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William Douglas Mackenzie LL.D.

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The Church, the War and Education

WILLIAM DOUGLAS MACKENZIE, LL.D.*

"The most dismal revelation that confronts the Church as the result of its study of the great mass of men assembled in the armies of the world is the extent to which these masses have been found separated from and even ignorant of the Christian faith. The testimony is practically universal that in all the armies there was to be found an appalling range of ignorance concerning the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, concerning the claims of God in Christ upon the allegiance of the individual man, and the meaning and value of those religious habits and practices which strengthen faith, inspire vision, and build up character.

"The revelation of the extent of this ignorance of Christianity among inhabitants of Christendom is itself a revelation of the educational task of the Church. That Church has for a thousand years occupied all parts of Europe; it has presided over the whole development of the European populations of North and South America. And this is the result:

"Before us is the picture of whole nations where the vast majority of the soldiers reveal their ignorance of the truths of Christianity and their personal separation from its faith. In many of these countries at this hour we are presented with a spectacle of millions of men and women engaged in wildly striving for a new social order in a manner which reveals how little they are directed by the spirit of Christ. Their minds seem to be too often indifferent to that view of God and the universe which springs from the Gospel of Christ. It is true and right to say that these modern uprisings of the workers and the peasants, these claims made for justice and liberty, for the 'square deal' and the merciful spirit, are indeed, to some extent the products of Christianity. In no part of the world, and in no period of history which has been uninfluenced by the Church can such movements or such a claim be considered as possible. And yet the very movements which are the offspring of the Christian spirit are carried on in ignorance of the Christian truth and its claims. The establishment of one set of Christian ideals is made and fought for in defiance of the moral system that we call Christian. It is a distracted world.

"Christian principles are appealed to and promoted by an unchristian spirit and unchristian methods; and that on continents where for hundreds of years the Church of Christ had had no religious rival; where the governments have, as a rule, given full opportunity to the Church to exercise all its ministries, and especially that sublime ministry with which we are here concerned—this ministry of Christian education."

From "*The Church and Religious Education.*"

*William Douglas Mackenzie, President of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, has written a pamphlet on "*The Church and Religious Education*" for the Committee on the War and the Religious Outlook. This committee is a representative body of religious leaders who have been engaged in a study of the effect of the war upon religious conditions.