

## **Irreconcilable Differences: Wartime Attitudes of George C. Pidgeon and R. Edis Fairbairn, 1939-1945**

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The German invasion of Poland on 01 September 1939, and the subsequent declarations of war on Germany by Great Britain and France on 03 September, put the Canadian government in the new position of having to decide whether or not to declare war on another nation. On 10 September, after parliamentary approval, the Canadian government pronounced its declaration of war on Germany.

The Canadian “national”<sup>1</sup> churches responded almost unanimously<sup>2</sup> with their support for the war effort; in fact, many of Canada’s leading Protestant leaders had publicly supported the war effort even before Parliament officially declared war. While the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches were all publicly united in their endorsement of the decision to go to war, the United Church of Canada (hereafter UCC) was a significant exception to this trend.

While the majority of UCC leaders supported the war effort there was a small, but active, group that urged the church to be pacifists throughout the conflict.<sup>3</sup> What is of interest in this paper is this polarization in a church united around the issue of social concerns. Like many of the American liberal socially conscious churches during World War Two,<sup>4</sup> the UCC was divided over the question of pacifism. Yet how could a church so concerned with national and international social welfare be so divided in its attitude to war? I will argue that the differences in the UCC towards the war effort were mainly the result of two radically opposing interpretations of history, scripture and church policy. More specifically, it will be

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shown that both sides of the division had fundamentally different conclusions in their interpretation of: (1) the pre-war UCC statements on war and peace; (2) war guilt; (3) justice and the example of Jesus; (4) Canada's identity as a Christian nation; and (5) the effects of war. The way in which these differences will be identified is primarily by examining the wartime attitudes of two prominent leaders in the UCC, George Campbell Pidgeon<sup>5</sup> and Robert Edis Fairbairn,<sup>6</sup> leaders who were both recognized as having a strong social concern, but who were also on the opposite ends of the spectrum when it came to supporting the war effort.

### ***Pre-War UCC Statements on War and Peace***

After Canada declared war on 10 September the UCC's Presbyteries met and approved the position taken by the Executive of General Council in its expression of loyalty to the Canadian government. All Presbyteries did so, and "at their meetings the pacifists were made quite aware of their minority status as they remained defiantly seated while those around them rose in favor of endorsing the Church's policy."<sup>7</sup> Faced with such opposition, 68 pacifist ministers issued a "manifesto" entitled "Witness Against War" in the 15 October 1939 issue of the *United Church Observer*. A month later the *Observer* published an additional 64 names of both clergy and laypersons. It would seem that Fairbairn was responsible for most (if not all) of the text of the manifesto.<sup>8</sup> The manifesto was a public "statement of faith and commitment" of the pacifist minister's opposition to directly "contributing to the war effort."<sup>9</sup> It was also a rebuke to a church that the ministers thought had abandoned its pre-war pacifist statements. Those who agreed with the manifesto were to communicate with Fairbairn.

The manifesto created a considerable stir in and out of the church. *The Star*, *The Globe and Mail* and *The Telegram* all had editorials that condemned the manifesto; many people considered it "disloyal," and others called for "strong action by the church and other authorities to condemn those who had signed it."<sup>10</sup> Even the Attorney-General Gordon Conant began an investigation into whether or not it violated Regulations 39 or 39A of the War Measures Act.

Central to the argument of the manifesto was the belief that the UCC had renounced war as a sin and would refuse to support any more wars: "We take our stand upon the declaration of our own General Council in 1938, that 'war is contrary to the mind of Christ,' and 'we positively reject

war, because war rejects love, defies the will of Christ, and denies the worth of man.”<sup>11</sup> Fairbairn, along with the other ministers, was referring back to the four resolutions made by the UCC in 1932,<sup>12</sup> 1934,<sup>13</sup> 1936<sup>14</sup> and especially in 1938.<sup>15</sup> These resolutions reflected the rising tide of pacifist sentiment the English-speaking Protestant churches in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>16</sup> After having lost his pastoral charge over the publication of the “Witness Against War,” after growing increasingly frustrated over the church’s lack of clarity on the war issue,<sup>17</sup> after writing in February 1941 a damning article in the *United Church Observer* entitled “Indictment” where he stated that the church was “incompetent and unworthy to serve the cause of God,”<sup>18</sup> after becoming increasingly isolated in the church, and after receiving a “tart” reply from the editor of the *United Church Observer* that closed his “relations with the Church paper,”<sup>19</sup> Fairbairn began his own newsletter in January 1943. It is in this newsletter that one can clearly see the importance which Fairbairn placed on the General Council’s pre-war statements on war, and also how he interpreted them to mean that the church was to be opposed to war.

Fairbairn claimed that by abandoning its pre-war pacifist statements the UCC was in a position of apostasy. The church believed it was fighting a “just cause,” yet it also had declared “war . . . contrary to the mind and spirit of Christ, therefore war is a sin and war-time is the occasion for every form of evil to increase and abound.”<sup>20</sup> As a result of these two mutually contradictory statements by the church, Fairbairn saw taking part in the war as “setting aside the mind and spirit of Christ for the duration.”<sup>21</sup> How else, he argued, could this be seen but a “deliberate profession of apostasy” by the church?<sup>22</sup> Throughout the next two and a half years Fairbairn continually used the church’s pre-war statements against itself. He wrote that Jesus was repudiated when men said “Of course war is contrary to Christ, nevertheless we are obliged to wage war.”<sup>23</sup> He criticised the church’s playing it safe by “refusing to make any official statement . . . while it has ignored its own past declarations in four General Councils condemning war.”<sup>24</sup> He considered the church to be a “weather-cock,” switching its beliefs as the winds of trends changed,<sup>25</sup> and as a result, the UCC was a church that had lost his confidence and support due to its lack of integrity on the issue.<sup>26</sup>

Pidgeon, however, was one of those leaders in the UCC who took the opposite view of Fairbairn. He was well aware of the pre-war statements, but, for him, there were other considerations that had greater moral weight

than the statements formulated in the pre-war days of the 1930s.<sup>27</sup>

### ***War Guilt***

While Pidgeon was cautiously supportive of the war effort, he was also open about the contribution of the western nations to the tensions in Europe. As early as January 1939, at a time of increased tensions in Europe, he asked somewhat prophetically “are we sure we are right ourselves?” for did not the west’s treatment of Hitler make war “inevitable?”<sup>28</sup> He went on to claim that “[we have] brought this on ourselves . . . [we are] reaping what [we have] sowed.”<sup>29</sup> Immediately following the German invasion of Poland, while supporting the Allied side, he proclaimed:

The statesmen of the world are claiming the right to command our lives and direct our doings. We consent there is nothing else to do. Yes, but those very statesmen have made, in their treatment of one another, this appalling mess of things, and have brought about the chaos which our boys are called to the colors to bring back to order. Hitler – the criminal of criminals? Granted, but Hitler was made possible by the victor nation’s treatment of a fallen foe.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that “mistakes had been made in the past,”<sup>31</sup> that the western democracies failed miserably in their response to the crisis in Europe and Asia,<sup>32</sup> and that “the free nations of modern time have too often forgotten the high ideals and aims which alone can justify a nation’s existence, and have concentrated their energies on profits”<sup>33</sup> did not deter Pidgeon from still endorsing the war effort in the first critical year of the war. His continued criticism of the west’s complicity in the war, after tapering off in 1941 and 1942, actually increased as the war appeared to be won.<sup>34</sup> No doubt, as his sermon of 20 May 1945 indicates, this renewed emphasis on the guilt of the West was in part his effort to ensure that the same mistakes were not made again.

The question for us to now answer is: Are we able to hold fast the ground gained in the eventful years just behind us? . . . The moment the enemy was downed [Germany in World War One] our old self-interest and self-indulgence reasserted themselves and brought on the world the dire curse from which we have just been set free . . . What

are we going to do with our religious freedom?<sup>35</sup>

Hopefully, and by Thanksgiving 1945 it seemed to Pidgeon that his hopes were being realized, the Allies would have learned from the past and do their “utmost with their unity sealed with the blood of their best” to stand for “the rights of the individual, for freedom of conscience, of worship and of speech, for government of the people, by the people and for the people, and for justice both in dealing with the criminals of the past and in planning for the social systems of the future.”<sup>36</sup>

Fairbairn was also convinced of the war guilt of the west. He argued that the war was due to greed and economic exploitation<sup>37</sup> and the tensions that arose were due to the western nations’ lust for empire.<sup>38</sup> Yet Fairbairn went beyond placing pre-war guilt on the west to claim that the Allied side was guilty of great hypocrisy and injustices during the war. He criticised Britain’s fighting for freedom yet at the same time repressing India.<sup>39</sup> He asked “What is the worst you see?” and after citing the evils in the world due to Nazism and totalitarianism, he said “Look again. The worst of all is what the practice of successful war is doing to ourselves, in the steady descent into the moral hell of callousness.”<sup>40</sup> The evils of Nazi Germany were great, but the callousness of their hearts had made the Allies do terrible things, so much so he was convinced that “the price of vistory [sic] is that we have become what we went to war to eliminate.”<sup>41</sup> Echoing the concern expressed by other pacifists in the war, the bombing of German cities was foremost in Fairbairn’s mind in this regard : “. . . that by embarking upon this campaign of ruthless destruction of life, civilian and military, we have reduced ourselves to the moral level of German and Japanese militarists.”<sup>42</sup> Even if the reported executions and cremations that were beginning to trickle out of Germany near the end of the war were correct, Fairbairn asked “are they any more diabolical thsn [sic] our cremation alive with phosphorus bombs of the civilians of Hamburg?”<sup>43</sup> He went on to argue that the difference between German atrocities and the Allied atrocities (bombing) was a “matter of temperament and training. Our way seems more refined. Does it make the atrocity any less atrocious?”<sup>44</sup> Fairbairn placed the blame for this “degradation of civilization below the level of beasts” at the foot of the church, for the church “did have insight once into the nature of war, but forsook it quickly when called to heel by the State.”<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, while Fairbairn’s understanding of war guilt led him to

conclude that no side in the war could claim the side of righteousness, Pidgeon did not see it that way. In fact, Pidgeon was very much convinced that the Allied side was still on the side of justice.

### ***Justice and the Example of Jesus***

Although a pragmatic element to Pidgeon's resigned support for the war can be identified,<sup>46</sup> such pragmatism was rooted in his interpretation of God's justice. For Pidgeon, justice was the main rationale for supporting the war effort. While it was a theme that ran throughout his wartime sermons, it was one that he emphasized more in the dark days of 1940 and 1941 as a way of keeping spirits high and ensuring Canadians and UCC members of the rightness of their cause.

Pidgeon was convinced that the "free nations have the clear conscience that they are on the Lord's side . . . God is with them in their struggle"<sup>47</sup> and that "God is the author of the justice for which we fight today. He is pledged to its maintenance and vindication; we are on His side."<sup>48</sup> Even though he recognized the sins of the Allied nations, the degree of the evil of the totalitarian powers made the Allied cause righteous. For, as Pidgeon proclaimed, "We are righting a system which for barbarity, injustice, systematized plunder and destruction is beyond anything imagined by men in our time."<sup>49</sup> Using 2 Samuel 5:22-25 in a sermon entitled "The Battle is the Lord's," after thanking God for Winston Churchill's leadership and expressing the desire for a new world, Pidgeon stated that the task of the Allied side was clear: "the first necessity now as in David's day is the defeat of barbarism and the re-enthronement of justice among the nations."<sup>50</sup>

Preaching a sermon entitled "The Story of Rizpah" from 2 Samuel 21:1-14, a sermon that he had also preached in May 1917,<sup>51</sup> Pidgeon argued that the state had responsibility for ensuring that justice was done.

According to this story and many others like it God clothes the ruler with authority to establish justice in the land. He holds the state responsible not only for doing right but for having the right done. If it fails and a crime is committed, the state is responsible for vindicating justice by bringing the criminal to account . . . If the state fails to do this, the people as a whole must bear the guilt and the consequences of the evil done by its individual members . . . Here you have

the Old Testament idea of pure justice . . .<sup>52</sup>

After listing atrocities around the world in war-torn countries, he went on in the same sermon to say:

Justice will not be mocked . . . Believing this as I do, I cannot think our country and Empire wrong in calling a halt to that sort of thing in Europe. There are many arrows in God's quiver which he waits to use, and one of them is the conscience of His people which drives them to avenge a wrong.<sup>53</sup>

Through nations, therefore, God was to accomplish "His purposes."<sup>54</sup> And his purposes were to oppose any actions which were contrary to the character of God, for "God is behind His attributes and everyone who attacks them challenges Him. He accepts the challenge."<sup>55</sup>

One of his main concerns of justice for the Allied nations was the just treatment of peoples. As the Allied defences were crumbling in France before the onslaught of the German *Blitzkrieg* in May 1940, Pidgeon proclaimed that all people were interdependent: ". . . according to the teaching of our text does not this make all men my brothers, and do not the responsibilities of brotherhood extend to all mankind? Never was the realization of this truth as necessary as now."<sup>56</sup>

Condemning the West's failure to act in the pre-war years, Pidgeon went on in the same sermon to attempt to inspire in what he considered an apathetic people a sense of their responsibility for those in countries where great injustices were occurring.<sup>57</sup> In his mind "children of the one Father are brothers and cannot escape the obligations of brotherhood."<sup>58</sup>

But what about the pacifist's emphasis on love? Pidgeon did emphasize the need for love and reconciliation, for when war broke out (and passions were not yet too high) he stated that "we cannot be Jesus's bond servants and disobey His central command – love your enemies."<sup>59</sup> He went on to say that "the most pitiable figure in human society is the man possessed of hate. He is the opposite of God; God creates while he lives to destroy."<sup>60</sup> Yet, throughout the war the few times that he seemed to be addressing the view of pacifists he was quite derogatory in his remarks. He referred to pacifism as a "fantasy of our own time,"<sup>61</sup> or "dreams and fancies impossible" which "gave the dictators their chance."<sup>62</sup> The New Testament did speak of love, but for Pidgeon "the New Testament does not

change the Old Testament doctrine of justice.”<sup>63</sup> While Pidgeon may have appreciated the sentiments behind pacifism, he did not seem to consider it a realistic alternative in a world of totalitarian states.<sup>64</sup>

Fairbairn, however, could not have disagreed more. The critical concern for Fairbairn was not justice per se, but rather, it was Jesus. Throughout his *Bulletin* the example of Jesus was held up as the example and role model for all Christians. Any alliance of church and state was considered a compromise of the church’s “supreme loyalty to Christ,”<sup>65</sup> and the UCC, according to Fairbairn, had committed such a grievous sin.<sup>66</sup>

Loyalty to Jesus, as Fairbairn interpreted it, was to chose Jesus’ way; the way of non-violence. “Reconciling Jesus Christ and war” was considered an “impossibility,” for Jesus Christ died “because he was a deeply convinced pacifist.”<sup>67</sup> Jesus’ repudiation of messianic expectations was understood by Fairbairn as the same as renouncing war.<sup>68</sup> The example of Jesus and the cross, however, was the ultimate example of Jesus’s way of non-violence.

Here [crucifixion] was indeed a form of warfare, the campaign of the spirit. Jesus was not merely resisting, he was attacking. There was no pacifism in his pacifism. He chose this way because he believed that even his own death would defeat evil and advance the kingdom . . . Jesus died because he was a deeply convinced pacifist . . . Omit this principle and insight, and you leave out the essential reality of the cross.<sup>69</sup>

It was Fairbairn’s hope that a nation (“perhaps the non-Christian Hindus!”<sup>70</sup>) would go the way of peace even to death, and then people would see that “yes, even though our western civilization perish and go the way of Egypt, Babylon, Rome, and the other empires and civilizations that have put their trust in the sword, God’s truth will arise from every Golgotha.”<sup>71</sup>

On a more pragmatic note, after four and a half years of war, Fairbairn argued that “modern war “must in the nature of things be total war,” and that meant that “if we must accept war we must accept the reality of war, and that means equipping ourselves for modern war in a modern way.”<sup>72</sup> He went on to say that

religious people who feel it necessary to accept war must stop fooling

themselves with the vain imagination that war can be waged in a nice, refined, and Christian way. Not modern war! Its scale of destruction is too vast, too brutally impersonal, and, in addition, it calls for all those skills of personal attack by terror and savagery which in Red Indians we branded as treachery.<sup>73</sup>

As a result, Fairbairn concluded, it was the pacifist who was a realist over against the “unrealism of men who think they can equate Jesus Christ and war.”<sup>74</sup>

### ***Canada’s Identity as a Christian Nation***

Another of the reasons for the divergent views between Pidgeon and Fairbairn was their different understandings of a Christian nation. Fairbairn’s attitude was summed up in his *Apostate Christendom*: “There has never been a Christian nation, ours are not Christian nations, there is no sign of a Christian nation.”<sup>75</sup> With the war in Europe finished and the war in Asia almost over, reflecting on how Canadians considered their country (and the Empire in which it was located) to be “special in God’s eyes,” Fairbairn wrote:

As I remember the common people of England, and as I know representative English-Canadians, they were, and are, obsessed by what they like to call “the Glory of the British Empire”. [sic] Of course they had been propagandized into this religio-patriotism through generations; that is why they hold to, or it holds them, so tenaciously. That explains the strange phenomena of British Israelism and the celebration of Empire Day. There is sufficient truth in the suggestion that flag-waving patriotism is the Britishers [sic] other religion, if not indeed his working religion. All they ever get out of it is the privilege of having their sons die periodically in war. But the profiteers of Empire could not possibly get solid gain from imperialism, if the common people were not so solidly held in the delusion that it is the Will of Almighty God that Britain should dominate the earth.<sup>76</sup>

In condemning the notion that Canada (or Britain) was a “Christian” nation (or part of a Christian empire), Fairbairn was well aware that there existed “a wide-spread sentimental mass of belief which accounts for our recent

habit of calling our respective countries ‘Christian nations.’”<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, he rejected such a notion.

Pidgeon, like most Canadians was firmly convinced that they lived in a “Christian civilization,” or in a Christian nation.<sup>78</sup> Making parallels with the Old Testament nation of Israel and Canada, Pidgeon concluded that Canada (and the other Western Allied nations) was special in God’s eyes and had a unique role to play in His plan.<sup>79</sup>

Now Israel was the elect nation chosen of God to prepare for the coming of His Son; none can take this honor from her nor share it with her. But there have been other races selected for other purposes. What about Greece? What about little Scotland and the place of her people in the modern world? And what about England’s stand in the breach when the bulwarks of freedom went down before the foe? Do you not think that Canada has a similar purpose to fulfil?<sup>80</sup>

Pidgeon was so convinced of the fact that God was on the side of “Christian civilization” that he periodically referred to the war as a “crusade.”<sup>81</sup> Because of Canada’s special place in God’s plan, victory was considered a result of God’s assistance. Prayer was considered to have “hurled back the best equipped army the world had ever seen” in World War One,<sup>82</sup> and during the present war Pidgeon considered prayer and consecration to be essential to victory.<sup>83</sup> After the war certain “miracles” in battle were attributed to God’s intervention.<sup>84</sup> God was considered to be “in the field”<sup>85</sup> responding to prayer and working out His plans and justice, and as a result, the Allies had God to thank for their victory.<sup>86</sup>

### *The Effects of War*

It would be unfair to conclude, however, that Pidgeon was merely a puppet for the state. While supportive of the war which defended “Christian” Canada, Pidgeon did pronounce his judgement on the present and future effects of war. Here both Pidgeon and Fairbairn could agree. War was a terrible thing. Yet, the similarities ended there.

Pidgeon did not see the war ushering in a new world order. On the contrary, one was supposed to reject the idea that “the power which could crush and destroy could build up an enduring empire.”<sup>87</sup> Pidgeon pointed out from the lessons of history that no such “new world order,” established

by force survived.<sup>88</sup> War was good only for the purpose of stopping aggression. Even then, war only destroyed.<sup>89</sup> The real work of building was after the war. Consequently, he continually urged a spiritual renewal and deeper commitment to Christ, elements considered to be critical in winning the war, but more importantly, in winning the peace.<sup>90</sup>

Pidgeon, known for having had a deep sense of social responsibility, expressed throughout the war his concern for social ills that caused the war, were a part of the war,<sup>91</sup> and especially the ones that would be faced after the war. Pidgeon's guarded optimism at the end of the war was that the spirit of self-sacrifice so evident in the war would be continued after the war. If that attitude was carried over "from war to peace," he asked, "would not many of our social problems disappear?"<sup>92</sup>

Fairbairn had no such optimism. He was convinced that a study of history showed that war never accomplished anything. World War Two was a case in point, for "the war pulled down three dictatorships and has established another in unchallengeable power."<sup>93</sup> He hoped that the church would have learned (again) about the futility of war, but he feared that "a good deal of faith will perish in the process."<sup>94</sup> Sceptical about the effectiveness of the United Nations,<sup>95</sup> upset about the lack of leadership in the UCC,<sup>96</sup> and deeply concerned over the spiritual state of a Christendom at war, Fairbairn expressed a sense of foreboding about the future.

Because of this lack of genuine faith we face with confusion of mind, foreboding, and a sense of inadequacy the problem of preparing for a more tolerable kind of post-war world. There simply *must* be a tremendous upsurge of Christian faith, understanding, conviction and devotion.<sup>97</sup>

Lamenting what might have been if the church had been "faithful to the gospel of Jesus" in the war he asked if they were not heading to a new "Dark Age?"<sup>98</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that the division in the UCC over the issue of participation in World War Two was the result of radically different, and mutually exclusive, views on war. Both sides in the argument based their views on their interpretation of history, scripture and church policy. The

problem for the “united” church was that these views were so contrary to one another. Pidgeon felt that history vindicated the use of war to stop evil, yet Fairbairn felt that history showed the futility of war. Pidgeon recognized the war guilt of the West, but considered the Axis Powers’ guilt was greater. Fairbairn, on the other hand, was convinced the both sides were equally guilty on all counts. Pidgeon equated the western Allied powers with Christian civilization, justice, and being on God’s side in the conflict. Focusing on the example of Jesus, Fairbairn felt that Jesus’ example of non-violence was the only Christian option to war. He also argued that there was no such thing as a Christian nation. Perhaps the greatest ammunition for Fairbairn in his attack on the stance of the UCC to war were the pre-war pacifist statements of the church. It could be argued that if these statements had not been made Fairbairn would not have had the case (or the expectations) that he claimed he had. As it was, the church did make such professions, and did stray from them. It also, in Fairbairn’s opinion, did not clearly and decisively state its position on the war during the war years. As a result, Fairbairn considered the church apostate.

The gulf separating Pidgeon and Fairbairn was wide and deep. Their differences of interpreting history, scripture and church policy meant that they would inevitably be on opposite sides of the conflict in the church over the war issue. Fairbairn declared that Pidgeon recognized this when he responded to one of Fairbairn’s inquiries by stating “it was impossible to discuss pacifism; our minds were too far apart.”<sup>99</sup> In a divorce court such alienation between the two sides would be called “irreconcilable differences.” The differences seemed just too immense, profound, emotional, and mutually exclusive for any dialogue and change to be possible.

### ***Endnotes***

1. Churches with “national aspirations” is the term used by Charles Thompson Sinclair Faulkner to describe the churches that had representation across the country and “aspired” to be national churches. Churches that he considers fit this description include Anglican, Presbyterian Church of Canada, United Church of Canada, and the four Baptist Conventions (see “‘For Christian Civilization:’ The Churches and Canada’s War Effort, 1939-1942,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 1975).

2. Though not with the same enthusiasm that they had entered into war in 1914. In 1939 there was a subdued sense of the war being a “messy but necessary job” (see Robert A. Wright, “The Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945,” in *The Canadian Protestant Tradition Experience: 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk [Burlington: Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1990], 188).
3. David R. Rothwell, “United Church Pacifism, October 1939,” *Bulletin XXII* (1973-1975), 36-55.
4. W. Edward Orser, “World War Two and the Pacifist Controversy in the Major Protestant Churches,” *Protestantism and Social Christianity*, ed. Martin E. Marty (New York: K.G. Saur, 1992).
5. Pidgeon (1872-1971) as a Presbyterian minister was actively involved in church union leading up to 1925 as well as serving as the first UCC moderator. He was involved in social reform, radio ministry, ecumenical movements, numerous committees, authoring *The United Church in Canada: The Story of Union*, and pastoring the prominent Bloor Street United (Presbyterian until 1925) Church in Toronto for thirty two years (1915-1947) (see John Webster Grant, *George Pidgeon* [Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962]).
6. Fairbairn (1880-1953) was active in arousing social awareness in the UCC, contributor to *Towards the Christian Revolution*, author of *Apostate Christendom* and *The Appeal to Reality*, pastor, founder and editor of a pacifist newsletter that circulated in the church, as well as one of the main leaders behind the pacifist movement in the UCC.
7. Rothwell, “United Church Pacifism,” 37.
8. Rothwell, “United Church Pacifism,” 38.
9. “Witness Against War,” *The United Church Observer* (15 October 1939), 21.
10. Rothwell, “United Church Pacifism,” 37, 47-50; Faulkner, “For Christian Civilization,” 49-58; and Thomas P. Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 200-211.
11. “A Witness Against War,” 21.
12. *The United Church of Canada Yearbook* (1932), 61, 105-106.
13. *The United Church of Canada Yearbook* (1934), 63-64.
14. *The United Church of Canada Record of Proceedings* (1936), 54, 107.

15. *The United Church of Canada Record of Proceedings* (1938), 63, 77-79, 93-98.
16. Socknat, *Witness Against War*, chapters 4-6. For an example of the rise of pacifism in another Canadian denomination in the thirties see Gordon L. Heath, "Flirting With Nirvana: The Canadian Baptist View of Warfare, 1919-1939," Paper presented at the Canadian Baptist Historical Conference, Hayward Lectures, Acadia University, 1998.
17. Socknat writes: "The United Church had offered little guidance on the proper Christian response to war because its exact teaching on the issue was unclear. For this reason both pacifists and non-pacifists urged the church to justify its action in condemning the 'Seventy-Five' and to show how its members could at the same time vow allegiance to Christ while doing the necessary deeds of warfare" (*Witness Against War*, 212).
18. Fairbairn, "Indictment," *United Church Observer* (01 February 1941), 11. In the *United Church Observer* (15 March 1941), 16-17, 26, there was a summary of the responses to Fairbairn's letter. The editor noted that it was impossible to print all the responses, and would not be printing any more. See also Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 212-213 for a summary of the varied response to Fairbairn's article.
19. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #1*, 19 January 1943. Most of these bulletins were dated and given a bulletin number. There are no page numbers because the newsletter was only one a single sheet of paper, usually on both sides. There are some gaps in the collection during the war years. Fairbairn was the sole author of the bulletin, but he did solicit comments and often responded to them. The bulletin can be found at the UCC Archives in Toronto.
20. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #1*, 01 January 1943.
21. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #1*, 01 January 1943.
22. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #1*, 01 January 1943.
23. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #3*, 02 April 1943.
24. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #3*, 02 April 1943; *Bulletin #26*, 20 March 1945; *Bulletin #27*, (no date).
25. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #8*, 24 September 1943; *Bulletin #25*, 20 February 1945. He was critical of Dr. Morrison, the editor of the *Christian Century*, for the same reason. Fairbairn considered his change in attitude an "amazing example of rationalization" to the trends of the day (*Bulletin #3*, 02 April 1943; and *Bulletin #6*, 22 July 1943). Fairbairn may have felt a sense of betrayal by

Morrison's change of attitude, for earlier in the war Morrison, in the *Christian Century*, had championed the cause of the UCC pacifists and their "Witness Against War" (see N. K. Clifford, "Charles Clayton Morrison and the United Church of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 15, No. 2 [1969]: 82).

26. In an open letter to the moderator of the UCC about the church's desire to organize evangelism in the churches, Fairbairn wrote ". . . we find within ourselves little interest or desire to undertake the proposed protracted effort, and we wish to tell you why . . . unless the United Church of Canada can bring itself to do what for five years it has refused to do, we have no confidence that it possesses the insight into the nature of the Kingdom of God, the power to utter the Word of Christ, or the courage to walk in the Way of Christ, as are necessary to justify and implement any campaign for the Kingdom of Christ" (*Bulletin #25*, 20 February 1945).
27. Pidgeon seems to have considered that such statements by the church were not authoritative statements in the way that statements such as the Basis of Union were to the church. As a result he felt no qualms about taking a position contrary to such statements.
28. 29 January 1939, File #1617, Box 46, Pidgeon Papers (hereafter PP). Each of Pidgeon's sermons, found in the UCC Archives in Toronto, has a title and text, date, file #, and box #. Further references to Pidgeon's sermons will follow that order (without title and text). Robert Wright argues that the Protestant church in Canada was well aware of the increase of tensions in Europe and Asia, was very concerned about the direction that international relations seemed to be heading, and during specific crisis, did protest the actions of imperialistic states (*A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest For a New International Order, 1918-1939* [Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991], chapter 7).
29. 29 January 1939, File #1617, Box 46, PP.
30. 10 September 1939, File #1647, Box 46, PP.
31. 05 November 1939, File #1658, Box 46, PP.
32. 19 May 1940, File #1698, Box 46, PP.
33. 23 June 1940, File #1705, Box 46, PP.
34. For example Pidgeon, taking a shot at the pacifists, argued that "preoccupation of religious people with dreams and fancies impossible of realization gave the dictators their chance" (28 June 1942, File #1819, Box 47, PP). Failure to listen to Churchill, trade with Japan, and isolationism also contributed to the war (05 December 1943, File #1891, Box 48, PP). Citing

the words of Dr. John R. Mott, “If you do not send ten thousand missionaries to Japan soon, you will be sending a million bayonets in my lifetime,” Pidgeon claimed that the church, because it did not send the missionaries, saw the prophecy fulfilled (23 May 1943, File #1873, Box 48, PP). This linking of missionaries and peace was not new to Pidgeon, for, as Robert Wright argues, the church, as a part of its international concern the thirties, had believed that missionaries were the “true harbingers of world fellowship” and the best way to bring about peace (*A World Mission*, 242-244).

35. 20 May 1945, File # 1949, Box 49, PP.
36. 14 October 1945, File #1954, Box 49, PP.
37. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #31, 20 August 1945.
38. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #9, 28 October 1943.
39. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #22, 20 November 1944.
40. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #12, 24 February 1944.
41. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #27, (no date).
42. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #27, (no date).
43. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #27, (no date).
44. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #28, 20 May 1945.
45. Fairbairn, *Bulletin* #27, (no date).
46. There was a note of resignation in some of Pidgeon’s early comments about the war. Phrases such as “we consent there is nothing else to do,” and “In the meantime, we are at war. We loath the idea of it, but here it is. Our duty is clear . . .” betrayed his “crushing disappointment” that the war had to be fought (10 September 1939, File #1647, Box 46, PP; 05 November 1939, File #1658, Box 46, PP). Throughout the war years Pidgeon expressed the concern that if totalitarianism was not confronted great evil would befall the world. Most of these fears were expressed at the times of greatest military crisis in the war. They tapered off as victory seemed assured (see, e.g., “We cannot lose heart because that would mean the renunciation of our inherited hope for the future” [19 May 1940, File #1698, Box 46, PP]; “If Great Britain were to follow that policy [appeasement] now the future of humanity would be without a gleam of hope . . .” [1940, File #1702, Box 46, PP]; “Our just task is to win the war, and if we fail at this point, nothing else will avail . . .” [13 October 1940, File # 1717, Box 46, PP; 10 November 1940, File #1721, Box 46, PP; 28 September, File # 1775, Box 47, PP]; “Nothing else matters if the

Nazis prevail . . . ” [16 November 1941, File # 1785, Box 47, PP; 28 December 1941, File # 1793, Box 47, PP]). At the end of the war in Europe Pidgeon proclaimed, “The evils from which the heroism of our armed forces delivered us were far more horrible than our worst imaginings” (01 January 1942, File #1794, Box 47, PP; 31 May 1942, File #1816, Box 47, PP; 11 April 1943, File #1864, Box 48, PP; 20 May 1945, File # 1949, Box 49, PP).

47. 09 January 1944, File #1897, Box 48, PP.
48. 21 November 1943, File #1889, Box 48, PP.
49. 05 December 1943, File # 1891, Box 48, PP.
50. 23 March 1941, File #1753, Box 47, PP.
51. A very discouraging time for the Entente powers in World War One. He also preached it again on 21 November 1943 with the new title “justice.”
52. 21 January 1940, File 1675, Box 46, PP.
53. 21 January 1940, File 1675, Box 46, PP.
54. 26 May 1940, File #1700, Box 46, PP.
55. 1940, File #1702, Box 46, PP.
56. 19 May 1940, File #1698, Box 46, PP.
57. Pidgeon was actively involved in the ecumenical movement before the war and his concern for the church overseas was reflected in his sermons devoted to updating the experiences of the church in occupied lands (see 25 May 1941, File #1763, Box 47, PP). He also spent a considerable amount of time during the war travelling to the United States on “ecumenical business” (Grant, *George Pidgeon*, 148). Much of this ecumenical concern arose in the 1930's in the context of the totalitarian threat as church leaders began to become concerned for their brothers and sisters in oppressed lands (Wright, *A World Mission*, 232).
58. 25 May 1941, File #1763, Box 47, PP. This reference to the “brotherhood of men” as a justification for war is interesting, for one of the prime rationales for pacifism in the inter-war period was the idea of the brotherhood of men. Pacifists at that time questioned how one nation could fight against another when all were brothers. Here the argument has been reversed and was being used as a rationale for conflict.
59. 10 September 1939, File #1647, Box 46, PP.

60. 10 September 1939, File #1647, Box 46, PP. See also 01 February 1942, File #1799, Box 47, PP; 31 December 1944, File #1933, Box 48, PP. John Webster Grant notes that Pidgeon “detested the wartime hysteria that threatened the church’s prophetic voice.” These warnings about hate would seem to be one of the ways in which he sought to counter such hysteria (*George Pidgeon* [Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962], 148).
61. 23 June 1940, File #1705, Box 46, PP.
62. 28 June 1942, File #1819, Box 47, PP.
63. 21 January 1940, File #1676, Box 46, PP.
64. Pidgeon did preach at least one sermon that had pacifist leanings. On 02 February 1941, in the sermon “The Law of Love” (he preached this before in 1923 and 1929), he claimed that “Christianity, the true Christianity, carries no arms; it wins its way by lowly service, by patience, by self-sacrifice” (see 02 February 1941, File #1743, Box 47, PP). Another interesting note in regards to Pidgeon’s view of pacifism was that in the *Bulletin #1*, 19 January 1942 and *Bulletin #29*, 20 June 1945, Fairbairn asserted that Pidgeon had preached a pacifist sermon on the radio. Fairbairn claimed that he wrote to Pidgeon asking him how he could reconcile his sermon with his support of the war. Fairbairn went on to claim that Pidgeon “evaded the request, and later declined.” A few years later, Fairbairn again made reference to this interaction and used it as an example of the lack of consistent thought and unfaithfulness of the UCC (*Apostate Christendom* [London: Ken-Pax Publishing Company Ltd., c. 1948], 31-32). There is, however, no record of correspondence between Fairbairn and Pidgeon in Pidgeon’s extensive collection of correspondence at the UCC archives.
65. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #2*, 01 March 1943.
66. One example of this unholy alliance between church and state that Fairbairn noted was the church’s support for war bonds. He stated “Think of the United Church, dependant for the covering of its deficit to a large extent upon war bonds! How could such a church give its prophets liberty to prophesy and still support them?” (see Fairbairn, *Bulletin #2*, 01 March 1943). Fairbairn was not alone in his criticism of the UCC’s support and use of war bonds. The *Christian Century* (05 February 1941, 12) published an article critical of the UCC over its war bonds program. There was considerable outrage in the UCC over the *Christian Century* article. The Press Censorship Committee in Ottawa even considered an ban on the *Christian Century* (see Clifford, “Charles Clayton Morrison and the United Church,” 83-85).
67. Fairbairn, *Bulletin # 5*, June 1943; Fairbairn, *Bulletin # 26*, 20 March 1945.

68. Fairbairn, *Bulletin # 5*, June 1943.
69. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #26*, 20 March 1945.
70. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #26*, 20 March 1945.
71. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #26*, 20 March 1945.
72. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #12*, 22 January 1944.
73. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #12*, 22 January, 1944.
74. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #12*, 22 January 1944.
75. Fairbairn, *Apostate Christendom*, 61-67.
76. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #31*, 20 August 1945.
77. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #8*, 24 September 1943.
78. 01 January 1942, File #1794, Box 47, PP. Pidgeon was not alone in his assumption that Canada was a Christian nation. Prime Minister Mackenzie King's speech to the nation on 28 October 1939, expressed well this link between Christianity and Canada, and also between Canada being a Christian nation and the justification for war. He said over the CBC that "the time has come when to save Christian civilization, we must be prepared to lay down our lives for its preservation. The young men who are enlisting in our forces today are first and foremost defenders of the faith"(MacKenzie King; cited in Rothwell, "United Church Pacifism," 52). Faulkner proposes that one of the main arguments that the Protestant national churches used to support the war effort in the first few years of the war was the argument that they needed to defend "Christian civilization." He also notes that democracy was considered by Canadian Protestant church leaders (as opposed to Canadian Roman Catholic church leaders) as a "necessary development of the Christian faith, and that the church's mission included the fostering of a healthy democracy" (Faulkner, "For Christian Civilization," 10, 129).
79. It should be noted that the most emphasis was made on this unique status (along with the expected divine deliverance) during the critical stages of the war.
80. 26 April 1942, File #1812, Box 47, PP. Three years later and victory in Europe assured, Pidgeon stated almost the exact same thing. In this context it was not to give hope in a time of despair, but rather, give inspiration for the tasks ahead. He said "Do you believe that Canada was given her freedom and independence in order to develop a type peculiarly her own and to make a unique contribution to mankind? Greece had such a privilege. So had little

Scotland. Consider what Great Britain's character and spirit have meant to mankind in this present crisis. Similarly God has a place for us in the future and will bring us to it. Our prayer is that He will fit us for it. What it may be no one can yet predict; but that a new northern race arose to enrich the soil of humanity is a necessity of the future and we may be equal to the demand if we will"(08 April 1945, File #1946, Box 49, PP; see also 19 May 1940, File #1698, Box 46, PP; 1940, File #1702, Box 46, PP).

81. 19 May 1940, File 1698, Box 46, PP; 26 April 1942, File #1812, Box 47, PP; 03 January 1943, File #1849, Box 48, PP. Pidgeon was not alone in his framing the war in terms of a "crusade." Prime Minister MacKenzie King, in his national speech in October 1939, referred to the war as a "crusade" (see Rothwell, "United Church Pacifism," 52). Other denominations also referred to the war as a crusade (see Faulkner, "For Christian Civilization," 70).
82. A reference to the British and French victory over the Germans at the Marne in 1914 (03 December 1939, File #1663, Box 46, PP).
83. Pidgeon recognized the National Day of Prayer as well as the Day of National Dedication throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations (08 September 1940, File #1713, Box 46, PP; 19 April 1942, File #1812, Box 47).
84. Operations Torch, Husky, the Dunkirk evacuation, and even the World War One Battle of Ypres, were considered the result of the miraculous intervention of God (13 May 1945, File #1948, Box 49, PP). Faulkner notes that all the national Protestant churches considered Dunkirk a miracle ("For Christian Civilization," 97-99).
85. 1940, File #1702, Box 46, PP.
86. 13 May 1945, Box 49, PP; 14 October 1945, File #1954, Box 49, PP. The Order of Service ("which may be used at the time of the cessation of hostilities in Europe or at the end of the war") provided by the Canadian Council of Churches dedicated victory to God's glory and offered thanksgiving for the "deliverance Thou didst vouchsafe to us" (see 13 May 1945, File #1948, Box 49, PP).
87. 28 January 1945, File #1936, Box 49, PP.
88. He used the examples of Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler who too would soon enough find out (02 May 1943, File #1870, Box 48, PP).
89. 23 March 1941, File #1753, Box 47, PP; 01 February 1942, File #1799, Box 47, PP; 27 December 1942, File #1847, Box 47, PP.

90. 17 March 1940, File # 1687, Box 46, PP; 30 June 1940, File #1707, Box 46, PP; 28 September 1941, File #1775, Box 47, PP; 19 April 1942, File #1811, Box 47, PP; 26 April 1942, File #1812, Box 47, PP; 01 November 1942, File #1837, Box 47, PP; 06 December 1942, File #1844, Box 47, PP; 11 April 1943, File #1864, Box 48, PP; 02 May 1943, File #1870, Box 48, PP; 19 September 1943, File #1879, Box 48, PP; 12 December 1943, File #1893, Box 48, PP; 23 April 1944, File #1908, Box 48, PP; 14 May 1944, File #1911, Box 48, PP; 01 April 1945, File #1945, Box 49, PP.
91. Pidgeon also preached wartime sermons on prohibition and on the rise of sexual promiscuity and disease.
92. 19 September 1943, File #1879, Box 48, PP.
93. Fairbairn, *Bulletin # 31*, 20 August 1945; Fairbairn, *Bulletin #28*, 20 May 1945; and Fairbairn, *Bulletin #4* (no date).
94. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #8*, 24 September 1943.
95. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #6*, 22 July 1943; and Fairbairn, *Bulletin #27*.
96. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #25*, 20 February 1945.
97. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #8*, 24 September 1943.
98. Fairbairn, *Bulletin #12*, 24 February 1944.
99. Fairbairn, *Apostate Christendom*, 32. Fairbairn also recognized their irreconcilable differences when he stated in 1943 that only one side in the argument could be right: both sides could not be right (*Bulletin #3*, 2 April 1943).

