

THE CANADA–BRITAIN–USA TRIAD: CANADIAN PENTECOSTAL PACIFISM IN WWI AND WWII

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The story of Canadian Pentecostal pacifism was shaped by its own set of early leaders and the Christian backgrounds they brought into the fledgling movement at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as by two influential relationships: a geographical connection to the United States as a constituent part of North America and a political identity as The Dominion of Canada attached to the British Crown. As a dominion, Canada governed its own internal affairs as a country; however, in foreign affairs, Canada was subject to the decisions of Great Britain. Canada's own brand of Pentecostal pacifism was shaped by this confluence of a porous border between Canada and the United States that encouraged ideological exchange through magazines, personal visits, joint conventions and other venues, on the one hand,¹ and a long reach across the pond which granted Britain the right to govern the foreign relationships of Canada, on the other hand.

Even though the Canadian Pentecostal churches, by and large, were not formerly incorporated as religious organizations with a Canadian federal government charter during WWI, I begin with “the Great War” because after the Canadian government established the Military Service Act in 1917 which called for Registration and Conscription, there were Pentecostal conscientious objectors who refused to fight in the Royal Canadian Armed Forces, or more accurately the Canadian Expeditionary Force. First, I argue that the story of Canadian Pentecostal pacifists in WWI was marked by the ironic, the tragic, and the heroic. Second, I look at later developments of Canadian Pentecostal pacifism within the triad of Canada–Britain–USA during WWII. Finally, I conclude with the different positions taken by the larger Canadian Pentecostal denominations in supporting or rejecting pacifism and conscientious objection today.

¹ Ronald Kydd, “Canada,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Edited by Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 48. Also see Michael Wilkinson, ed. *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

WORLD WAR I: CANADIAN PENTECOSTALS WITH A
BIBLICALLY BASED POSITION OF
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE
CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

On August 4, 1914 the United Kingdom declared war on Germany in response to the German invasion of Belgium. Canada as a nation within the British Empire automatically entered the war. Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden stated categorically, “when Great Britain is at war, Canada is at war, and there is no difference at all.”² Canada established the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) immediately as an army to serve overseas. The CEF was governed by British Armed Forces Law and held the status of a colonial troop. The Canadian government encouraged its loyal citizens to enlist voluntarily in the CEF in order to aid Britain and the allied forces in what the Empire viewed as the just cause of defending democracy, protecting weaker nations, and winning the war. The year 1916 proved disastrous to the allies. On the front, officers of the CEF needed reinforcements due to the significant loss of their comrades. A new government came into power in Britain with a promise and a commitment to win the war and called for the dominions to send additional troops.³

In response, Canadian Prime Minister Borden pushed the Military Service Act (MSA) adopted by the House of Commons to conscript 100,000 men as reinforcements for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Although 99,561 people were conscripted, only 24,100 soldiers actually went to the front due to numerous exceptions and the exemptions applied erratically at different tribunals.⁴ The MSA, which introduced conscription and compulsory military service in Canada, also included a clause offering limited exemption on the grounds that a conscripted person who “conscientiously objects to the undertaking of combatant service and is prohibited from so doing by the tenets and articles of faith, in effect on the sixth day of July, 1917, of any organized religious

² “The Conscription Crisis of 1917,” *Historica Peace and Conflict*, <http://www.historica.ca/peace/page.do?pageID=278>, 1 of 3. Accessed 1/29/2012.

³ *Ibid*, 2 of 3.

⁴ *Ibid*.

denomination existing and well recognized in Canada, at such date, and to which he in good faith belongs.”⁵

Historian Amy J. Shaw observes that conscientious objection in the MSA was defined by the individual’s association with one of the five peace churches in Canada—Society of Friends (Quakers), Mennonites, Hutterites, Tunkers (Brethren in Christ), and Doukhobors—thus by a reference to a person’s corporate identity rather than by an individual’s conscience that objects to participation in warfare that leads to the destruction of human life. This distinction is important in understanding the character of Canadian Pentecostal pacifism in WWI. Shaw makes the point clearly:

In Canada, then, what carried most weight was not an individual’s personal objection but that of the church to which he belonged; respect was accorded to the dictates of his recognized, established denomination rather than his own conscience.... This limitation had important significance. It reduced the provision for conscientious objection in this country from an individual right to a privilege accorded certain groups. The limitation on grounds of exemption is important because it followed a wider trend in the tendency of the Canadian government to treat its people in terms of their corporate rather than individual identity... The use of collective conscience of the church as a proxy for the individual conscience of the soldier left the political fortune of the individual dependent on the political stance of the church.⁶

Another consequence that both Shaw and Thomas Socknet noted is that smaller “sects” in Canada that had legitimate conscientious objectors in their midst, often had their Christian pacifism informed, by a more biblicist approach to war and peace reflecting Jesus’s teaching on the Sermon on the Mount and other relevant passages of Christian Scripture rather than by a long standing tradition and herit-

⁵ MSA pacifist exemption clause (1917). Cited by Thomas P. Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 75.

⁶ Amy J. Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the First World War*. Studies in Canadian Military History Series (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 13-14.

age. These groups included the Christadelphians, International Bible Students Association (IBSA, later called Jehovah Witness), Plymouth Brethren, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Pentecostal Assemblies.⁷ Some of the smaller sects did make an appeal to the Central Appeal Tribunal implementing the MSA that “their adherents ought to receive exemption on the grounds of membership in a denomination with pacifist sentiments.”⁸ In response to the appeal, the Central Appeal Tribunal judge “ruled in 1918 that the Church of Christ, or Disciples, Pentecostal Assemblies, Plymouth Brethren, and the International Bible Student’s Association failed to meet the necessary qualifications for conscientious objection.” Each of these sects, in the judge’s view, was not “an organized religious denomination existing and well recognized in Canada.”⁹

The judge’s ruling sent an ominous chill within the ranks of Canadian Pentecostal conscientious objectors. The judges in the local tribunals operated by the exemption law in the MSA that if Pentecostal conscientious objectors could not qualify for a different form of exemption, then they had to serve when conscripted or live by the consequence which led to prison terms and in certain cases to brutality, torture and abuse to make the conscript comply with military orders. This dire consequence for conscientious objectors might have been avoided if early Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies had incorporated prior to WWI and subsequently chartered with the government as a denomination with a Statement of Fundamental Truths that included a pacifist article concerning military combatant service. However, an apparent number of influential early Pentecostal leaders in Canada had a definite proclivity against organizing into a denomination, believing that a centralized organization would evolve into a hierarchical bureaucracy that would lead to a quenching of the movement of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Hebdens, who were highly esteemed, resisted the idea of organizing local churches into a denomination rather than focusing on the mission of strengthening, expanding, and evangelizing local Pentecostal Assemblies churches, as well as establishing new Pentecostal con-

⁷ Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 10; cf. Socknet, *Witness Against War*, 80-81.

⁸ Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 10.

⁹ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 81-82.

gregations at the grass roots.¹⁰ Peter Hocken notes that the Pentecostal Assemblies that morphed into the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) viewed the church in spiritual rather than institutional terms.¹¹ This spiritualized ecclesiological mind-set fostered an irony that the local Pentecostal Churches that were dispersed across the country lacked a necessary organizational umbrella of “cooperative fellowship” to provide a corporate voice to the Canadian government that validated the very Pentecostal conscientious objectors who attended, supported, and built these very local Pentecostal churches. Unfortunately, the Pentecostal conscientious objectors were left to fend for themselves at the time of conscription.

Though both the PAOC and the American Assemblies of God (AG) rose out of revivals such as Toronto and Los Angeles, the General Council of the AG was established in 1914, the year that WWI started. When conscription in the United States was established in 1917, the AG officially registered with the United States government as a pacifist church.¹² When conscription was established in Canada in 1917, no Pentecostal denomination in Canada, as mentioned earlier, had incorporated as a church organization with the Canadian government.

When conscription happened in the United States, Stanley Frodsham—a native of England who moved to America in 1910—was elected in 1916 as the General Secretary of the General Council of the AG and faced the reality of conscription in 1917. As an absolute pacifist himself, Frodsham worked with officials of the General Council to register the Assemblies of God as a pacifist church. After submitting the Resolution to President Woodrow Wilson, the readership of the AG was informed of the denomination’s response to the conscription Law by publishing the Resolution with this introductory statement:

¹⁰ Thomas William Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Mississauga: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 39-44; Adam Stewart, “A Canadian Azusa? The Implications of the Hebden Mission for Pentecostal Historiography,” in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 17-38.

¹¹ Peter Hocken, “Church, Theology of the,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 544.

¹² Murray W. Dempster, “Reassess the Moral Rhetoric of Early American Pentecostal Pacifism, in *Crux XXVI* (March 1990), 25.

From the very beginning the movement has been characterized by Quaker principles. The laws of the Kingdom, laid down by our elder brother, Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount, have been unqualifiedly adopted, consequently the movement has found itself opposed to the spilling of the blood of any man, or of offering resistance to any aggression. Every branch of the movement whether in the United States, Canada, Great Britain or Germany, has held to this principle.¹³

The well-travelled porous border between the United States and Canada did not carry the good news for Canadian Pentecostal pacifists due to a status quo spiritualized ecclesiology as well as dysfunctional organizational governance due to Trinitarian-Oneness fissures.¹⁴

More significant, there was no authoritative voice of a chartered Canadian Pentecostal organization to request that the MSA amend the conscientious objector exemption statute for Pentecostal believers so that the Canadian law would be consistent with the British regulations for conscientious objector exemptions to qualified Pentecostal individuals associated with a registered Pentecostal denomination or cooperative fellowship. After all, Canada was subject to Britain in foreign affairs and British Armed Forces governed the Canadian Expeditionary Force. A strong legal argument from the vantage point of a colony might have balanced the scales of justice for Canadian Pentecostal individuals in the way that British Pentecostals like Donald Gee and others gained a conscientious objector exemption, but no proxy voice was available to be sounded in Canada for equity throughout the British Empire.

Colin Whittaker narrated the story of the influential British Pentecostal theologian Donald Gee after the British government introduced conscription. Gee immediately registered as a conscientious objector and his tribunal judge gave him an exemption from military service and ordered him to find agricultural work in two weeks to avoid

¹³ "The Pentecostal Movement and the Conscription Law," *Weekly Evangel* (August 4, 1917) 6.

¹⁴ Miller, *Canadian Pentecostal History*, 115-116; Kydd, "Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 961-962; David Reed, "Oneness Seed on Canadian Soil: Early Developments of Oneness Pentecostalism," in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 169-91.

imprisonment. Fortunately his wife, Ruth, had an uncle who was a farmer and employed his nephew. For the first few months Gee would burst periodically into tears from utter physical exhaustion. Gee recalled that it was easier to endure the physical toil than it was to endure “the bitter and often cruel persecution he had to suffer for being a hated ‘conchie’.”¹⁵ In his own words, Gee emphasized this point, “The intense anger of the neighbors at the ‘conchie’ in their midst made life extremely difficult.”¹⁶

The resistance to organizational development of Canadian Pentecostal churches vis-à-vis the United States and Britain made for tragic consequences among Canadian Pentecostal conscientious objectors. Conscientious objectors were verbally sneered at as “conchies,” experienced character defamation as “slackers” or “cowards,” and stereotyped as “unpatriotic,” “effeminate,” “self-serving,” “stubborn,” and “holier than thou.”¹⁷ Beyond the verbal abuse, conscientious objectors were physically mistreated, and sometimes even brutally attacked and tortured at the hands of prison guards or barrack officers. The real life episodes of heroic Pentecostal conscientious objectors were often filled with a sense of tragedy and simultaneously expressed their courage in standing fast in their Christian faith and Pentecostal beliefs. Conscientious objectors in the small sects seemed to experience a disproportionate amount of abuse.

The Minto Street Barracks in Winnipeg produced the most shameful and outrageous mistreatment of conscientious objectors, which occurred in the winter of 1917-18. In those military insular confines, men were subjected to brutal acts of torture to get them to comply with military commands. Three conscientious objectors—Charles Matheson, a Pentecostal, and Robert Clegg and Frank Naish, both members of the International Bible Students Association (IBSA)—were sentenced to three days confinement for their unwillingness to obey a lawful command. Provost-Sergeant Simpson applied the brutal punish-

¹⁵ Colin C. Whittaker, *Seven Pentecostal Pioneers* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1983), 84.

¹⁶ David Bundy, “Donald Gee: The Pentecostal Leader Who Grew in Wisdom and Stature.” *Heritage* (Fall 1992):10. Bundy cites an unpublished work by Donald Gee in the archives of the Donald Gee Center in Mattersey, England: “Pentecostal Pilgrimage: World Travels of a Bible Teacher.”

¹⁷ Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 120-149.

ment for their disobedience and sought to bring them into compliance with military orders. All three, in turn, were forcibly stripped naked and held under ice-cold showers until they either surrendered to military authority or collapsed. Pentecostal Matheson was first. After standing firm for hours in refusing to comply, he finally buckled under the unrelenting pressure and agreed to submit to military orders. Clegg and Naish followed. Their severe punishment ended with Naish in a state of nervous collapse and Clegg in an unconscious state, being admitted to the hospital.¹⁸

The *Manitoba Free Press* published an editorial “Stop It” on the Minto Street incident and the news spread like wildfire through the public, finally reaching the ears of federal government leaders, including Prime Minister Borden, who called for an immediate investigation.¹⁹ In the subsequent court of inquiry, Pentecostal Charles Matheson was brought to testify about his mistreatment by the Provost-Sergeant of the Minto Barracks. Matheson gave his sworn affidavit:

[The water] was very cold, and as I stood under it, it got colder, till it became icy cold. My whole body began to heave... when I would stand with my back to it, he would make me turn around and face it, and make me turn my face up to it. I was shading my face with my hand...he made me take my hand down... I was beginning to get dazed, and I was tumbling around... He asked me, “Will you give in now?” I said no. He put me in again... This went on three or four times... He said “we will either break you or break your heart” ... I was put into my undershirt and things, and I was dragged away. My body was wet, my hair was wet, I was taken up to the guard room and put in there.²⁰

Clegg, in his sworn affidavit, gave a similar story. His violent ice-cold water treatment was directed in a helter-skelter motion at his neck, his shoulders, his spine, his kidneys, his forehead, and his chest in repeated fashion. Clegg then stated that he was violently lashed dry. Then, he was forced into a second cold-shower treatment.

¹⁸ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 82-83.

¹⁹ “Stop It,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 25, 1918. Cited by Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 83-84.

²⁰ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 82-83; Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 90.

I was in a semi-conscious state during the greater period of the second treatment, and when taken out, was seated upon a cold stone slab, which caused me to lose control of myself and become absolutely incapable of any control of my limbs or muscles... while still wet and in a condition of complete nervous prostration, and helplessness, I was dressed... dragged on the concrete floor, upstairs, through the drill hall, to the place of detention. Subsequently, while unconscious, I was removed to St. Boniface hospital.²¹

The verdict rendered in the court of inquiry was a mockery of justice when the Prime Minister accepted the Major-General's report that supported his subordinates in Winnipeg and claimed that the incident had been greatly exaggerated. The Militia Council, however, did reform the policy that future conscientious objectors who refused military orders would face court martial and be sent to civil prisons. Consequently, both Clegg and Naish were convicted by district courts martial of wilful disobedience of a military order and each one was sentenced to two years imprisonment.

Less than a month after the Minto Street episodes the Winnipeg newspapers chronicled another story about the treatment of a Pentecostal conscientious objector, David Wells, who was charged with desertion. He was a member of the Pentecostal Assembly in Winnipeg. It may have been that Wells refused to report when called up for service when he heard or read about the Minto Street mistreatment and did not want to subject himself to the same abuse and torture. Whether or not that was a factor in his reluctance to report to his local tribunal is only speculation; he was duly charged with desertion and given a two-year sentence. The Assistant Provost Marshal Goddard who conducted the prosecution of Wells demonstrated a definite bias against the twenty-four-year-old Pentecostal who worked as a teamster. The prosecutor characterized Wells as a religious fanatic who attempted to hide behind his religion. This characterization may have been triggered when Goddard asked Wells to plead. Wells responded with an apparent sense of confidence in Scripture: "I plead guilty before man, but not before

²¹ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 83.

God,”²² a parody of Peter and John who were called before the Sanhedrin and commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus to which they responded: “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God” (Acts 4: 19).

An unexpected and shocking turn of events happened: Wells was pronounced dead in the Selkirk Asylum on February 18, 1918 after just beginning his incarceration into Stony Mountain Penitentiary on January 24. Wells’ file states bluntly, “insane, dies.”²³ Given the proximity of Well’s death to the Minto Street brutal mistreatment of Matheson, Clegg and Naish suspicions of foul play hit the rumor mill. The summarization of the *Manitoba Free Press* potentially added fuel to the fire by showing the shock of how quickly this house of horror happened: “Wells became a raving lunatic four days after being taken to the penitentiary on January 24. On February 11 he was removed to the Selkirk asylum, and died on February 18.”²⁴

Other documented Pentecostals who suffered from the isolation of incarceration as “conchies” included:

- Frederick Leader, a 22 year old farmer from Caledonia, Ontario who was born in the UK with no prison sentence recorded. A short note states that he “later accepted service,” which may have indicated that he may have complied in order to stop maltreatment.
- Elmor Morrison, a 21 year old farmer from Moorefield, Ontario sent to Kingston Penitentiary for two years of solitary confinement who became a missionary to China with the PAOC.²⁵
- Clarence Morton, a 20 year old labourer from Brantford, Ontario sentenced on September 16, 1918 to Kingston Penitentiary, with a marginal note, “Negro.”²⁶

²²Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 91-92.

²³Shaw, “Appendix: Lists of Conscientious Objectors, Table 1: Claims of conscientious objection to military service,” *Crisis of Conscience*, 186.

²⁴ “‘Objector’ Dies Raving Maniac,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 27, 1918, 5. Cited by Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 92.

²⁵ Douglas Rudd, *When the Spirit Came Upon Them: Highlights from the Early Years of the Pentecostal Movement in Canada* (Burlington, ON: Antioch Books, 2002), 149-151.

²⁶Elder Clarence Morton upon his release from prison planted a Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in 1926 in Windsor, Ontario. The church, Mt. Zion Church of God

- John Phillips, a 22 year old farmer from White Hall, Ontario was given a life sentence on June 16, 1918, which was commuted to 10 years.
- Vernal Running, 21 year old farmer from Lansdowne, Ontario was 112 days in prison before being sent overseas to England.
- William Steinberg, a 21 year old labourer from Ontario who was sentenced for two years in Stony Mountain Penitentiary, the same facility in which Wells occupied for four days.²⁷

The public protests about the brutal treatment of Matheson, Wells, and other conscientious objectors had no noticeable effect on the Borden administration. In fact, in March 1918, the Military Service Branch ordered that conscientious objectors sentenced to civil prison were to be sent overseas against their will. Refusal to obey a military order at the England “front” was grounds for being court-martialed and shot by firing squad. Groups of conscientious objectors were sent over on the troopship *Melita*, then on the *Waimana*, and finally the SS *Metagami* on April 9, 1918 that carried Vernal Running, an Ontario Pentecostal farmer. Most of the men were sent to Seaford Camp in Sussex, England.²⁸ Although information about that time is scarce, those who did leave accounts reported brutal punishment.²⁹

in Christ, is currently pastored by Bishop Clarence Morton, Jr., the son of Bishop Clarence Morton, Sr. The younger Bishop told me in a telephone conversation that his father often told his story as a conscientious objector by saying that “he refused to wear the King’s uniform.” Telephone interview, 9/12/2013. I am indebted to Jim Craig, PAOC Archivist Consultant, who led me to Bishop Morton, Jr.

²⁷This list of Pentecostals is selected from Shaw, “Appendix: Lists of Conscientious Objectors, Table 1: Claims of conscientious objection to military service,” *Crisis of Conscience*, 166-188.

²⁸After arriving at Seaford Camp, Vernal Running was tried by court martial for not obeying a military command. Shaw notes the lack of formal education in Running’s disjointed trial testimony: “My reasons for refusing to obey military rules are five years ago I gave my life to God for his service. Since then I have been obeying Gods law and keeping his commandments. He says in his word we can’t serve both God and man. God says my kingdom is not of this world if it was my servants would fight. Thou shall not kill. If we disobey one commandment we are guilty of all I am willing to suffer all that comes my way for Jesus. If we suffer we shall reign with him I am persuaded there is nothing able to separate me from the love of Christ which abides in my soul.” Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 117.

²⁹See Shaw, *Crisis of Conscience*, 94-95.

At that point in time, thankfully only six months of this tragedy of warfare for both the armed forces and the pacifists would end. Strictly speaking the war ended for Germany with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. However, a ceasefire came into effect with Germany on “Armistice Day,” the eleventh hour of November 11, 1918. For some of the Canadian Pentecostal conscientious objectors who were still in England, Armistice Day was the day of crossing the ocean back to the homeland, while other conscientious objectors returned home on December 2, 1918 on the ocean liner *Aquitania*.³⁰

WORLD WAR II: CANADIAN PENTECOSTAL PACIFISTS DISCOVER VARIED GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO THE POSITION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

The Treaty of Versailles had stripped Germany of its productive Rhineland and imposed huge reparation payments to the victorious powers. The measures taken to keep Germany in check by the treaty may have sowed the seeds to World War II by adding impetus for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in 1933. Over the next six years under “Hitler’s Third Reich” Germany had unshackled itself from the Versailles treaty, remilitarized the Rhineland, introduced compulsory conscription, annexed Austria and occupied Czechoslovakia.³¹ On September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland without warning and sparked the start to World War II. Two days later, Britain and France were at war with Germany, and within a week Canada joined the war.³²

Less than one month passed between Canada’s joining the war and the publication of the official position of the PAOC in its response to the war.³³ In the October 2, 1939 issue of the *Pentecostal Testimony*, in an article “The Pentecostal Movement and War,” editor D.N. Buntain reprinted the official position of the PAOC in light of “the fact that our Empire is in a state of war” and “brings home to us the solemn ques-

³⁰ Ibid., 96.

³¹ <http://www.worldwar-2.net/prelude-to-war-index.htm>, 1 of 4. Accessed 2/28/2012.

³² <http://www.worldwar-2.net/>, 1 of 2. Accessed 2/28/2012.

³³ The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) organized under a federal charter on May 17, 1919, and in the 1928 General Conference adopted a pacifist statement on war, which was to be incorporated into the Statement of Fundamental Truths. This General Conference adopted statement was published in *The Pentecostal Testimony*, October 1928, 5.

tion”: “What part should I play in this business? As a Christian, should I go to war?” In responding to his own questions, Buntain wrote, “On page fourteen of our constitution under date of 1939, we read, paragraph 24:”³⁴

24. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

WHEREAS, we have accepted the Word of God as our rule of conduct and purpose to be governed by its Divine principles, and as our Assemblies for the past twelve years or more have always accepted and interpreted the New Testament teaching and principles as prohibiting Christians from shedding blood or taking human life.

RESOLVED, That in time of persecution or ill-treatment at the hands of the enemy, we should not “avenge ourselves,” but rather give way to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay,” saith the Lord. (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35). Neither shall we [sic] take up any weapon of destruction to slay another, whether in our own defence or in defence of others, for it is written, “Due no violence to no man.” (See Luke 3:14; Matt 26:52; John 18:36; 15-18, 19). We should rather suffer wrong than do wrong.

RESOLVED, That all civil magistrates are ordained of God for peace, safety, and for the welfare of the people (Romans 13:1-10). Therefore it is our duty to be in obedience to all requirements of the Law that are not contrary to the Word of God. It is our duty to honor them, pay tribute, or such taxes as may be required, without murmuring (Matthew 17:24-27) and show respect to them in all lawful requirements of the Civil Government.³⁵

In light of this position, Buntain goes on to promote the principle of individual conscience and the practice of prayer for God’s guid-

³⁴ “The Pentecostal Movement and War,” *The Pentecostal Testimony*, October 2, 1939, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

ance to the question of military service. Buntain offers surprising counsel:

It is not for any church or individual to dictate at this time, but to leave every individual to be guided by the Word of God and his own conscience. Let every man go to his knees and his Bible and be honest and true. Let him satisfy the highest demands of his own conscience in this matter. If he cannot conscientiously shoulder a rifle and march to war, let him work out his own destiny in the fear of God. If the call of the Empire becomes so insistent that he must decide, there are non-combatant units as the production units, the transport units, the hospital units, etc., where he can offer himself. On the other hand, if the believer feels that he should enlist in the standing army in any capacity, let the church keep silent. Let each person be guided in their own soul.³⁶

Buntain argued for a shift from Pentecostal pacifism in WWI to a Pentecostal position of individual conscience in choosing to be 1) a conscientious objector, 2) a non-combatant, or 3) a combatant as God guides the prayerful Pentecostal believer.³⁷

Two conflicting articles published in *The Pentecostal Testimony* (PT) followed—one by Donald Gee on pacifism and the other by A.E. Allin on combatant service. These authors expressed the diversity of Pentecostal opinion on war and peace; they meshed together Buntain's view of the polyphonic voice of a Christian believer's individual conscience. Gee's article on "Conscientious Objection" was published on February 15, 1940 to provide counsel for Canadian Pentecostal conscientious objectors. Gee made his central point clear: an authentic conscientious objector is an objector to all wars and not particular wars judged whether the particular war is considered to be right or wrong. This absolute and universal objection to participation in war, according to Gee, "is based upon the simple obedience as a Christian to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, and an acceptance of them as the final

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

rule for the disciple.”³⁸ A.E. Allin entered into the discussion on July 1, 1940 with his article on “Christianity and War.” Allin argued that killing in war was not murder since the act does not arise from evil intent, or to deliver individual benefit such as a robbery. Rather, one is carrying out warfare for the good of a nation in the defense of its democratic way of life.³⁹

This Pentecostal pluralistic view of individual conscience proves confusing and possibly suspicious in light of Buntain’s citation of “Paragraph #24 Civil Government” published in *PT* in 1939 which differs from the initial document passed by the 1928 General Conference. The 1928 paragraph on Civil Government includes a definitive pacifist clause in the final resolve that is not found in the 1939 paragraph published in *PT*.

RESOLVED, that all civil magistrates are ordained of God for peace, safety, and for the welfare of the people. (Romans 13:1-10). Therefore it is our duty to be in obedience to all requirements of the Law that are not contrary to the Word of God *and that does not force one to the violation of the sixth commandment by bearing arms or going to war.* It is our duty to honour them, pay tribute, or such taxation as may be required, without murmuring. (Matthew 17: 24-27; 22: 17-21), and show respect to them in all lawful requirements of Civil Government.⁴⁰

The italicized clause clearly stated that the PAOC in 1928 by action of the General Conference was a pacifist church at the heart of its identity on the issue of military service. Yet, this highlighted pacifist phrase no longer appeared in the denominational yearbooks from the time of the General Conference minutes in 1928 through 1939 when Buntain gave his counsel on whether or not “As a Christian, Should I Go to War?” Even though the pacifist phrase was eliminated, there was

³⁸ Donald Gee, “Conscientious Objection,” *The Pentecostal Testimony*, February 15, 1940, 10. This article was published in the *PT* from a reprint from *Redemption Tidings* (AG-UK) without notation of date and pagination.

³⁹ A.E. Allin, “Christianity and War,” *The Pentecostal Testimony*, July 1, 1940, 4-5.

⁴⁰ *The Pentecostal Testimony*, October 1928, 5 (Italics mine).

no documentation in any General Executive minutes of any action to delete the phrase.⁴¹

After publishing the PAOC position on “Paragraph 24 Civil Government,” Buntain lists the AG Article XVI MILITARY SERVICE that clearly states the pacifist position on conscientious objection, “We, as a body of Christians, while proposing to fill all the obligations of loyal citizenship, are, nevertheless, constrained to declare that we cannot conscientiously participate in war and armed resistance which involves the actual destruction of human life, since this is contrary to our view of the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God, which is the sole basis of our faith.” Buntain then comments on the AG position: “This has been the standing position of the Pentecostal Movement since its inception. As a body of believers we are persuaded that the spirit of the New Testament is opposed to the shedding of blood. As a Full Gospel Movement, we do not believe in war.”⁴² Since the pacifist phrase had been deleted in the PAOC Statement, Buntain immediately followed the PAOC Statement with the AG Statement so he could retain the pacifist option that was deleted and arrive at his Pentecostal position of individual conscience in choosing to be 1) a conscientious objector, 2) a non-combatant, or 3) a combatant. It would not be an overstatement to say that Buntain kept the option alive for those Pentecostals who were pacifists and could not conscientiously participate in military service, although he needed to go over the porous border.

The Department of National War Services, after receiving concerted lobbying, amended the regulations governing exemptions from military service for conscientious objectors in WWII. The modified regulations changed radically from WWI. Probably the most significant change for Pentecostal conscientious objectors and others from the smaller sects, in gaining an exemption was that it was no longer required that conscientious objectors in Canada belonged to a recognized peace church. Several strings, however, were attached to a successful

⁴¹ James D. Craig, PAOC Archives Consultant, provided this information on the pacifist deletion. Craig also noted in his email that in “The 1926 Statement of Faith published in the *Testimony* (Feb., 2-3) reproduced the US Assemblies of God statement and did not mention the believer’s position as regards the civil government, military service or participation in war,” 1 of 4. Email accessed on August 28, 2013.

⁴² Buntain apparently cited the US Statement, reported in the *Weekly Evangel*, August 4, 1917, 6, in order to affirm a pacifism statement and to integrate the option of conscientious objection as an option for Canadian Pentecostals.

claim for an exemption. As in WWI, the conscientious objector needed to fill out an application letter of postponement. However, it was now required that the conscientious objector also needed to provide a “certificate” from the head of his religious denomination verifying that he had “sincere conscientious scruples against the bearing of arms.”⁴³ An exemption, however, carried with it an inherent responsibility—if the conscientious objector was medically fit—to perform alternative service for the benefit of the country during the period of the war. These were the three types of alternative service: 1) non-combatant training in a military camp, 2) non-combatant first-aid training in other than a military camps, and 3) civilian labour at other than a military camp. The end of 1940 put in place, with some modifications the new regularity system.⁴⁴

The first issue occurred in the spring of 1941 when the government decided to send conscientious objectors to military camps with living facilities for conscientious objectors already in place. The military authorities balked at the plan and opposed any conscientious objectors in their military camps. As a consequence, the Department of National War Services became convinced that an alternative service program needed to be civilian-based and transferred the administration of the non-combatant service program to the administration of the Parks Board of the Federal Departments of Mines and Resources. This new and more entrepreneurial government agency created camps in the National Parks, the Forest Experimental Stations, the Survey and Engineering Projects, and the British Columbia Forest Service. Approximately 30 different camps were in operation to address the needs within these areas for the ongoing welfare of the nation.⁴⁵ There were fourteen Pentecostal conscientious objectors in alternative service work camps in the national parks between 1942-1944.⁴⁶

The alternative service program expanded and diversified in 1943 under the Department of Labour so that conscientious objectors could be employed in the private sector. A number of conscientious objectors (doctors, dentists, engineers, and teachers)—could now transfer from their perceived “concentration and internment camps”—to utilize

⁴³ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 235.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ See Table 2: “Religion by year” in Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 239.

their job skills in industry, education, medical and hospital services.⁴⁷ The largest number of conscientious objectors engaged in agricultural work where labour shortages existed, mostly Mennonites who had a former occupation as a farmer. Of the 10,851 Canadian conscientious objectors under alternative service 6,655 were employed in agriculture.⁴⁸

One Pentecostal conscientious objector, George H. Warnock,⁴⁹ worked his way through the alternative service system in the British Columbia Forest Service and then as an employee in private industry at the Pacific Lime Company under Alternative Service regulations. Warnock received his order (along with a ticket) to report at the army training center in Victoria, BC on November 22, 1940. He had no affiliation with a church background that resisted going to war, so he believed there was no way he could be an “objector”: he could not provide a “certificate” from the head of his religious denomination to verify his “sincere conscientious scruples against the bearing of arms.” Even so Warnock had made up his mind: “I would not kill my fellow-men, nor would I undergo military training to learn how to do so.”⁵⁰

Warnock sent his respectful yet firm letter of reply and indicated that he would not report on the appointed day. He recalls that he said something like this in his letter: “When I received the Lord Jesus into my life, I determined to follow Him the rest of my life, regardless of the consequences.”⁵¹ Several months later he received his notice to report for Alternative Service in a forestry camp. He was moved to various forestry camps during the course of the war. When he was given an option to work in the private sector as part of his alternative service work, he remarked:

⁴⁷ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 246-248.

⁴⁸ See Table 3: “Disposition of conscientious objectors under alternative service as of December 31, 1945” in Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 249.

⁴⁹ George Warnock is best known for *The Feast of Tabernacles: The Hope of the Church* (Cranbrook, BC: George Warnock, 1951) in which he laid out the doctrine of the Latter Rain Movement founded in North Battleford, SK.

⁵⁰ I am indebted to Darrin Rodgers, Director of the Flower Heritage Center, for informing me that Warnock had a website in which he shared his biography as a conscientious objector in WWII. For the narrative on Warnock and the italicized quotation, see George H. Warnock, “A Brief Outline of My Life,”

<http://www.georgewarnock.com/bio.html>, 2 of 4. Accessed 1/22/20012.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Later some of us were given the option of going to one of the isolated places where industries found it difficult to keep the crew they needed. As men could almost pick and choose the job they wanted. I volunteered for one of these, and was sent to the Pacific Lime Company on Texada Island, a few miles west of the mainland of British Columbia. We remained under Alternative Service regulations . . . but worked along with the employees in the plant. The company was not subsidized by our cheap labour (\$25, per month plus board). They were required to pay the going wage, we received the \$25, and board allowance, and after taxes and other deductions—the net balance was sent to the Red Cross Society.⁵²

Though WWII ended in August 1945 with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Warnock and others remained under the Alternative Service jurisdiction until the last of them was finally released a year later in August 1946. Socknat provided his personal reflections on pacifism in WWII:

Whatever effect the alternative service experience would have in the future . . . the state's recognition of an individual's right to conscientious objection regardless of church affiliation and the provision for alternative service under civilian supervision appeared to be appropriate concessions for the time and a tribute to the persistence of pacifist resistance to compulsory military service. It was a notable moral advance over the treatment of

⁵² Ibid. The reference to the Red Cross Society was part of the amended alternative service work of conscientious objectors working in private industry. Socknat notes, "The actual employment on conscientious objectors in agriculture and industry . . . was conditional upon their agreement to contribute part of their earnings to the Canadian Red Cross Society. Under the terms of a special contract with their employers conscientious objectors were paid at the 'prevailing wage rate' but received only twenty-five dollars per month. The remainder of their earnings, less taxes, was diverted to the Red Cross." Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 248. Socknat notes that by January 1946 there were more than 10,000 conscientious objectors in Canada and that 90% accepted employment in agriculture and miscellaneous essential industries. In Socknat's own words: "By the time the alternative service program ground to a halt they had contributed \$2,222,802.70 to the Canadian Red Cross Society," 256. The conscientious objectors had made a significant funding of humanitarian services and helped to create a post-war economic recovery of Canadian business and agriculture.

Canadian conscientious objectors during the First World War, but one that would always need defending.⁵³

THE DEMISE OF CANADIAN PENTECOSTAL PACIFISM

In his *Pentecostal Pacifism: The Origins, Development and Rejection of Pacific Belief among the Pentecostals*, Jay Beaman has chronicled the demise of Pentecostal pacifism in the United States, noting that the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) may be the exception.⁵⁴ Canadian Pentecostal Pacifism is more of a mixed bag. At least two Canadian Pentecostal denominations are still pacifist. COGIC churches in Canada are now chartered with the government with their own Canadian jurisdictions and leadership while remaining internationally connected to COGIC headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee. The pacifist position of COGIC in 1917 remains strong and reflects the longstanding position on COGIC churches in Canada:

ARTICLE IX

Of Magistrates and Civil Government

We believe that civil magistrates are ordained for the peace, safety and good of the people. That it is our duty to pray for them, and obey them in all things which is not contrary to the word of God, and that does not take authority over, or force the conscience in matters of bearing arms or going to war. That it is our duty to honor them, pay tribute, to respect them in all lawful requirements of civil government.⁵⁵

The United Pentecostal Church, International (UPCI) came into existence in 1945 and remains vibrant in the United States, Canada

⁵³ Socknat, *Witness to War*, 258.

⁵⁴ Jay Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism: The Origin, Development and Rejection of Pacific Belief among Pentecostals* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

⁵⁵ Church of God in Christ and Pacifism, <http://pentecostalpacifism.com/COGIC1.html>, Accessed 8/18/2013, 1 of 1. This document identifies Beaman's view that COGIC is one of the few remaining absolute pacifist denominations in the United States.

and 170 other nations. The United Pentecostal Church of Canada currently includes seven Districts that cover all the provinces.⁵⁶ UPCI scholar David Bernard traces the UPCI article on Conscientious Scruples to 1945 when the denomination was formed by the merger of the Pentecostal Church Incorporated (PCI) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ (PAJC). The Statement of Conscientious Scruples in the UPCI Articles of Faith is a clear declaration that the UPCI church is a pacifist church:

Conscientious Scruples

We recognize the institution of human government as being of divine ordination, and, in so doing, affirm unswerving loyalty to our Government; however, we take a definite position regarding the bearing of arms or the taking of human life.

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we believe in implicit obedience to his commandments and precepts which instruct as follows: “That ye resist not evil” (Matthew 5:39); “Follow peace with all men” (Hebrews 12:14). (See also Matthew 26:52; Romans 12:19; James 5:6; Revelation 13:10.)

These we believe and interpret to mean Christians shall not shed blood nor take human life. Therefore, we propose to fulfill all the obligations of loyal citizens, but are constrained to declare against participating in combatant service in war, armed insurrection, property destruction, aiding or abetting in or the actual destruction of human life.

Furthermore, we cannot conscientiously affiliate with any union, boycott, or organization which will force or bind any of its members to belong to any organization, perform any duties contrary to our conscience, or receive any mark, without our right to affirm or reject same.

⁵⁶ “United Pentecostal Church, International” in *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, http://protestatism.enacademic.com/613/United_Pentecostal_Church_International, 1 of 3. See also “United Pentecostal Church, District and Leadership,” <http://www.upci.ca/districts.html>, 1 of 1.

However, we regret the false impression created by some groups of so-called conscientious objectors that to obey the Bible is to have a contempt for law or magistrates, to be disloyal to our Government and in sympathy with our enemies, or to be unwilling to sacrifice for the preservation of our commonwealth. This attitude would be as contemptible to us as to any patriot. The Word of God commands us to do violence to no man. It also commands us that first of all we are to pray for rulers of our country. We, therefore, exhort our members to freely and willingly respond to the call of our Government except in the matter of bearing arms. When we say service, we mean service – no matter how hard or dangerous. The true church has no more place for cowards than has the nation. First of all, however, let us earnestly pray that we will with honor be kept out of war.

We believe that we can be consistent in serving our Government in certain noncombatant capacities, but not in the bearing of arms.

We further believe that our military personnel must live in a manner consistent with the Articles of Faith.⁵⁷

The Church of God, Cleveland, TN (COG) found its way through the porous border from Tennessee to the rural town of Scotland Farm, Saskatchewan in 1920 that was made into a foreign missions beachhead for the evangelization of Saskatchewan and Ontario. Through 1962 the Canadian COG was administered mainly from the United States. Since then, COG Canada became chartered with the Canadian government, yet retains international connection to the Church of God International Offices in Cleveland, TN.

The Church of God International has rescinded its absolute pacifist beginnings. David Roebuck, Director of the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center, notes that following WWII the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) officially changed its position on war by dropping its ban on combat service. Convening on the very day the Japanese surren-

⁵⁷ David K. Bernard, *Understanding the Articles of Faith* (Antioch, TN: World Aflame Press, 1998) 35-36.

dered to end WWII the Fortieth Assembly adopted the following statement:

The Church of God believes that nations can and should settle their difference without going to war; however, in the event of war, if a member engages in combatant service, it will not affect his status with the church. In case a member is called into military service who has conscientious objection to combatant service, the church will support him in his constitutional rights.⁵⁸

This exact text from the 1945 Annual Assembly was repeated in the 2012 Statement under the heading VII. COMBATANT MILITARY SERVICE making a clear declaration that the Church of God (Cleveland) is not a pacifist church and affirms combatant military service.

Finally, I conclude with the PAOC, the largest Pentecostal denomination in Canada. Earlier I referred to the adoption of a pacifist position at the 1928 General Conference. But how does the operational pacifist phrase—"Therefore it is our duty to be in obedience to all requirements of the Law that are not contrary to the Word of God and that does not force one to violation of the sixth commandment by bearing arms or going to war"—become eliminated? I pick up this story at Paragraph 23 in the 1939 SFET and chart the trajectory for the demise of pacifism. First, the Pacifist Phrase is deleted from Article 23 Civil Government.

23. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

WHEREAS, we have accepted the Word of God as our rule of conduct and purpose to be governed by its Divine principles, and as our Assemblies for the past twelve years or more have always accepted and interpreted the New Testament teach-

⁵⁸ Minutes of the 40th Annual Assembly of the Church of God, 31. Cited by David G. Roebuck, "Brief History of the Church of God," 21 of 31. The Church of God 74th International General Assembly contains the header "VII. Combatant Military Service," Daniel L. Black, Ed, *Minutes 2012 Church of God Book of Discipline, Church Order, and Governance* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 2012), 34. http://cogheritage.org/histories_of_cog/page/brief_history_of_the_church_of_god_by_da... 10/12/2013.

ing and principles as prohibiting Christians from shedding blood or taking human life.

RESOLVED, That in time of persecution or ill-treatment at the hands of the enemy, we should not “avenge ourselves,” but rather give way to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay,” saith the Lord. (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35). Neither shall we [sic] take up any weapon of destruction to slay another, whether in our own defence or in defence of others, for it is written, “Due no violence to no man.” (See Luke 3:14; Matt 26:52; John 18:36; 15-18, 19). We should rather suffer wrong than do wrong.

RESOLVED, That all civil magistrates are ordained of God for peace, safety, and for the welfare of the people (Romans 13:1-10). Therefore it is our duty to be in obedience to all requirements of the Law that are not contrary to the Word of God. It is our duty to honor them, pay tribute, or such taxes as may be required, without murmuring (Matthew 17:24-27) and show respect to them in all lawful requirements of the Civil Government.⁵⁹

Second, the 1942 version deletes the first two paragraphs and includes only the third paragraph of the 1939 document. Surprisingly, there is no evidence in the General Conference or General Executive minutes between 1940 and 1942 concerning motivation or authorization for the removal of these two paragraphs.

Third, Article 23, Civil Government, is removed from SEFT and, scheduled to be moved to “Resolutions.” The General Executive minutes of March 17, 1949, page 3, record the following item without discussion:

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF THE P.A.O.C. – It was moved, seconded and carried that in printing the Doctrinal Statement of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada either in

⁵⁹“The Pentecostal Movement and War,” *The Pentecostal Testimony*, October 2, 1939, 3.

the year book or separately that paragraph #23 re Secret Societies and #24 re Civil Governments be *deleted and included* under “resolutions.” (Italics added)

Evidently this instruction was misunderstood and the items were simply deleted and not included under resolutions as instructed. It seems that the omission was either never noticed or else if it was, it was decided not to remedy it.

In summary, the four largest Pentecostal denominations in Canada differ in maintaining, redefining, or abandoning Pentecostal pacifism. The COGIC in Canada and the UPCI in Canada remain pacifist churches. The COG in Canada has affirmed the option of combatant service for Pentecostal believers yet the church in the exercise of a conscientious objector’s constitutional rights will support those COG Christians who have conscientious objection to combatant service. The PAOC has abandoned pacifism in three stages: 1) the explicit reference to “bearing arms or going to war” was removed by 1928, the same year the initial three-paragraph statement was created and approved by the 1928 General Conference; 2) the first two paragraphs which included the more general prohibitions regarding the shedding blood or taking up weapons last appeared in 1947; and 3) presumably in 1949 the remaining paragraph on Civil Government, which was supposed to be reproduced at the end of the SFET as an unnumbered paragraph, was inadvertently deleted. This omission was never addressed or rectified. This summarizes the journey that led over time to the loss of pacifism in the PAOC.⁶⁰

A CONCLUDING PERSONAL CODA

The story that I narrated on the subject of Canadian Pentecostal Pacifism is very meaningful to me personally. My Canadian Pentecostal father, Henry Dempster, was a pacifist in WWII, and his brother, my Canadian uncle Richard Dempster, who was a Presbyterian in the Scottish family tradition, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in WWII and was killed in action in Germany. When I went back to Melville, SK to

⁶⁰ James D. Craig, “The Evolution of the PAOC Official Statements Regarding Civil Government and Participation in War,” PAOC Archives, 1 of 4. E-mail accessed August 28, 2013.

visit my mother in St. Paul Lutheran Home in August 2011, I walked in the hallway that connected St. Paul to St. Peters Hospital. I came across a huge collage of framed pictures and stopped to see the display. Then, I saw Richard Dempster's picture in his military uniform, along with twenty-eight others who were killed in action in a display of remembrance for those who gave their lives in WWII. Each person pictured on the wall had one of the lakes in Northern Saskatchewan named after him. I looked on the large map and found Dempster Lake in honour of Richard Dempster giving his ultimate sacrifice in service to the Dominion and the Empire. His picture had this tribute surrounding it:

Dempster Lake
Named in Memory of
Richard Dempster
Melville, Saskatchewan
Royal Canadian Air Force
Sergeant, R225014
On Active Service to His Country
Killed in Action
September 23, 1943
Age 22
Buried at
Reichswald Forest War Cemetary
Kleve, Germany

In those moments of seeing the wall of honour for the first time I felt a sense of pride in both my dad and my uncle. But from D.N. Buntain I gained the insight, like a Balm in Gilead, that each brother—Henry and Richard—had followed the path of individual conscience.