

CONTINUITIES IN CENTRAL CANADIAN BAPTIST
RESPONSES TO WAR, 1899–1945

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Between 1899 and 1945, Canada went to war three times at the behest of the British Empire. The first of these conflicts, the South African War, marked a sort of coming of age for Canada. It was the first war it participated in as its own country, despite the fact that Canada had little choice in the matter. If Britain was at war, so was Canada. The Protestant press was a major contributor to not only promoting a certain view of the war, but also to tying the war to Canada's identity; the churches wielded significant influence in shaping the views of the public. The next war was the Great War.¹ The manner in which Canadians, and especially Canadian Protestants responded to the Great War differed little from how they had responded to the South African War fifteen years earlier. In 1939, Canada was again at war for the cause of the Empire. While the relationship between Britain and Canada had changed since the beginning of the First World War, an event perhaps implied in Canada's slightly delayed declaration of war on Germany in 1939, the manner in which Canadian Protestants responded to the war was remarkably similar to how they had responded to the First World War.

1. In the last few years, there have been ongoing memorials marking the centennial of the Great War. The federal government of Canada has promoted the war as a coming-of-age moment for Canada as a country. This is a simplistic view, though it may be true for military and political purposes. If Canada had a coming-of-age moment, it was the South African War which set a precedent for how Canadians, and Canadian Protestants more specifically, responded to the World Wars. I will use the terms Great War and First World War interchangeably.

Gordon L. Heath has argued that the manner in which the Canadian churches reacted to the Great War was framed by a set of precedents that were established during the South African War. Elsewhere he has argued that Baptists in Britain, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand (BACSANZ Baptists) linked their Baptist identity with imperial identity. Taking a cue from these two arguments, which will be dealt with in more detail below, this paper argues that significant continuities characterized Central Canadian Baptist responses to each of these three wars. This study shows that the assumptions of justice, nation-building, and empire, which Heath argues were established as precedents in the South African War, guided the Central Baptist war commentary and rhetoric in their denominational newspaper the *Canadian Baptist*.² These assumptions were, in fact, firmly established in the Canadian Protestant outlook, but were sharpened by imperial war.

This paper begins by examining some of the precedents established during the South African War as well as the context from which they came. Following this, there will be an analysis of the First World War and the Second World War, respectively, in which the continuities between these wars will be emphasized, primarily the assumptions of justice, nation-building, and empire. Finally, I will conclude by offering an interpretation of these war time continuities.

Gordon Heath's argument that the South African War established precedents for how Canadian Protestants, and Central Baptists more specifically, would respond to later imperial wars,

2. The term Central Canadian Baptists refers to those Baptists who were part of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (currently named Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec). This paper will rely not only on their denominational newspaper, the *Canadian Baptist*, but will also occasionally quote the *McMaster Monthly* and its descendant, *The Silhouette*. These were both student newspapers out of McMaster, which was the BCOQ denominational university. Mark Steinacher ("Sheep Not of this Fold," 262–303) has shown that before the move to Hamilton, the majority of McMaster students were Baptists, and even after the move, they remained the single largest group, though not necessarily constituting a majority.

was a call for more work to be done on this subject.³ To date, very little has been done. In fact, besides Heath's own work on Canadian churches in the South African War, there is a paucity of work on the other two wars. It is true that the First World War has received some attention lately, due to the centennial celebrations, but even work on Canadian Protestants in the First World War is quite limited.⁴ Compared to the Second World War, however, the works on the First War seem to constitute a library.⁵ There is only one work directly concerned with Canadian Protestants in the Second World War, a doctoral dissertation, but it only covers 1939–1943.⁶ A handful of monographs and surveys of

3. Heath's work ("South African War," 15) on this subject is itself a response to Carman Miller's argument that there were continuities between the South African War and the First World War. See Heath, "The Nile Expedition," 98–114, for evidence that continuities in Canadian Protestant responses to British imperial wars stretch back at least fifteen years before the South African War. Miller's argument can be found in Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, preface and Chapter 1.

4. Scholarship on the First World War has focused primarily on the Conscription Crisis and its impact on English-French relations, as well as the experiences of military chaplains and pacifist Mennonites.

5. The majority of scholarship done on the two world wars has focused on various aspects of the Canadian Mennonite experiences of these wars. As Heath ("Canadian Churches and War," 64) has noted, Mennonites have received a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention in relation to their numerical strength in those time periods.

6. See Faulkner, "Christian Civilization." Unfortunately, this work, which focuses on the war effort, focuses more on the different visions of Christian civilization promoted by Protestants, on the one hand, and Catholics on the other. He studies how these different visions came out in their work and complicated the tensions between French and English Canadians. It is true that there is a great deal of scholarship devoted to exploring the experience of Mennonites during the Second World War, as well as the experience of army chaplains. Faulkner's work is the only one devoted specifically to the mainline denominations and their responses to the Second World War. The lack of scholarship on Canadian Protestants and the Second World War is, admittedly, bewildering in light of the war's popularity amongst makers of pop culture. There are countless novels, games, movies, and television shows set in the war or about various facets of the war, and there are also links between the war and national identity in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first for western nations such as the USA, Britain, and Canada.

Canadian history make brief generalizations about Canadian Protestants in the Second World War. As far as continuities between the wars, there is only Heath's work and Carman Miller's, and, as of yet, these only extend to the First World War. The continuities in the Protestant responses to Canada's three imperial wars could tell us a great deal not only about the relationship between Canadian Protestants and British imperial sentiment, but also the extent to which the churches shaped imperial sentiment in war-time, and the extent of their influence over public opinion.⁷ Clearly, there is much work yet to be done. This paper will take the important step of establishing that there were continuities in Canadian Protestants' responses to the three wars, first, by using Central Canadian Baptists as a case study, and second, by exploring the nature of these continuities.

A Word about Newspapers as Historical Sources

Newspapers have not always been well received by historians as historical sources because of charges of inaccuracy and editorial bias. These charges have been based on a distinction between historical events described in a newspaper, what they called historical reality, and the descriptions themselves. The description, or commentary, in the newspapers is of interest in this paper because it reveals much about both the writers of the paper and the public reading it. Glenn Wilkinson argues that newspapers are a form of two-way communication between the writer/editor and the public, and that the views of the latter limits what the former can write.⁸ Similarly, Jerry Knudson suggests that newspapers must strike a responsive chord with the public or they could not exist economically.⁹ Peter Hennessy, as well as Roberto Franzosi, have brought up the difficulties of using newspapers as

7. It might also have a bearing on historiography that argues that imperial sentiment in Canada died after the First World War; it may also refute elements of the secularization thesis, but this is beyond the scope of the current project.

8. Wilkinson, "To the Front," 203–4.

9. Knudson, "Late to the Feast," § 8.

historical sources due to editorial bias, but in light of Wilkinson and Judson's suggestions, editorial bias is less prominent a problem than they think.¹⁰ For a religious newspaper, however, as Gordon Heath has shown, the editor was always an ordained member of the denomination, so editorial bias, though not a non-issue, is less of a problem.¹¹ In his history of the *Canadian Baptist*, Harold Trинier observed that the paper was largely a reflection of the editor's personality, but on behalf of the denomination.¹² Straying too far beyond what the denomination saw as acceptable would jeopardize the editor's employment. In addition, Gordon Heath, as well as Candy Brown, have shown the important role that denominational newspapers played in building denominational identity.¹³ Thus, in this paper, religious periodicals, though not free of editorial bias, are viewed as a sufficient means of gauging denominational opinion and views on world events such as war.

*The South African War: The Central Baptist
Response and its Context*

The Canadian Protestant response to the South African War, 1899–1901, has been well examined by Gordon L. Heath.¹⁴ He contends that four key assumptions guided the Protestant response to the war. These included the assumptions of nation-building, empire, justice, and missions. This paper will concentrate on the first three of these assumptions because they were

10. See Hennessy, "The Press," 20; Franzosi, "Press as a Source," 6–7.

11. Heath ("Forming Sound Public Opinion," 122) states that "the religious press was to be a voice for the 'parent' denomination."

12. Trинier, *Century of Service*, 137–38; Heath, "Forming Sound Public Opinion," 122.

13. Heath, "Forming Sound Public Opinion," 137; Brown, *The Word*, 146, 169.

14. See Heath, *Silver Lining* for a study of Canadian Protestants in the Boer War. See also Miller, *Painting the Map Red* for a broader scope that interacts with the secular press.

three of the major continuities in each of the three wars under review here.¹⁵

Heath argues that the four mainline Protestant denominations in Canada viewed the South African war as a just cause.¹⁶ This affirmation took place in the context of just war theory. This is not to say that pastors in these denominations preached sermons outlining *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, or that denominations issued detailed statements that discussed the finer points of a just war theology. Rather, they saw the war as a just cause because the war appeared to be for the reasons of self-defence, and the “alleged Boer mistreatment of non-combatants.”¹⁷ An edition of the *Canadian Baptist* from early in the war described the initial hostile engagements between the British and the Boers and expressed the British hope that “an end shall be made to the oppression of Britons in the Transvaal.”¹⁸ Related to this was the idea that no empire was as righteous as the British empire, and so, to expand the empire was to spread justice.¹⁹ A more detailed article from August 1900 noted that an Afrikaner independence movement had been developing in the South African states, contending for primacy against loyalty to the British empire:

Beneath all, there has been a deep and growing current, the current of Bond Afrikanerism, as against loyalty to the British Empire. This war is a trial of strength between the two powers. It had to come sooner or later. Had it come later the issue might probably have been the victory of the former. Today the prayer of every loyal Briton is for the victory of the latter. The former means the ascendancy of a

15. This article does not exclude the assumption of mission because it is problematic or because it is not present in the newspaper war commentary. It is excluded because the other three assumptions were far more prominent, and also due to space limitations.

16. See Heath, *Silver Lining*. The four mainline Protestant denominations in Canada were the Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Baptists. In 1925, the Methodists amalgamated with the Congregationalists and a portion of Canadian Presbyterians to form the United Church of Canada.

17. Heath, *Silver Lining*, 22; Heath (*The British Nation*, 46) notes that the Boers started the war by invading British territory on 11 October 1899.

18. “Editorial Notes,” *Canadian Baptist*, 26 October 1899, 1.

19. Heath, *The British Nation*, 140.

caste, and that the least educated, the least progressive; the latter means a free people, with equal rights to just government, be it British, Boer or Black, under the flag of the Empire.²⁰

Heath notes in agreement that “despite its problems and injustices, the empire was considered to be the world’s most benevolent empire: where the Union Jack flew, liberty and justice reigned.”²¹

Another assumption that guided Canadian Protestants’ response to the South African War, which was closely linked with the notion of a just empire, was nation-building. Phyllis Airhart has argued that although the Protestant churches had initially been apathetic to Confederation, in the decades immediately following the birth of Canada, they took it upon themselves to supply the country with an identity: namely, Canada as “the Lord’s Dominion.” She argues that the vision of Canada as “His Dominion” furnished the churches with “an ideological and theological framework for a wide variety of voluntary organizations—temperance societies, the Lord’s Day Alliance, missionary societies, to name only a few.”²² Similarly, Robert Wright has observed that “the major Protestant denominations—Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist—had been among the ‘corporate institutions that had shaped the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.’”²³

The link between church and society, however, stretched back in time to the days before Confederation, indeed, to the early days of evangelicalism. William Wilberforce himself, the famous champion of evangelical social activism, linked the welfare of one’s country with Christian responsibility, especially as it related to what he called “morals.”²⁴ Morality figuring largely in Christianity, it was only logical for the churches to be a moral

20. “The Causes of the South African War,” *Canadian Baptist*, 23 August 1900, 15. It should be noted that this article was extracted from *The Independent*.

21. Heath, *The British Nation*, 140.

22. Airhart, “Ordering a New Nation,” 101.

23. Wright, “Canadian Protestant Tradition,” 139.

24. Wolffe, *Expansion of Evangelicalism*, 161.

force in Canada's otherwise godless frontier culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Neil Semple has argued that Methodists, who comprised a significant percentage of Canada's population in the early nineteenth century, emphasized moral purity in a pioneer society in which immorality reigned.²⁵ At the same time, Methodists, who assigned great importance to personal conversion and regeneration, expected one another to help improve national life. Semple notes "the cultural and moral requirements of Methodism demanded the reformation of individuals in the corrupt world. Only by this process could the nation and the world truly progress."²⁶ Michael Gauvreau has also noted a link between evangelicalism and nation-building in the early nineteenth century. He argues that in a frontier society that lacked much in the way of virtue and values, evangelicalism provided the values for early Canadian culture as it was formed.²⁷ The result of what Gauvreau and Semple suggest was the formation of a Protestant culture in English-speaking Canada. As William Westfall has observed, this Protestant culture "came to have a profound influence over public opinion."²⁸ It also provided the basis from which the mainline Protestants could undertake nation-building with such gusto and success; the Protestants' outlook at the turn of the twentieth century was one of optimism. In fact, this optimism was widespread enough for Prime Minister Laurier to declare that "the twentieth century will be the century of Canada."²⁹

With that being said, the South African War was easily linked with the nation-building efforts of the mainline Protestants. One of the ways this happened was in conceiving of the war as a coming-of-age moment for Canada. Canada's small contribution to the war effort, in the form of several thousand soldiers, was a point of patriotic pride.³⁰ An editorial note in the *Canadian*

25. Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 56.

26. Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 66.

27. Gauvreau, "Protestantism Transformed," 50.

28. Westfall, *Two Worlds*, 9.

29. Quoted in Heath, *Silver Lining*, 51.

30. Heath, *Silver Lining*, 51. The number of troops sent by Canada (7,368) was, as Heath (*The British Nation*, 51) notes, less than half of the

Baptist noted with excitement and pride that “for the first time in the history of the British Empire all the principal Colonies will send contingents to the scene of conflict . . . Canada leads with 1,000 men.”³¹ The link between supporting the war and being nation-builders also meant that the churches held services of prayer for the war, preached in support of the war, supplied army chaplains, and raised money for the war.³² These actions, rooted in the nation-building task that they had donned of their own will, would set precedents for how Canadian Protestants would respond to both the First and Second World Wars.

The final assumption that will be treated here is that of empire. For Canadian Protestants, their national outlook and their self-conceptions of Canadian identity all occurred in the framework of the British empire. Imperialism in Canada, it should come as no surprise, was rooted in the British heritage of the majority of English Canadians. Phillip Buckner has noted that the Canadian census of 1901 defined sixty percent of Canadians as being of British origin.³³ People of British extraction continued to constitute a majority of English-speaking Canadians until 1941.³⁴ This did not mean, however, that Canadian identity, in imperial terms, was exclusively British. If one was British, one was already something else, such as English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh.³⁵ The inherent pluralism of British identity was easily extended to include Canadians, many of whom were first generation immigrants from various parts of the British Isles, or were well-established Canadians who proudly emphasized their British roots. Canadians “realized that they were British with a difference. In some respects they thought of themselves as better Britons . . . this sense of superiority coexisted alongside an almost uncritical admiration for British culture and

number of troops contributed by Australia (16,632). This detail was important when the colonies vied for “the glory of who was most loyal to mother England” (51).

31. “War with the Boers,” *Canadian Baptist*, 19 October 1899, 8.

32. Heath, *Silver Lining*, 86.

33. Buckner, “Canada and the British Empire,” 4.

34. Buckner, “Canada and the British Empire,” 4.

35. Buckner, “Canada and the British Empire,” 7.

institutions.”³⁶ Canadian historian John S. Moir has argued that Canadians had an enduring sense of loyalty to Britain from the eighteenth century up to the 1950s. He argued that Canadian loyalism held a view of life which emphasized things Canadian within a British context.³⁷ This view was “based on a confidently assumed superiority of British institutions, and an unquestioning belief in the God-given mission—or responsibility—of the British people to share the blessings of the Almighty, with all other peoples.”³⁸ Other scholars agree with Moir on this point. The cultural connection was very strong, so strong, in fact, that as John Thompson has argued, in early twentieth-century Canada there was a ubiquitous “Imperial sentiment.”³⁹ He notes a journalist from that time period who described Toronto as “the most ultra-British city on earth . . . Englishmen suffering from a laxity in loyalty should hasten to Toronto, where they can be so impregnated with patriotism that they will want to wear shirt fronts made of the Union jack.”⁴⁰ An October 1901 edition of the *Canadian Baptist* described the recent royal visit in Toronto. The visiting Duke of Cornwall, grandson of Queen Victoria, represented, the article argued, “the best traditions of the mighty past of a great race . . . [and] the present might and majesty of the most extensive empire of the world.”⁴¹ The article went on to describe what this royal visit accomplished:

But what purpose has all this display served? It has done, doubtless, more than we can estimate, to make the British realm conscious of its oneness. When, in British possessions all round the world, the thronging multitudes have done homage to British traditions, law, and might and majesty, as embodied in the prospective head of the nation, it cannot but draw them all closer together around the throne and do much to foster the truest imperialism. It is also hoped that it

36. Buckner, “Canada and the British Empire,” 8.

37. Moir, “Loyalism,” 73.

38. Moir, “Loyalism,” 73.

39. Thompson, “Third British Empire,” 88.

40. Thompson, “Third British Empire,” 88.

41. “The Royal Visit,” *Canadian Baptist*, 17 October 1901, 8.

may hasten the awakening of Great Britain to a realization of her mighty heritage in her colonies.⁴²

These sentiments not only confirm what numerous historians of Canada have already posited, namely a widespread sense of loyalty and British patriotism, but also evince the special relationship Canada maintained with mother Britain in the outlook of many of its Baptist citizens.

A major component of British imperial identity was racism. In her work, Paula Hastings has argued that constructions of Canadian British identity in the late-nineteenth century were rooted in ethnicity: Anglo-Saxon. In this, Anglo-Saxon superiority was founded upon divine providence and the idea of the Anglo-Saxon race as being a chosen people. Hastings states that “Imperialists in Canada viewed the empire as ‘the vehicle and embodiment of a progressive civilization which was designated by Providence to spread its culture, religion, and political institutions across the face of the earth.’”⁴³ One article in the *Canadian Baptist* optimistically reflected on the past century and the potential problems faced in the twentieth century, and declared that “the last century, by divine appointment, was largely Anglo-Saxon.”⁴⁴ An editorial note in another edition of the *Canadian Baptist* quoted a Methodist missionary in Africa with excitement, who declared that “cities and civilization on the shores of the great inland lakes, and a new Anglo-Saxon centre of civilization will form in South Africa.”⁴⁵ Thus, it would seem Britain’s war in South Africa was also construed in racist terms. It is important to note, however, that the extent to which this racism informed the outlooks of Central Canadian Baptists is difficult to ascertain. I want to avoid claiming that all were racists, and it is hard to know who, if any, among the original audience read these articles and threw the paper down in disgust at such racism. The fact

42. “The Royal Visit,” *Canadian Baptist*, 17 October 1901, 8.

43. Hastings, “Anglo-Saxon Race,” 95. See Komeski, “Reform and Empire,” 49–57 to see how this racism combined with notions of class superiority in social reform efforts in Canadian cities such as Winnipeg.

44. “Twentieth Century Problems,” *Canadian Baptist*, 3 January 1901, 8.

45. “Editorial Notes,” *Canadian Baptist*, 14 February 1901, 1.

that this racism existed, and in all likelihood was not uncommon, must suffice. Needless to say, it had imperial overtones.

Finally, British imperial sentiment, in Canada especially, was linked with Protestantism, and a notion of the British Empire as a sort of Protestant Christendom. Hilary Carey describes it thus, “the common Christianity which suffused Greater Britain was, for the most part, assumed to be a ‘generic’ Protestantism, which encompassed imperial loyalty and the celebration of uniquely British (or Anglo-Saxon) virtues of freedom, tolerance, justice, and civic duty.”⁴⁶ One article argued that the British Empire was “today mightier, more majestic, and more potent for good than ever,” and indeed, that the Queen’s sceptre “makes for righteousness.”⁴⁷ It was assumed that, where Britain went, Protestant Christianity would also venture. Furthermore, the great liberty acclaimed to British rule, especially religious liberty, was believed to be the elixir of Protestant growth in British territories the world over. As far as Central Baptists are concerned, Michael Haykin, who has noted that pro-British sentiment was widespread among Canadian Baptists, mentions one piece published by the Ottawa Association in 1916 that described the British Empire as “the most truly Christian Empire which ever existed.”⁴⁸ The same article questioned if Britain had failed in her divine mission. The author admitted that “she has not done all she might have done,” but, “she has done much to emancipate, elevate and educate the down-trodden races. She still has a great mission in the world. But she must be true to her Divine calling . . .”⁴⁹

The assumption of empire underlay and informed the assumptions of justice and nation-building. The South African War was viewed through the lens of empire. As Heath and Carl Berger have noted, imperial sentiment in Canada was imbued with religious meaning and purpose. Berger describes this as a view of “the Empire as the vehicle and embodiment of progressive

46. Carey, *God’s Empire*, 5.

47. “Twentieth Century Problems,” *Canadian Baptist*, 3 January 1901, 8.

48. Haykin and Clary, “O God of Battles,” 177.

49. “Twentieth Century Problems,” *Canadian Baptist*, 3 January 1901, 8.

civilization which was designated by Providence to spread its culture, religion, and political institutions across the face of the earth.”⁵⁰ This widespread view among Canadian Protestants meant that the South African War, not to mention the World Wars, was not only justified in terms of self-defense, but also by the idea that the extension of the empire was good; a British victory would mean the establishment of British rule in the Boer Republics, which could only be good for their citizens.⁵¹ The religious dimensions of the assumption of empire, and the corollary assumptions of justice and nation-building, as the following will demonstrate, persisted in the imperial conflicts of the two World Wars.

The First World War

As Central Baptists had supported the South African War as a just cause, so they supported the First World War.⁵² Michael Haykin has noted that Central Baptists were initially hesitant to support the war.⁵³ The sentiments seen in the *Canadian Baptist*, however, suggest that this hesitancy was short-lived, a fact Haykin acknowledges when he notes that Central Baptists quickly concluded that the war was just.⁵⁴ In this war, however, the idea of the war as a just cause became overtly religious. An excerpt from a letter at the front was published in the January 1915 edition of the *Canadian Baptist*, in which the writer deplored the fact that some men were “hanging back,” that is, hesitating to

50. Berger, *Sense of Power*, 217.

51. Heath, *Silver Lining*, 96, 105.

52. For the views of other mainline Protestant denominations in Canada, see Marshall, “The Methodist Church,” 102–32; for Presbyterians, see MacDonald, “For the Empire and God,” 133–51; for Anglicans, see Davidson, “Anglican Church,” 152–69; for Protestants more generally, see Grant, *Canadian Era*, 113–16. For more on the mainline Protestants’s chaplaincy during the war, as well as sources regarding other denominations, especially Mennonites, see Heath’s extensive annotated bibliography of Canadian Churches and war (“Canadian Churches and War,” 61–124).

53. Haykin and Clary, “O God of Battles,” 174.

54. Haykin and Clary, “O God of Battles,” 174.

enlist, when the empire was in dire need. The writer went on to make his case by saying “if ever God called volunteers to fight in a Holy War, it is now . . . on every hand the Almighty is calling us to fight for peace. It is not against the Germans that we are fighting, but against the mad, devilish spirit which they have deified. Let us be true now, and we shall surely strangle that spirit.”⁵⁵ In 1914, soon after the war broke out, an editor of the *McMaster Monthly* proclaimed “it is a holy war—for it is in defence of Christianity itself that we are fighting. Let’s rally to the colors, ye men of McMaster.”⁵⁶

In an April 1916 edition of the *Canadian Baptist*, a sermon was printed in which the writer, Rev. F. A. Jackson, discussed at length the great sacrifice of Christ and then argued that it was such Christian faith and willingness to sacrifice that motivated men to enlist:

We can understand why our boys are willing to go, and why we who love them more than life let them go. There have been mixed motives here and there, no doubt; but the most-worthy motive, the motive with blessing on it, the motive with winning power in it, has been pure love of right, love of liberty, love of country, and love of God, more than love of self.⁵⁷

The sentiments mentioned here were rooted in a view of the world that was framed by the concept of Christendom. Out of Christendom came Christian civilization. And at the pinnacle of Christian civilization, as far as English-speaking Canadians were concerned, was the British Empire of which they were a part. For Central Canadian Baptists, this meant that an assault on Britain was an assault on Christian civilization and its attendant principles. These values or principles were seen as being rooted in Christianity, so an attack on them implied an attack on

55. “All for a Scrap of Paper,” *Canadian Baptist*, 21 January 1915, 3.

56. “Our Graduates,” *McMaster Monthly*, October 1914, 30.

57. “The Great Current Underneath,” *Canadian Baptist*, 20 April 1916, 4. Within the Central Baptist discourse of war, and likely that of other Canadian Protestants as well, there was a significant strand of thought that drew parallels between Christ and the British Christian Soldier, the above quote being a minor example of such. Within this, the concept of sacrifice figured largely.

Christianity. On the basis of this train of thought, it was not such a leap to characterize the war as a Holy War, as so many did. As Christian history has taught us, as soon as a conflict becomes a holy war or a holy cause, it is necessarily a just cause in the eyes of its proponents.

The characterization of the war by the churches as a just war was accompanied by a nation-building impulse that shaped the way Central Baptists conceived of, and spoke about, the war. In this way they expressed a particular articulation of Canadian national identity. One aspect of this was the idea that Canada must make its contribution. This was motivated by the idea that Canada, having come of age in the South African War, was now a “grown up nation,” that, as part of both the British Empire and Christendom, it was Canadians’ duty to “do their bit.” An editorial in the *Canadian Baptist* from April 1915 noted that Canadian troops had not been long at the front and, though many had been killed, the Canadian casualties were miniscule to those of Britain: “A Canadian Press Dispatch of last week says that up to April 11th, the total British casualties of the war from the beginning amount to 139, 347, a fearful toll of life, even though small as compared with the losses that have befallen the foes.”⁵⁸ The editor proceeded to direct his readers how to think of this in relation to Canadian identity, writing, “As the war goes on it may be expected that Canada’s loss will grow in proportion to the numbers of men going to the front. But we must be prepared for this, and be ready to bear the painful loss in the spirit of magnanimous men and women. The price of freedom and righteousness is never small; but the compensation will always outweigh the fearful price.”⁵⁹ Canada was firmly on the side of freedom and righteousness, in the Central Baptist view.⁶⁰

Another aspect of the nation-building impulse of Central Baptists, in terms of how it shaped their perception of the war, had to do with national unity. One editorial noted how “Canada never

58. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 22 April 1915, 1.

59. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 22 April 1915, 1.

60. At the time of my writing, research into the views of western and eastern Baptists in the First and Second World Wars is yet needed.

faced problems so large and so far-reaching and so vital as those that have arisen since the Kaiser of Germany threw the Christian nations into deadly conflict,” but that the effect of this had been “the unification of Canadians to a degree that has been both astonishing and wholesome.”⁶¹ The editor, quoting Sir Wilfred Laurier, argued that this unity should result in “the brave troops going out from us to the front to defend as noble a cause as ever engaged the effort of man, as noble a cause as any for which brave men have shed their blood, shall be as fully equipped as a Canadian enterprise . . . this, for the moment, is our supreme duty, our greatest obligation.”⁶²

Unsurprisingly, the assumptions of nation-building that guided Central Baptist perceptions of the war meant that the war was an important event for Canada’s future. In the instance of one editorial, this not only meant that Canada would achieve a glorified place alongside Mother Britain for its war exploits, but meant that Canada could come into its own as an industrial power in the world. The editor wrote:

At the present juncture in the making of Canada, some may fear lest she is to receive a setback from which she will be long in recovering. Our hope rather is, that both commercially and industrially, through the incidents of war, Canada is of necessity developing along lines that will stand her in good stead in the future days of peace. Canada’s resources in material, commercial and industrial realms are being exploited in ways that cannot but be productive when the war is a thing of memory and of history. What now in a measure seems to be a curse will in future days be turned into a blessing, both for individuals and for the nation. By the very ills of war Canada is being developed along lines that are new and full of promise.⁶³

As these few representative examples indicate, the war was a catalyst for the promotion of a Canadian identity, and probably did much in shaping that identity, for a time at least.

The final assumption in which there were significant continuities between the South African War and the two World Wars

61. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 22 April 1915, 1.

62. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 22 April 1915, 1.

63. “Canada in the Making,” *Canadian Baptist*, 30 March 1916, 1.

was the assumption of empire. As previously mentioned, British imperial sentiment was inherently racist. While this was not always apparent, it did appear in the *Canadian Baptist* from time to time. A prime example of this, and also a bizarre example due mainly to the fact that this statement came from a French Baptist pastor, was printed in the *Canadian Baptist* in April 1915. He wrote,

In France, Switzerland, Algeria and everywhere I have been, I have noticed with wonder how the strong English race retains its habits and tongue. They have their cricket game, their turf, their clubs, and also their churches. Though able generally, to speak fluently and to conduct their business in the language of the country where they live, they maintain invariably their own language. They do not assimilate themselves with the other nationalities. They remain English and that is one of the main reasons for the great strength of the British Empire. As on the sinking steamer Titanic, their motto is: 'Be British!' everywhere and always.⁶⁴

The assumption of empire was also inherently religious, that is to say, Protestant.⁶⁵ An editorial responding to a Mormon

64. "Conservation," *Canadian Baptist*, 29 April 1915, 4.

65. This is not to suggest, however, that the Empire excluded Roman Catholics, nor that they were disloyal. Mark McGowan ("English-Speaking Catholics and the Great War," 34–74; *The Imperial Irish*, 3–20, 71–104) shows that English-speaking Canadian Catholics were staunchly loyal to Britain and supported the war effort overtly: through the enlistment of their sons. These English-speaking Catholics maintained their loyalty even in the midst of difficult situations such as the seemingly pro-Austrian comments of a Canadian-Ukrainian Bishop, rumors that the Pope was pro-Austrian, and the unrest in Ireland along cultural, religious, and political lines. Simon Jolivet ("French-Speaking Catholics," 75–101) provides a window into the experience of French Canadians in Quebec, making a distinction between these French Canadians and the significant populations of French Canadians outside Quebec. He argues that the Great War brought disunity to French Canadians and was a catalyst for the beginning of Quebec's autonomy in the French-speaking world and its departure from what he calls the axis of French Canada.

This is also not to deny that anti-Catholic sentiment lived and breathed among many of Canada's Protestants. A mistrust of Roman Catholics ran very deep in evangelical Protestants. It would seem that in the assumption of empire itself there was a basic contradiction. On the one hand it was very much concerned with British liberty, as passed down through centuries of British law and

discussion of the war as being Armageddon quoted a Scottish YMCA worker who was at the front. He said “It means a big thing, still, today, for our Empire, this heart deep singing of our soldier men. I have never dreamed that I should see such depths of feeling for eternal things. Do not tell me this is Armageddon. It is not the end of things. It is Resurrection and Pentecost we are passing through. A harvest is being sown in France, of which the reaping will be Empire-wide. There will be angels at the ingathering.”⁶⁶ This person described the war not only in explicitly religious terms, but used language of revivalism and implied that a British victory would herald some sort of utopia. This appealed to the widespread postmillennialism of Canadian and British Protestants, which has been noted by numerous historians.⁶⁷

Assumptions of empire also meant that Central Baptists offered up prayers for the war and affirmed their loyalty to the British crown both in their newspaper and in their worship services. An article printed in February 1916 discussed the importance of praying for those in authority and then recommended that congregations sing ‘God Save the King’: “In this connection, we desire heartily to commend the churches wherein ‘God Save the King’ is prayerfully sung from Sunday to Sunday in these perilous and anxious days. Never did the National Anthem have so much content for the men, women and children of this generation as now. Let it be sung in every church with heart and voice at least at one public service a week.”⁶⁸

tradition. In the late nineteenth century, this guaranteed religious pluralism but also ensured certain rights for everyone regardless of creed. This was a glory of the empire. On the other hand, English-speaking Protestants in Canada construed the empire in terms of a Protestant entity that, because it was so great, allowed Catholics to benefit from living in it. Furthermore, moments of war seem to have provided whatever was needed to at least temporarily overcome religious prejudice and work together. Differences seemed to disappear in the midst of patriotic fervour.

66. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 20 May 1915, 1.

67. See, for example, Bebbington, *Baptists*, 125–26, and Dochuk “Redeeming the Time,” 10–20.

68. “For Those in Authority,” *Canadian Baptist*, 3 February 1916, 1.

Wartime prayers and imperial sentiments were often mixed together in the form of poems. Gordon L. Heath has explored war poetry in Canadian Protestant newspapers during the South African War and he identifies numerous themes which included: the monarchy, the Union Jack, England and the Anglo-Saxon people, and Canadian nationalism/imperialism.⁶⁹ War poetry in the *Canadian Baptist* mirrored these themes, and complemented them with poems about the armies at the front and imprecations for God's protection and blessing on Britain's cause. One of these poetic prayers, entitled "Prayers for Our Armies at the Front," went as follows:

O Lord of Hosts, Whose mighty arm
 In safety keeps 'mid war's alarm
 Protect our armies at the front,
 Who bear of war the bitter brunt;
 And in the hour of danger spread
 Thy sheltering wing above each head.

In battle's harsh and dreadful hour,
 Make bare Thine arm of sovereign power
 And fight for them who fight for Thee,
 And give Thine own victory;
 O in the hour of danger spread
 Thy sheltering wing above each head.

When pestilence at noonday wastes,
 And in death in triumph onward hastes,
 O Saviour Christ, remember Nain,
 And give us back our sons again:
 In every hour of danger spread
 Thy sheltering wing above each head.

If by the way of wounded lie,
 O listen to their plaintive cry,
 And rest them on Thy loving breast
 O Thou on Whom the Cross was pressed:
 And in the hour of danger shed

69. Heath, "Passion for Empire," 133–41.

Thy glorious radiance on each head.

O Friend and Comforter divine,
 Who makest light at midnight shine,
 Give consolation to the sad
 Who in the days of peace were glad:
 And in the hour of sorrow spread
 Thy sheltering wing above each head.⁷⁰

This poem invoked the biblical imagery of God's strong right hand and appealed to the biblical theme of God's provision and protection of his people. Not only did this poem imply the religious dimensions in which the war was framed for Central Canadian Baptists but it also implied the view of the British Empire as being appointed by God to shower his blessings throughout the world. Another poem, which is far too long to reproduce here in its entirety, was entitled "To England," and it further exemplified this view. One stanza described Britain:

Oh, age-long leader of men
 Up Freedom's shining heights, all freemen's friend,
 And saviour of the shackled and oppressed;
 Who, taught of old the song of the free seas
 That fenced thee from the tyrant, hast achieved
 Ever some new and fairer liberty
 Wherewith to light the world; if thou hadst failed!⁷¹

The following stanza described the relationship between Canada, and other British colonies, and Britain:

Grey Mistress of the realm
 That girts the globe! Mother revered and Queen,
 By our hearts' choice, to all thy daughter states,

70. "Prayers for Our Armies at the Front," *Canadian Baptist*, 3 February 1916, 1.

71. "To England," *Canadian Baptist*, 23 March 1916, 1, second stanza. The second line of this stanza likened Britain to the source of freedom and liberty in the world, while the next line is a reference to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the British Empire. The "tyrant" mentioned is a reference to Napoleon, and the free seas were, of course, maintained by the British navy, the most powerful navy in the world during the nineteenth century.

The free young nations of the west and the south,
 Which yearn to thee across the severing seas—
 That yet to bind us to thee, Motherland,
 With loving hearts and loyal, proud to wear
 Thy name upon us!
 For a painted peace
 Hadst thou forsworn thyself, hadst made a mock
 Of truth an honor, hadst betrayed thy trust
 And them that trusted thee; hadst left thy friend
 In peril's hour unaided; hadst put shame
 On all whom thy once proud name was called;
 Hadst to all earth been false, and hadst denied
 That Heaven which for this time had strengthened thee
 To smite or succor!⁷²

The poem went on to suggest that Christian Britain was the source of truth and freedom in the world and emphasized “the crown which God had set upon thy [Britain’s] brow.” The poem concluded, at length, expressing notions of British loyalty, divine appointment and mission, in a way that no prose could accomplish:

By thy happy choice,
 Brave, righteous, noble, hast thou made us thine
 In new, glad fealty. Henceforth do we love
 And honor thee beyond the scope of words.
 In passion of joy and pride our souls leap forth
 To follow thee upon the Dolorous Way
 Which duty set thee, way of tears and blood,
 To whatsoever goal God wills for thee.
 Our tears with thine, with thine our blood commit,
 Shall be God's chrism on awful fields of fight
 To blossom to strange splendors by and by.
 See! All our eager coasts lean forth to thee.
 The seas are foam beneath a thousand keels
 Of far-sailed fleets that bring our sons to share
 Thy grief and glory. From the Anstral lands,
 The veld of Afric, India's ancient shores,
 Canadian prairies, the uncounted isles

72. “To England,” *Canadian Baptist*, 23 March 1916, 1, third stanza.

And coasts remote which the great name defends,
 Our flags stream forth to battle.
 We had loved
 White, smiling beautiful Peace. With the lover's gaze
 We watched while thou adventuredst thy soul
 Unto the utmost verge of what man may
 To follow her fair feet. Now God for Peace
 'Gainst them that would her, sends us forth to
 war,
 To suffer on a thousand gory fields,
 For thy name sake, and the world's, and His High
 Name;
 That war through war may perish, nay, through Love,
 The love that leads us up this Golgotha;
 That war may cease from out the heart of man,
 The old bad order pass, a new world shine,
 The age of earth wide brotherhood, which seers
 Hailed from the dawn of time, and poets sang
 Leaning across the future. Such our faith!
 The morning breaks!
 Thank God, thou didst not fail!⁷³

Other poems, such as one entitled "The Call" printed in the *McMaster Monthly*, emphasized the British framework from which Central Baptists understood the war. One stanza read "For England asks for the sons she lent, to the East, West, South, and North, And who stands by when a mother's cry, Is bidding her sons, 'Stand Forth.'" ⁷⁴ Another stanza directed the reader to think of their patriotic duty as being in a long line of British loyalty: "the shades of the past stand clear at last, For the flag by land and sea; What was the duty for Wellington, Nelson and Moore, Is doubly duty for me." ⁷⁵ The final stanza of the poem invoked biblical imagery of God's protective arm, implying the notion that Britain was a divinely chosen nation: "Then God send England the strong right arm, To prosper well in the

73. "To England," *Canadian Baptist*, 23 March 1916, 1, stanzas eleven and twelve.

74. "The Call," *McMaster Monthly*, February 1915, 187-88.

75. "The Call," *McMaster Monthly*, February 1915, 187-88.

fight.”⁷⁶ War poems such as these provide for the historians an invaluable window into the outlook of Central Baptists, for whom these poems expressed the principles upon which their very worldview was founded. While these poems merit a far more detailed study, this paper cannot but only mention them as examples of the assumptions of empire that guided Central Baptist responses to the First World War.

A corollary to the assumption of empire, especially because of how it cast the war in religious terms, was the demonization of the enemy. This was also a precedent set in the South African War, though it was intensified in the two world wars. One of the poems mentioned above characterized Germany as “thy very enemy that seeks thy life, chanting her fierce unholy hymn of hate.”⁷⁷ Central Baptist rhetoric, regarding the enemy, ranged from “German militarism,”⁷⁸ to “degenerate servants [of the Kaiser],”⁷⁹ and “the hordes of hell.”⁸⁰ Certain acts by the Germany military, such as the sinking of the American ship, *Lusitania*, were called “the Germany atrocity,”⁸¹ while other acts of an equally reprehensible nature, such as massacring non-combatants in Belgium were called “outrages.”⁸² Germany’s leader, Kaiser Wilhelm, was also demonized as “the Hun,”⁸³ a term suggesting he was barbaric, and “the Prussian despot.”⁸⁴

This discussion demonstrates that the response of Central Baptists to the First World War was set by precedents established in the South African War. The foundational assumptions underlying their response were the assumptions of the war as a

76. “The Call,” *McMaster Monthly*, February 1915, 187–88.

77. “To England,” *Canadian Baptist*, 23 March 1916, 1, tenth stanza.

78. For example, see “Your Country Needs You,” *Canadian Baptist*, 25 March 1915, 5 (“shedding their blood to save their . . . countries from German militarism which threatens their very existence”); “All for a Scrap of Paper,” *Canadian Baptist*, 21 January 1915, 3, (“we shall forever cut out this cancer of German militarism”).

79. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 20 May 1915.

80. See “All’s Well,” *Canadian Baptist*, 10 February 1916, 1.

81. “The Germany Atrocity,” *Canadian Baptist*, 13 May 1915, 8.

82. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 20 May 1915.

83. “Editorial,” *Canadian Baptist*, 17 February 1916, 1.

84. “Five Souls,” *Canadian Baptist*, 22 April 1915, 2.

just cause, the war and Canada's national identity, and the war as the Empire's cause. Now, turning to the Second World War, I will further show the continuities in these assumptions between the wars.

The Second World War

The years following the First World War were marked by a degree of upheaval as the citizens of the British Empire, and the other nations involved in the war, realized that "the war to end all wars" had come at a terrible price. Robert Wright has noted that disillusionment followed the war and it undermined the confident optimism that had characterized the Canadian and British outlook leading up to the war.⁸⁵ Gordon L. Heath has argued that, like many other Protestants, Canadian Baptists embraced pacifism in the inter-war period. He contends, however, that this was rooted in three factors: their experience of the horrors of the war, post-war optimism that war would be outlawed, and the influence of the social gospel.⁸⁶ Their pacifist convictions were clearly not deeply rooted, which their sudden abandonment of this position immediately after the Second World War began would seem to suggest.⁸⁷ The student newspaper at McMaster University, *The Silhouette*, advocated, in early 1939, Canadian isolation from any European war.⁸⁸ The writer, after noting that

85. Wright, "Canadian Protestant Tradition," 139.

86. Heath, "Rise and Fall of Pacifism," 37–53. The place of the social gospel in their pacifism is especially interesting considering that the social gospel was a significant component of pro-war and imperial sentiment in both World Wars.

87. For examples to see how quickly and passionately Central Baptists abandoned pacifism, see "I Am at War," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 February 1940, 5; "The Militant Christian," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 August 1940, 3; "Pacifism is Crumbling," *Canadian Baptist*, 14 September 1940, 7; "Pacifism is Over," *Canadian Baptist*, 15 February 1942, 3; "Life By Battle or Death By Hun—Pacifist Choice," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 March 1941, 3; "The Christian and War," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 April 1941, 2.

88. This is likely evidence of a growing American cultural influence over Canadians, especially through media and popular culture, though Americanization is beyond the scope of this paper.

“the church would probably not oppose any intervention in an imperialistic war, and would more likely support it, linking Democracy with Christianity,”⁸⁹ emphasized that this was not representative of the youth of that age. He declared that “we ourselves are not in sympathy with the imperialistic attitude that Canada’s frontier is found wherever the Union Jack flies,” suggesting instead that Canada strengthen its ties with the United States.⁹⁰ Once war had begun, however, Central Baptists, including even students at McMaster, demonstrated their loyalty.

Just as with the South African War and the First World War, the Second World War was declared to be a just cause by Central Baptists.⁹¹ It was just because, as one article in the *Canadian Baptist* noted, “for the second time in the space of a generation the leaders of Germany have hurled Europe into the abyss of misery and bloody strife.”⁹² The article, written by J. A. Johnston, president of the Convention, went on to affirm Central Baptists’ loyalty to Christ and the Empire, “we must give our first loyalty to Christ and then, as conscience shall direct, to the Dominion and to the Empire of which we are citizens.”⁹³ An editorial, from the same edition of the *Canadian Baptist*, saw the war as just because of the evils of dictatorial government and the insanity of dictators such as Hitler: “Britain and France by their united action at this time are declaring that dictator rule with its associated evils must cease . . . Gangsters cannot be reasoned out of their insanities.”⁹⁴

89. “Is Neutrality Possible?” *The Silhouette*, 24 February 1939, 2.

90. “Is Neutrality Possible?” *The Silhouette*, 24 February 1939, 2.

91. For the views of other Canadian Protestants regarding the Second World War, see Faulkner, “Christian Civilization”; Grant, *Canadian Era*, 149–55; For the United Church of Canada, see Airhart, *Soul of a Nation*, 126–53; for an extensive annotated bibliography of Canadian churches in the Second World War, including important topics such as chaplaincy and the experience of Canadian Mennonites, see Heath, “Canadian Churches and War,” 63–124.

92. “War!” *Canadian Baptist*, 31 August–7 September 1939, 1.

93. “War!” *Canadian Baptist*, 31 August–7 September 1939, 1.

94. “War Again!” *Canadian Baptist*, 31 August–7 September 1939, 1.

The next week an official statement from the President of the Convention was printed on the front page of the *Canadian Baptist*. It emphasized loyalty and the justice of the cause:

We appreciate profoundly and support whole-heartedly your own action and that of your Government in placing the resources of Canada alongside those of the mother country and of our sister Dominions in the preservation of liberty and in resistance to ruthless oppression. Believing in the justice of our cause we can assure you and your Government of the most prayerful and practical support consistent with our Christian faith and our love of liberty and democracy, these always having been basic principles of our Baptist position. With assurance of our unswerving loyalty to His Majesty the King . . .⁹⁵

This statement from the president of the Convention is important for at least two reasons. First, it connected the war with Baptist identity. The war was characterized as an effort to protect liberty and democracy, which were basic Baptist principles.⁹⁶ Second, the allusion to liberty and democracy point to a phenomenon of the Second World War, not as apparent in the South African or First World War, in which democracy and Christianity were conflated. The religious dimensions of the First World War were seen in the declaration that it was a Holy War. While the Second World War did not see the zealous imperialistic and jingoistic outbursts that accompanied the First War, in the view of Central Baptists, the Second War had an underlying religious dimension that informed their view of the whole conflict.

The conflation of democracy and Christianity is evidence of the assumption of nation-building, because according to Central Baptists Canada was an important Christian and British democracy, as well as the assumption of empire, because Christian Britain was the source of democracy. In this way, the assumption of nation-building was nuanced by the notion of preservation; the war was being fought to preserve Canada as a British

95. "The War and the Baptists," *Canadian Baptist*, 14–21 September 1939, 1.

96. See Rudy, "Baptist Identity and Ecumenism," 11–15; 64–80; 98–121, for discussion and examples of these two Baptist principles as well as a detailed analysis of Baptist identity in the twentieth century.

Christian democracy. Furthermore, the categories of political and religion were blurred as Christianity and democracy were conflated.

In 1940, an article in the *Canadian Baptist* expressed this blurring of the religious and political dimensions of the war, stating “the Christian faith is the direct antithesis of this [communism and fascism] . . . So the war, dreadful though it is, becomes a holy crusade.”⁹⁷ A Baptist pastor from Calgary, who had an article published in the *Canadian Baptist*, produced a statement that exemplified the notion that the British Empire was not only a Christian empire, but the source of much that is good and worthy in the world:

The best things in our British tradition and our Empire’s life are the things that grow out of Christian elements in our past and present. British law and justice, British love of fair-play, British tolerance and liberty, and the strong humanitarian and philanthropic strains in our national life—these are all the products of the Christian faith of Christian Britishers . . . it is the bounden duty of every Christian citizen to do all in his power to strengthen and deepen such Christian elements in the nation’s life . . . The nation and the Empire need YOUR contribution to its highest life.⁹⁸

Other articles printed in the Central Baptist newspaper were more explicit in their linkage of Christianity and democracy, though in these instances, their Britishness was not emphasized, but would have been assumed by their readers. One article, entitled, “The Spiritual Foundations of Democracy,” argued that democracy has “two main principles; the principle of freedom and the duty of considering others. The privilege we are all willing to accept but are we so ready to carry out the duty? Can we come to see this duty not as something burdensome, but as a joyous privilege? The privilege of loving our neighbour as much, that we want to help him in every way possible.”⁹⁹ The author made it

97. “Christianity on the Fatal Spot,” *Canadian Baptist*, 1 January 1940, 3.

98. “My Duty to My Church,” *Canadian Baptist*, 15 January 1941, 7.

99. “The Spiritual Foundations of Democracy,” *Canadian Baptist*, 2 February 1939, 7.

clear that the privilege of freedom inherent in democracy was the privilege of loving one's neighbor. In another article, one writer declared that "Democracy then is a form of government which can be established and maintained only by those who have learned to govern themselves on a moral and spiritual basis, who have learned to think in terms of the greatest good for the greatest number."¹⁰⁰ This notion of the common good, was then connected to the Christian theme of sacrifice when the author wrote, "I like to think that democracy was born in the Garden of Gethsemane in that hour when the Master cried, 'Father' In that hour the complete surrender of self-will and self-interest for the good of humanity was achieved."¹⁰¹ Yet another article, this one written by the President of the Baptist World Alliance, John Rushbrooke, proclaimed that "the perfect democracy demands a fully Christianized society . . . it is a Christian concern to stand for democracy . . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."¹⁰² Another article stated the foundational belief that "a vital Christianity and a genuine Democracy are inseparable. The native air of Christianity is liberty . . . Liberty and the spirit of Jesus are one in the same."¹⁰³ As far as these statements are concerned, the war was being fought to preserve the glorious ideals of British democracy, of which Canada was a key example.

As these statements indicate, the assumptions of nation-building and empire were enmeshed by the religious dimensions of both. Another element of this viewpoint was the demonization of the enemy. In the *Canadian Baptist*, the Germans were referred to as bandits, gangsters, gangster race, godless, heretics, and pagans.¹⁰⁴ One writer saw the Allies as "being soldiers of the cross

100. "Where Democracy was Born," *Canadian Baptist*, 2 February 1939, 11.

101. "Where Democracy was Born," *Canadian Baptist*, 2 February 1939, 11.

102. "Spiritual Freedom from Constraints of Earthly Authority," *Canadian Baptist*, 30 March 1939, 8.

103. "Baptist Democracy in a World of Dictators," *Canadian Baptist*, 13 April 1939, 5.

104. For example, see "War Again!" *Canadian Baptist*, 31 August–7 September 1939, 1.

which unites us with our fellow believers in the great fight under Christ's banner against all forces of paganism and irreligion in the life around us."¹⁰⁵ Conceptions of Canadian and British soldiers being the "good soldiers," or "Christ's soldiers," Heath has noted, dated back to the Crimean War.¹⁰⁶ Caricatures of Hitler took a similar path. For example, one article argued that "the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche has seeped down into the heart and mind of the German people, and it has become incarnate in Adolf Hitler . . . The power behind Hitler is the power of the Devil's revolt against God."¹⁰⁷ Hitler was also labelled as the Anti-Christ. One article reassured readers that "to defeat this Anti-Christ we have the unfailing promises of God . . . we will, as Christ's Crusaders, meet the challenge."¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that major continuities exist between the Central Baptist responses to the South African War, the First World War, and the Second World War. The assumptions of justice, nation-building, and empire were continuous, though not necessarily identical in expression, in these three conflicts. This analysis indicates that these assumptions were imbued with religious meaning. The foundational assumption of empire entailed a view of the British Empire as providential and civilizing. This meant that a war could be easily justified. Any apparent threat to this God-appointed empire became a cause for war. In the cases of the World Wars, it was "Holy War." Similarly, the assumption of nation-building was informed by the framework of empire. Thus, the wars were opportunities for Canada to distinguish itself and improve itself in the context of the British empire. In the First World War, this was primarily and explicitly related to

105. "The Church—Its Nature and Function," *Canadian Baptist*, 9 March 1939, 4.

106. Heath, "South African War," 27.

107. "The Powers Behind Hitler," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 October 1940, 3.

108. "War's Miracles of Past Assure of Divine Help Against New Anti-Christ," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 June 1940, 5.

industrialization, national unity, and social reforms. In the Second World War, it was primarily seen as the preservation of democracy.

The analysis of the continuities in imperial sentiment among Central Baptists between 1899–1945 suggests not only that imperialism shaped their outlook on war, but played a profound role in shaping their articulation of Canadian identity. Furthermore, the “death of imperialism”¹⁰⁹ interpretation, which argues that Canadian imperialism died in the years following the First World War, either did not account for Central Baptists, or ignored the religious dimension entirely, a practice that has, unfortunately, become pervasive among Canadian historians. Central Baptists were treated here as a case study, but nearly every secondary source encountered in this study appeals to research that indicates that the Central Baptist experience was representative of the broader Canadian Protestant experience, with some inevitable exceptions, of course. It seems that the strength of the Protestant press in shaping public opinion is also ignored by many historians.¹¹⁰ The imperial sentiment articulated in the *Canadian Baptist* is only one example of the Protestant responses to these imperial wars, and, it should be remembered, is an example from the smallest mainline denomination.

One of the inherent risks of the approach taken in this paper is a “flattening” of history, in which differences in context for each war are discounted. I have tried to avoid this by pointing to some contextual differences between the two World Wars. The contexts of the South African War and the First World War had far more in common than that of the two World Wars. That is to say, the Canada of the South African War was rather different than the Canada that entered the Second World War. And yet, as this paper shows, there were significant similarities. Indeed, the fact that the imperial sentiments examined herein persisted during the Second World War reveals how deeply rooted were the assumptions of justice, nation-building, and empire in the Central Canadian Baptist outlook. It is surely difficult for a person in the

109. See Thompson, “Third British Empire,” 88.

110. See Heath, “Forming Sound Public Opinion,” 109–59.

twenty-first century, who witnesses frequent and rapid changes in culture and technology, to understand that Canadian cultural identity, as far as Central Baptists and other Protestants were concerned, did not change drastically or rapidly over the course of these forty-six years.

Finally, this paper suggests that through the influence of the denominational press over public opinion, British imperial sentiment was alive and well from 1899–1945, and by this sentiment each of these wars was a just war. Furthermore, one is confronted with the reality that the Protestant churches, in this case Central Baptists, were major promoters and articulators of these ideas. While on the one hand this was no doubt motivated by an appropriate understanding of the separation of church and state, on the other hand, it seems to have been shaped by the convergence of notions of Christian civilization, human progress, divine providence and appointment, postmillennialism, and Anglo-Saxon superiority, which, when imbibed by a young nation still preoccupied with its frontiers, was a heady concoction. While these ideas may seem hopelessly backward, disturbing, or misguided to contemporary readers, it should be remembered that no person, Christian or otherwise, is impervious to the cultural atmosphere in which they live.

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