the first World War, in the opening phases of the war Cooper seems to have seen it in terms of a crusade.¹⁴ In November 1914, he published a rousing poem in the *Glasgow University Magazine*, encouraging students to join the fight "in God's great name":

⁹ Edward M. Spiers, *University Officers' Training Corps and the First World War* (Council of Military Education Committees of the United Kingdom, Occasional Paper 4, online at: http://www.comec.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/occasional_paper_no_4_no_crop.pdf), 13.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/ww1-biography/?id=2397>.

¹¹ Wotherspoon, *James Cooper*, p. 274. Recruitment was high across Scotland: in the early stages of the war, Scotland's rate of recruitment was the highest across the United Kingdom: in Glasgow, 22,000 men had enlisted by the first week of September 1914. Scotland provided 22 of the 157 battalions of the British Expeditionary Force in France, and, S. J. Brown suggests, "probably experienced higher casualties as a proportion of its population than any other political unit within the British Commonwealth" (S. J. Brown, "The Scottish and Irish Reformed Churches and the First World War," in: Hans-Georg Ulrichs, Marco Hofheinz, Georg Plasger and Michael Weinrich (eds), *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die reformierte Welt* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Theologie 2014), pp. 254-271, at p. 254; compare also 256; Keith Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], p. 6; James L. MacLeod, "Greater Love Hath no Man than This": Scotland's Conflicting Religious Responses to Death in the Great War," *Scottish Historical Review* 81 [2002], pp. 71-72).

¹² Wotherspoon, *James Cooper*, p. 274.

¹³ See, for instance, entries for 2 May 1915 and 30 April 1916 respectively (GUArch CH 2/1).

¹⁴ For the preaching in England and Germany during the First World War, see A. J. Hoover, *God, Germany and Britain in the Great War: a study in clerical nationalism* (New York: Praeger 1989); for England, see Albert Marrin, *The last crusade: the Church of England in the first World War* (Durham NC: Duke University Press 1974); for Scotland see Stewart J. Brown, "'A Solemn Purification by Fire': Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches, 1914-19," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994), pp. 82-104; Peter Matheson, "Scottish war sermons," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 17 (1972), pp. 203-13. Compare also Charlotte Methuen, "'The very nerve of faith is

Britain's Call to Arms

Arise! ye sons of British blood,
The hour is come to do or die!
Against the free the tyrant's brood
Their blood-stained banner wave on high.

Through Belgium's green and fertile plain
Their track is red with peasants' gore;
And now the vineyards of Champagne
This "Scourge of God" smites sharp and sore.

An earlier Scourge, but not more fierce,
In those same fields once found his doom;
And ye in God's great name shall pierce
His serried ranks and drive him home.

At you he aims, at Britain's might
He strives to strike by sea and land;
Nor cares on whom his blows may light,
If ye but fall beneath his hand.

Then rise, ye sons of British blood!
Show of what metal ye are made;
Against the despot's conscript brood
To freedom's arm lend freeman's aid.

Till brutal force is fain to own
Itself o'ercome by juster might,
And lays its godless weapons down,
Confessing Him who judges right.¹⁵

Brown has found that the focus on the War as crusade characterised preaching until the summer of 1915, when the realities of the war began to become apparent.¹⁶ Cooper here, however, seems to focus more on a comparison with the battle of Waterloo (Napoleon being the "earlier Scourge" that "in those same fields once found his doom"¹⁷) than on biblical

touched': British preaching during the Great War," in: Matthieu Arnold and Irene Dingel (eds), *La Prédication durant la Grande Guerre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2017), pp. 63-73.

¹⁵ *Glasgow University Magazine*, November 1914, p. 11.

¹⁶ Brown, "A Solemn Purification by Fire," pp. 83, 91-92,

¹⁷ That Cooper alludes to Waterloo, rather than to the crusades or to medieval battles such as Bannockburn (1314), is in contrast to the use of Robert the Bruce on posters encouraging men to enlist. See David Goldie, "Shades of Bruce: Independence and Union in First World War Scottish literature," in: Gill Plain (ed.), *Scotland and the First World War: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Bannockburn* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press 2017), pp. 205-226, especially pp. 205-209. For the legacy of

themes. The War is fought – and, he implies, will be won – in God’s name, but his poem does not explicitly draw on Scripture.

This changed with Cooper’s publication, in conjunction with the Church of Scotland’s Young Men’s Guild, of *The soldiers of the Bible* which he prepared for the press in the closing months of 1914.¹⁸ This small volume, designed to be carried in a uniform pocket, explored images of soldiering and warfare in the Old and New Testaments. It witnesses to a striking shift in Cooper’s attitude towards the War, suggesting much more caution about claiming that it was being fought at God’s behest. This is particularly clear in the early chapters. The Old Testament sections covered Nimrod, “the first Conqueror”; Abraham “The unselfish warrior”; Pharaoh, “the hardened tyrant”; Amalek and “Israel’s first battle”; “Rules for Warfare in the Law of Moses”; Joshua, “The soldier of the conquest”; Deborah and Barak, including “the recreants and the heroes”; Gideon, “the greatest of the Judges”; Jephthah; Samson; Saul; Jonathan, “valour and friendship”; David, “the man after God’s own heart”; “David’s mighty men”; Ahab; Jehu; and Cyrus. His New Testament soldiers were the soldiers mentioned in the gospels; Cornelius the centurion, “the first gentile Christian”, Paul “among the Roman soldiers” and “War and peace in our Lord’s teaching”. This is a devotional work: each chapter begins with a relevant biblical text or texts, lists a “prose” Psalm and a Psalm paraphrase and a hymn to be sung. Leading ideas in the text are drawn out and commented on, and many of the chapters close with “moral reflections” clearly, but not explicitly, related to the war.

This work suggests that Cooper had already become quite cautious in his conclusions about the war. The first chapter, on Nimrod, closes with a warning: “they that take the sword shall **perish with the sword**, unpitied, their doom prayed for (Ps. ix. 19) and rejoiced over, even by the holy and the merciful (Ps. lviii. 10; Jas. ii. 13; Rev. xviii. 20).”¹⁹ Scripture is employed here to question the war and the motives behind it whilst still offering encouragement to those who had joined up. Cooper explains that Abraham was “a man of peace; he never fought a battle for his own gain,” whereas, in contrast, “Britain proclaimed

Waterloo, see also, in the same volume, Caroline McCracken-Flesher, “‘Not My Land’s Hills’: War and the Problem of Scottish Homecoming,” pp. 65-82.

¹⁸ James Cooper, *The Soldiers of the Bible* (London: A. & C. Black 1915). The author’s preface is dated 19 December 1914 [p. viii].

¹⁹ Cooper, *Soldiers of the Bible*, p. 5; bold emphases in this and subsequent quotations are as given in the original text.

war on Germany, compelled, as our statesmen said, 'by our own honour and our own interests'."²⁰ Abraham "rose at the call of brotherly love; and we (St John says) ought to 'lay down our lives for the brethren' (I John iii. 16), valuing a brother above 'interests' and estimating men more than property."²¹ He concludes, in the moral reflection, "not simply the lawfulness of such a war as that of Abraham against the invading kings," but also that Abraham's example "shows further that such **war** may be itself a **means of grace**, bringing us a clearer vision of Christ, and a closer fellowship with Him."²² Christ is the Prince of Peace, and yet, Cooper argues, "**the mere absence of war is not an unmixed blessing to mankind**": peace under Solomon gave rise "to tyranny and idolatry", while "the Roman peace brought forth monsters on the throne like Tiberius and Nero; it **crucified the Saviour**, and laid Ten imperial persecutions on His faithful followers."²³ Christ's true peace is to be found in faith and love, and Cooper asserts that these have been increased by the war:

We were on the brink of civil war in Ireland; and sins of all sorts were rife— disorders, party-spirit, class-hatreds, oppressions, rebelliousness, materialism, excessive love of gain as well as of sport and pleasure; forgetfulness of God, neglect of ordinances, unbelief, men "taking counsel together ... to cast away the cords of the Lord and of Christ" (Ps. ii. 3). Since the War broke out, much of this has already vanished: we are a united people; charities, self denial, religion have revived at home, and the life-blood of our noblest manhood has been freely poured out in a glorious cause. Who shall say that in the eyes of Him Whose eyes behold the evil and the good (Prov. xv. 3), this time of War with all its carnage has been worse than the time of peace preceding it?²⁴

Cooper is here already in late 1914 pointing to "the sinfulness of pre-war society, and the need for national repentance", a theme which Brown suggests generally emerged much later in Scottish preaching, after 1917.²⁵

At the same time, drawing on Deuteronomy 8, Cooper also warns that "**military success has its moral dangers**", and in particular three: forgetting or disobeying God, "pride

²⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

²¹ Ibid., p. 7.

²² Ibid., p. 9.

²³ Ibid., pp. 195-196.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 196.

²⁵ Brown, "A Solemn Purification by Fire", pp. 83, 99-101.

and boastfulness”, and self-righteousness.²⁶ Indeed, for Gideon, “**triumphs proved the occasion of serious sin,**” for “victory brings its perils to the soul.”²⁷ Cooper here draws an analogy to Germany’s “brilliant success” against France in 1870 which he believes led up to the present “gigantic, and on [Germany’s part] part unnecessary War.”²⁸ This, for Cooper, is a modern example of the temptations to which Gideon succumbed.

Under the heading “Amalek”, Cooper considers “Israel’s First War; waged by the command of Moses in self defence against a wicked and unprovoked attack; victory gained by the combination of stubborn fighting and intercessory prayer.”²⁹ He would return to this passage – and to these themes – in his sermon at the service on 3 January. Cooper pointed to Jonathan as “the special example in the Bible of **youthful valour and disinterested friendship,**” showing that “an irreligious father may have a godly son.”³⁰ “Friendship,” Cooper concluded, “brings duties as well as pleasure; it may often involve us in heavy sacrifice; but a friend well chosen and constant is worth all that.” Cooper would return to Jonathan as the example of “youthful faith and valour”, of faith, and of friendship and fellowship in his 1917 address commemorating William George Teacher, killed aged twenty-two.³¹ Jehu, “an example of the **soldier** who will **lend his sword to God** but will **not give him his heart,**”³² is contrasted to Cyrus, the “warlike conqueror” who was yet “the predestine agent to effect a great religious revolution which should help enormously to prepare the world for the **coming** and the **kingdom** of the **true Messiah.**”³³ This, for Cooper, is an example of “how God ... can make all things work together for good to them that love him (Rom. viii. 28).”³⁴ The New Testament, Cooper hold (citing Isaac Williams), shows that “**soldiering**, even in that old Roman Army, might be ‘a school of virtue and lay the

²⁶ Cooper, *Soldiers of the Bible*, p. 26.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 88.

³¹ *Order of service and address given by the Right Rev. Professor James Cooper ... at the unveiling and dedication in Hillhead Parish Church, on 29th December, 1917, of a stained glass window in memory of Second Lieutenant William George Teacher, 15th (Service) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry. Also, sermon “Triumph through sacrifice” by the Rev. Walter R. Lacey, M.A., Hillhead Parish Church, 30th December, 1917* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons 1918), pp. 7-10.

³² Cooper, *Soldiers of the Bible*, p. 136.

³³ Ibid., p. 145.

³⁴ Ibid.

foundation of faith in discipline, in hardship, and obedience’.”³⁵ The soldiers who crucified Jesus were doing their duty; however, their treatment of Jesus before the crucifixion shows “the worst of the **vices** to which a **wicked soldiery** is prone” and offered “a warning to every soldier HOW NOT To use the people who in the day of his power are put into his hands!”³⁶ Cooper here uses Scripture to highlight the temptations offered by war, whether to individuals or to nations, as well as identifying what he saw as its possible benefits.

As the editor’s preface commented, Cooper’s *The Soldiers of the Bible* sought to draw out “many lessons suggested by the present Great War,” relating them to both the Old and the New Testaments.³⁷ The primary theme of his work is the increase and deepening of piety, but it also seems to offer a biblical justification for Britain’s being at war. Similarly, the sermon Cooper preached on 3 January 1915 shows him wrestling with the implications of the War, not only for the nation, but for individuals, and particularly the students whom he knew and to whose welfare he was clearly committed. This was to be a day of “humble prayer and intercession,” which fitted well with the tone of *The Soldiers of the Bible*. The tone of the service was set by the opening penitential rite which drew out the themes of excessive worldliness already highlighted by Cooper in *The Soldiers of the Bible*:

With shame and sorrow we confess before Thee as a nation and people we have lived too much without Thee in the world, and in times of prosperity we have sought to rest upon ourselves alone.³⁸

The implication is that as a nation Britain should also repent, and this is stance is picked up in Cooper’s sermon, which discusses the sinfulness, not only of Britain, but of all European nations.

The readings set for the service were Exodus 17 and Romans 8:18-39. Cooper took as his sermon text Exodus 17: 9 (RV): “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.”³⁹ The implication – drawn out in *The Soldiers of the Bible*, although not explicitly stated in the sermon – is that those who have joined the armed forces to fight are following a

³⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 170.

³⁷ Cooper, *Soldiers of the Bible*, p. v [unnumbered page].

³⁸ Cooper, *Our twofold need*, p. 13. The form of confession at the service at the Park Church the same day was quite different, consisting of a responsorial form of Psalm 51: MacLean, *Service of prayer in time of war*, p. 5.

³⁹ Cooper, *Our twofold need*, p. 3.

similarly prophetic call, “called and ‘chosen’ (Eph. i. 4) ... ‘manfully to fight under His banner against the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto our life’s end’.”⁴⁰ The sermon begins with an affirmation and a question: “The Bible is the Word of God: the rule, therefore, of Faith and Morals. What does it tell us about war?” Cooper found the same question, with a response, in the Epistle of James (4: 1): “Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures which war in your members?” The Bible, he concluded here, as he had in *The Soldiers of the Bible*, offers insight into the origins of war. The Epistle to James implies, thought Cooper, that war arises from “envious, selfish, inordinate, unscrupulous desires after pleasure, wealth or power;” he saw this as borne out by “all history from the beginning of this world’ empires down to the vast and dreadful war now raging.” The War had not been provoked, but had been caused by “the envy, the ambition, the domineering power of the German Empire.” To this extent, he concluded “the Bible account of the origins of war is justified before our eyes.”⁴¹

However, Cooper also saw the Bible as prophesying peace and an end to all War: “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire” (Ps 46: 9).⁴² This would come about, he suggested, “when the nations, instead of rejecting the Law of our LORD JESUS CHRIST (as recent German philosophy, and too much of German theology unhappily have done), bow themselves once more before His cradle and His cross.”⁴³ War would cease, in Cooper’s understanding, when nations turned to New Testament principles in order to “take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart [and] ... find rest unto their souls” (Matthew 29: 11). Only then would Isaiah’s prophecy be fulfilled, that the nations “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks” (Isaiah 2: 4). “Peace,” maintained Cooper here, as he had argued also in *The Soldiers of the Bible*,

is the fruit of Righteousness: it can grow on no other tree. And so long as Unrighteousness is mighty, so long must our LORD (instead of sitting among the

⁴⁰ Cooper, *Soldiers of the Bible*, p. 18.

⁴¹ Cooper, *Our twofold need*, pp. 3-4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4. In an address given in 1916, Cooper’s colleague, H.M.B. Reid, Professor of Divinity, similarly fulminated against the influence of German liberal theology, affirming: “We shall not readily continue to drink from the muddy wells of German theology.” H.M.B. Reid, *Theology after the war: closing lecture in the senior class of divinity, Glasgow University, session 1915-16* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1916) p. 10. See Methuen, “The very nerve of faith is touched,” p. 66.

nations as the Prince and Arbiter of Peace) go forth HIMSELF, in *righteousness to judge and make war*, while the *armies of heaven follow him clothes in fine linen, white and pure* [Rev 19: 11]. HE is going forth now, we believe, before our armies, at the hosts of His hosts invisible.⁴⁴

In Cooper's reading, the War being fought by the allies was "warfare dictated by no covetousness, carried on in no spirit of ambition or malice" but "simply to restore and establish on sound Christian foundations a peace which had long been threatened and was most wickedly disturbed."⁴⁵ Consequently, he affirmed, "it is surely no presumption humbly to believe that our blessed Lord looks down [on the War] with sorrowful and sympathetic approbation."⁴⁶ Just as Melchizedek was commissioned "to *bless* and to communicate with *bread and wine*" Abraham when he returned with "his rescued brother *from the slaughter of the kings* [Gen 14: 18-20; Heb 7:1]," so too Christ "ratifies in heaven the benediction His ministers pronounce .. on our sailors and soldiers going forth to battle for a similarly sacred cause."⁴⁷ Similarly, Cooper asked, "may we not claim" that Moses's instruction to Joshua "to *choose out men and fight with Amalek* [Ex 17: 9], now seconds the appeal of our recruiting officers?"⁴⁸

Thus far, Cooper's sermon draws on scripture apparently to present God as on the side of the allies and approving of their efforts to counter what he describes as a German imperial threat. At the same time, however, Cooper also wanted to assert that the Church was extended far beyond the nation, and that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him [Acts 10 : 35]."⁴⁹ Consequently, he reminded his congregation, that God "has many faithful ones , we know, among the subjects of the two great Empires which are now our enemies."⁵⁰ Moreover, not only were some Germans and Austrians were faithful followers of Christ, but no nation – not even Belgium, that "gallant little kingdom which suffered first"⁵¹ – was without sin. Rather, affirmed Cooper "it is our *cause* that we venture to say is *righteous*: it is not ourselves."⁵² The war would be "a blessing

⁴⁴ Cooper, *Our twofold need*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵² Ibid., p. 6. This aspect of Cooper's sermon is discussed in greater detail in Methuen, "The very nerve of faith is touched," pp. 69-70.

in disguise ... if it calls us back in humble faith to the Divine and Human Saviour whom GOD ... sent to *bless us in turning away every one of us from our iniquities* [Acts 3: 26]." The Napoleonic wars, claimed Cooper in a somewhat problematic piece of historical analysis, had had such an effect: "by 1815, when Waterloo was fought, there had been an universal revival. There was Chalmers in Scotland; there were Simeon and ere long the Tractarians in England. There came Montalembert in France. The *lands of Christendom had rest for over forty years* [Judges 5: 31]."⁵³ Similarly, five months into this War "one hears from the Front, that the men are praying as many of them had not prayed for years," and "everywhere the men are responding to the exhortations of the chaplains."⁵⁴

Cooper, on this basis, felt able to affirm "We think the blood well spent: the lives laid down in a noble cause."⁵⁵ Reiterating his conviction that the War could be understood as analogous to Moses's instruction to Joshua, and echoing his interpretation of the same passage in *The Soldiers of the Bible*, where he observed that victory came about through "stubborn fighting and intercessory prayer,"⁵⁶ he affirmed: "We need more *Men*; and we need more, and more instant, *Prayer*."⁵⁷ Men, women and children "*ought always to pray and not to faint* [Luke 18: 1]," even though "this is not easy to flesh and blood."⁵⁸ A focus on the cross, and regular receiving of the sacraments, could offer a reminder "that our LORD intercedes for us in heaven: showing HIMSELF on the midst of the Throne, *the Lamb as it had been slaughtered* [Rev 5: 6]—*now appearing in the Presence of God for us* [Heb 9: 24]."⁵⁹ Cooper concluded that prayer is vital because "victory is still in the hand of God. *It is His to save by many or by few* [1 Sam 14: 6]."

For Cooper, writing this sermon as 1914 ended and 1915 began, the Bible offered a justification for why the War should be being fought, and the New Testament presented a vision of how Old Testament prophecies of peace might be fulfilled through faith in the Prince of Peace. Scripture also offered models of suffering and sacrifice. Scripture also offered a reminder that God was bigger than the allied cause, and that the outcome of the conflict was far from certain. The future, for Cooper, lay in God's hands. Although the

⁵³ Cooper, *Our twofold need*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Cooper, *Soldiers of the Bible*, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Cooper, *Our twofold need*, p. 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

evidence is scanty, Cooper's later war sermons also seem to highlight duty and suffering rather than crusading zeal. The text of one is extant: the address given on 29 December 1917 at Hillhead Parish Church, to mark the unveiling of a stained glass window in memory of Second Lieutenant William George Teacher; here, as has already been seen, his theme was friendship and faith, whilst the preacher, Revd Walter R. Lacey, spoke on "Triumph through sacrifice".⁶⁰ Otherwise only the themes of Cooper's sermons preached before the university are recorded. Those which seem to have related to the War include, on 30 April 1916, "Our Duty to Caesar" (taking as his text Mark 12:17 "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"); on 26 November 1916, the 'Patience of Job' (James 5:11: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy"); and, at an OTC Church Parade on 13 May 1917, 'Crowned because HE suffered' (Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man").⁶¹

The themes explored by Cooper in his sermon on 3 January 1915 were entirely consistent with a "day of humble prayer and intercession". However, it is apparent from *The Soldiers of the Bible* that Cooper's use of the Bible to explore the themes of the war had already led him to a far more nuanced approach to the War than that which he had taken in the poem published in the early autumn of 1914. Cooper wrote and preached as a man who had long been a parish minister and who was aware of the pastoral needs to the congregation to which he was preaching. he did so also as a man also who was involved daily in teaching theology to young men who were themselves preparing to exercise the ministry of Word and Sacrament, but who was also chaplain to the OTC. By December 1914, he was probably aware of at least ten University of Glasgow students who had been killed in action and of many others wounded, some severely.⁶² It was presumably a combination of all these factors

⁶⁰ *Order of service and address*, pp. 11-16.

⁶¹ GU Archives, CH 2/1, register of preachers.

⁶² In total, the University of Glasgow lost 761 members of its community during the first World War. Twelve students had died by 31 December 1914, including a German student who had begun his studies in Glasgow before moving to Greifswald, and several who died of illness: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/events/ww1/ww1rollofhonour/1914/>. The first to be killed in action, on 14 September 1914, was John Hamilton Dickson. The first Divinity student to be killed was Allan Mills Fenwick, on 9 December 1914. News of the deaths of students seems to have reached the Professors swiftly, and Cooper would probably have been aware of Fenwick's death when he was preparing his

which led him, even at this early stage, away from a crusading view of the War. By January 1915, Cooper was reading Scripture for its nuanced insights into the moral complexities of the war, which faced both those who were fighting and those who remained at home.

sermon for 3 January. For the numbers of Divinity students joining up, casualties, and deaths, see Methuen et al., "The University of Glasgow's Faculty of Divinity in the First World War."