

The Book and the Sword:
The Bible and the Cultures of War 1914–1918
University of Cambridge, 11-13 September 2016

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Mark Chapman: 'The Church of England and the Serbian Orthodox Church in the First World War'

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the perception of the Serbian Orthodox Church by members of the Church of England through the First World War, with a particular focus on the year 1916. The early years of the war were marked by a series of key events which aimed to promote the cause of Serbia among the British public, as well as helping consolidate Serbian national identity among Serbs themselves. Wartime 'Serbia' grew out of the virtually unknown pre-war 'Servia' to become another of the small countries – along with Belgium – that Britain was fighting to protect. Its religion and traditions were frequently discussed in the media and in the pamphlet and propaganda campaign. Drawing on the church press, contemporary documents as well as unpublished writings, especially by the Oxford Anglo-Catholic theologian Leighton Pullan, I also show how a closer alliance with Orthodoxy provided another front for conservative Anglicans to attack theological liberalism on account of its associations with German theology.

After a brief overview of some of the pamphlets which aimed to educate the British public about the Balkans, I discuss the church's involvement in the Serbian Relief Fund and the work of the various church and medical representatives who responded to the call to assist in humanitarian relief in Serbia, including such well-known figures as the hymnologist and liturgist Percy Dearmer and his wife Mabel. Particularly important in raising awareness of Serbian Orthodoxy and of Orthodoxy more generally was the celebration of 'Kosovo Day' on 28 June 1916 (thus immediately before the Battle of the Somme), where a rally was held at the Albert Hall in support of Serbian refugees at which the Archbishop of Canterbury gave an address. I will look in detail at this event. Equally important in consciousness-raising were the frequent visits of Fr Nicolaj Velimirović during the war. At the same time as informing members of the Church of England about the plight of Serbia and its Orthodox Church, these also led to ecumenical advances which included Orthodox preaching and even celebrating the eucharist in Church of England churches. In 1917 a significant number of Serbian seminarians were able to escape from Belgrade to study in Oxford, which helped create a keener appreciation of the intellectual and spiritual traditions of the Orthodox churches. I conclude with a brief assessment of the impact of the First World War on Anglican-Orthodox relations.

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Stephen PA Edmonds: 'Biblical Resonances in the sermons of the Anglo-Catholic movement (1914-1918)'

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Abstract:

This paper will explore a further facet of the theological and pastoral response of the Anglo-Catholic movement to the Great War. Specifically, it will explore the role of sacrifice, with particular reference to the death of the soldier, and the biblical motifs that shaped this response.

My paper primarily considers the response of Anglo-Catholic clergy on the Home Front. I have contended that the response of the Anglo-Catholic movement, which itself had been formed through a distinctive theology of sacrifice in the nineteenth century, linked the sacrifices of the Great War, particularly the unprecedented and massive loss of life, with the sacrifice of Christ. The death of the soldier was conceived as an 'offering,' a holy sacrifice, similar to that of the sacrifice of Christ, and a life also 'laid down for his friends.'

My primary sources comprise religious literature specific to the period, chiefly collections of sermons and weekly and monthly theological publications, which appear not to have been closely read in academic study. The main sources of Anglo-Catholic thought throughout this period are the weekly church periodicals (The Church Times and [Anglican] Guardian). These, coupled with various monthly ecclesiastical diocesan newsletters, give a day to day account of how the movement responded to the conflict in the weekly roll of preaching through the Old and New Testaments. Further to this, various themes were explored during sermon series offered throughout Advent, Lent and Holy Week.

The use of Christ-like motifs was a powerful tool in the interpretative armoury of the Anglo-Catholic clergy, and some specific themes stand out, many of them representative of frequently cited lines of New Testament scripture that became popular in the ecclesiastical response to the war. These included: 'Greater love hath no man than this' (John 15:13); 'obedient unto death' (Phil 2:8); 'filling the afflictions of Christ' (Col 1:24); the imitation of Christ, 'made perfect by suffering' (Hebrews 2:10).; and 'drinking the cup' (Matt 20:22).

However, beyond these citations, most of which were later commonly used in war memorials, other, less well-known motifs were also surprisingly common. Anglo-Catholic sermons made regular use of 'Redeeming the time' (Eph 5:16) and 'the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations' (Rev 22:2). The Old Testament made occasional, and

notable, appearances. The prayers of the nation, the prayers of the clergy, and the celebration of the Eucharist, were often compared to the hands of Aaron and Hur (Exodus 17:12) by members of the movement. One cleric compared the victims of gas attacks to those bitten by serpents in the wilderness (Numbers 21:6). The Old Testament prophets were another source regularly taken for guidance at this time – such as HB Mackay (Isaiah), HL Paget (Nehemiah), and HP Denison (Habakkuk).

Beyond common parish sermons, whilst some members of the Anglo-Catholic movement had great reservations at modern biblical criticism, other biblical scholars marshalled their efforts towards the conflict, such as Edmund Tyrell-Green (Professor of Hebrew, St David's, Lampeter, 1896-1924) Charles Knapp (Merton College, Oxford) and the Oxford patrist, Frederick Homes-Dudden.

In assessing the theological response, my initial aim was to investigate the manner in which the death of soldiers in the War was interpreted by members of the movement, as a holy sacrifice, similar to that of the sacrifice of Christ, or in some way joined to His sacrifice – a view which became increasingly theologically heterodox as the war progressed.

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John Hammond: 'Memorialising Sanctified Sacrifice: Biblical Afterlives in British Great War Remembrance'

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Abstract:

The Great War generation was mostly born into a Victorian society and imbued with a Christian faith to which it turned when seeking to commemorate its wartime dead. In various mediums, artists, architects and designers, adopted biblical characters, events and locations to commemorate the fallen and those that served and survived.

In Edinburgh's Scottish War Memorial, stained glass artist Douglas Strachan turned to the Book of Genesis to portray the story of Adam and Eve, followed by the fratricidal episode of Cain and Abel. Official war artist Sir William Orpen also found inspiration in the Garden of Eden narrative for his *Adam and Eve at Peronne*, an image showing his concern for the fate of the common British soldier.

The plight of Belgium and her people, drew comparisons with the biblical account of the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and the consequent Babylonian exile. Prophets and prophecy surrounding this event and the subsequent return to Jerusalem, were employed to provide encouragement in wartime and succour in peacetime remembrance.

Abraham's willingness to obey God and sacrifice his son Isaac recorded in Genesis 22 and emphasised in Hebrews 11, was embraced as a memorial motif mirroring faith and the wartime sacrifice of youth. More so, John 3:16's message of God's love and paternal sacrificial gift, was utilised to sanctify the fate of the nation's fallen, with willing self-sacrifice, accompanied by a concomitant renewal and reward, acting as inspiration and consolation.

Timothy 2:3, meanwhile, exhorts the reader to endure hardship as 'a good soldier of Jesus Christ' and in like manner, Ephesians 6 recommends that the reader 'put on the whole armour of God', detailing the spiritually defensive property of each piece. Both are seen in numerous stained glass memorials in ecclesiastical settings, as are fallen warriors receiving the Crown of Life of Revelation 2:10 and later in the book, archangel Michael, the War in Heaven and the New Jerusalem.

Illustrating a select number of memorial examples, this paper will seek to offer an overview of the importance of the Bible in the foundation of British Great War Remembrance and demonstrate the extent to which this has been forgotten or goes largely unrecognised.

Patrick J. Houlihan: 'Adapted Tradition: Everyday Catholicism and the Liturgical Movement in Central Europe during the First World War'

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Abstract:

The Great War remains an understudied episode in the Catholic history of the twentieth century. Aside from papal histories of the Vatican, studies of religion remain focused on the bishops and clergy in a largely national context; popular movements and lived experience remain vastly fragmented and underdeveloped.

This paper examines everyday lived Catholicism as adapted tradition, with the Great War as a focal point of continuity and change. Histories of the reform impulse known as the Liturgical Movement allude to the stirrings of 19th century reform under Pius X (d. 1914). These trends increased dramatically in the post-1945 era in the period of reform leading to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Nevertheless, the years of the Great War are often quickly passed over without sufficient reflection on the everyday Catholic lived experience of the First World War.

Drawing on archival materials from across Central Europe, this paper puts transnational focus on the losing powers, advancing a critical examination of religion beyond state-supporting instrumentalism. Regarding the Liturgical Movement, the paper concentrates on Central Europe in the Great War and interwar era, especially through the life stories of Pius Parsch and Romano Guardini—and their influential monastic-lay networks in places like Maria Laach and Klosterneuburg. Parsch served as a military chaplain in the Austro-Hungarian Army, and Guardini served as a hospital chaplain in Bavaria. Both Parsch and Guardini were key innovators in the Liturgical Movement, and their experience of the First World War was fundamental to their conceptions of the Liturgical Movement and the need for reform. But their conception of reform was in key ways a return to more Biblically oriented practice and liturgy founded in holistic forms of worship. The Liturgical Movement would be a key influence in the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

The paper outlines Catholic religious culture during the First World War, stressing how Catholic believers coped with the everyday pressures of war. It then unpacks how reformers like Guardini and Parsch interpreted the war, making sense of the need for reform based on connections with the laity on a mass scale. The paper historically examines the Liturgical

Movement to demonstrate how the experience of twentieth-century warfare influenced the adaptation of Catholic tradition.

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Andrew Mein: 'Bishops, Babykillers and Broken Teeth: Psalm 58 and the Air War'

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Abstract:

O God, break the teeth in their mouths;

tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!

The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done;

they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.

People will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous;

surely there is a God who judges on earth.”

(Psalm 58:6, 10-11)

Can Christians pray these words about their enemies, even in wartime? The curses of Psalm 58 stood at the heart of a controversy that flared up in Britain during July 1917. This brought together two apparently unrelated issues: Church of England liturgical revision and the morality of reprisals for German air raids. In the first week of July 1917 the Convocation of Canterbury (predecessor of today's General Synod) received a report on revision of the Psalter. Among other recommendations, it proposed that the whole of Psalm 58, together with the imprecatory verses from nine other Psalms, should be removed from liturgical use. Convocation's decision quickly provoked a stir in the Press. On July 6th the Daily Express ran a front page banner headline: 'BISHOPS BOYCOTT DAVID'S REPRISAL PSALMS' while headlines below ran 'BAN ON REPRISAL PSALMS' and 'DAVID'S WICKED IDEAS OF VENGEANCE!'. Similar headlines appeared in other newspapers, and from the outset the connection between the imprecatory Psalms and the question of reprisals was clearly at the front of people's minds. At the same time Convocation was not without its defenders, who saw the move as a step forward for civilization and a courageous attempt to stem the public's thirst for vengeance against Germany. This paper will explore the controversy as it developed over the ensuing weeks, and ask what we might learn from it about the place of the Bible in wartime Britain.

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Charlotte Methuen: “The Bible is the Word of God. ... What does it tell us about war?” The use of scripture in Professor James Cooper’s sermon on the National Day of Prayer and Intercession, 3 January 1915’

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Abstract:

On 3 January 1915, the British government appointed a national day for “humble prayer and intercession” relating to the War. The Church of Scotland’s “Committee on Aids to Devotion” drafted an order of service which was presumably used across Scotland. It was certainly celebrated at St Andrew’s parish church in Glasgow, where James Cooper, the Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow, who was also chaplain to the OC, preached the sermon.

Cooper took as his text Exodus 17: 9 (RV): “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.” Cooper began his thoroughly biblically based sermon with an affirmation and a question: “The Bible is the Word of God : the rule, therefore, of Faith and Morals. What does it tell us about war?” He found the same question, with a response, in the Epistle of James (4: 1): “Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members?” The Bible, he concluded, offers insight into the origins of war. Cooper understood that author of the Epistle to James to imply that war arises from “envious, selfish, inordinate, unscrupulous desires after pleasure, wealth or power.” However, Cooper also believed that the Bible foretold an end to all War: “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire” (Ps 46: 9). Cooper predicted that this would come about “when the nations, instead of rejecting the Law of our LORD JESUS CHRIST (as recent German philosophy, and too much of German theology unhappily have done), bow themselves once more before His cradle and His cross.” War would cease, in Cooper’s understanding, when nations turned to New Testament principles in order to “take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart [and] ... find rest unto their souls” (Matthew 29: 11). The War, argued Cooper, was being fought “to restore and establish on sound Christian foundations a peace which had

long been threatened and was most wickedly disturbed.” On this basis he concluded that the war was viewed “by our blessed Lord ... with sorrowful and sympathetic approbation.”

Cooper was careful to affirm, however, that since “in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him” (Acts 10 : 35), there were also Germans and Austrians who were faithful followers of Christ; no nation – not even Belgium – was without guilt. The war would be “a blessing in disguise ... if it calls us back in humble faith to the Divine and Human Saviour.” Cooper asserted that this had been the effect of the Napoleonic wars, and that it was also the case five months into this war. “We need more *Men* ; and we need more, and more instant, *Prayer*,” he concluded, for “victory is still in the hand of God. *It is His to save by many or by few*” (1 Samuel 14: 6). For Cooper, in 1915, the Bible offered a justification for why the War should be fought. In particular, the New Testament presented a vision of how the Old Testament prophecies of peace would be fulfilled.

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Jane Potter: 'Christ is literally in No Man's Land': the Bible and the Poetry of 1914-18

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Abstract:

For those who experienced the Great War, whether as combatants or non-combatants, on the battlefields or on the home front, the Bible was a central and resonant force. This paper will consider the ways in which the poets of the Great War drew on and reinterpreted Biblical themes, imagery, and language. Poets were not alone in finding resonance for contemporary events in the Bible. Leaders of the Church of England, like their political counterparts in government, used the language of the King James Version in particular as patriotic rhetoric, depicting the War as a holy crusade against the German infidel or Beast from Revelation. Millions of bibles, hymn books and religious tracts were sent to British soldiers by a variety of organizations and tales of Bibles kept in pockets stopping bullets were widely circulated. Just how many of these were actually read is open to debate for the Great War followed on the heels of a dramatic fall in church attendance and a rising tide of secularization strengthened by successive Education Acts in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Yet if the Church of England's power was diminishing and the practice of Christianity on the wane, the language of the Bible remained an intrinsic part of everyday speech. For writers, whether soldier or civilian, the Bible was both an overt source and a subtle influence, and it had a profound impact on literary interpretations of the conflict, especially poetic interpretations. Motifs and tropes of Christ's suffering and sacrifice and of St John's prophetic, apocalyptic visions feature prominently in the work of Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, David Jones, and Siegfried Sassoon, among others. For while the 'poets of the Great War' were not a homogenous group, made up solely of those now in the 'canon' of war literature, hundreds of other lesser-known – and admittedly less-accomplished – poets were writing and publishing verse that appeared in newspapers, magazines, individual volumes, and edited collections often 'sold for the benefit of charities'. This paper, whilst focusing on the work of more well-known 'soldier poets', will contextualize them within a wider literary landscape in order to demonstrate how the Bible was employed both to make sense of and bear witness to the suffering and trauma of 1914-1918.

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Hugh Pyper: 'How Can We Sing the Lord's Song? The Silence of the Bible in Musical Reactions to WWI.'

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Abstract:

The Bible is notably absent from works written by classical composers either during or in response to the First World War. In this paper, after reviewing the reasons for this absence of settings of biblical texts in this period, three exceptions are discussed which, in various ways, point to the reasons why the Bible was avoided by many other artists. The works to be considered are: Requiem (1916) by Frederick Delius, A World Requiem (1922) by John Foulds and Alban Berg's opera Wozzeck (1925). The first was neglected even by Delius's admirers for its uncompromising scorn of any religious consolation in contemplating death, couched in phrases drawn from Ecclesiastes. The second was at the heart of the formal British Festivals of Remembrance from 1923-1926 and then forgotten, in part because of increasing dissatisfaction among audiences with its attempt, based on theosophical teachings, at combining biblical texts with other religious writings to offer consolation to those of all religions or none. The third has become a key work in 20th century music, both for its original response to Schoenberg's innovations and because of its depiction of the descent into madness of an ordinary soldier who is prey to dehumanising forces on all sides and haunted by specifically biblical images of judgment and destruction. The attitude to the Bible characteristic of each of these composers and the fates of their works shed light on how the Bible became implicated in the disruption of European culture that the War came to represent.

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Eric M. Reisenauer: 'The Ships of Tarshish and all the Young Lions Thereof: The British Empire, Scripture Prophecy, and the War of Armageddon, 1914-1918'

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Abstract:

For some time, scholars have devoted attention to the apocalyptic imagery used extensively during the First World War in both secular and religious cultures. Arlie Hoover, Jay Winter, Phillip Jenkins, Peter Harrington, Michael Snape, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, among others, have noted the essential place which religious and apocalyptic themes played both in the war and in the modernist culture which surrounded it. These themes captured and gave shape to the sense of rift and coming crisis that many in Britain felt regarding the political, social, and cultural shifts of the early twentieth century. My work focuses on one particular apocalyptic theme that blossomed during the war, the sense of Britain as holding a privileged and protected place in Biblical prophecy, and argues that it served as a type of emotional and cultural anchor in the midst of this upheaval.

The terms “Armageddon” and “Apocalypse” were used countless times as shorthand for the war before, during, and even long after the conflict. One of the most recent works to examine the wide adoption of such a view, Philip Jenkins’ *The Great and Holy War*, provides an overview of how these terms and their concomitant images were common across national and confessional lines. What Jenkins’ and the others’ work do not do is drill down into the nature of this early-twentieth century end-times belief to map the contours of those ideas that provided the faithful both a way to understand the conflict and a clear sense of the role which their nation and people must play. Broad themes of personal righteousness and national Divine favor are covered, but particular identities and destinies of nations go virtually unexamined. This is a curious oversight since these identities and destinies are starkly present in much contemporary literature and lectures on prophecy and they had been virtually unmodified for a century or more in most cases. In the British case, the identities proffered were the Ships of Tarshish, the King of the South, and the people of Israel of the prophecies. Rather than competing, these identities overlapped quite naturally and most of those who studied the prophecies considered at least two (and sometime all three) to be simply differing names for the same prophetic nation. The destiny of the British nation and empire was also clearly set forth: the destruction of the continental Anti-Christian power Gog, their assistance in the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land, and their full participation in the post-war order established by Christ at his Second Advent, an order very different from and indeed antithetical to the League of Nations. Assertions that these identities and the duties had been clearly set forth in the Scriptural prophecies and were being fulfilled before the world’s eyes were made with increasing confidence as the war unfolded. That Britain and its colonies (the young lions thereof) enjoyed this privileged and irrevocable designation, and had done from time immemorial, provided immense consolation as well as security in a chaotic world riven by a war of Biblical proportions.

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Mike Snape: 'The Bible in the Military: The British and American Experience in Two World Wars'

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Abstract:

The Bible was undoubtedly the most widely owned, and probably the most commonly read, book in the British and American armed forces during the two World Wars- conflicts that represent the bloodiest foreign wars in the history of Great Britain and the United States. As the guardians and products of historically Protestant societies, religion enjoyed a privileged position in the British and American armed forces, organisations that were dominated by an overwhelmingly Protestant -and biblically literate- professional officer class. Taking into account the constitutional differences between the two societies, and the religious limitations this theoretically imposed in the American context- this paper demonstrates the striking, enduring and even growing significance of the Bible in both nations' armed forces during the two World Wars.

The paper will begin by considering the place of the Bible in the institutional culture of the British and American armed services- addressing the historically formative influence of biblical values on the military profession, the distribution and availability of the Bible and scripture portions, the use of the Bible and of biblical language by military and naval commanders, and even the manner in which the Bible impinged on the conduct of military operations. It will then consider the cultural significance of the Bible for British and American service men and women in the era of the two World Wars, addressing the implications of their biblical knowledge (or, more usually, biblical consciousness) in ethical matters and –more extensively- in the realm of individual and collective resilience and morale. By considering the use of the Bible in the course of ordinary service life, in the front line, in captivity, and in other situations of hardship, it will discuss its considerable significance both as a devotional text and as a talisman.

The paper will conclude by underlining the hazards of periodisation that are implicit in the scholarship stimulated by the centenary of the First World War, and by illustrating the need for as broad a chronological perspective as possible in understanding change and continuity in the use and significance of the Bible in the course of the First World War.

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Marc Saperstein: 'Amalek in the Great War and Beyond'

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Abstract:

Amalek is a biblical personality who does not get a large number of verses, yet who figures significantly in much of post-biblical thinking about war. The extent to which contemporaries are identified as descendants of the biblical Amalekites has important implications for Jewish discourse and behaviour in critical times. After quickly reviewing some examples in sermons delivered during the American Civil War and the Spanish-American War, I turn to the Great War, where—apparently for the first time—Jewish preachers on both sides of the conflict describing the enemy as Amalek: for German and Austrian preachers, Amalek was Russia, for French and America preachers it was Germany. I will then continue to review the far more common rhetorical usage of Hitler as Amalek in sermons delivered during the period of Nazi persecution and mass murder, 1933-1945, testing the implications of the theme not merely as rhetoric but as a basis for action.

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Rabbis and the Great War, in *European Judaism* 48:1 (Spring 2015), pp.3-141: articles by ten different scholars, including Saperstein on the wartime sermons of Morris Joseph (West London Synagogue) and the sermons of Joseph Krauskopf (Philadelphia).

Stanley Boylan, "A Halakhic Perspective on the Holocaust," in *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. Bernard Rosenberg (Hoboken NJ: Ktav; New York: Rabbinical Council of America, 1992), 195-214 (esp. pp. 208-12 on comparison of Hitler to Haman and Amalek)

Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) (chapter 5: Amalek, pp. 107-46.)

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Gilles Vidal: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me" (Psalm 27: 5) - Being and remaining a Christian during World War I.

Institution: Institut Protestant de Théologie - Faculté de Montpellier / Centre Maurice-Leenhardt de Recherche en Missiologie

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Abstract:

French political rhetoric during World War I is full of references to religious motives: the nation gathers in "Sacred Unity" as President Raymond Poincaré expressed it, and the French country landscape would become filled with crosses. The Christian churches endorsed this nationalist and mystical rhetoric about the nation's defence.

In this circumstance fighting for the nation became an act of divine justice and the sacrifice of Christ became an archetype of all the soldiers' sacrificed lives. At one level, in official statements or communications, the biblical text has sometimes been used - and abused - by some ministers or leaders to justify the righteousness of the war. But at another level, in the soldiers' daily life, the Bible has also been called up to comfort people, to strengthen the faith and to restore some confidence in a more pacific image of God. The constant reference to the Psalms by some soldiers obviously illustrates that trend.

Based on official data from the churches as well as testimonies of soldiers and clergymen involved in the conflict, this paper intends to consider the different ways of referring to the Bible during the World War I.

A first part will describe the general atmosphere at the beginning of the war in France and its religious characteristic. The particular position of the Protestants and the necessity for them to over prove their patriotism will be examined here.

A second part will give some examples of the use of the Bible at different levels of responsibility in the Church: in some official letters from the head of the Church or in some particular statements such as the one written in 1916 by different chaplains calling for Christian unity.

Another examples will be taken from the experiences related within diaries or letters from soldiers, chaplains, missionaries or indigenous volunteers coming from the protestant missions.

The last part of the paper will eventually explore how some people distinguished themselves from the main trend of pure Christian nationalism and tried to promote another way of Christian thinking based on a different interpretation of the Bible.

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Cindy Wesley: 'Making the Bible Safe for Democracy: American Methodists and the First World War.'

Institution: Wesley House Cambridge

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Abstract:

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson appeared before a joint session of the United States Congress to ask for a Declaration of War against Germany. Wilson, the son of a Presbyterian minister and former President of Princeton University, carefully stated his case against the German policy of sinking ships of commerce, no matter whether they flew the flag of belligerent or neutral nations. Further, and perhaps more importantly, Wilson made a strong moral case that would give the American public the sense that the war to which they would send their young men was a just and honourable cause. He asserted that America's involvement would serve the principle of universal democracy and bring about the defeat of imperialistic autocracy:

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. . . We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.¹

In 1917, the Methodist Episcopal Church was the largest Protestant denomination in the country. The denomination's leadership fully backed Wilson's claim that the Great War was a noble effort to crush the forces of autocratic villainy and promote the good of worldwide democracy. Although the majority of English-speaking members of the denomination were sympathetic to the Allied cause, the denomination was, between August 1914 and February 1917, strongly supportive of peace efforts and of American neutrality. The sharp reversal of the denomination's position on the war required explanation and the dismantling of earlier arguments in favour of peacefulness. It also provided an opportunity for the denominational leadership to promote Americanization in the form of a homogenous political and national identity to its some 60,000 German-speaking members.

This paper will explore how the Methodist Episcopal Church interpreted the Bible to support Wilson's call to make the world "safe for democracy" and how it communicated a union between biblical Christian and liberal American democracy to the people in the pews. The

¹ Sixty-Fifth Congress, 1 Session, Senate Document No. 5. The speech was published in every national newspaper, as well as in Methodist denominational papers including Zion's Herald and The Christian Advocate.

paper explores war sermons published in denomination and secular newspapers, widely-disseminated Sunday School material with titles like “Marshalling the forces of patriotism: a course of twelve studies for use in the Sunday Schools” and “Christian Democracy for America”, and a six-week Bible study on democracy for young people published in the English-language and German-language denominational newspapers. Through these popular publications, Methodist Bishops and leaders of the Mission Board and Publication Society not only promoted straightforward nationalism that garnered no hint of dissent but also promoted the idea that American democratic ideals had a significant role in the coming Kingdom of God on earth.

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edited during the war years by Rev. Charles Parkhurst. Although it duplicated some materials from the denominational weekly, The Christian Advocate, the newspaper also included original material and editorials.