

said that the balance has been on the side of good or on the side of evil? So far as the evidence is yet available it will be difficult, we think, to give a favorable answer to the question. Long ago London papers complained that the first outburst of religious fervor in England had already fizzled out—the sudden rush to the churches had proved little better than a flash in the pan. France has generally been pointed to as the shining example of the purifying effect of the war, and there can be no doubt that a remarkable—and, it may be added, much-needed—religious awakening has taken place in ‘the eldest daughter of the Church.’ Should the revival last, and its effects continue, the whole future of the Church in France will be favorably affected. But even in the case of France, it appears that things are not quite so rosy as they have been painted. The French Cardinal Billot, speaking at the French seminary in Rome on the occasion of the visit of Rene Bazin, used these grave words: ‘To guard ourselves from all exaggerated enthusiasm it is sufficient to give ear to the cries of anguish that reach us from the chaplains at the front and above all from those attached to ambulances and hospitals, placed in the presence of reality, in the presence of those sacerdotal souls that are enervated and deformed in a place and in a profession that does not belong to them, of those poor seminarists, above all, abandoned to themselves, separated from their superiors and directors, deprived of the spiritual aids of which now more than ever they have need, so-as to be maintained in the spirit of their vocation. It is sufficient to have received the confidences of our worthy bishops tortured (the word is not too strong) by the anguish that the prospect of the future occasions them, of the future of the Church of France, three-fourths of whose clergy (according to the figures of the Minister of War) is at this moment under military service; of our bishops who seek, with little success (above all if the present condition should happen to be prolonged) for suitable remedies, I shall not say to arrest, but even to diminish, the appalling evils.’ And a special correspondent of the *New York Freeman's Journal* reports: ‘We hear much of the chastened tone of life at Paris. A Catholic officer returned wounded from the front has told me that the ill-famed Paris of which we have read has been transferred to behind the firing line, and that life on the boulevards and in the Latin quarter would be a decent and restrained existence compared to what he was obliged to witness there while seeking to avoid it.’ The chaplains are working wonders in the Allied lines, but evidently—in some sections at least—there is ample scope for all their activity.

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But it is in the case of Germany that moral deterioration, consequent upon the war, is most noticeable and widespread—so at least we must conclude from the utterances of her own press and pastors. We have already quoted in these columns the outspoken utterance of a well-known German Catholic review, the *Historisch Politische Blätter*. Speaking of the increasing lack of religion, this review remarked: ‘One proof of this, among a thousand others, is to be seen in the articles which appeared on the anniversary of the declaration of war. Not a writer of them has thought of adding a religious word for the multitude of readers. . . . Always and in all it is an insolent paean of the human spirit and of brute force. A song of hate against nations and for their extermination. Not a word about God's action in the affairs of men, His justice and vengeance, His love and grace.’ Other papers are even more emphatic in their protest against the increase in crime and immorality which has been so marked since the outbreak and development of the war. ‘The people are living a life of such repulsive immorality and indecency,’ says the Berlin *Kreuzzeitung*, ‘so shameless in its open ostentation and depravity, that soldiers returning home turn their heads away in horror and ask themselves why they should sacrifice their lives for such a people. Did these heroes know more of the secret of what is really going on, they would see that, dark as the picture is on

the surface, it is far blacker underneath.’ The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* deplors the ‘abandoned immorality’ of the general public. ‘The divorce courts are busy, and nearly all the cases involve wives of soldiers. It is of quite common occurrence for a young soldier to return from the battle line to find his wife carrying on a liaison with another man.’ The theatres are to blame, says the paper, ‘plays are produced so nauseating in their depravity and lasciviousness that they may well fill our soldiers, purified in the fire of war, with disgust at this decay of the national morals. The German people must not tolerate such degeneration. . . . they must eradicate these plague spots that disfigure the radiant features of Germania.’ The German clergy have also felt it their duty to call attention to the immoral tendency prevalent in the Empire. At the recent meeting of the General Synod of Berlin, the Rev. Dr. Weber, of Bonn, declared that conditions in the Rhine province were unspeakable, that the criminal and immoral contamination of the youth of both sexes was appalling. Other clergymen told similar tales of their own districts, and it was generally decided that the state of affairs was so bad that it was a case for special legislation. ‘The great war,’ said one pastor, ‘which it was expected, would raise the moral tone of the nation, had, to the horror of all true Germans, the exactly opposite effect.’ All of which brings us back to the trite but painful fact that war is hell—not only in its operations but also in its consequences.

### Rationalism and the Purpose of Life

Christianity may have its difficulties, but they are nothing to the difficulties which confront the followers of ‘scientific Rationalism’ when they are called upon squarely to face the facts of life—and of death. So long as he is left to purely destructive work—to picking holes and flaws in the Christian propaganda—the Rationalist is fairly happy; but when he is asked to set forth a definite positive creed which shall furnish an adequate answer to the deeper questions of the human heart, the bankruptcy of the system becomes quickly apparent. To the questions, Whence have we come? Whither do we go? What is the meaning and purpose of human existence?—questions which every thoughtful mind, sooner or later, must ask itself—Rationalism is either dumb or returns at best a message of despair. Let us illustrate by recent utterances of two of its most illustrious exponents. Not very long ago Dr. Fridtjof Nansen delivered an address on ‘Science and the Purpose of Life’ before the Social and Political Education League, London; and as it has been published by the Rationalist Press Association it may be taken as fairly representing the Rationalist standpoint. This is how Dr. Nansen treats the subject: ‘We cannot go into detail here; but what has been said might be sufficient to show how the circulation of the universe is continually going on from eternity and into eternity. This is the lesson which modern science teaches us with regard to existence. The life of a solar system lasts only for a second compared with eternity, and will again be dissolved into new systems. Mankind, with its history of struggles, attainments, and aspirations, its joys and its sorrows, will be wiped out like a dream of the past. This may seem a sad and hopeless view of things, and the one dangerous and despairing question that will probably force itself upon the young man when he begins to see it is the question of *purpose*.’ And this is the best that Dr. Nansen can give in answer to the ‘dangerous and despairing question’: ‘The explanation is evidently that *purpose* is an idea which entirely belongs to the organic world. It is a leading principle in the struggle for existence and in the law of the survival of the fittest. Every organ has a purpose; and when a zoologist discovers a new organ in an animal, his first desire is to find out what the purpose of that organ may be. But this is not a principle that can be applied to *energy*, and life itself is a form of energy. To ask, therefore, “what is the purpose of life?” or “what is the purpose of the organic world?” is a question of very