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AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN:
PEACE, WAR, AND PATRIOTISM AMONG PENTECOSTALS
IN THE UNITED STATES DURING WORLD WAR I

ZACHARY MICHAEL TACKETT

Much is said now of patriotism and going to war in defense of our beautiful country, but we have a higher and nobler calling than this. Augustus J. Tomlinson, 1917¹

We desire to express to your Excellency [President Woodrow Wilson] our loyal support at this time of national crisis and to assure you that we will do all in our power to uphold your hands. Stanley H. Frodsham, 1917²

Within a decade of the 1906 Los Angeles Azusa Street revival, Pentecostals in the United States voiced contrasting perspectives on pacifism and patriotism. The war in Europe during the early twentieth century challenged Pentecostal perspectives on peace, patriotism, and war. As Americans took up arms, most leaders within emerging Pentecostalism called upon the government to recognize the Pentecostal commitment to peace and to validate their constituents' right to claim conscientious objector status. American Pentecostals were not consistent, however, in their objections. Many advocated pacifism; some did not. Historians Jay Beaman and Paul Alexander have shown that, on the whole, Pentecostals during the First World War expressed a commitment to pacifism.³ Yet, as social ethicist Murray Dempster has shown, pacifism was far from universal among America's Pentecostals. In the Assemblies of God

¹ Augustus J. Tomlinson, "Beautiful Light of Pentecost," *Church of God Evangel* (May 12, 1917) 1. The assumption is made within this paper that Tomlinson either authored or approved these writings.

² Stanley H. Frodsham, "The Pentecostal Movement and the Conscription Law," *Weekly Evangel* (August 4, 1917) 6.

³ Jay Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism: The Origin, Development, and Rejection of Pacific Belief among the Pentecostals* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009). Paul Alexander, *Peace to War: Shifting Allegiances in the Assemblies of God* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009).

(AG), pacifism was a controversial position among denominational officials, pastors, and constituents.⁴

Three types of response by Pentecostals to the war in Europe may be observed. First, a prophetic community of some Pentecostals opposed the war. Second, others attempted to simultaneously embrace nationalism and attempt to oppose the war in Europe. Third, Pentecostals who upheld the *status quo* either failed to oppose the war or accepted that Pentecostals, as all Americans, should fulfill their patriotic duty by participating in the war effort. Before I turn to Pentecostal perspectives, I must offer a short summary of emerging American identities.

SETTING THE STAGE: THE CHALLENGE OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

The late 1800s and early 1900s brought massive upheavals in American culture. Economically, the foundation of an agrarian culture was replaced by an industrial society. The center of the economy moved from the agrarian South to the industrial North. This shift resulted in significant cultural changes. Slavery no longer was legal, yet the economic systems that relied upon cheap labor remained in place. Landholders in the South continued African American subjugation by attempting to reorient the dynamics of slavery through sharecropping systems that favored the landowner. The South became further entrenched in American apartheid through Jim Crow laws and growing vigilante enforcement of majority cultural expectations. The cultural ideals of new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe conflicted with the ideals of earlier immigrants from northern Europe. Asian immigrants, although contributing significantly to America's labor force and to the face of nineteenth century America, were often viewed with disdain. Freed slaves, formerly from Africa, attempted to participate fully in American society. American Indians were forced to conform to Euro-American

⁴ See the following articles by Murray W. Dempster, "Peacetime Draft Registration and Pentecostal Moral Conscience," *Agora* 3 no. 4 (1980) 2-3; "Review of Jay Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism*," *Pneuma* 11 no. 1 (1989) 59-64; "'Crossing Borders': Arguments Used by Early American Pentecostals in Support of the Global Character of Pacifism," *EPTA Bulletin: The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 10 no. 2 (1991) 63-80; "Pacifism in Pentecostalism: The Case of the Assemblies of God," in *Proclaim Peace: Christian Pacifism from Unexpected Quarters* (Edited by Theron F. Schlabach and Richard T. Hughes; Champaign: Illinois University Press, 1997), 31-58.

expectations. The United States was changing. Correspondingly, what it meant to be American was changing.

Historian Jonathan Hansen identifies two distinct types of Americanism that emerged during the Progressive Era.⁵ The first group advocated for a homogenous American society that elicited the image of a smelting pot, where all people would be unified through Anglo-American ideals. An alternative group valued American idealism, but rejected homogeneity in favor of a multicultural society. These proponents valued the contributions of those who were marginalized by the dominant political, economic, and social power structures due to gender, race, servitude, or ethnicity.

The first group represented strongly by Theodore Roosevelt emphasized a homogenous community from English and northern European stock. He contended that those who did not fit the Anglo-American mold must be re-formed; all persons from the various ethnic and social communities were to be smelted into an Americanized expression of English and northern European values. This ideal devalued the politically marginalized, the poor, persons of color, recent immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, immigrants from Asia, Native Americans, persons of Jewish and of Catholic heritage, and the first Spanish immigrants to the Americas. However, Roosevelt's smelting pot concept of the American ideal became the politically and culturally dominant concept of Americanism. Furthermore, in Roosevelt's opinion, war functioned as an ideal crucible for his homogenized view of America. Historian Gary Gerstle interprets Roosevelt's conclusions: "the stress and dangers of combat generated pressures [that serve] to unify [in a way] that no peacetime initiative could simulate."⁶

The contrasting ideal of Americanism valued the contributions of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural communities. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis (and other intellectuals and social scientists like W.E.B. Du Bois, Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne, and John Dewey) argued that the identity and strength of America should be found in the variety of

⁵ Jonathan Hansen, "True Americanism: Progressive Era Intellectuals and the Problem of Liberal Nationalism," in *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal* (Edited by Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 73-89.

⁶ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6.

its immigrants—immigrants past, present, and future—in order to develop a diverse and unified community. According to Brandeis, “Immigrants must be brought into complete harmony with our ideals and aspirations and cooperate with us for their attainment... [and] possess[ion] [of] the national consciousness of an American.”⁷ Unlike Roosevelt, Brandeis looked forward to the contributions of future immigrants who would provide an incipient value to American culture. Hansen summarizes Brandeis: “[prejudice] and industrial dependence, not cultural diversity, threatened American democracy. It was the duty of all true Americans to safeguard equal opportunity and fair play.”⁸ Therefore, America should not extrapolate from the new immigrants that which is distinctive, but “must preserve for America the good that is in the immigrant.”⁹

These conflicting goals concerning American diversity reflected vastly differing proposals for the American ideal. It is into this world that American Pentecostals would have to carve out not only their relationship to nationhood, but also their relationship to the global Christian community. Not least among the issues related to nationhood, these Pentecostals would have to grapple with participation in times of war. I turn now to the tumultuous convergence of American self-identity and biblical interpretation for early Pentecostal responses to war.

GETTING STARTED: TRAJECTORIES OF PENTECOSTAL PACIFISM

According to Beaman, though Pentecostals had emerged shortly before World War I as a sect that rejected the *status quo*, they eventually accommodated to the emerging American middle class. Early Pentecostals rejected American cultural expectations through their pacifism, an expression of a sectarian, anti-cultural commitment, but over time their desire to embrace the mainstream led Pentecostals to accept the dominant American culture and reject pacifism.¹⁰

⁷ Hansen, “True Americanism,” 74, quoting Louis D. Brandeis, “True Americanism,” in *Brandeis on Zionism: A Collection of Addresses and States by Louis D. Brandeis* (Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press, 1942), 4-5.

⁸ Hansen, “True Americanism,” 74.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism*, 107.

Paul Alexander, author of *Peace to War*, traces the AG shift from a peace church during the First World War to a church that by the Vietnam War had come to recognize war as a legitimate means of resolving international conflict. Alexander demonstrates how the AG came to see pacifism as the venue of the individual, rather than the voice of the church as a community. In 1917 the AG declared to the government that the fellowship would be opposed to armed conflict and contended that all AG members who claimed conscientious objector status should be recognized. This position was affirmed by the vote of the General Council, the highest government body of the AG, in 1927 and again in 1947.¹¹ However, Alexander does acknowledge that the presbytery may not have allowed the initial statement in 1917 to be voted on by the General Council because leaders feared that the proclamation may not have had the support of the full constituency. Nonetheless, argues Alexander, “If pacifism was not the majority position in the early Assemblies of God, the statement would surely have been changed after World War I—but was not.... This retention of the statement even after World War II points to its majority status in at least the first generation of the Assemblies of God.”¹²

During the Vietnam War, the AG revisited its policy on combatant and conscientious objector commitments. The denomination declared that individual conscience was the AG perspective toward war; moreover, this had always been its perspective toward war.¹³ Ethicist Murray Dempster rejects the notion that this was not a change in AG policy, but argues that “[s]uch a claim arbitrarily revises history.” The revised 1967 statement by the AG was “an unacknowledged banishment of the pentecostal heritage.”¹⁴ He particularly lamented his church’s failure to engage Scripture when revisiting the statement on peace and war.

¹¹ Alexander, *Peace to War*, citing Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism*, 21, 73, and Roger Robins, “A Chronology of Peace: Attitudes toward War and Peace in the Assemblies of God: 1914-1918” *Pneuma* 6 (Spring 1984) 23.

¹² Alexander, *Peace to War*, 37-38.

¹³ Minutes of the Thirty-Second General Council of the Assemblies of God (1967) 35. Cited by Dempster, “Peacetime Draft Registration,” 2.

¹⁴ Dempster, “Peacetime Draft Registration,” 2.

Apparently, the pentecostal believer's conscience on war no longer needed to be formed specifically by biblical teaching but was now to be informed by knowledge of certain political, theological and ethical propositions.... The poverty of explicit biblical thinking in this rationale is an utter embarrassment to people who give first priority in a "Statement of Faith" to affirming the authority of Scripture.¹⁵

Dempster continues: "[W]ill the church model the importance of forming its own moral conscience under the authority of Scripture and of speaking a prophetic word to others in accordance with 'the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God which is the sole basis of our faith?'"¹⁶

In later writing, Dempster emphasized his appreciation to Beaman for highlighting shifts in the Pentecostals' acceptance of war; Beaman's work in 1989 was "a cause for celebration... a fresh and illuminating perspective, highlighting the fundamental change in pacifistic belief that has occurred among pentecostals during their short history."¹⁷ However, Dempster challenged Beaman's theory of why Pentecostals made such a shift. According to Dempster, American Pentecostals during World War I did not reject American cultural expectations, as argued by Beaman, but viewed "pacifism as part of the church's redemptive witness to the world."¹⁸ Thus, early Pentecostals advocated transforming American cultural expectations. Dempster points to Pentecostals such as Arthur S. Booth-Clibborn, his son Samuel H. Booth-Clibborn, Frank Bartleman, Stanley Frodsham, and Charles Parham who challenged the dominant voice of American nationalism during World War I. These pacifists advocated "a moral authentication of the universal truths of the gospel."¹⁹ Pentecostals who engaged this prophetic voice built their case upon the following themes: pacifism provided a moral sign of a restored New Testament apostolic church, pacifism provided a critique of social evil, and pacifism affirmed the value of human life. Moreover, pacifist Pentecostals were not rejecting American culture but were challenging the dominant expression of Progressive Era Americanism. Con-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷ Dempster, "Crossing Borders," 63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

tributing to the national discussion on the nature of Americanism, Pentecostals framed their critique of the social evil of war in the intrinsic value of humanity given by God to all. “[P]acifism provides a moral authentication of the universal truths of the gospel.”²⁰

Pentecostal Pacifists as Prophets

“War is madness” shouted the elder Booth-Clibborn.²¹ War destroys order in society. Booth-Clibborn was particularly strident against nations that called themselves Christian while using warfare to achieve their imperialist objectives. Nations that back up their call for peace and political mandates with weapons of war do not exhibit the principle of peace exhibited by Jesus. Peace talks among nations that are backed by naval fleets and armies are not intended to develop peace but to inspire respect and imperialism: “this wilfully [sic] blind and narrow spirit is the seed of war.”²²

Another strident voice against war was the Azusa participant-chronicler, Frank Bartleman. According to Dempster, Bartleman identified war as “institutionalized evil that reflected the sinful power structure of the world system.”²³ Europeans were militaristic colonialists who were being judged by God: “Belgium for her Congo atrocities. France for her infidelity and devil worship. Germany for her materialism and militarism. England for her hypocrisy, bullyism over weaker nations, and her overwhelming pride.”²⁴ According to Bartleman, England deserved primary criticism for WWI. England was using political and economic power to subjugate humanity, advance colonialism, and further the European caste system.²⁵ “England, whose religious pretensions are the greatest today, has stolen most of her possessions from the weaker nations. She is the greatest of sea pirates.”²⁶ The United States likewise, does not escape Bartleman’s critique. Prior to American entry into the war, Bartleman challenged the American claim to neutrality. He wrote a

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Arthur Sidney Booth-Clibborn, *Blood against Blood*, 3rd edition (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1916), 12.

²² A. Booth-Clibborn, *Blood against Blood*, 26.

²³ Dempster, “Pacifism in Pentecostalism,” 38.

²⁴ Frank Bartleman, “Present Day Conditions,” *Weekly Evangel* (June 5, 1915) 3.

²⁵ Frank Bartleman, “The European War,” *Weekly Evangel* (July 10, 1915) 3.

²⁶ Frank Bartleman, “What Will the Harvest Be?” *Weekly Evangel* (August 7, 1915) 1.

scathing critique of Americans' outrage toward the hostile sinking of Lusitania prior to the United States officially taking up arms. "A torpedo bored its way into the bowels of the great vessel loaded with ammunition and arms for the destruction of the Germans.... The ammunition came from America. And yet we complain because Americans were killed. ... Judgment time has come."²⁷

Bartleman is clear, however, that he was not taking sides with Germany and her allies. To the contrary, "The sins of Germany are many,"²⁸ particularly in regard to Germany's commitment to imperialism. "Germany no doubt is ambitious to rule Europe."²⁹ Yet, Bartleman had better things to say about Germany than England. "In German cities even the vacant lots are all planted with vegetable gardens. Every foot of ground is utilized and developed to the utmost. Germans have built their nation with the sword in one hand and trowel in the other."³⁰ Nonetheless, in the case of Germany and England, along with their allies, they have failed to recognize that faithfulness both to God and to nationalism have conflicting objectives. "Patriotism has been fanned into a flame. The religious passion has been invoked, and the national gods called upon for defense in each case. What blasphemy! ... It is simply wholesale murder. It is nothing short of hell. And yet they glorify it."³¹

A third example of a prophetic voice is that of Augustus J. Tomlinson, leader of the Church of God (CG) in Cleveland, Tennessee. Like Booth-Clibborn and Bartleman, Tomlinson contended that war was wrong because it took human life and destroyed society. "Much is said now of patriotism and going to war in defense of our beautiful country, but we have a higher and nobler calling than this."³² He believed that commitment to heavenly citizenship, engaging an eschatological ethic, must supersede nationalist commitments. "Jesus loves the world. This takes in Germany as well as America. If we are Christ's, then we love the world too, and our love is not limited to our own na-

²⁷ Bartleman, "Present Day Conditions," 3.

²⁸ Bartleman, "What Will the Harvest Be?" 1.

²⁹ Bartleman, "The European War," 3.

³⁰ Bartleman, "What Will the Harvest Be?" 1.

³¹ Bartleman, "The European War," 3.

³² A.J. Tomlinson, "Beautiful Light of Pentecost," *Church of God Evangel* (May 12, 1917) 1.

tive country.”³³ Using the actions of Jesus as a model, Tomlinson argued, “[D]o we see Him slaying the multitudes because they were trampling upon His rights? It is pride and selfishness usually that leads to war.”³⁴ War also takes the lives of husbands, fathers, and sons, devastating their families at home. Tomlinson laments: “The home is left desolate as wife and children think of husband and father out on the bloody battle field. Weary, hungry, cold, wounded and bleeding, dying, dead, at the hand of the cruel war. Homes broken up never to be united again.”³⁵

Historian Janette Keith observed that conscription procedures during World War I prioritized the wealthy, the middle class, and politically connected families. “Under the rubric of fairness,” notes Keith, “the Selective Service System favored industrial workers, middle-class fathers, and established religious bodies and in doing so fastened a disproportionate burden on the southern rural poor.”³⁶ Tomlinson and the CG would have felt this injustice. One of Tomlinson’s primary concerns during the war, in addition to the actual destruction of human life, was the emotional and economic destruction of the family. Sons, husbands, and fathers were taken from the home for the duration of the war and possibly forever.

Tomlinson charged that a commitment to the church and Christian ideals should supersede all other commitments, including nationalist concerns. “[W]e owe our first and best to God. Our first duty is to the church. We obligate [ourselves] to be loyal and true [to God]. This, then, is our first duty. The war demon may try to persuade you that your first duty is to the stars and stripes, but this is a delusion.”³⁷ Tomlinson believed that Pentecostals should reject government-endorsed war by refusing to participate; bravery was not found in the taking up of arms, but in refusing those arms. Bravery was found in challenging the war in Europe by declaring conscientious objector status.

³³ A.J. Tomlinson, “The Awful World War,” *Church of God Evangel* (February 24, 1917) 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ “President of United States Calls the People to Prayer,” *Church of God Evangel* (September 26, 1914) 2.

³⁶ Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 83.

³⁷ Tomlinson, “Awful World War,” 1.

The economics of everyday life also demanded indirect contribution to the war effort. "We cannot fight [in combat] and we are sometimes at a loss to know just where to draw the lines. We are helping in the war by paying high prices for food and clothing, but these are necessities and we cannot refuse to purchase them."³⁸ Postal workers contributed to the war. Coalminers, common in Appalachia, provided the government with needed energy to propagate the war. Farmers supplied food to the soldiers. "It makes scarcely any difference what one engages in now[,] he is helping in the war more or less in some way."³⁹ Tomlinson identified the end result of passive participation in war: "[I]ndirectly we are lending our assistance in the very thing our conscience condemns. We are helping to pull the triggers that fire the guns that take the lives of our fellowmen. We do not want to do this but it is forced upon us."⁴⁰ Finally, Tomlinson concluded that Pentecostals have a responsibility to pursue an eschatological ethic, rather than nationalist concerns. "We are in the world, but not of the world. While we are here we must obey the laws of the country to which we live so long as those laws do not require us to disobey God, then God must be first even if the penalty is inflicted upon us. This is God's world. Here is where we must stand."⁴¹

Patriotic and Pacifist

In contrast to the absolute pacifists, other Pentecostals either supported the war or provided little objection to the war. For these Pentecostals, ethics and nationalism were compatible. In 1917, although the AG had adopted a pacifist stance, the AG passed a motion that discouraged its ministers from taking actions that might undermine American nationalism. A resolution passed by the Texas District and affirmed by the General Council warned preachers that if they spoke against the government they would be censured; their ministerial credentials would be

³⁸ A.J. Tomlinson, "Days of Perplexity," *Church of God Evangel* (January 26, 1918) 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

revoked.⁴² The General Council extended the provision, “Such radicals [who object to nationalism] do not represent this General Council.”⁴³

Thereafter, in January of 1918, the editor of the *Weekly Evangel*, E.N. Bell, published this report: “The General Council has always stood for law and order. So at our last Council Meeting we took a strong stand for Loyalty to our Government and the President and to the Flag. Let all note this and be duly warned.”⁴⁴ Absolute opposition to United States’ involvement in war was not acceptable. “It is one things [sic] to be in our own faith opposed personally to taking human life, even in war, but quite another thing to preach against our Government going to war. ... It is none of our business to push our faith as to war on others or on the Government.”⁴⁵ Bell further admonished “[p]reachers who are excused from war, old or young,” to “show their gratitude to God and the Flag for such religious liberty and prove this by extra service and sacrifices to the good of mankind, to the Government and to God.”⁴⁶

It is also noteworthy that Bell stated that these final comments reflected his personal stance, not the position of the AG. But, as editor of the *Weekly Evangel*, the official organ of the AG, and as the first leader of the fellowship, his words would have been received by many constituents as the official position of the AG. “[T]he General Council cannot and will not try to help any preacher who willfully disobeys the laws of the land,” asserted Bell. “... So let all our preachers be duly warned not to do anything *rash*, like these other preachers, that will land them in a Federal Penitentiary, or up before a shooting squad for Treason to the Country.”⁴⁷ Historian Grant Wacker observes:

Bell was on a roll. In the succeeding weeks he encouraged AOG members to buy Liberty Bonds, remember that Jesus paid taxes to the Roman government, and keep in mind that civil authority was ordained by God. ... In the summer of 1918 he ordered the destruction of all copies of Frank Bartleman’s antiwar

⁴² Dempster, “Pacifism in Pentecostalism,” 47.

⁴³ Ibid., citing Minutes of the General Council of the Assemblies of God (1917).

⁴⁴ E.N. Bell, “Preachers Warned,” *Weekly Evangel* (January 5, 1918) 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

broadside, *Present Day Conditions*, which the Evangel had printed back in 1915 and later reprinted in tract form.⁴⁸

Later that year, Bell published what Robins refers to as a “blatantly non-pacifistic” response to the question of whether it was morally acceptable to kill in battle: “Our faith leaves this with the conscience of each man... But everyone must keep personal hatred out of his heart.”⁴⁹ Ironically, following Bell’s 1918 article in which he warned AG pastors not to oppose the federal government’s commitment to war, the next page gives full articulation of the resolution of the AG advocating pacifism. The editor, presumably Bell, printed the pacifist statement of the AG and articulated the criteria required of a petitioner for conscientious objector status.⁵⁰

Still other Pentecostals and their communities remained silent concerning participation in the war. Such is the case of G.F. Taylor and the Pentecostal Holiness Church (PHC). In June 1917, Taylor stated to his constituents that while the United States was preparing for war, Christians should prepare for spiritual warfare.⁵¹ Taylor seems to have recognized the tension provided by commitments to heavenly citizenship and American citizenship. Christians were “citizens of the cross, as most of my readers are [also] citizens of the United States.”⁵² Taylor encouraged readers to shift their focus to evangelism. Readers were to view the war in Europe as an admonishment to focus upon “a mighty conflict in the heavenlies,” in which “souls are hanging in the balances of their eternal destinies, and the call of the hour is to save them before it is too late.”⁵³ Taylor called ministers to evangelism: “while the nations

⁴⁸ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 246. Wacker cites Bell in *Weekly Evangel* (January 26, 1918) 9; *Weekly Evangel* (February 23, 1918) 6; *Christian Evangel* (June 11, 1918) 8. Wacker indicates that Bell was probably speaking for S.A. Jamieson and A.P. Collins in *Christian Evangel* (August 24, 1918) 4.

⁴⁹ Robins, “Chronology of Peace,” 22-23, citing Bell “Questions and Answers,” *Christian Evangel* (October 19, 1918).

⁵⁰ E.N. Bell, “The Pentecostal Movement and the Conscription Law,” *Weekly Evangel* (January 5, 1918) 5.

⁵¹ G.F. Taylor, “Preparedness,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* (June 7, 1917) 8. Taylor was editor of the *Advocate*. While the article does not include a byline, the assumption is made that Taylor, as editor, either wrote the article or approved the article.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

of the earth are preparing themselves for war, let us be as wise as they, and prepare ourselves for the fight against sin.”⁵⁴ Later publications in the *Advocate*, the official newsletter of the PHC, instructed preachers, but not laity, how to apply for conscientious observer status. The PHC position followed the standard government exceptions to conscription in which ministers could declare as conscientious objectors.

The PHC did state that soldiers should receive the support of their churches. One advertisement in the *Advocate* encouraged readers to purchase New Testaments that had been edited specifically for soldiers and sailors: “Give one to your son or neighbor’s son when he has to leave home.”⁵⁵ On another occasion, a church member, Joseph F. Barnett, indicated that he was scheduled to appear before the conscription board: “I do not know what will be the end of this, but this one thing I know, I must hold God up everywhere I go.” Barnett did not appear eager to serve, but did see military life as an opportunity for Christian service.⁵⁶

Pacifists in Support of American Idealism

Some Pentecostal leaders opposed the war. Other leaders saw themselves as committed to America, even if that meant going to war. A third voice challenged the war, but saw that challenge as consistent with the ideals of Americanism. Two leaders who advanced this third perspective included Charles H. Mason, bishop of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), and Stanley Frodsham in his later writings, when he was working in the role of Secretary of the AG. Although Mason and Frodsham were pacifists, they contended that pacifism could be engaged while remaining faithful to the ideals of Americanism. Frodsham viewed combatant service as acceptable for those whose conscience allowed such service. Mason argued that war was particularly harmful to America’s poor and persons of color, yet maintained that he and the COGIC were faithful to the United States and could support the nation financially through the purchase of war bonds.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁵ Joseph F. Barnett, “Army and Navy Testament,” advertisement, *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* (October 25, 1917) 5.

⁵⁶ Joseph F. Barnett, “Testimonies,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* (August 16, 1917) 11.

Mason rejected the killing that war required: "We believe the shedding of human blood or taking of human life to be contrary to the teaching of our Lord and Saviour, and as a body, we are adverse to war in all its various forms," stated the Mason endorsed COGIC statement of faith.⁵⁷ At the same time, Mason called upon COGIC members to buy Liberty Bonds: "I have loaned [to] the government, and have succeeded in raising for the help of the government more than three thousand dollars, in taking out bonds, and as far as I am concerned the spiritual injunction stands. I have loaned, hoping [to receive] nothing in return."⁵⁸ Mason considered the purchase of Liberty Bonds by his members on par with giving to the needy.

Public opinion generally considered conscientious objectors not as advocates for peace, but advocates for Germany.⁵⁹ Mason attempted to counter the popular notions that pacifists were enemies of the state and that African Americans were susceptible to influence from German sympathizers.⁶⁰ The recently established Bureau of Investigation developed an extensive investigative report on Mason and other African-American leaders. Mason and various colleagues spent time in prison because they supported the right of conscientious objection.⁶¹ The report of the Bureau, often reflecting a bias against African Americans, argued that Mason was an advocate for Germany. Mason is reported to have stated, "Germany is going to whip the United States for the mistreatment accorded the negroes, if for no other reason."⁶² To the contrary, Mason confirmed his commitment to the United States by placing the responsibility of the war on the German Kaiser. Mason proclaimed, "They tell me the Kaiser went into prayer and came out and lifted up

⁵⁷ "In Re: Rev. Charles Harris[on] Mason," held by Special Collections, University of Memphis Libraries, Tolbert-COGIC collection, box 9.

⁵⁸ Charles H. Mason, "The Kaiser in the Light of Scriptures," in *The History and Life Work of Bishop C. H. Mason*, Compiled by Mary Mason (Memphis: Church of God in Christ, 1987), 40.

⁵⁹ Theodore Kornweibel, Jr., "Race and Conscientious Objection in World War I" in *Proclaim Peace*, 60-62 and "Investigate Everything": *Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 76-117.

⁶⁰ Kornweibel, "Race and Conscientious Objection," 61-62.

⁶¹ Michael Clark, "FBI File Reveals Endurance," *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis, Tennessee: Nov 10, 1983), held by IFPHC.

⁶² See "In Re: Rev. Charles Harris[on] Mason" and Clark, "FBI File Reveals Endurance."

his hands and prayed, and afterwards [sic] declared war.” If the Kaiser “had been praying for peace he would not have declared war.”⁶³ The Kaiser acted upon imperialist commitments, “attempting to gather to himself all nations and to rule all people.”⁶⁴ Mason concluded his sermon by praying that the Germans would be driven back and the independence of Belgium would be restored. This did not mean, however, that Mason advocated war as a solution in Europe. Instead, the church was looking forward to the coming of the Prince of Peace after which all peoples would beat their swords into plowshares and study war no more.⁶⁵

The most vocal and observable pacifist voice within the AG was Stanley Frodsham. He contended that a Christian’s priority should rest in a commitment to the eschatological kingdom of God and to heavenly citizenship. His earliest objections to war carried an intense prophetic edge. Yet, in his later and more moderate correspondence to President Wilson, he reported that the AG affirmed loyalty to the president and to the United States. Frodsham assured President Wilson that he would receive “loyal support at this time of national crisis” and “we will do all in our power to uphold your hands.” Attached to the letter was a resolution committing the AG to pacifism. “[W]hile purposing to fulfill all the obligations of loyal citizenship, [we] are nevertheless constrained to declare [that] we cannot conscientiously participate in war and armed resistance which involves the actual destruction of human life.”⁶⁶

At the same time, the document allowed non-combatant participation, stating “any service of a non-military character, not out of harmony with the Resolution attached, that we can give to our country at this time, will be gladly rendered.”⁶⁷ The document stated further that should some Pentecostals choose to serve as combatants, the AG would not object.⁶⁸ J.W. Welch, Chair of the General Council, interpreted the position of the AG, as “not intended to hinder anyone from taking up arms who may feel free to do so, but we hope to secure the privilege of

⁶³ Mason, “The Kaiser,” 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁵ Kornweibel, “Race and Conscientious Objection,” 62, citing Mason, “The Kaiser in the Light of Scripture,” 62.

⁶⁶ “The Pentecostal Movement and the Conscription Law,” *Weekly Evangel* (August 4, 1917) 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

exemption from such military service as will necessitate the taking of life for all who are real conscientious objectors.”⁶⁹

Frodsham's conclusions in his earlier writings had resonated with the absolute pacifists, such as Bartleman, who rejected any form of nationalism that would supersede heavenly citizenship. However, as the United States entered the war, Frodsham relented. This shift places Frodsham in closer agreement with E.N. Bell, who wrote a fiery admonishment to AG ministers warning them not to speak ill of the United States.

CONCLUSION: CITIZENS OF HEAVEN AND/OR EARTH?

It is my contention that straightforward conclusions concerning American Pentecostals and pacifism defy an easy answer. A primary factor in their decision-making process included rejection of military service in relation to their identity as Americans. In order to garner a response, these Pentecostals had to wrestle with conflicting approaches to the American ideal. The evidence demonstrates that early American Pentecostals articulated three nuanced positions concerning military participation during the First World War. The first response was a prophetic voice that called for absolute pacifism, expressed through leaders such as Frank Bartleman, Arthur Booth-Clibborn, and A.J. Tomlinson. These Pentecostals ushered a challenge to Roosevelt's contention that war unites the peoples. Instead, war and nationalism destroy society. They believed that the church should call the nations to peace and recognize that all people are equal and valuable. Their challenge was not a rejection of the American ideal, but a prophetic call to recognize the value of all persons, including those who had been labeled as the enemy. American Pentecostals were not rejecting culture; they were not retreating from culture. They were calling for a healing of society. This prophetic voice decried a type of Americanism that marginalized many based upon race, gender, ethnicity, or economics. This prophetic voice of Pentecostalism called all to prioritize heavenly citizenship. However, the Pentecostal commitments to heavenly citizenship were not consistent, and Pentecostals struggled with what it meant to be Christian and American.

⁶⁹ J.W. Welch, "An Explanation," *Weekly Evangel* (May 19, 1917) 8, held by FHPC.

The second approach highlights Pentecostals who were careful in their support of war and their choice not to challenge the war effort. As such, Pentecostals should make the best of the situation and use it as a means for evangelism. The prominent E.N. Bell represents a conflicted position; pacifist yet staunchly American as he vacillates between voice of the AG and personal commentator. Others such as G.F. Taylor stated that Pentecostals should be concerned not about earthly combat, but prepare for spiritual warfare. These Pentecostals were not avoiding interaction with culture but saw them as expecting to have to participate in war as all Americans.

The final approach may be found in those who saw war as destructive, but wanted to maintain patriotic commitments. "This is a rich man's war," stated Bishop Mason. Nonetheless, he thought the COGIC members should readily contribute to American ideals through purchasing Liberty Bonds and by rejecting the claim that African Americans were pawns of foreign governments. Frodsham desired to put the AG on record as rejecting war while recognizing that some of the members of the AG may choose to take non-combatant roles; some might even participate as combatants. Though such proponents did not view war as an appropriate means of resolving global problems, they viewed Pentecostals as faithful Americans, not retreating from society, but fully participating.

Following the First World War, Pentecostals would continue the struggle individually and collectively to identify their various alignments. Whether in a time of peace or war, questions concerning participation in military service would remain intricately connected to questions concerning the degree of allegiance to nationhood.