CREATING A CHRISTIAN AMERICA: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTESTANT

NATIONALISM IN THE GILDED AGE AND PROGRESSIVE ERA

by

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The United States, for the better part of its history, existed as a "Protestant Christian" nation. The creation and cultivation of this distinction began in the seventeenth century with the immigration of English and Dutch Protestants to the New World. In the New World, these Protestant groups founded and administered colonies in the name of God and, with the exception of a small English Catholic colony in Maryland and sporadic French and Spanish Catholic colonies in the South and the West, enjoyed complete political, social, and economic control of the eastern seaboard. Yet differing theological views among the Protestant groups, stemming from either Calvinist or Arminist doctrines of belief, meant each Protestant sect carved regional enclaves dedicated to shaping the destiny of their respective areas as they saw fit.[1]

Despite the individuality of Protestant groups in theology and in cultivating and shaping a particular vision for their respective regions, each of these groups embraced a common orientation driven by a shared vision for the New World—the creation of a Christian America. Whether it was the Anglicans in Virginia, the Huguenots (French Protestants) in the Middle Colonies, the Swedish Lutherans along the Delaware River, the Scottish Presbyterians in New Jersey, the Quakers and Anabaptists in Pennsylvania, or the Moravians in Georgia, the Carolinas and Pennsylvania, all dreamed of establishing a Protestant Christian paradise capable of influencing the destiny of the world.[2] From the

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[1] The simplest distinction between Arminists and Calvinists are as followed: (1) Calvinists believed that predestination in its defined form; as if God by an eternal and irrevocable decision had destined men, some to eternal bliss, others to eternal damnation, without any other law than His own pleasure. Arminists on the contrary, believed that God wished to make all believers in Christ who persisted in their belief to the end blessed. (2) The doctrine of election, according to Calvinists, highlights the idea that the chosen were unavoidably blessed and the outcasts unavoidably lost. Arminists believe that in a milder doctrine that Christ had died for all men, and that believers were only chosen in so far as they enjoyed forgiveness of sins.

seventeenth century through the eighteenth century, the Atlantic seaboard provided a laboratory for Protestant groups to establish "Christian states . . . informed by . . . God's continued guidance over his nation."[3]

The distinction of the United States as "Protestant" shaped many Americans' perception of the greatness of the country, which Louis Snyder described as "messianism." This meant, according to Snyder, that Protestants viewed their country as the pinnacle of civilization capable of transforming not only the destiny of the New World but also the destiny of the world. From the colonial era through the national era, the belief in messianism united colonial Protestants behind a strong "Protestant nationalism," or the belief that the nation's strength and national character stem from embracing, promoting and protecting the Protestant Christian values of the country.

Protestant nationalism derived from two interacting beliefs. The first, that the strength of the United States stems from Protestant Christianity and the racial traits of Anglo-Saxon race (this point would not be emphasized until immigration issues in the early nineteenth century). The second, in order for the United States to maintain that greatness, Protestantism needed to be monolithic and completely ingrained in the socio-cultural landscape of the country. This belief transcended denominational lines, despite differences in theological and liturgical styles, fueling Protestantism to keep America

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[2] Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), 13.

[3] The English Puritan establishment, which gained prominence in the New England colonies following the transfer of Dutch and Swedish lands to England by 1664, established their territories as "holy experiments" with the goal of creating a society so faithful and a church so pure that its light would shine and transform the world. Within the colonies, the process of achieving a Godly society meant there was no room for dissention—not from other faiths and not from those within the purview of the Puritan church. In every colony, laws, customs, liturgy, social constructs and government bodies were created by religious elements to promote a unified and pure Christian society. See Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 7-10.

Christian (which to them meant Protestant) and to promote its expansion into all corners of society.[4]

In the nineteenth century, Protestant nationalism drove many endeavors, including the desire to expand the borders of the country to the Pacific Ocean. Dubbed "Manifest Destiny" in 1839 by John O' Sullivan, the expansion westward took on mythic status in American society, thanks in large part to the writings of prominent clergy like Lyman Beecher, father of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher-Stowe, and popular Americans like Samuel Morse, inventor of the telegraph. These works articulated the importance of American expansion as early as 1835 and shaped perceptions of the region as an "empire of mind, power and wealth" that would be a "glorious benefit" for the nation.[5] The appeal to both religious and nationalist themes served western expansion well as manifest destiny gained widespread support by a majority of Americans. In the end, westward expansion, coupled with the social crusades against Mormons and Catholics, show that, despite the "secular" face of American society, the United States was, according to Richard Wolf, near "monolithic in its Protestant orientation and character."[6]

Beginning in the 1850s, the social and economic changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution weakened the Protestant grip on the country and, conversely, the strength of nationalist Protestantism. As society became more industrial and urban,

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[4] Some good works explaining variations of Protestant nationalism include Louis Snyder, *Varieties of Nationalism* (Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press, 1976); Russell B. Nye, *The Almost Chosen People* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1966); Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987) and Warren L. Vinz, *Pulpit Politics: Faces of American Protestant Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

[5] Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati, OH: Truman & Smith, 1835), 12.

[6] Richard Wolf preface to Robert T. Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1967), *v-vi*.

moving away from the close-knit agrarian communities, Protestant churches failed in their duty to guide this transition. Instead, they remained inert and overly hostile to voices within their religious traditions calling for change. Eventually, the lack of action towards the socio-cultural changes in the industrial era created schisms in the major Protestant denominations (Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians). From the 1870s to the mid-1880s, in fact, the gulf between those wanting to confront these changes and those that wanted to ignore them grew substantially eventually splitting denominations into "liberal" churches, which emphasized temporal salvation and an active clergy, and "conservatives," who maintained the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and spiritual salvation.

In the years immediately following the Civil War, the divisions between Protestant groups deepened. By 1870, the nationalistic Protestantism that dominated the seventeenth through the early nineteenth century vanished. Yet the disconnect between society and the Protestant church would not last. In the late nineteenth century, Ohio Congregationalist Washington Gladden and New York Baptist Walter Rauschenbusch emerged to guide Protestantism back into the hearts of American society while pushing notions of Protestant nationalism into new directions.

In the 1880s, Gladden and Raushcenbusch articulated a theology that refocused colonial messianic nationalism in a nineteenth century context. These men argued that the United States had a special destiny to fulfill as the biblical "City on a Hill," specifically that America was destined to usher in the kingdom of God.[7] Yet social unrest, stemming from political and social clashes in many southern states, threatened America's destiny.

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[7] "City upon a Hill" is a phrase that derives from the "Salt and Light" metaphor found in the Gospel of Matthew, which calls the children of God to shine on the world and glorify the word of God for all. See,

Not willing to give up on seeing the creation of a Christian America and the kingdom of God, Rauschenbusch, Gladden and their contemporaries articulated a national reform campaign based on "Christian obligations," which emphasized that every Protestant had the duty to make the country more Godly and to emulate the good works of Jesus Christ to do so.[8] In the late 1890s and early twentieth century, Charles Sheldon popularized Christian obligation with the motto "What would Jesus do?" helping fuel the "Social Gospel" movement, which combined Christ emulation with a program of social reform and reconstruction aimed at Christianizing the country.[9]

This new dynamic between faith and society and the programs of reform it would spawn proved popular amongst Americans as social reform swept from coast to coast. In fact, liberalism would supplant conservatism and its doctrines of predestination as the primary theological doctrine well into the twentieth century. In the end, the push for social reform and the establishment of the Kingdom of God reignited a nationalistic commitment to the Protestant faith that would last through World War I.

In the nineteenth century, Protestant nationalism became an influential part in shaping the American experience at almost every level of society. Despite the appearance of a nationalistic Protestantism in everything from nineteenth and twentieth century

Matt. 5.13-15 KJV (King James Version). In the American context, John Winthrop, governor and leader of the Massachusetts Bay Company, referenced the biblical term in a 1630 sermon he gave on route to their new home in the New World. In his famous invocation he pronounced that the new colony would be "a City upon a Hill" watched by world. Since Winthrop's time, the term "City on a Hill" defined a special meaning for the birth, growth, and success of America as the preeminent country on earth. In the nineteenth century, Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch used the term to give an eschatological meaning to their vision of social reform.

[8] Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America,* 11-12.

[9] For the discussion of the theology of the "Social Gospel," see Walter Rauschenbusch, "The Church and Social Questions," in *Conservation of National Ideals,* ed. Delphine Bartholomew Wells (New York, NY: Revell, 1911), chap. 9 passim. For its intended application, see entire Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1914) and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1919).

social reform to early twentieth century internationalism, scholarship defining and discussing, explicitly, Protestant nationalism is lacking. In fact, with the exception of Warren L. Vinz's *Pulpit Politics: Faces American Protestant Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (1997), Louis Snyder's *Varieties of Nationalism* (1976), and Russell B. Nye's *The Almost Chosen People* (1966), few works even give a name to Protestant nationalism.

What does exist and what ultimately influences the study of American Protestantism, are works that examine the broad concepts of Protestantism in America. In general, this type of scholarship populates the field of American Protestant history and holds many luminaries as Martin E. Marty, Sidney E. Mead, H. Richard Niebuhr, Robert T. Handy, Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. and Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner. Each one of these historians offers insightful looks into Protestantism including theology, social relevance, political significance and general histories on the development of Protestantism in the United States.

Scholarship on American Protestantism also exists in the form of regional studies. Works on Northern and Eastern Protestantism represent the most oft-studied areas of Protestantism in America with Willem A. Visser 'T Hooft, Charles Howard Hopkins and Martin E. Marty devoting countless pages describing the emergence and importance of the various socio-religious movements, including liberal theology and Social Gospel. Charles Howard Hopkins' *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (1940) in particular offers insightful looks at society in the northeast and, in great detail, explains the path of the social gospel from a placid ideology to a dynamic source of social reform.

Scholars of Southern and Western Protestantism, likewise, offer detailed insights into the dynamics of Protestantism. Works by Southern religious historians C. Vann Woodward, Glenn Feldman, Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald Mathews offer excellent insights into the relationship between faith and society and how that dynamic defined the social and racial structure in the South. Similarly, Ferenc Morton Szasz, Sarah Barringer Gordon, and other Western historians examine how Protestantism shaped and defined relationships between non-Protestant groups, like Mormons, Native Americans, Chinese immigrants and Catholics. More importantly though, these historians analyze how eastern Protestantism shaped and influenced development of the West, ultimately bringing the region into line with the rest of the country.

Combining these various approaches to studying American Protestantism, this work will show that behind the movements of reform, expansion, exclusion and discrimination lays a very specific goal of nineteenth century Protestants—the creation of a Christian America. More importantly, it will show that driving the Protestant quest for a Christian America is a salient and potent Protestant nationalism that united the mainline (and dominant) Protestant groups in a common desire to protect and promote that idea. In order to accomplish this task, it is important to trace the development of nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant nationalism, including the environment in which it developed and the various forms it took after the Civil War.

I

Protestantism Divided: Society and Religion in the Gilded Age

Protestant nationalism derived from two interacting beliefs. The first holds that the strength of the United States stems from Protestant Christianity and the racial traits of Anglo-Saxon race (this point not emphasized until immigration issues in the early nineteenth century). The second belief is that in order for the United States to maintain its greatness, Protestantism needed to be monolithic and completely ingrained in the socio-cultural landscape of the country. This belief transcended denominational lines, despite differences in theological and liturgical styles, fueling Protestantism to keep America Christian (which to them meant Protestant) and to promote its expansion into all corners of society.

The ideas behind America's nineteenth century Protestant nationalism formed early in country's history. In the colonial era, where denominationalism and varying degrees of crown loyalty prevented any sort of national Protestant conscience to form, the belief in crafting a Christian America where church and state were inseparable connected the New England, Middle and Southern colonies. Additionally, the means of the ways in which this hope would coalesce and the activities the various denominations engendered to make that happen likewise connected these different groups. In the New England colonies, for example, Puritans joined church and state through legal means, like the "Cambridge Platform" of 1648 and the "Half-Way Covenant" of 1662. These laws

empowered local magistrates to enforce infractions against the Bible, such as idolatry, blasphemy and heresy while promoting the creation of a biblical commonwealth.[10]

The largely Anglican Southern and middle colonies established similar laws. Yet Anglican preachers did not enforce these laws as strictly as northern Puritans, at least initially. Following the ascension of William and Mary to the English throne, however, the crown took a greater interest in strengthening the colonial church. The Ministry Act of 1693, for example, increased the presence of ministers to New York, while church expansion in Maryland (1702) brought patterns of religious establishment by law into the region. By the time of the American Revolution, Protestants in both regions "served equally as obedience to God's will" and looked towards fulfilling the destiny of the United States.[11]

From the colonial era thru the American Revolution, American Protestants drew inspiration from the vision of a Christian America. According to Robert Handy, this vision "provided a common orientation that cut across denominational differences, and furnished goals toward which all could work."[12] Yet the declaration of independence from Britain, the war and the subsequent pains of creating a nation threatened to derail Protestant hopes. Tensions between denominations vying for supremacy in a socio-religious vacuum and the creation of a constitutionally secular society eroded the

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[10] See the specifics of the Cambridge Platform in Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 194-237. For its influence in shaping Puritan social and religious life, see Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933). For the whole story on the Half-Way Covenant, see Robert G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

[11] William A. Clebsch, *From Sacred to Profane America: The Role of Religion in American History* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 157-58.

[12] Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities,* viii.

religious establishment.[13] Nevertheless, the indomitable spirit of creating a Christian society remained at the very core of the U.S. American experience and continued to link Protestant groups at a base level.

In the nineteenth century, the Protestant drive to Christianize the United States intertwined with destiny of the new nation reinforcing it and, in turn, being reinforced by it. Within the first decade of the nineteenth century, Protestant churches gradually came together in an attempt to Christianize America's education and legal system. In the 1810s, the three largest Protestant groups, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, began a crusade to Christianize the education system, create a legal system favorable to the laws of God, protect public morality from vice, and establish a widespread network of religious institutions capable of ensuring these things would happen.[14]

Protestants also protected their vision from those outside of the Protestant mainstream, specifically the Catholic Church. This rapidly growing group, whose population rose 30,000 to 600,000 from 1790 to 1830, emerged the premier threat to Protestant designs. Beginning in 1840, fears of Catholics fueled nativist and anti-Catholic sentiment in the country, some of which turned violent, and sparked an organized effort to limit their presence in the country.[15] While specific attempts to address Catholics will be discussed in another section, it is important to note this mission pushed Protestants

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[13]At the start of the nineteenth century, eleven Protestant groups vied for control of America's religious sphere. This included larger denominations, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists (Puritans), Lutherans and Episcopal, and the smaller ones, Moravian, Dutch Reformed, German Reformed, Mennonite and Quaker.

[14] Handy, *A Christian America,* 48-51.

[15] Nativist and anti-Catholic concerns were largely driven by those outside of the church. However, influential Protestant leaders, such as Lyman Beecher and Horace Bushnell, fed anti-Catholic sentiment by an influential propaganda campaign. Their wildly popular anti-Catholic works, Beecher's *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati, OH: Truman & Smith, 1835) and Bushnell's *Barbarism the First Danger: A Discourse for Home Mission* (New York, NY: The American Home Mission Society, 1847), while not directly advocating violence, inspired a number of mob acts around the country.

into a "united front against Catholicism" and began a "new Reformation in which Popery would be driven from the land."[16]

As society and religion grew closer in the early nineteenth century, paradoxically, Protestantism bent under the weight of its own ambition. Beginning in the 1830s, divisions appeared between Protestant churches as denominations clashed over numerous secular and religious issues related directly to the desire to protect and promote Protestant America. The most important theological issue, which will be discussed shortly, was the emergence of liberal theology, a new theological trend that placed the Bible in a temporal context and sparked debates of biblical relevance in the changing American landscape. The most contentious in general, however, was the institution of slavery, specifically its role in the country and its legacy and legitimacy in the Bible. In the 1840s and 1850s, many Protestant denominations debated and ultimately split over whether a Christian America should embrace slavery. In the end, the issue of slavery was, perhaps the biggest issue of the pre-Civil War years and *the* issue that ultimately divided Americas Protestant institutions in the early years of the nation's development.

During the years of conflict, 1863-1866, these divisions worsened as northern and southern denominations entrenched themselves in religious rhetoric that supported their view of a Christian society. Southerners and Northerners believed that God was guiding their cause to "affirm…and conserve the institution of slavery" and to "save this land to universal liberty," respectively.[17] In the end, the cessation of war and the reunification of

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[16] Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1938), 181.

[17] Southern views in James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing, 1957), 42. Northern view from Gilbert Haven, *Sermons, Speeches and Letter on Slavery and Its War* (Boston, MA: Arno Press, 1869), 358.

the country did little to mend the cracks between denominations. In fact, the military and religious occupation that characterized Southern Reconstruction pushed northern and southern denominations farther apart.

Following the Civil War, the process of rebuilding the United States was also a process of rebuilding American Protestantism and reconnecting it with the fate of the nation. Yet the country that emerged in the post-war years, in the midst of rapid industrialization, posed serious challenges to these attempts. Instead of coming together to address the negative side of industrialization, such as rampant poverty, corruption, and the general breakdown of "traditional" American society, Protestant denominations remained at odds and largely divided. For a time, at least, the vision for a Protestant American appeared to have died. Protestant nationalism did not die, however. In the decade of the seventies, a shift in the theological landscape of the country pushed Protestant hopes for a Christian America back into the mainstream.

A Brief look at Society in the Gilded Age [18]

Following the Civil War, a wave of industrialization swept triumphantly over America's agrarian culture, which went largely undisturbed since the seventeenth century. In its place arose a vigorous capitalism, unapologetic in its drive to transform the United States into a modern and powerful force. Very quickly "traditional" American life, defined by eloquent simplicity and rugged individualism, gave way to a new social reality that included new national business networks (railroads, telegraph lines, and the banking system), bigger cities, new business and production methods and technological advances (electrical grids, telephone, mechanized farming equipment). With these

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[18] The term "Gilded Age" and a detailed description of what this term means found in Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today,* (1878; New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1904).

advances, many Americans viewed their country as the pinnacle of progress. This description was not far off. While not the pinnacle, per se, the United States did rapidly increase its standing amongst industrial nations, ultimately joining the preeminent industrializing nations in the world by 1870.

The industrialization that characterized the Gilded Age also carried significant problems. For starters, although industrialization did strengthen the nation, the prevailing notion that it was beneficial to everyone was an illusion.[19] In fact, the blessings of industrial progress were, according Glenn Porter, "by no means universally appreciated or equally shared by all."[20] Instead, the wealth and power that emerged during the Gilded Age was concentrated in a select few, what Michael McGerr calls "the upper-ten" percent.[21] For the other ninety percent, industrialization was rife with problems.

Those living in rural America had it especially rough. In this region of the country, industrialization in the form of agricultural mechanization broke apart the family farms and the "island communities," essentially self-sufficient social organizations, in favor of economic and social integration. The farmer, who was used to certain freedoms of working the land, faced a new and hard existence that he did not control. Many could not handle it and left for the west or for jobs in the cities.[22] Those that stayed did not have

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[19] Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1967), 13.

[20] Glenn Porter, "Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business," in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America,* ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996), 4.

[21] Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 37.

[22] Of those farmers most affected were African-Americans. Following emancipation, African Americans were tied to the land, more so than their white counterparts largely because of legal and racial barriers to getting jobs in other sectors of the economy. When industrialization infiltrated rural America, blacks were weighted down with less economic opportunity with whites getting preferential treatment. Job-seeking elsewhere proved inviting but it strained family ties and created an image for African-Americans as being

it any better, particularly if they were poor. Faced with the growth of specialized farming

co-ops, called "agriculture rings," poor farmers banded together to buy land or new

machinery. Yet these farmers could not compete with wealthy farmers who, along with

businesses, formed powerful entities in America's agricultural sphere.

People living in cities, which was the "heart" of industrial America, experienced a

different set of problems than their rural counterparts. Men, women and children, had to

deal with an ever-expanding infrastructure that never quite met the needs of urban

citizens, such as unclean water and general sanitation issues. In addition, America's new

class of wage earners, such as those working in factories or shops, had to deal with an

economic hierarchy where those on top cared more about profit than ethics and morality.

Because of the overwhelming concern of profit over workers' rights, the industrial

masses faced "pauperization and hopeless degradation," such as long hours, low pay and

the constant threat of physical injury or death in the business owners' pursuit of economic

prosperity.[23] Finally, urban dwellers had to deal with political corruption and ineptness,

as well as chronic economic depression and the possibility of living in abject poverty.

The economic and political problems devastated a large portion of American

society during the 1870s. Yet they were not the only concerns facing industrial America.

The changing social order caused by a flood of immigration, over 3 million from 1866-

1880, made the American people equally nervous.[24] In the urban centers of the country,

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indolent, which fueled white prejudice against blacks as being lazy and disloyal. From Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The African-American Experience," in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America,* ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 138.

[23] Terrence V. Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor, 1859-1889* (1890; New York, NY: Scholars Book Shelf, 1967), 128 (citations from the reprinted edition).

where the immigrant presence was overwhelming, tensions between natives and immigrants flared, usually over economic issues. Native-born Americans, for example, often competed for jobs with immigrants who worked for cheaper wages. In the rural areas, it was the same. Business owners hired immigrants over natives because they would accept less money. In California, this tension led to clashes between native labors and Chinese workers, eventually exploding in anti-Chinese movements and a failed attempt at passing legislation aimed at expelling the Chinese and preventing further immigration from China.[25]

The impact of foreign religion on the dominant Protestant order was another concern. As non-Protestant immigrants continued entering the country groups emerged to protect American culture from what they perceived to be threats to the Christianization of the country. These groups, such as the Know-Nothings, targeted religious traditions that they saw as genuine threats to fundamental aspects of American life, e.g. democracy, capitalism and freedom. More often than not, Catholics were the primary targets of these crusades because of Protestant perceptions that Catholics did not share the same respect for ambiguous notions of "Americanism" defined by a commitment to democracy and freedom. Ultimately, these crusades to limit or remove foreign religious influences were an important step in the rebirth of Protestant nationalism because they forged a common identity among Protestantism based on perceptions of cultural and religious superiority.

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[24] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), 14, 106-07. See also Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, NY: Perennial, 1990), 122.

[25] For a broad overview of the anti-Chinese movement, see Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California,* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1973). For legalities of the movement, see Gerald R. Neuman, "The Lost Century of American Immigration Law, 1776-1875," *Columbia Law Review* 93 (December 1993): 1833-1901.

Across the country, the realities of a modern America shaped people's understandings of and reaction towards the industrializing course. Many Americans, as characterized in Booth Tarkington's *The Turmoil* (1915), wished for a return to a time when "No one was rich; few were very poor; the air was clean, and there was time to live."[26] Some lashed out at the system, either through violence, such as the 1877 Great Railway Strike, or through political and legal means. While federal troops put down the former, the latter found some success. Rural organizations, like the Grange and Farmer's Alliance, and urban Knights of Labor, succeeded in getting laws passed that addressed specific needs of the working class, such as a reduced workday and the abolishment of child labor.

In a sea of industrial progress and big business, the successes of these reformers meant little. Businesses continued to assert dominance over both urban and rural America, immigration continued and governments proved inept and ineffectual to meet the basic needs of the people. During the 1870s, the mood of the country was overwhelmingly negative and the vast majority of people came to share a common belief that the fate of each person was determined by distant forces which he or she "neither saw, understood, nor controlled."[27]

Protestantism Addresses the Gilded Age

In the chaos and confusion of industrialization, Protestantism remained largely silent regarding the transformation of American society. This stoicism fueled the dominant mood among denominations, which was one of ambivalence. Within the religious sphere, debates raged amongst denominations on the need for an active and

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[26] Booth Tarkington, *The Turmoil: A Novell* (New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1915), 2.

[27] Wiebe, *The Search for Order,* 12.

involved church, specifically one able to address and reform the deteriorating ethics and morality of modern America.

On one side of the debate were the "liberal" denominations, such as Northern Methodists, Unitarians and some Congregationalists. These groups, which sided with the abolitionist movement in the years before the Civil War, tended to hold a more worldly understanding of the Bible, such as the idea that it was not the literal word of God but a guide of how to live ones life. Stemming from this belief, these denominations viewed the duty of Protestants to emulate the teachings of Christ, specifically those that dealt with social regeneration, and spread those teachings across the world as Christ had done.[28]

During the 1870s, each of these denominations (including a few others, such as the Disciples of Christ and the Friends) did their part in reaching out to those affected most by industrialization. Northern Methodists, reached out to disenfranchised workers in the South, specifically African-Americans and, working with black Methodist congregations, helped further black education by building universities and schools.[29] Congregationalists likewise furthered African-American education in the South, but they also established missions in the West to evangelize the Native Americans but also to help establish medical facilities for the flood of people coming into the area seeking medical treatment from diseases like tuberculosis. Finally, the Unitarian Church helped shape

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[28] For a look at the theology driving these denominations, see Theodore Munger, *The Freedom of Faith* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1883), 3; Willem A. Visser 'T Hooft's *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1963), 169-171 and Winfield Burggraaff, *The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America* (New York, NY: The Board of Publication and Bible-School Work of the Reformed Church in America, 1928), 160-163.

[29] For examples of what the Northern Methodists accomplished, see Paul Douglass, *Christian Reconstruction in the South* (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1909), 44-50 and Henry L. Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941), 94-100.

liberal theology and other worldly theories to address the transformation of modern America. Two Unitarian groups in particular, the Free Religious Association and the Western Unitarian Conference, openly endorsed scientific study and denounced attempts to censor progress in American society as denying the Christian desire to "establish truth . . . in the world."[30]

Popular clergy and theologians, such as Henry Ward Beecher and Samuel Harris, likewise threw their support behind an active church. Harris, for example, gained quite a reputation as an activist following an impassioned speech at the Andover Theological Seminary in 1871. In it, Harris claimed that the need to address social injustice was "divinely inspired." Yet Harris went even further, tying the health of the nation to its status as a "Protestant Christian" country. Harris claimed that the obligation of a Protestant civilization to care for those steamrolled by the industrial process. "Philanthropy; the promise of human progress; the rights of man and the removal of oppression," Beecher argued, were the best hope for a modern civilizations survival, especially a nation that has "absorbed much of the spirit of Christianity.[31]

By reaffirming the nation as Protestant Christian, Harris drew a link between colonial and early nationalist era Protestant nationalism, which would eventually coalesce into its rebirth in the 1880s. In the years following Harris' lecture, others would continue to strengthen those links, especially as industrialization and religious divisions contributed to the continued secularization of the country. Congregationalist laymen and

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[30] James Freeman Clarke, *Orthodoxy: Its Truths and Errors* (Boston, MA: American Unitarian Association, 1866), 603.

[31] Samuel Harris, *The Kingdom of Christ on Earth: Twelve Lectures Delivered Before the Students of the Theological Seminary, Andover,* (1879; Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1885), 2-3 (citations from the reprint edition).

philanthropists Charles Loring Brace was one such individual. In the early 1880s, Brace's popular *Gesta Christi,* an observational piece on the evolution of Protestant theology in the human existence, claimed that the United States and its religious institutions (specifically Protestant ones) showed the greatness of the nation. Brace argued that, as a nation, the United States represented the "progress of civilization." Yet it could only achieve that distinction if Protestantism embraced, what he called, the "achievements of Christianity"—regard for the weakest and poorest, for women, and opposition to all forms of cruelty and oppression—to name a few.[32]

While Harris and his supporters laid the foundation for the rebirth of Protestant nationalism, it fell on others to continue building towards it. The famed Henry Ward Beecher, whose unwavering support for modern society and new revolutions in thought, brought Protestantism closer in line with modern America. Beecher, like Harris, believed the country neglected its Christian obligation to American society, which he saw as keeping pace and guiding any changes that the country underwent. The specific point of Beecher's criticisms, much like the Unitarians, stemmed from the overwhelming resistance within the religious sphere to new scientific and philosophical trends. One of his more controversial stances, in fact, dealt with Beecher openly embracing evolutionary theory, which had infiltrated American society in various forms, i.e. social Darwinism and eugenics. In its pure scientific form, however, Beecher argued that evolution represented "the great truth" obtained through "patient accumulation of fact, and marvelous intuitions of reason, and luminous expositions of philosophic relations, by

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[32] For the complete list of the Achievements of Christ, see Charles Loring Brace, *Gesta Christi: Or a History of Humane Progress under Christianity* (New York, NY: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1882), vi-vii.

men trained in observation, in thinking." He would go on to connect the discovery of evolution to the divine providence of God's plan.[33]

The clergy and intellectuals that emerged as advocates for an active Protestantism were some of the most influential and charismatic religious leaders of the age. Aside from Henry Ward Beecher, who gained notoriety for not only embracing scientific and philosophical trends in a largely hostile environment but also claiming that it was "God's will," very few directly challenged the status quo. Of those who did, none did more to advance social activism and social reformation than Congregationalist minister Washington Gladden.

Beginning his career as religion editor for the New York *Independent* (1871-75), Gladden quickly gained a reputation following his exposé of Boss Tweed that would lead to the successful, yet corrupt, politico's downfall.[34] When he finally moved to the pulpit in 1875, the young firebrand carried that same indomitable spirit and led several crusades against the economic and social sphere of the United States and their commitment to "classical theory"—a hyper-competitive approach to business that emphasized a merciless drive to make profit, often at the expense of the worker.[35] While this approach to business proved successful in making money, Gladden resented the business owner's commitment to a philosophy that would seek personal gain over the welfare of the worker. In fact, Gladden called the whole system a barbaric struggle between organized

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[33] Henry Ward Beecher's thoughts on how man should approach new trends, such as evolution, found in his *Prayers from Plymouth Pulpit* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1867), 45-46. They were later reprinted in Henry Ward Beecher, *Evolution and Religion: Eight Sermons* (Bridgeport, CT: Green & Drummond, 1885), 25-30.

[34] Washington Gladden, *Recollections* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 206.

[35] Samuel Hollander, "Sraffa and the Interpretation of Ricardo: The Marxian Dimension," *History of Political Economy* 32 (Summer 2000): 187-232.

labor and capital, going as far as saying that this dynamic proved "brutal and devastating to the moral order."[36]

In 1885, Gladden published *Working People and Their Employers*, which reflected his long struggle in the seventies to get business owners to "rediscover Christ's law" and find a "new conscience" amongst themselves and in how they conduct business. In this work, Gladden explains that his early crusades to reform the business sphere were a bit idealistic. Yet he firmly believed that business owners should address issues on fair wages and safety that would benefit the worker and bring a new ethical and moral standard into the work place. If they did not address such issues, Gladden concluded, workers had the right to "rectify the situations themselves."[37]

The vagary of Gladden's statement implied, at least to some, that the young minister supported worker protests and strikes, both of which occurred the following year. That was not the case. Gladden believed that strikes and violent protests diminished the integrity of the nation and generally proved futile in rectifying grievances. In fact, strikes and protests in the nineteenth century often led to more restrictive and repressive measures. Instead, Gladden believed that workers had the right to unionize and seek retribution through legal means rather than violence. Although not as controversial as striking or protests, worker's unions maintained an air of suspicion among business leaders, particularly at a time when the fear of socialist ideology started to emerge in American society. Yet Gladden stood by his opinion and continued to push for worker's rights.

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[36] Gladden, *Recollections,* 298.

[37] Washington Gladden, *Working People and Their Employers* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 168-170, 190-191.

Despite his fame and national recognition, neither helped Gladden in his cause as his words carried little weight among the business community. His challenge to the business elites and his advocating of unionization did make him a popular and influential figure in the burgeoning liberal Protestant movement, however. In fact, along with Henry Ward Beecher, Gladden would emerge at the end of the decade a vanguard of liberal theology and, following liberalism's rise to prominence in the mid-1880s, a leader in directing Christian activism across the country.

The ideas of the various denominations and the individuals mentioned represent a fundamental shift in Protestant theology. This "new theology," born in the Great Awakening of the 1840s under the pen of Horace Bushnell and nurtured by the Unitarian Church in the years following, entrenched itself in the ideology of the Protestant Church, especially in the North. The specific of this theology will be discussed in the next section, yet the mindset of Beecher, Gladden, Harris and Northern Methodists, Congregationalists and Unitarians, on issues of social reform and church activism, revolves around one of the goals of the new theological movement—ushering in the "Kingdom of God."

In American religious thought, the idea of God's kingdom existed as the ultimate goal of the various Protestant groups. From the colonial era to the 1870s, in fact, this desire formed the core Protestant nationalist ideology that emphasized the idea that the United States had a special destiny in the world, or what John Winthrop described as a "City on the Hill."[38] Yet the specifics of the kingdom, such as how it was to come about or even what it was, differed among Protestant groups. Until the 1870s, in fact, the only thing denominations could agree upon was the spiritual nature of the kingdom. In the

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[38] For a modern interpretation of the "City Upon a Hill" in context with the ideas of Protestant nationalism, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1951), 46-50.

1870s, liberal denominations and their supporters rallied around the idea of a temporal kingdom, one that was built on earth (within the United States, specifically) and one that would unite secular and religious society into a Christian society.

Although the idea of creating a temporal kingdom rested in Horace Bushnell's original conception of new theology, conservative suppressed serious theological debates on the subject in the forties and fifties. In 1865, Edward Beecher rearticulated the idea as a means to address the changing state of American society. Edward, much like his brother Henry Ward, Samuel Harris and Charles Brace, saw Protestant Christianity as intertwined with the strength of the nation. As the Civil War ended in 1865, Beecher recognized that the schism in Protestantism and the inevitable return of the Industrial Revolution would seriously threaten that bond by, what he saw as, the rise of secularism.

In an article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra,* Beecher argued the America must retain its Christian identity and keep pace with the changes in society. The church (meaning Protestantism) he argued, was ordained to keep "the civil government, the state, commerce, political economy, the arts and sciences, ad the schools, under the influence of God." Relating it to the creation of a temporal kingdom, Beecher continued, "Only when the church has achieved a Christian organization of society, in all nations and in all parts, effected, sustained and animated by God" would the gospel would be complete.[39]

Beginning with Horace Bushnell and Edward Beecher, liberal Protestants formed an ideological opposition to the dominant, conservative socio-religious sphere by advocating an active clergy capable of creating not only the kingdom of God but also a Christian America capable of being the seat of that kingdom. In the 1870s and lasting

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[39] Edward Beecher, "The Scriptural Philosophy of Congregationalism and of Councils," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 22 (April 1865): 287.

until the early eighties, proponents of liberal theology would struggle to get their voices

and ideas into the larger society but to no avail. American society, both in the secular and

religious sphere, embraced firmly the sociological and theological tenets of Calvinism,

which denounced an active and temporal path to salvation. For the rest of the seventies,

liberals and conservatives would clash over the role of the church in society, furthering

the divide between these two theological groups.

Protestantism in Conflict

When liberal theology emerged within Protestantism to address the state of

American society in the seventies, links existed between the nationalistic Protestantism of

the pre-Civil War era and new theology. Yet the growth of liberal Protestantism proved

anachronistic to the realities of America's socio-religious sphere in the 1870s. In fact,

liberal Protestantism emerged 10 years too early and the denominations and individuals

who supported this religious theology in the seventies remained relatively isolated in

American society, their words reaching small audiences in the North or even smaller

groups within denominational traditions. Instead, the vast majority of Protestant

denominations, as well as the socio-religious sphere as a whole, ascribed to a more

conservative theological view drawn from the "habits . . . [and] introspection inherited

from a decadent Calvinism."[40]

Calvinist theology, which articulated a strict orthodoxy of biblical literalism,

clashed with the emergent liberal theology, which did not. Theological differences

between Calvinism and new theology aside, fundamental differences existed in how each

theological view understood industrialization and the modernization of America. Unlike

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[40] Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 15.

new theology, which saw society as corrupt, people suffering and in need of reform, Calvinism articulated the belief that society was as God intended. The plight of the working class, including the harsh living and working conditions, the strength of business and the collection of wealth in a select few, were all part of God's plan for those individuals and if HE saw fit, would change it. Any attempts to alter this course were seen as an affront to God, His plan for society and therefore heretical.

This direct and simplistic understanding of the state of society defined how conservatives responded to the zeal of liberal Protestantism and its agents. Among many conservatives, many believed that new theology "rejected as authoritative the Old and New Testament writers" and claimed those who supported them were committing the highest form of heresy.[41] More importantly though, the adherence to Calvinist theology defined how conservatives approached their own role in industrial America. Instead of getting actively involved, as the liberals would like, conservatives maintained the role of spiritual guides during, what Charles Hopkins called, "a period of testing."[42] Yet the focus of their guidance adhered to tradition and devoted itself to the reformation of the individual, leaving society to take care of itself.

The commitment to the individual, rather than society, is an important aspect of Calvinist ideology that stems from biblical notions of stewardship, which charged the church with the well being and salvation of its members.[43] In this understanding,

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[41] "Orthodoxy: Its Truths and Errors," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 40 (Spring 1868): 126-127.

[42] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 15.

[43] The original Biblical teachings on stewardship that influenced Calvinist thought were Luke 16 and Romans 12:1. For stewardship in the context of nineteenth century Calvinist theology, see George Marsden, "The Gospel of Wealth, The Social Gospel, and the Salvation of Souls in Nineteenth Century

conservatives found common ground with liberals. Where they differ, however, is in the means of achieving individual salvation. Where liberals viewed individual salvation as inexorably tied to social salvation. Conservatives, saw the breakdown of society as inconsequential to saving souls. In fact, conservatives would likely embrace temporal suffering because of the pietistic view within Calvinist ideology that claims that heaven was a reward earned after a period of suffering on earth and only after the individual ". . . lay up treasures in heaven."[44] Societal reform, which was an "unnatural" means of alleviating suffering, in theory, would be detrimental to achieving those rewards.

To further individual salvation, and despite their aversion to social reform or social activism, conservatives in the seventies (actually dating back to the 1860s and the National Reform Association) undertook numerous "reform" missions to supplement the regeneration and salvation of the individuals. Unlike liberal notions of social reform, though, conservative reforms did not transform society. Instead, conservative social reform supported the traditional *mores* and institutions already in place. Commonly called "ascetic Protestantism," these missions focused on things like temperance, prohibition, anti-gambling, anti-prostitution, Sabbath breaking and other issues that threatened the traditional "Puritan ethic." While the benefit to society was minimal, the removal of these temptations was essential to protecting individuals from the corrosion of modern society while simultaneously saving their souls.

As the seventies wore on, marred by depression and revolt in the secular sphere, the divide between liberals and conservatives widened as they clashed over theology and

America," *Modern American Protestantism and Its World: Protestantism and Social Christianity,* ed. Martin E. Marty (New York, NY: K.G. Saur, 1992), 3.

[44] Lyman H. Atwater, "Calvinism in Doctrine and Life," *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review* (New York, NY: J.M. Sherwood, 1875), 75.

the role of the church in society. Conservatives were especially vicious as they attempted

to protect the old order and traditions. Personal attacks on popular clergy, including

accusations of adultery leveled at Henry Ward Beecher and heresy trials of purported

"liberal" clergy within their respective denominations, were common.[45] In the religious

environment of the 1870s, especially until 1875, liberalism did not stand a chance of

blossoming beyond its enclaves in the North. Meanwhile, conservatism, despite its rather

medieval understanding of society and church participation, remained firmly in control of

religious thought and ideology in the United States.

To ensure that this dynamic remained and to ensure that the nation continued to

progress as "God intended," conservatives threw their support behind the pillars of

secular society, specifically corporations and big business. Business owners benefited

from the support of conservative churches as it provided a moralistic justification for

their deeds (or misdeeds) committed in the name of industrial progress and sustainability.

In short, industrialists could pacify the poor, deny their rights, inflict horrid conditions on

them and, thanks to the support of the conservative denominations, remain morally and

ethically in the right.[46] As Washington Gladden carried his campaigns into the economic

sphere, the liberal minister experienced firsthand this relationship. His pleas for worker

rights and the creation of a business ethic, for example, were met with attitudes derived

directly from Calvinist orthodoxy and held the view that a persons place in the economic

sphere, such as worker or business owner, as well as the amount of suffering experienced,

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[45] For the ramifications of the Henry Ward Beecher controversy and the heresy trial of David Swig, see Richard Wightman Fox, "The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism, 1875-1925," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Winter 1993): 641-642.

[46] Herbert G. Gutman, "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age," in *Modern American Protestantism and Its World: Protestantism and Social Christianity*, ed. Martin E. Marty (New York, NY: K.G. Saur, 1992), 36.

revealed their level of sin. In short, people were poor and suffered because they were sinful and rich because they were without sin. Throughout the seventies and into the eighties, the relationship between religious conservatism and big business would be a major impetus to the spread of liberal theology.

Conservatism and traditionalism remained firmly entrenched in America's socio-religious sphere, effectively holding back the "religion of gush" (a term widely used by conservatives to describe liberalism's effusive, emotional and affectionate practices) of Beecher, Gladden and other liberal Protestants. However, the realities of life in the decade of seventies would reveal the tenuous nature of that control and the reality that conservatism resulted in a sterile union of individualism and formalism. In the early twentieth century, in fact, conservatives would look back on the 1870s as the beginning of the decline of conservatism because it did not address the true needs of the people, which stemmed from poverty and economic instability, not alcoholism or dancing. William Jewett Tucker, a liberal theologian writing in 1919, claimed that, although conservatism was a "theology of experience that sent the religious man out into world in prayer, yet failed to end him into the shop or the factory." Liberalism, he argues, "understood the peril of materialism, and sought to harmonize it with religious forces." Conservatism could not. Because of this simple difference, conservatism, he concludes, was "not fit to understand or to meet the problems involved in the rise of industrialization."[47]

The Consequences of Protestant Inaction

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[47] Quote taken from William Jewett Tucker, *My Generation: An Autobiographical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 97. Also in Charles Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 18.

The theological and sociological split between liberals and conservatives, coupled with conservative ill concern for industrial society, rippled into an already fragile secular sphere and drastically changed the relationship between Protestantism and the individual. American society in the 1870s, as previously mentioned, underwent profound changes in its economic and political systems, as well as in its socio-cultural dynamic. These changes did not bode well for a populace, who became gravely concerned with economic hardships, political corruption and increased immigration. Across the country, feelings of hopelessness and despair characterized the general mood of the people. In this type of environment, it is not uncommon to turn to religion for guidance or moral and social uplifting. During the 1870s, liberal currents, which were more sympathetic to social concerns, were isolated and conservatives, more concerned with alcohol, gambling and dancing, continued to direct salvation away from society as a whole.

How this dynamic between conservatives and liberals played out in defining the relationship between the individual and the church is somewhat speculative. Religious historian Willem A. Visser 'T Hooft posits that the lack of support from Protestantism and its ambivalence to the negative changes of industrialization pushed individuals away from national and public expressions of faith, which included attending or supporting their local churches and public outburst of religious fervor. Visser 'T Hooft claims that, amongst those affected, many lost faith in their church's ability to lead their flock against the industrial movement or to influence how industrialization would ultimately affect their lives.[48]

While it is likely that some Protestants fled from houses of worship, particularly in the liberal enclaves in the North and the East, historians Richard Fox and Clifton

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[48] Visser 'T Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America,* 23.

Olmstead offer a more probable explanation of the church-individual dynamic in the decades following the Civil War. Fox and Olmstead contend that people in the mid-nineteenth century actually became more religious despite the failures of local churches or regional federations to address the negative effects of industrialization. One of the more successful methods of fueling religious fervor was the revival meeting, made famous by Dwight Moody. In the early nineteenth century, Moody's revival campaigns gained throngs of supporters in whatever town or city hosted them and inspired many to maintain and grow their faith even during a generally trying time in American history.[49]

While it is hard to confirm if church membership did decline during the seventies, particularly with the successes of Moody's revival crusades, it is easy to gauge how individuals reacted to these changes, and conversely, how the churches reacted to changes in people's attitudes. Individuals became angry at the status quo of "the rich getting richer and the poor poorer" and became susceptible to ideologies that would offer them a modicum of hope or the promise of regaining a measure of control over their lives. Socialism, with its message of equality and, more importantly, its message of natural ownership found an audience with those affected by the widening socio-economic gap. Throughout the seventies, socialist thought found a home among the working class and fueled many forms of worker protests, which ranged from the reform efforts of the Knights of Labor to unionization and the railroad strike of 1877.

The shift towards social radicalism and the acceptance of socialist ideology among the worker did not go unnoticed in the religious community. Yet the majority of conservative denominations approached social discontent in a familiar way; they

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[49] Fox, "The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism, 1875-1925," 643 and Clifton E. Olmstead, *Religion in America, Past and Present* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 114, 118.

recognized a general unhappiness among the people yet they ignored it or focused on their program of ascetic reform. In some cases, conservative churches even openly supported the businesses by denouncing strikes, Socialism, and other popular expressions by the workers. By the end of the decade, conservatism grew increasingly irrelevant to those looking to Protestantism as a means of helping ease the problems of modern America. In the end, the "acids of modernity," as Charles Hopkins put it, ate away at the insulated nature of Calvinist thought and weaken it enough for liberalism to grab hold and shape religious thought and practice.[50]

The popularity and acceptance of liberalism exploded in the eighties. In a number of denominations, with the exception of southern Baptists, liberal minorities quickly assumed control. Even a number of high profile conservative clergy, joined the liberal crusade. Lyman Abbott, Walter Rauschenbusch and Josiah Strong, for example, joined Washington Gladden and Henry Ward Beecher in their crusade to reform society and bring it back in line with Christian principles. Throughout the eighties, these men stepped up and became a guiding force in the religious and social life of the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. From the 1880s until the end of World War I, Gladden, Rauschenbusch and Strong reshaped socio-religious thought in the country, bringing religion and society back together, ultimately pulling Protestant nationalism out from the chaos of the post-war era.

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[50] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 53.

II

Towards a Nationalistic Protestantism: Liberal Theology and Social Christianity

The liberal Protestantism that emerged in the 1880s represented a "new theology" in American life.[51] First theorized in the 1840s by New England Congregationalist Horace Bushnell, liberal Protestantism advocated a step away from the otherworldliness of conservatism towards a more temporal understanding of religion and its role in society. In his works, *God in Christ* (1849) and *Christian Nurture* (1847), Bushnell denounced the rigid conservatism for its dogmatic and often *lassiez-faire* approach to humanity. Instead, Bushnell advocated a more humanist approach to Christianity that sought to reconcile the faith with the needs of the people. More importantly, Bushnell advocated a more simplistic approach to Christianity. The overly dogmatic Calvinism of the 1840s, Bushnell argued, betrayed the original intent of the Christian faith, which was the idea of faith through "inspiration" and a "spiritual vivacity."[52] Not surprisingly, this led Bushnell to criticize some major tenets of Calvinist doctrine, which ranged from disagreements over notions of original sin (which many conservatives used to justify temporal suffering and selective salvation) to doctrinal issues on Atonement and revivalism.[53]

Bushnell's biggest objection to conservative orthodoxy was its pessimism concerning the fate of humanity, which in the forties stemmed from the religious doctrine

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[51] Horace Bushnell first articulated the term "new theology" in the 1840s. Yet his disciple Theodore Munger furthered the development and dissemination of new theology in the 1880s to explain the differences between conservatism and liberalism with regards to social salvation. Conservatism, for example, denied social redemption, while liberalism endorsed it. See Theodore Munger, *The Freedom of Faith* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1883), 25.

[52] Horace Bushnell, *God in Christ: Three Discourses* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1876), 287, 303.

[53] Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner, 1861), 8, 33.

of *premillennialism*. Bushnell, a burgeoning *postmillennialist*, took offense to the idea

that that humanity, as a whole, lacked any hope of salvation.[54] Instead, Bushnell

articulated a different faith for humanity that did not end in destruction but rather one that

ended in humanity living in an earthly paradise under Christ's rule.[55] Moreover, Bushnell

believed that humanity would have an active role duty to prepare the world for Christ's

return. In Bushnell's temporal doctrine of salvation, he argued that humans were the key

to assuring that Christ's return would take place. Bushnell believed this could happen

only through the process of individual *and* social salvation. While the notion of

individual salvation was widely accepted amongst conservatives, the idea of social

salvation remained taboo and heretical in the broader Protestant Christian community.

Yet Bushnell's vision of societal "Perfection," as he called the salvation of both

individual and society was the only way to bring morality to the United States and create

the "Kingdom of God" on earth.[56]

In addition to being a temporal understanding of Christian doctrine, Bushnell's

new theology presented itself as "anti-orthodox." Under Bushnell, liberal Protestantism

broke sharply from the rigid orthodoxy of conservatism and developed into what W.R.

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[54] *Premillennialism* was the belief that at some point in the future the one-thousand-year reign of Christ would be preceded by a period of intense conflict between good and evil, accompanied by the virtual destruction of contemporary society upon which Christ would return and establish his Heavenly Kingdom on Earth. *Postmillennialism*, by contrast, sees Christ coming to set up his kingdom **after** the millennium when man has adequately prepared the world through faithful preaching of the gospel message as the church is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

[55] Mary Bushnell Cheney, *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1880), 295.

[56] In the context of American religious thought, the notion of God's Kingdom is a constant throughout America's history. Ministers ranging from John Winthrop and Jonathan Edwards in the seventeenth century through Horace Bushnell in the 1840s spoke of the creation of the Kingdom as the ultimate goal of America's Protestant institutions. Yet the thinking has always been in a spiritual sense. With the exception of seventeenth century notions of a "City on a Hill," the Kingdom has been envisioned as a place beyond reality. Bushnell would change this perception by promoting a temporal Kingdom. His disciples would continue to push this theory, laying the foundation for the Progressive Era reform movements.

Hutchinson called "a benign religious imperialism."[57] This meant that, unlike

conservatism, which was a static religious doctrine, liberal Protestantism was a dynamic

theology that actively sought to incorporate a multitude of religious, sociological and

political ideologies into its own, unique orthodoxy. In the late nineteenth century, 1880s

and 1890s especially, the influx of new ideologies into American thought liberal

Protestantism encompassed or absorbed several ideologies, which ranged from obviously

liberal beliefs, such as Arminianism (Postmillennialism), Unitarianism and Socialism

(after 1890), to more conservative social doctrines like social Darwinism and, in the early

nineteenth through the twentieth century, "Americanism."

From its inception, liberal theology proved a contentious religious doctrine. In

1840s America, where Calvinism reigned in religious ideology, Bushnell's new theology

regularly incurred the displeasure of theological conservatives. In fact, after the

publication of *Christian Nurture,* Bushnell faced charges of heresy leveled by his fellow

clergy.[58] Yet strands of religious liberalism survived in America's theological landscape.

It would be another thirty years until Bushnell's theology would find a place in American

religious thought where it would influence a widespread program of theological reform

and social activism.

Early Challenges to the Old Order

The social Christianity that emerged in the 1880 descended directly from Horace

Bushnell's new theology. The tenets of individual salvation and social activism of new

theology rooted themselves in late nineteenth century liberal Christianity as Walter

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[57] William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 44.

[58] Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 5.

Raushenbush, Washington Gladden and the other social Christians utilized these concepts to articulate, not only a common goal (the Kingdom of God), but the means to that goal through the establishment of a common identity (Protestant Christian nation). Yet the liberal Christianity that existed during the last two decades of the Gilded Age formed by events that occurred in the years before 1840 all the way to 1880. In these years, periodic burst of religious liberalism challenged the older socio-religious order ultimately laying the foundation for the later social Christian movements.

During the forty-year period between the articulation of liberal theology and the emergence of the social Christians, Bushnell's new theology underwent refinement by events, ideas and individuals that would slowly transform new theology from an abstract theological concept into a doctrine of social activism. For the first two decades, especially, new theology remained in a perpetual state of stasis kept in check by a strict adherence to orthodoxy. Yet periodic outbursts of religious liberalism, responding to a number of social and economic changes, pushed ideas that would become new theology into the national consciences, if only briefly. The earliest of theses social changes that brought liberal religious ideas into American religious thought was the anti-slavery crusades.

From their earliest days, the anti-slavery crusades placed the cause of freeing slaves within the context of religious obligation. In fact, abolitionist movements in the 1830s, such as William Lloyd Garrison's New England Anti-Slavery Society and Minister Theodore Weld's American Anti-Slavery Society, drew their inspiration largely from an 1818 declaration by the Presbyterian General Assembly, which stated that

slavery was a "gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature."[59] By attaching the issues of morality and Christian obligation to the question of slavery, these societies were able to appeal to people's innate religious sensibilities concerning human equality and the temporal Kingdom of God. Although controversial, especially in the South, anti-slave rhetoric was somewhat successful in the North.

In the North, the moral and ethical issues over slavery bled into the region's Protestant churches, energizing Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterians to join the anti-slavery cause. While the most common way of supporting anti-slave crusades consisted of pulpit denouncements, some denominations threw support behind abolitionist societies, such as Theodore Dwight Weld's American Anti-Slavery Society. With denominational backing and support, these associations successfully disseminated anti-slave information amongst sympathetic churches in the region and by the 1830s propelled the issue onto the national scene.

The actions of Protestant abolitionists raised awareness to the heinous act of slaveholding and its un-Christian nature and sparked an interfaith debate amongst liberal and conservative factions over the nature of church involvement in temporal matters.[60] Despite the interfaith dialogue, the churches that formed or joined abolitionist societies and advocated active protests were few and did not represent the overall attitudes of American Protestants. Instead, the views of Protestants in the 1830s were largely against any sort of active involvement against the institution of slavery. The most common reasoning was that the Church should not "meddle in temporal affairs" because the

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[59] *Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia, PA: William Bradford Publishing, 1818), 28-29. Also in Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities,* 61-62.

[60] Olmstead, *Religion in America,* 95.

chance to "injure religion" was too great.[61] While this attitude portrays ambivalence towards the issue of slavery on an institutional level, it betrays the actual feelings of the clergy, many of whom held negative views toward slavery, as well as concerns about the effect of slavery on American civilization. Southern Minster John Holt Rice, for example, was "convinced that slavery is the greatest evil in our country," but because of the nature of early nineteenth century religious beliefs, individual feelings, such as Rice's, meant little.

The debates of church action versus inaction carried into the 1840s and 1850s, where these issues folded into the emerging debate on biblical literalism versus biblical rationalism.[62] The abolitionists, reflecting Bushnellian ideals on biblical rationalism, drew the ire of biblical literalists, who claimed a scriptural base for slavery. Instead, the abolitionists claimed that, according to the Bible, slavery went against the teachings of Christ and His teachings of "universal brotherhood." Although biblical literalists had an answer to the abolitionists' claims, that the Bible did in fact condone slavery, each side was entrenched in their respective beliefs and unwilling to compromise. The question of biblical literalism versus biblical rationalism drove a wedge between liberal and conservative Protestant churches that would last into the decades following the Civil War.[63]

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[61] Excerpted from Ernest T. Thompson, *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1961), 20.

[62] Olmstead, *Religion in America,* 96.

[63] Of those that split over the issues of slavery were the "Big Three" of American Protestant Churches: The Baptist (split in 1844-45), Methodists (1844-45) and Presbyterians (a protracted spilt between 1857-1861), see Nelson R. Burr, *A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America: Religion in American Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 683-693.

Other instances of religious liberalism occurred in the period of intense revivalism and spiritualism following the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. In the early years of industrialization, American society invested itself, both physically and spiritually, in modernization. Workers from all over the country flocked to industrial centers in search of a better life and better opportunities. Beginning in late 1857-early 1858, however, a stock market crash shook American society to its spiritual core bringing on mass hysteria and doomsayers decrying the economic turmoil as punishment for the sins of society.[64] In several large cities, throngs of individuals filled local churches seeking repentance and moral guidance on how to rid society of its sin. One of the more popular methods of removing sin was sanctification, or the receiving of Christ's saving love to purify the body of sinful impulses. Gradually, this movement of personal atonement spread into smaller cities and churches, slowly infiltrating Protestant churches across the country.

At the heart of the revival movement existed the Bushnellian concept "Perfection." As previously mentioned, "Perfection" advocates the idea that salvation of society occurs only after individual salvation. In the late 1850s, this idea manifested in the sanctification movements gaining popularity in each instance were revivalism took hold. Eventually, this movement gained even more momentum in the 1860s with numerous lay organizations pushing for comprehensive social reform, especially in the years of Reconstruction. Like the social activism of the abolitionist movements, ideas of social and individual salvation were subject to the whims of the dominant conservatism, which grew more potent in the years leading up to and, especially during, the Civil War.

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[64] Olmstead, *Religion in America,* 90 and T.L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America,* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 238.

The instances where new theology emerged did not signal a widespread theological shift towards liberalism, but rather a brief repudiation of America's religious discourse. Even the North's victory in the Civil War and the subsequent missions to "reform" Southern denominations did little to uproot conservatism from American religious life.[65] Instead, American Protestantism remained firmly committed to its Calvinist roots and conservatism continued to dominate religious and social discourse following the Civil War. This was due in large part to the nature of the "liberal" character leading these surges, which was not liberal at all. In the 1850s and 1860s, no true liberal Christian led these momentary surges in liberal ideology, largely because none existed. Instead, each of these instances was led by so-called "enlightened Conservatives"— orthodox individuals cognizant of the problems of society and willing to speak out on temporal ways to alleviate these problems. Eventually though, these individuals would embrace their identity as theological "liberals" (as they called themselves throughout the nineteenth century to distinguish themselves from the culturally stricter "Calvinists"), with some, including Washington Gladden and Henry Ward Beecher, emerging as leaders in the movement to spread new theology.[66]

New Theology Emerges

The sporadic nature of theological liberalism in the first half of the nineteenth century proved the power of religious conservatism in American society. Until 1870, in fact, new theology remained marginalized in the broader socio-religious sphere existing in pockets, or enclaves, around the country. Despite new theology's marginalization,

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[65] The actions of Northern Protestants and their missionaries actually furthered the gulf between liberals and conservatives. In the South, the process of Reconstruction and the various "mission" movements to the region only served to unite the various denominations against liberal currents.

[66] Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America,* 10.

Bushnell's teachings on social salvation and individual regeneration thrived well into the

Glided Age thanks in large part to the actions of a handful of clergy and organizations

keeping liberal theology in the conscience of American Protestantism. Men such as

Henry Ward Beecher, Washington Gladden and Theodore Munger, would continue to

shape new theology around important social and economic changes in American society,

specifically the social and economic "modernization" of country during the post-war

phase of the Industrial Revolution. As businesses grew and transformed American cities

following the war, new socio-cultural ideas began to infiltrate everyday thought. Perhaps

the most significant of these new ideas, and one that influenced the socio-religious

landscape greatly, was the theory of evolution.

By the 1870s, Charles Darwin's opus on evolution, which explained the origins of

man away from the Biblical interpretation of creation, found broad acceptance among

Americans. The integration of evolutionary theory happened, thanks in large part, to the

works of Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer, whose theories on the role of

evolutionary thought shaped American socio-cultural relations for decades.[67] Not

surprisingly, conservatives castigated Darwin's theory as "atheistic" and a "bestial

hypothesis" because it challenged the core ideology of human existence. Liberals on the

other hand welcomed the theory of evolution because, according to Henry Ward Beecher,

it provided ammunition against conservatives' stranglehold on Biblical orthodoxy by

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[67] For these ideas, see Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology,* vol. 2 (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), 506-511, 522. This book covers metaphysics, biology, psychology, sociology and ethics interpreted according to the principle of evolutionary progress. More importantly, Spencer's work brought the doctrines of evolution within the grasp of the general reading public and to establish sociology as a discipline. See also, Thomas Huxley, *Evidence on Man's Place in Nature,* (1863; Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003). This book, published only five years after Darwin's *Origin of Species*, was a comprehensive review of what was known at the time about primate and human paleontology and ethnology. More than that, it was the first attempt to apply evolution explicitly to the human race.

bringing "aid to religious truth . . . [and] falls in line with the other marked developments of God's providence . . ."[68]

The final decade of this forty-year period represents the most significant for the development of Bushnell's new theology simply because it forced the issue of how religion was going to deal with, not only new theories in science, but also the many facets of social modernization. The liberals' willingness to adapt to the changing socio-cultural landscape (coupled with conservatives' repudiation of modernization) gave them an edge in winning the hearts and minds of American Protestants. This is important, particularly in the 1870s, when economic recession was effectively destroying or altering what was left of the old religious and social orders.

In large and growing cities, such as New York and Chicago, the sore spots under the gilded surface revealed a culture of exploitation and degradation exemplified by horrid working situations and squalid living conditions that existed in the overcrowded tenements. In addition, poverty was rampant amongst the lower classes, workers became disposable commodities, and political corruption made sure that the means to address such conditions would not improve.[69] The largely conservative religious sphere recognized the plight of the worker but remained silent on how to address their concerns. Instead, clergy urged the workers to look towards the afterlife for their reward and not to worry about conditions in the factories or in the tenements. In spite of conservative ambivalence, the squalor of city life drew out a consortium of Protestant liberals willing to challenge the status quo.

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[68] Henry Ward Beecher, *Evolution and Religion*, preface passim.

[69] Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights, IL.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1983), 3-7.

Those within the liberal churches perceptive enough to recognize a need for change in approach were rare but they began to make themselves known in the 1870s. Men such as Reverend Edward A. Washburn of New York, for example, spoke on the need for social reform an urged faithful Christians to do everything in their power to help those affected most by industrial practices. Additionally, Washburn advocated "the morality of Christ" on American businessmen urging them to practice "social honesty" in regards to cleaning up factories and eliminating the need for child labor.[70] In that same period, Episcopal bishop Henry Codman Potter advocated an increased role of the church in addressing social problems stemming from industrialization, stating that it is necessary for the church to retain its hold on the people.[71]

In spite of Washburn's assessment of the great city as "the growing curse of civilization" and a "plague center," and Potter's assumptions on the role of the church in societal affairs, liberal Protestants remained unconcerned with the state of society. The main reason for this ambivalence did not reflect an inherent commitment to Calvinist ideology, but rather it reflected the inability to move away from the social crusades of the previous decades, most notably the anti-slave crusade. Through the fifties and sixties, liberal Protestants in the North and East focused all their attention on the abolition movement and directed all their energies towards freeing the slaves.

As the second phase of the Industrial Revolution took off following the Civil War, few liberal churches made the transition from discussing the state of slavery to discussing

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[70] Originally in Edward A. Washburn, *The Social Law of God: Sermons on the Ten Commandments* (New York, NY: Thomas Whittaker, 1881), 121, 212. Excerpts reprinted in Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 34.

[71] See Harriet A Keyser, *Bishop Potter, the People's Friend* (New York, NY: Thomas Whittaker, 1910), chap. I.

the society born from the industrial process. Instead, many churches, particularly those in the Northeast, resigned themselves to indoctrinating freed slaves into the larger social order choosing to ignore the plight of the worker. Until the mid-seventies, few Protestant institutions ventured away from this crusade of social, intellectual and moral support of the nation's black communities. Those that did, such as Washburn and Potter, became "radicals" among their peers.

One of these so-called radicals, Washington Gladden, stands out among early liberal Protestants in that he sought to alter the course of liberal religious thought away from the issue of slavery and onto the concerns of society as a whole, specifically as it relates to the workers of his time. In his work, *Working People and their Employers* (1876), Gladden claimed, "Now that slavery is out of the way, the question that concerns our free laborers are coming forward . . . They are not only questions of economy, they are in a large sense moral questions . . . it is plain the pulpit must have something to say about them."[72]

Gladden's attitudes towards the working class emerged as a reaction to the horrors of industrialization. As a young minister in Ohio in the early 1860s, Gladden established a reputation as a fierce critic of the deplorable laxity of morals in society and of the ambivalence of the churches in addressing the temporal concerns of society, particularly the concerns of the working class. Early in his career, he chastised conservative religious institutions for their lack of compassion towards the worker and he spoke on addressing the ills of *this* world as a fundamental instead of relying solely on spiritual absolution. This concern for workers led the young minister, then editor of New York *Independent*

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[72] Gladden, *Working People and their Employers*, 8.

(1871-75)*,* to attack political and social corruption.[73] While Gladden posed tough moral and religious questions to political leaders, he ultimately resigned his post in 1875 to pursue other endeavors.[74]

Gladden's need to protect the worker proved perceptive to the changing socio-religious dynamic within Protestantism. In the 1870s, American Protestantism began a slow shift from conservative to liberal theologies. One of the outcomes of this shift revealed a greater appreciation for the role of the worker in society among liberal Protestants. The crusade to better society through the working class fell in line with a larger socio-religious mission of creating a moral and righteous society based on Christian influences. Gladden, like the Reverend Edward Beecher in the sixties and Henry Ward Beecher in 1880s, saw the worker as a conduit for the bringing civil government, commerce, political economy, the arts and sciences, and the schools, under the influence of God. Unfortunately, the end of the 1870s saw little headway in the larger socio-cultural sphere of nurturing the proposed status of the working class. For example, businesses and conservative churches, which still dominated American society, continued to abuse their station and exploit or ignore the worker. Additionally, proponents of new theology proved ineffectual at helping the poor and working class thanks to a limited understanding of civil and equal rights for workers. Because of these factors, the worker and the poor, caught between an uncaring industrial elite, an ambivalent conservative clergy and an inept liberal clergy, withdrew from the religious sphere.

The Birth of "Social Christianity"

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[73] See Chapter 1, above.

[74] Stories found in Gladden, *Recollections,* 206-210, 243-247, 252.

The processes of industrialization and era of conservative dominance of the 1870s left a divide between religion and society. In the 1880s, that divide grew larger, bordering on total alienation between the two groups and helped the secularization of American society.[75] Many clergy, including the prominent minister Walter Rauschenbusch, spoke extensively on the need for an aggressive Protestantism as the means to refocus Christianity back to the needs of the people. Reflecting on this period in his work *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), Raushenbucsh realized that good intentions lacked the aggressiveness to reform society. Instead, he argued, America's churches needed to advocate a more active approach to social reform.[76] As the perceptions of declining ethics and morality grew more acute, clergyman, many of whom echoed the sentiments of Gladden, Henry Ward Beecher and Rauschenbusch spoke openly on the need for a dynamic and an active Protestantism that reoriented itself back in line with the needs of the people. Towards the end of the decade, this social conscience grew among America's liberal theologians leading them to embrace, openly, social activism and an aggressive Protestantism.

A prime motivator of Christian activism centered on the belief that the modern world, with its excesses of individualism, initiated a new social crisis. Proponents of Christian activism, including Henry Ward Beecher (who died in 1887), Washington Gladden, Walter Raushenbucsh, Josiah Strong and famed economist Richard T. Ely, believed that the churches exercise their spiritual obligation to ameliorate these issues.

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[75] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 54-55.

[76] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1907), 206-209.

More importantly, these men believed that the only way to do that meant reconstructing society in a manner that reflected the country's Christian heritage.

The process of reconstructing the country would be daunting, as each liberal denomination held differing approaches based on their unique understanding of scripture. Some liberal Protestants, for example, fought social sin and sought reform through charity. Some adovacted social reconstruction along socialist lines where everyone would be an equal in the eyes of God. Regardless of the differeing processes or the understanding of the task before them, each attempt to reform society fit under a broader crusade defined by the term "social Christianity."[77]

The popular assumption of social Christianity centers on its distinction as anti-orthodox, or that it does not have a systematic core of doctrine or a distinctive theological viewpoint. Yet social Christianity shared many tenets with new theology, including the focus of temporal salvation as a means to spiritual salvation, the reorganization of the social order along Christian ideals, and the creation of the Kingdom of God.

Similarities aside, social Christianity represented an evolved form of new theology with several unique concepts. The most important of which, and one of social Christianity's central tenets, was "individual regeneration."[78] Modeled after Bushnell's perfection ideology and one of the Reverend Jesse Henry Jones' "two wings of Protestantism," individual regeneration was, in essence, transforming oneself into a more moral person by "dedicating all the life to God."[79]

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[77] Olmstead, *Religion in America,* 124.

[78] Charles M. Morse, "Regeneration as a Force in Reform Movements," *Methodist Review* 73 (Winter 1891): 171.

[79] John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection: The Works of John Wesley* (1872; Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1966) 366-446 (citations from the reprint edition). For the complete details

Unlike Bushnell's notion of regeneration, which meant simply living a pious life, individual regeneration went much deeper. Tracing its origins to works by John Wesley, the eighteenth century Methodist minister and theological inspiration to Horace Bushnell, individual regeneration rested not on finding one's internal goodness but "the Authority of Christ."[80]

The Authority of Christ, at its core, defined Christian activism in the context of the action of Jesus Christ as both the spiritual "Redeemer" and the temporal "Good Samaritan" instead of an abstract moralism drawn from man's innate Christian obligation, which Bushnell and liberals in the fifties and sixties used to fuel anti-slave campaigns.[81] By using the spiritual and temporal dimensions of Christ as a template for how humanity should act, especially on issues of social activism, advocates of individual regeneration enticed men to seek a truer insight into the meanings of God by asking, "What would Jesus do?"[82] Ultimately, individual regeneration based on the Authority of

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on the nature of the "Two Wings of Protestantism," see Jesse Henry Jones, *The Kingdom of Heaven: What is it; Where is it; and the Duty of American Christians Concerning It* (Boston, MA: Noyes, Holmes and Company, 1871), 222-230.

[80] Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection The Works of John Wesley,* 119. For important nineteenth century works that discuss the "authority of Christ" as the central theme see, William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology,* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898) and William Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).

[81] Visser T'Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America,* 40.

[82] The origin of this phrase comes from a story in the book in which, at the close of a sermon on following Jesus when a shabby-looking young man told "his hearers a tale of unemployment and want." He then tells the tale of how his wife died, gasping for air, in a New York tenement owned by a member of a church. Trying to understand how rich Christians could turn their backs on those in need, and still praise and worship God, the man asks, "What would Jesus do?" After asking his question, the man collapsed in the aisle. Following the man's death a few days later, the minister took the man's query as a challenge to Christian doctrine. He told his followers to not embark on any action without first asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* (Chicago, IL: Whitaker House, 1898), 14.

Christ legitimized social Christianity into what Historian H. Churchill King called the "religion *of* Jesus" rather than the "religion *about* Jesus."[83]

Individual regeneration, or the act of creating a person "totally Christian in character, spirit and purpose," became an integral part of the social Christians' plan to reconstruct America and reinforce its distinction as a Christian nation.[84] Despite widespread acceptance of individual regeneration to liberal thought, other issues arose that retarded any progressed towards achieving their aims. One of the more pressing of these issues facing liberal denominations centered on the exact definition of a Christian America.

In the late 1870s, two schools of thought emerged offering differing visions for a Christian America. The first, influenced by Josiah Strong, espoused an exclusionist and totally Protestant Christian America. In this vision, the kingdom of God existed only for those of true Protestant stock, which meant Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian or Presbyterian. Strong argued that the growth of other faiths in the country (Mormons, Jews, Catholics and the myriad of minor Protestant denominations) prevented the coming of the kingdom and that true Christians must do everything to remove these obstacles from American society.[85]

By contrast, Walter Rauschenbusch presented a more utopian Christian America that encompassed all faiths (with Protestants on top) working together to build a better society. In this vision, things like denominational and cultural differences did not matter.

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[83] H. Churchill King quoted in Visser T'Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America,* 37.

[84] Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America,* 6-7.

[85] His thoughts on non-Protestants and non-whites found in Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Past, Present and Possible Future* (New York, NY: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1885), chap. 4 passim.

Instead, this Christian America would be maintained through religious humanitarianism—essentially social work and social activism working together to promote a better society and bring the kingdom of God to fruition.

Both Strong's and Rauschenbusch's view of a Christian America represented the extremes of what a Christian America would be. While support for each existed among liberal Protestants, the consensus of how to define a Christian America came from Richard T. Ely and his idea of a "Christian commonwealth." Ely believed, as the others eventually would, that Protestant Christians were obligated to unite, in theology and purpose, along the lines of social solidarity, or "the dependence of man upon man."[86] Containing elements of socialist ideology, i.e. collective-cooperation, Ely's social solidarity reflected a powerful desire among liberal Protestants to remove the negative effects of society and seek the kingdom of God through activism and other means to reform society.

Ely's vision for the United States, and his call for active reform, represented something tangible, something that American Protestants could utilize in the here and now. More importantly, Ely's vision proved more feasible than Strong's doctrine of exclusion (although numerous crusades occurring at the time were attempting to fulfill Strong's vision) and less utopian than Rauschenbusch's vision of a religious society. In the end, the goal of creating a Christian commonwealth fueled nineteenth century social Christianity at many levels and provided the means to not only transform the individual but also to bring the kingdom of God ever closer to fruition.

Challenges to Social Christianity

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[86] Richard T. Ely, *Social Aspects of Christianity: And Other Essays* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1889), 26-27

The ideas of Christianity as a temporal theology and as a social institution worked together, almost symbiotically, to define the essence of social Christianity. As Jesse Henry Jones opined in 1875, these two distinctions created "two wings" of Protestantism working together towards a common goal. In other words, the only possible way to create God's Kingdom and redeem society came from both the regeneration and redemption of men.[87] In the nineties, the message of the social Christians carried into all corners of society and addressed issues relevant to achieving goals of societal, moral and ethical redemption. In the seventies and eighties, the message of socializing religion, and the larger idea liberal Protestant ideology, made social Christianity an easy target for those challenged by its message.

One of the groups to challenge the advance of social Christianity was the large corporations, otherwise known as "trusts" or "big business." In general, business owners viewed social Christianity in an overwhelmingly negative light. They did not like liberal theology's overt socialist tones, nor did they like the fact that men like Washington Gladden actively sought to disrupt their economic source through anti-capitalist rhetoric disguised as moralism and "business ethics." [88]

The harshest criticism directed towards liberal clergy stemmed from the clergy's' active participation in the economic sphere, such as Washington Gladden's unwavering support of labor unions and their right to protest. On this point, business owners believed that supporting the right of the worker to rage against the establishment distracted clergy from the true tasks of the church and its members—saving souls.

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[87] Charles Ellwood, *Reconstruction of Religion: A Sociological View* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1922), 77.

[88] Ibid., 27.

This anti-social Christian sentiment existed within a vast majority of nineteenth century business owners, yet not all of America's business elites denounced the call for a Christian business ethic and the recognition of workers' rights. Andrew Carnegie, the famed industrialist and devout Christian, spoke on the need for a new business ethic and advocated societal reform that benefited the workers.[89] Despite the support of powerful industrialists like Carnegie, the atmosphere of the economic sphere remained overly hostile to the actions of the social Christians.

The business owners' disdain for social Christians, while potent, meant nothing compared to the animosity that existed within the Protestant sphere itself. The more conservative Protestant, called "fundamentalists" in the 1880s, looked upon the social Christians as abominations to Protestant theology and heretical to Christian orthodoxy.[90] Among their list of criticisms existed many old concerns, such as distrust towards the establishment of the "institutional church." Keeping in line with their strict and orthodox view of Protestantism, conservatives believed that the institutionalization of the church— the process of making it involved in temporal matters of the state—went against long held notions of "predestination." As such, fundamentalists viewed liberal attempts at

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[89] Carnegie advocated a moralist avenue for the rich to address poverty in society. In a plea to his fellow elites, Carnegie claimed that they, meaning the rich, had in their power the means to eradicate poverty in the United States. In decidedly religious language, Carnegie associated poverty with sin and asserted that the gates of paradise were only available to those committed to bettering society. While Carnegie's thesis was praised in almost every respect, it was ignored within his community and social circles. See, Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth,* (1889; reprint, Bedford: MA: Applewood Books, 1998), 14 (citations taken from the reprint edition).

[90] The term "Fundamentalists" denotes conservatisms return to a more Calvinist understanding of the Christian faith and their opposition to what they saw as a move away from the fundamental teachings of the Bible.

social activism, which consisted of aggressive evangelization and numerous social work programs, as an attempt to defy God's will.[91]

Many new concerns existed as well, particularly as liberals gained more power in shaping Protestant theology. Liberals, who viewed the Bible as subject to literary criticism, drew the ire of conservatives, who understood the Bible as the infallible word of God. As the shift from conservatives to liberalism accelerated in the eighties, the liberal view of a malleable orthodoxy integrated into their mission and justified much of their crusade. Yet liberals, in their attempt to reconcile doctrine with social regeneration, came under fire by conservatives calling their mission heretical and "anti-Christian."

At the heart of conservative criticism, and the primary point of contention between religious ideologies in the eighties, lay liberal assumptions that humans were capable of voluntary control over conditions and circumstances formerly assigned to supernatural powers. In short, fundamentalists believed that liberal Protestants took salvation away from God and placed it in the hands of man. Thus, challenging, or worse trying to supplant, the otherworldliness of the Bible.[92] Ultimately, the differences between the two theologies continued to push liberals and fundamentalists further apart, at least temporarily.

Throughout the seventies and eighties, the challenges from social and business elites and the conservative elements within America's Protestant churches severely hampered the spread of liberal Protestantism. Towards the end of the eighties, however,

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[91] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York, NY: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1873), 152. Also quoted in Ira V. Brown, "The Higher Criticism Comes to America," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 38 (December 1960): 194 and Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1982), 35.

[92] Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America, 25*.

the social Christian's emphases on the temporal nature of Christianity and its focus on the whole social system aligned, if slowly, social Christian theology with the concerns of the vast majority of Americans. By 1890, the message of social Christianity found acceptance through American society and found a place amongst those affected by industrialization—the poor, the worker and the middle-class. Yet problems persisted. At the close of the eighties, the social Christian movement remained a static force limited to discussions of action rather than actual activism as the concerns of the social Christians.

Transforming Social Christianity

The evolution of social Christianity from the mid-forties to the eighties was a slow adjustment of the liberal clergy to the needs of the common person.[93] The transition from an abolitionist's mindset to a reform one, coupled with an embattled industry and fundamentalist Protestant agitators, contributed greatly to social Christianity's slow evolution. Yet other reasons affected how the liberal movement evolved. According to Charles Hopkins, social Christianity in the eighties remained stuck in a phase of adolescent idealism. The movement, Hopkins describes, was "focused more on utopian idealism than establishing a concrete sociological foundation for reform."[94] As a result, much of social Christian theology rested on grand ideals eloquently articulated in public forums or national convention instead of finding application to real life situations. Because of these factors, the last decade of the century brought a sobering realization

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[93] Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America,* 12-14.

[94] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 54-55

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amongst the social Christians—the amorphous theology of social Christianity lacked sufficient power to reform the ethical and moral degradation of society.[95]

In the 1890s, the call among social Christians for an aggressive Christian activism intensified. Beginning in 1893, for example, a depression barreled down on the American populace that ushered in massive unemployment, around 4 million without jobs during the yearlong depression.[96] Additionally, the early nineties witnessed corporations continuing to abuse workers, deny the rights of unions and use the government to put down riots and protests with violent and repressive measures. All of these issues exacerbated the already deteriorating social conditions across the United States to the point individuals believed in the imminent breakdown of society. According to historian Richard Hofstadter, the uncertainty of whether things would improve created a "psychic crisis" among Americans.[97] This issue, coupled with the depression, the growth of the immigrant class, the rampant corruption of government at the local level and the general breakdown of ethical and moral standards, pushed the question of an aggressive Protestantism into the forefront of theological debate.[98]

The vanguards of an aggressive social Christian movement represented a diverse group of individuals from a myriad of secular and religious traditions. Moreover, the leaders of this movement represented familiar faces within the liberal theological tradition of the seventies and eighties. Two of the individuals, Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch, pioneered an aggressive social Christianity as early as the 1870s.

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[95] Philips, *A Kingdom on Earth,* 116-117.

[96] Robert Hunter, *Poverty* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1905), 11.

[97] Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics*," Harper's Magazine,* November 1964, 77–86.

[98] Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America,* 60-61.

In the nineties, these men became the leaders and the prophets of the dynamic and aggressive Christian theology. Many historians, in fact, consider Rauschenbusch the father of practical activism based on his works with the Brotherhood of the Kingdom and his theological opus and national reform movement, the "social gospel."

For the most part, the distinction of Walter Rauschenbusch as the father of practical activism rings true. In numerous speeches and writings, which carried the same theme from the nineties to the twentieth century, the outspoken Rauschenbusch assailed America's Protestant churches as collectively "dumb," "inert," "impersonal," and lacking any sort of evangelical spirit when dealing with the nation's problems. In his mind, the lack of initiative characterized the Protestant churches as "narrow and incompletely Christian." Instead, Rauschenbusch believed that "true" Christians are "active" and "passionate" about social activism and social reform.[99] While the criticism of how Protestants addressed social concerns angered both the liberal or fundamentalist camps, it did make headway in changing American Protestantism.

Like Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden maintains a similar regarded during this time largely based on his involvement in helping the working class. Following the Haymarket riots of 1886, Gladden spoke out in favor of the worker's right to strike. Although he did not encourage violence (in fact, he deplored the use of violence as a means of social change), Gladden did support the worker's claim to the fruits of their labor. Through the eighties, Gladden's work with unions and his declarations on the rights of workers, which he claimed was under "attack" by industrial elites and big business, propelled this minister from Ohio into the national spotlight. In the nineties,

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[99] Walter Rauschenbusch, "The New Evangelism," *The Independent* 56 (May 1904): 1056-61. Reprinted in Walter Rauschenbusch, "The New Evangelism," in *American Protestant Thought: The Liberal Era,* ed. William R. Hutchison (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 110-13.

Gladden continued to exert his influence over the liberal Protestant movement as he fought to unite the processes of modernization and the tenets of new theology. His 1890 work *Burning Questions,* in fact, poses several questions—"Has Evolution Abolished God?", "Who is Jesus Christ", "Is death the end?"—meant to guide Protestants and show them how modernization and faith can be reconciled.[100] By the turn of the century, social Christians embraced the worker, thanks in large part to the writings of Washington Gladden.

The minister Josiah Strong represents another important figure in evolving the social Christian movement through his advocating various programs to stabilize the changing social order thus laying the foundation for social regeneration. Throughout the eighties, Strong spoke out frequently on the changing social face of the United States and the need to maintain a strict social order constructed and maintained in the Protestant religious traditions. In Strong's seminal work, *Our Country,* the outspoken and controversial minister rallied faithful Protestants against challenges to the "Protestant order." This included immigrants, Catholics, Mormons and other groups that Strong saw as a threat to Protestant dominance in America and the creation of a Christian America.[101]

In the late eighties, Strong, utilizing his role as secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, initiated two important conferences to discuss these "perils" and the

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[100] These questions are posed throughout Washington Gladden, *Burning Questions of the Life That Now Is, and That Which Is to Come* (New York, NY: The Century Co., 1891), 1-45.

[101] For Josiah Strong's thoughts on non-Protestant groups, see Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis* (New York, NY: Baker & Taylor, 1891), chap. 4, chap. 5 passim. Specifics of Strong's address found in John Henry Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religion: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with The Columbian Exposition of 1893,* vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893), 1449.

"opportunities of the Christian church and of the country" to best address them.[102] Yet

outside of actually establishing that these perils posed a real threat to the vision of a

Christian America, nothing came out of the meeting to address them. In 1893, Strong

held the third and final of these conferences that actually set a task for American

Protestantism to fulfill its social and religious mission. Thanks to the works of Josiah

Strong, a new dimension, called "Social Evangelization," emerged in the social Christian

movement emphasizing conversion of non-Protestants, thus softening his earlier position

of outright exclusion. This idea carried over into the twentieth century as the bases for the

social gospel as well as the "Americanization" movements of the 1910s.

The only non-religious leader was the economist Richard T. Ely. Professor Ely,

according to the minister Lyman Abbott, was "the first economist to treat economics as a

human problem" and an ardent critic of the state of religion in American society.[103]

Throughout the eighties, Ely, like many of his religious compatriots, voiced concern of

America's religious institutions benign attitudes to the changing state of society,

particularly on issues of America's "individualistic" character. In his 1889 work *The

Social Aspects of Christianity*, Ely challenges and criticizes the otherworldly conception

of orthodoxy and individualism as "an unfortunate error" in American life.[104] In the

nineties, Ely continued to speak out on the rampant individualism plaguing American

society and pushing his concept of *social solidarity*, which gained new life at the turn of

the century as the "secular" dimension of the social gospel.

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[102] For an important discussion of the anti-immigrant rhetoric coming from these Evangelical Conferences, see H.H. Boyesen, "Immigration," *National Perils and Opportunity: The Discussions of the General Conference held in Washington D.C., Under the Auspices and Direction of the Evangelical Alliance for the United States* (New York, NY: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1887), 52-74.

[103] Lyman Abbott quoted in Visser 'T Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America,* 24.

[104] Ely, *Social Aspects of Christianity,* 66.

The depression, the outbreaks of violence and the social unrest proved advantages for Rauschenbusch, Gladden and the other social Christians to shift social Christianity from a concerned, yet inactive and complacent liberalism to an active and dynamic Protestantism. As the nineties continued, Gladden, Rauschenbusch, Strong, and Ely continued to refine liberal theology away from complacency and towards activism. Through the leadership of these individuals, the decade of the nineties witnessed an important shift social Christianity thought that redefined the role of religion in American society.

A New Christian Theology

The liberal Christianity that Gladden and the others ascribed to shared many characteristics with the benign theoretical approaches of the seventies and eighties. At its core, new liberal theology conformed to Bushnellian theology and the ideas of temporal salvation. In addition, it focused heavily on the notion of Christ emulation and the pursuit of the Kingdom of God. Yet the social Christianity in the nineties also distinguished itself from earlier strands of liberal Protestantism and it did so through the adoption of numerous ideologies that existed outside of the religious sphere. As the social Christians continued to evolve to meet the needs of the people and a changing socio-cultural landscape, they adopted many controversial ideologies, particularly socialism.

Prior to 1893, the relationship between religion and socialism existed in a state of contention, not only in conservative circles but also in liberal ones. While conservative rejection of socialism surprised no one, liberal rejection of socialism shocked many, especially considering prominent liberal clergy, such as Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and Henry George, passionately advocated uniting socialist

thought with Christian ideology.[105] Until 1893 though, liberals, like conservatives, deemed this new ideology subversive, foreign, and dangerous to the foundations of American society.[106] Yet drastic changes in American society caused by the depression of 1893 made the call for a more aggressive and practical form of Christianity, regardless of its ideological leanings, a necessity.

Early in the life of the social Christian movement, Protestant clergy unanimously rejected socialism. In the nineties however, this "subversive" ideology became a viable approach to expanding social Christianity and giving it the revolutionary spirited needed to go from a docile movement to an aggressive one.

Building from the early attempts of Rauschenbusch and Gladden to inject socialist ideology into the arm of liberal Protestants, prominent clergy like the Reverends George D. Herron and William Dwight Porter Bliss proved instrumental in making this controversial ideology attractive to social Christians. One of the ways they accomplished this involved emphasizing a natural connection between socialist ideology and the social Christian movement. Herron, for example, delivered fiery speeches on the intrinsic nature of socialism in Christianity that drew connections between what socialists believed, such as social reformation, and Christian desires to create a Christian society and a Godly kingdom.

In many of his works, Herron emphasized the power of socialist ideology to reconstruct society away from the "unspeakably corrupt world of business." Building on the notions of social reconstruction towards the kingdom of God, Herron believed socialism the key to ensuring the creation of the kingdom. Tying it to the tenets of an

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[105] George R. Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1933), 339.

[106] McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent,* 64.

active Christianity, Herron channeled the Communist dialectic of Karl Marx and advocated a radical and immediate reconstruction of society into a "Christian State" where *mores* and customs are taken directly from the teachings of Christ.[107]

Episcopal minister William Dwight Porter Bliss held similar views on a Christian-socialist dynamic, particularly the notion that Christianity was inherently socialist and vice-versa. Moreover, Bliss believed that the future of the social Christian movement and the regeneration of society rested in embracing both doctrines. Unlike Herron, Bliss shied away from revolution as the means to reshape the social order and claimed instead that the transformation was inevitable and natural, especially if social Christians understood and professed a deep commitment to the teaching of Christ.

Like Herron, Bliss did much to further the transition and speed up the process. In 1899, he founded the Society of Christian Socialists (SCS), an organizations dedicated showing that "the aim of Socialism is embraced in the aim of Christianity."[108] For a time, the SCS proved a fruitful and popular endeavor, establishing groups in many small cities across the country. Yet the reach and influence of the SCS proved limited. To reach a broader audience, the SCS utilized Bliss' monthly journal *The Dawn*.[109]

Immediately upon inception, *The Dawn* became the "strong arm" of Bliss' Christian Society as well as the mouthpiece for the Christian Socialists as a whole.[110] Every month, *The Dawn* contained a virtual library of materials covering current issues,

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[107] George D. Herron, "The Social Failure of Political Economy," *The Kingdom*, 24 December 1895, 587 and George D. Herron, *The Christian Society* (Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell, 1894), 16-17.

[108] William Dwight Porter Bliss, *The Encyclopedia of Social Reform: Including Political Economy, Political Science, Sociology and Statistics* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1897), 258.

[109] "A Christian Socialist Church," *The Outlook* , 1 January 1898, 90.

[110] William Dwight Porter Bliss, "Declaration of Principles," *The Dawn,* 15 May 1889, 3.

like land questions and economic matters, and other matters relating to the state of American society. Additionally, *The Dawn* solicited contributions from notable social Christians, like Washington Gladden and George Herron, and pushed at-home study courses on understanding Christian socialism. More often than not these "courses" consisted of nothing more than reading Christian socialist propaganda, such as P.W. Sprague's *Christian Socialism: What and Why?* (1891) and Bliss' *Handbook of Christian Socialism* (1895).[111]

The use of *The Dawn* as a propaganda piece served the social Christian movement well. Many of the ideas and arguments presented within its pages guided the social Christian movement on numerous issues, such as the settlement house programs, the nationalization of transportation and utility companies, industrial reform (an eight-hour workday), equal suffrage and compulsory education.[112] In the end, .the actions and ideas of Herron and Bliss, as well as the myriad of Christian Socialists, pushed socialist ideology into social Christian theology to the point liberal Protestants saw in socialism the promises of a society that fit in well with the image of a unified Christian brotherhood and the kingdom of God.[113]

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[111] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 174-175.

[112] Ibid.*,* 177.

[113] Both George Herron and W.D.P. Bliss were influenced, not only by Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden, but also by the Reverend C.M. Morse. A few years before George D. Herron and W.D.P. Bliss attempted to persuade liberal Protestants on the merits of socialism, C.M. Morse wrote numerous theses and delivered speeches explaining how socialist ideology was inherently Christian and conversely, that Christianity was inherently socialist. In an essay for the *Methodist Review* (1891), for example, Morse claims that Jesus, for all intent and purpose, was a socialist. Morse argued that Socialism, much like Christ, was a "moral teacher" on how individuals should live their lives and build a society Perhaps Morse's greatest contribution to bringing socialist ideology into the lexicon of religious liberals, however, was the "sociological doctrine of Jesus," which is the gospel of Jesus (ministry, social work, etc.) put into a real world context. This is similar to, and was inspired by, Horace Bushnell's individual regeneration.

Socialism was not alone in effecting the evolution of social Christian ideology and its adoption amongst liberal Protestants. According to Charles Hopkins, nationalist thought, or the belief in the strength of one's country, emerged dovetail to the Christian socialist movement. Throughout the eighties and nineties, nationalist ideology became an important facet of American life. As Americans grew more nationalistic, liberal Protestants saw an opportunity to unite the secular and religious spheres by emphasizing a common identity in the Protestant faith and its power to transform society.[114] In the nineties, this "messianic nationalism," which shared similarites with colonial-era Protestant nationalism, influenced a large number of religious intellectuals and contributed greatly to the spread of social Christian theology.[115]

Nationalist ideology fostered a greater connection between Americas along a number of paths including libertarianism, materialism, Anglo-Saxonism ethnocentrism, and egalitarianism.[116] Of these other forms, Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism and egalitarianism proved invaluable in strengthining a sense of togetherness among Americans. From the mid-nineteenth century-onward, in fact, secular and religious institutions developed a unique American cultural identity using these two forms that emphasized not only a shared commitment to the Protestant faith but also the belief in an inherent superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic race.

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[114] For context, see Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1887; New York, NY: E Modern Library, 1917).

[115] Discussions of Messianic Nationalism found in Louis Snyder, *Varieties of Nationalism* (Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press, 1976), 201-210. For more info on the Nationalist Clubs, see John W. Baer, *The Pledge of Allegiance: A Revised History and Analysis* (Annapolis, MD: Free State Press, Inc, 1992), chap. 3 passim.

[116] Warren L. Vinz, *Pulpit Politics: Faces of American Protestant Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 3.

Nationalist thinking blossomed during the nineties, especially in the general populace. The successful Anglo-Saxon crusades (discussed next chapter) and the spectacular defeat of Catholic Spain in 1898 appealed to a society that viewed the world through the lens that of a paranoid eye, always distrustful and xenophobic.[117] More importantly, these endeavors reinforced a common identity that lay hidden since the Civil War. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, white-Protestant America came together along socio-religious lines proclaiming a destiny well within their grasps.[118] As the twentieth century dawned, this new sense of self fueled numerous socio-religious crusades and reinvigorated the quest for a Christian America.

Even before their emergence in 1893, the social Christians represented a new and unique voice in the liberal Christian movement. Yet Gladden and the others (including the numerous social work and Christian organizations) represented a relatively small group within the broader liberal Protestant movement.[119] The decade of the nineties changed perceptions, however. From 1893 until the turn of the century, these men, their ideas and the methods of creating a Christian America seeped into the socio-religious mainstream signaling a "new birth" in America's religious and social life. In the end, this new birth blurred the lines between the secular and the sacred, ultimately pushing Protestant nationalism back into the forefront of American thought.

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[117] Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, 1966), 145-147.

[118] Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, 29-43.

[119] Visser 'T Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America,* 16.

III

The Anglo-Saxon Mission

Protestant nationalism stemmed from two fundamental changes to American society. The first change occurred in the transformation of America's theological landscape from conservative Calvinism to a new liberal theology. From the 1840s until the end of the century, liberal and conservative Protestants gradually came together on the need to address the "hostile" forces and social "sins" that threatened both a Protestant America as well as the kingdom of God. The evolution of social Christianity to include both liberals and conservatives ideologies, as well as a greater emphasis on social activism, ultimately legitimized the movement and transformed social Christianity into the "social gospel." In the early twentieth century the social gospel, discussed in depth next chapter, spread across the country and linked together the various regions of the country in a crusade to transform society.

The second change occurred parallel to the development of liberal theology and is one of the more significant changes in developing a nationalistic Protestantism. During the early nineteenth century, the larger American sphere underwent socio-cultural changes that American Protestants felt compelled to address, lest their vision of God's earthly kingdom be in vein. In particular, Protestants grew concerned with the growth of the Catholic Church and the immigrant class (two things inexorably linked) and the birth of new religious traditions, such as Mormonism, which presented challenges, not only the socio-religious character of the country but also the development of the kingdom of God.[120] Despite these concerns, American Protestants convinced themselves to meet the

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[120] The distrust of Mormons by mainline Protestants existed at numerous levels. Socially, Protestants disliked the nature of plural marriage, which many compared to slavery. Politically, they did not accept

socio-cultural challenges before them and "meliorate the conditions of these groups" from "misery to abundance, happiness, and peace" through the adoption of Protestantism.[121]

Another dimension of this confidence rested in notions of racial and ethnic superiority. Among American Protestants, belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority complimented an already high opinion of the utility of Protestantism. In fact, this belief fueled the idea of a Christian nation by promoting the "Americanizing" of groups and cultures outside of the mainstream. This meant, among other things, making the characteristics of each faith and culture subordinate to the Anglo-Saxon character of the nation.[122] Only then would the protection and promotion of a Christian nation be possible. In the nineteenth century, this racial and ethnic identity, along with religious distinctions previously mentioned, added a unique facet to Protestant nationalist thought.

Protestants, still decades away from uniting on theological activism, found common ground on presumptions of an ethnic, racial and theological superiority as well as in the need to preserve America's Protestant character from the corroding influences of groups powerful enough to challenge the dominant protestant order, specifically Mormons and Catholics. Over the course of the nineteenth century, American Protestants embarked on a mission to, not only limit or exclude Mormons and Catholics from

how Mormons established their church, calling its organization too "Romanesque," and fearing that, if left alone, it could eat away at the democratic foundation of the country. Finally, mainline Protestants feared Mormon theological designs, which sought to usurp the creation of God's kingdom away from mainline groups and refocus it as the sole destiny of the Mormon Church.

[121] Vinz, *Pulpit Politics,* 2. Allusions to messianic nationalism taken from Louis Snyder, *Varieties of Nationalism,* 201-210. Quote from Thomas Paine in Russell B. Nye, *The Almost Chosen People* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1966), 172.

[122] William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 208.

influencing the socio-cultural sphere but to also to promote the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon culture. From 1850-1918, the "Anglo-Saxon mission" represented the concerted effort by Protestants to accomplish that goal.[123]

The Anglo-Saxon Mission: The Mormons

In the second decade of the twentieth century, mainline Protestants answered the "Mormon Question," which asked how a Protestant nation could defend against threats to traditional (i.e. Protestant) notions of marriage, religion and law.[124] By 1900, Protestants altered Mormon practices to fit into a more "American," or Protestant, and successfully banned the controversial practice of "Celestial Marriage," or polygamy in the Mormon sphere.

Although Mormons conformed to Protestant designs by 1910, the nineteenth-century struggles between mainline Protestant groups and the Latter-day Saints (LDS) represented an important look at how a Protestant Anglo-Saxon mission functioned. Moreover, the Protestant's Mormon crusade represent the length Protestants went to ensure the fulfillment of their world vision, even against a group culturally and racially similar to the majority of American citizens.

The Mormon-Protestant conflict began in the 1840s with immediate distrust of Mormons and Mormonism by the larger Protestant population. To a Protestant in the early nineteenth century, who still viewed the world through a strict, Calvinist

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[123] The concept of an "Anglo-Saxon Mission" exists in a number of works. The best references that place it in a nineteenth-century context are Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1967), 142-144; Josiah Strong, *Our Country* (New York, NY: Baker & Taylor, 1885), chap. 4; and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 2-5.

[124] The "Mormon Question" is analyzed and discussed in depth in, Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 4.

understanding, Mormonism emerged as an anomaly in the American religious landscape. This perception stemmed primarily from the nature of Mormonism itself, which comprised of primitive Christian theology and "restoration" theology, a unique concept that sought to reconnect Christianity with the original apostolic traditions.[125] Yet nineteenth century Protestant views towards Mormonism also stemmed from the environment from which it emerged—the "Second Great Awakening."

The Second Great Awakening, named so because it was second such wave of religious revivals and reinventions aimed at reforming American Christianity, swept like a fire through parts of the Northeast. In the 1820s, Mormon founder Joseph Smith received a vision of creating a church capable of restoring Christianity back into a pure form. Such restorative faiths were common in the "burned over" district of upstate New York. In fact, Mormonism shared many similarities with other restorative faiths, such as emphasizing returning Christianity to the biblical Abraham and the Sinaitic Covenant, or the original discourse between God and Man. Mormon belief differed from these other faiths though, particularly in their interpretation of "universality," commonly known as doctrine of the one true Christian church.[126]

Compared to other restorative faiths, like the Disciples of Christ movement, and the Protestant sphere in general, Mormons did not claim their universality from within the canonical texts of the Bible. Instead, the Mormon claim to Christian universality came from the *Book of Mormon*—a text that combines both Old and New Testament doctrines with a host of other religious systems, such as the practice of continuous revelations

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[125] Gordon, *The Mormon Question,* 19-20.

[126] Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 72.

found in numerous Caribbean faiths.[127] Smith, interpreting his first vision as a covenant with God and the *Book of Mormon* as God's new message to his children, drew clear distinctions between the Mormon faith and mainline Protestantism by claiming a direct connection with both Old Testament Sinaitic traditions and New Testament Apostolic traditions.[128] In his understanding, Mormonism represented not a variant Christian faith but the *true* Christian faith.[129]

Because of how the Mormons viewed themselves theologically, their way of life took on an immediate "otherness" in eyes of early nineteenth century America.[130] Mormon organizational approaches, such as their reliance on a hierarchy and their communal nature, attracted as much attention as their theological beliefs. Protestants in the 1840s characterized the Mormon social structure through simplistic observations based on early nineteenth century definitions "Americanness." The Mormon hierarchy, of which the Prophet or "President" held absolute spiritual and secular authority, represented an un-democratic structure, and therefore "anti-American," in the eyes of most Protestants. Similarly, the communal nature of Mormonism went against American individualistic traditions of work and land management where the worker used his labor

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[127] The presence of Caribbean religious practices in the New York area comes from the slave trade. Over time, traditional African faiths, which emphasized continuous revelations and an active spiritualism, flourished in the United States following the Civil War. To see similarities between nineteenth century Mormon notions of continuous revelations and African faiths, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 9 passim.

[128] Gordon, *The Mormon Question,* 21-22.

[129] Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition,* 67-70.

[130] Description of this "otherness" found in Jan Shipps, "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream,* ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 81-97.

to becoming closer to god.[131] Immediately, the distinctions of Mormons as outside of this traditional structure cast suspicion and distrust on the group.

Emerging from the Second Great Awakening along with numerous theological movements (liberal Christianity being among them), the Mormon faith drew clear distinction between itself, American society and those Protestant faiths it considered "corrupt" interpretations of Christianity. Its theological and cultural distinctions, meant to give Mormons a unique role in shaping America's destiny, threatened the larger Protestant sphere and perceptions of Protestant superiority. Moreover, Mormon distinctiveness made both the church and its supporters easy targets for religious and secular forces, as the assassination of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum (1844) and the forced migration westward (1846-1850) attest. Of all the perceived threats to Protestant America from the Mormon Church, however, the doctrine of "Celestial Marriage," better known as polygamy, represented the greatest threat to America's social fabric.

Revealed to Smith in 1843, the "Doctrine of Celestial Marriage" made polygamy part of the official Mormon cannon. In the broader American sphere, this proclamation shocked nineteenth century Protestant America. Many non-Mormons viewed plural marriage as an affront to the Constitution and ideas of liberty and freedom. These individuals appealed to notions of female slavery, drawing connections between that and African slavery as "twin relics of barbarism."[132] Individuals in the religious sphere used the language of protecting the family and marriage, constructing links to the sanctity of both as a fundamental Christian precept keeping American society together. Regardless

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[131] This idea that labor is the path connecting Man to God is know as the "Protestant Ethic." See, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904; Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), chap. 2.

[132] For a discussion on the "Twin Relics of Barbarism," see Gordon, *The Mormon Question,* 54-83.

of the reasoning for disliking polygamy, both secular and religious spheres united in their attempts to remove this threat from society. From 1852-1890, the mainline Protestant churches led numerous political and social crusades to eradicate Mormon polygamy.

The Protestant anti-polygamy crusades fit into two distinctions—social and legal. In the social sphere, anti-Mormon crusades began within the first decade of the canonization of polygamy. These early protests, carried out by middle-class Protestant women of the East Coast, took the form of the "novel movement." The various novels, built on similar themes of women as helpless slaves to the lascivious nature of Mormon men, shocked readers with tales of "betrayal," "slavery," "seduction," and "death" that befell women in polygamous relationships.

Nothing more than anti-Mormon propaganda, these novels did three important things: they promoted monogamy, they denounced Mormonism and appealed to non-Mormons' sense of family and monogamy's importance to the health of American society. Metta Victor, author of several novels, hammered this last point in many of her novels claiming, "The welfare of the country depends on Christian monogamy."[133] For Victor and other novelists, monogamy equaled core American values like "freedom" and "democracy" and polygamy, which put women in bondage, sought to destroy those traditional values and, conversely, American society.

The novel movement placed women's rights at the forefront of the national anti-polygamy debate. More importantly, the movement placed women activists at the forefront of the anti-polygamy crusade. Over time, women led anti-Mormon movements transformed the more passive novel movement to a more activist anti-polygamy crusade—the mission home. The Industrial Christian Home (ICH), the only mission

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[133] Metta Victor in Gordon, *The Mormon Question,* 30.

home for "saving" Mormon women, embodied this social activism and, for a while, became a safe haven and teaching center for women who rejected the Mormon way of life.[134] Created in 1886 by Angie Newman and enrolling almost 154 women and children within the first year, the ICH quickly developed a bifractured reputation in Utah. On the on hand, Protestant women viewed the mission home as a necessity to further their moral crusade against polygamy. Yet Mormon women viewed the home as a threat to their way of life, which many believed more pure and more Christian than the lives of the Protestant women attempting to proselytize them.[135] The animosity towards the home mission from Utah Mormons, coupled with the ICH's own internal struggles, effectively crippled the home mission movement. The ICH closed its doors in 1893.

Outside of the novel movement and the mission homes, Protestant churches in and around Utah initiated educational and congregational campaign against Mormonism. In the years 1862-1882, the five major Protestant denominations of the West (Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians) established "free school" in Utah to education Mormon children in "true Christian" doctrine and values. In short, the Protestants running these schools saw the opportunity to instruct children and teach them how to be proper Christians with the hope of converting an entire generation of Mormons thus wiping out Mormonism within a generation. During the nine-month school year, many LDS children attended these schools, yet almost none of the turned away from Mormonism.[136]

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[134] Peggy Pascoe, *Relations to the Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1879-1939* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 85-86.

[135]Ibid., 87.

[136] Shipps, "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream," 94-95.

One of the more effective means of creating anti-Mormon sentiment not only in the region but also across the country relied on the use of "Mormon experts," Utah Protestant ministers used to convey first-hand accounts of the misdeeds of the Saints to congregations across the country. In the 1880s, these experts existed in all of the western denominations, yet the Baptist churches utilized and promoted such individuals better than other Protestant groups. The reverend M.T. Lamb, for example, made a reputation for himself traveling across Utah and nearby states preaching on the "absurdities" in the Book of Mormon. In these lectures, gathered in book form in 1887, offered comparisons between the Book of Mormon to the Bible explaining why they were different but also how Mormonism would corrupt the Bible if left unchecked. [137] To many outside Utah, Lamb and the other ministers represented important conduits to the activities in "heathen lands."

Utah Protestants also circulated several well-read anti-Mormon pamphlets across the country, bringing their "inside" experiences to the masses in an attempt to galvanize support for anti-Mormon crusades. Because the goal meant gaining support, these pamphlets emphasized many traditional biases the average person found familiar: the Mormon's claim to be the only true Christian church, a critique of their "anthropomorphic" theology, their priesthood, the writings of Joseph Smith, and denunciations of polygamy. In the 1880s, these pamphlets gained huge circulations among Protestant ministers. [138] A few, specifically the Presbyterian tract "Ten Reasons

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[137] M.T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible: Or, The Book of Mormon, Is It From God?* (New York, NY: Ward & Drummond, 1887), chap. 1, chap. 5 passim.

[138] T. Edgar Lyon, "Religious Activities and Development in Utah, 1847-1910," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (Fall 1967): 292-306.

Why Christian Can Not Fellowship the Mormon Church," proved extremely popular and found renewed life in the 1920s.[139]

The use of pamphlets, together with the anti-Mormon sermons and the various women's movements, provided effective tools in the success of the anti-Mormon crusade. Yet the legal side of the anti-Mormon and anti-polygamy crusades proved the most effective application of the Anglo-Saxon mission and the means by which put the most pressure on the Mormon Church to conform to the "standards" of a Protestant Christian America.

Immediately following the Mormons revelation of the practice of polygamy, Protestant churches and non-Mormon politicians in Utah solicited the U.S. government to outlaw and make illegal plural marriage. Although Mormons protested on the grounds of the First Amendment, clever political maneuvering and overwhelming popular support put pressure on the federal government to pass the first federal anti-bigamy statute (the Morrill Act) in 1862.[140] Yet the debates over the protection of polygamy under the First Amendment did not go away. The LDS Church, in a test case involving Brigham Young's secretary, George Reynolds, argued before the U.S. Supreme Court that the Constitution protected polygamy as a practiced tenet of faith. Not swayed by the Saints' arguments, in *Reynolds vs. the United States* the Supreme Court ruled that polygamy deserved no protection because, as Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite claimed "religious

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[139] Reprinted as "Ten Reasons Being a Statement Why Christians Cannot Fellowship with Mormons," pamphlet, *Utah Historical Society* (1921). Also in, Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915,* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 159.

[140] Shipps, "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream," 96.

doctrines . . . [could not] be superior to the law of land." Otherwise, he concluded, "such ideas would invite chaos."[141]

The *Reynolds* decision created a dilemma for the Mormons. If they continued practicing polygamy, they violated civil law. Yet if they outlawed it, they denied the teaching of their prophet Joseph Smith. While the Mormons debated the theological and secular implications of the *Reynolds* decision, Congress, articulating America's anti-Mormon attitudes, passed a flurry of legislation further marginalizing polygamy in American society. The Poland Act in 1874 and the Edmunds Act in 1882, both outlawing plural marriage and the consummation of such unions, made it easier to convict polygamists and define social parameters more in line with the Protestant mainstream.[142] Despite the passage of these acts, Mormon defiance continued.

In 1887, the U.S. government, responding to continued polygamous acts, enacted the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Under this new act, the government received *carte blanche* to stop the practice of plural marriage. Throughout the 1880s, the government enacted several "Raids," where federal agents pursued and arrested numerous polygamists and suspected polygamists. In spite of Mormon efforts to escape the Raids, the amount of arrests made, according to historian Jan Shipps, almost collapsed Mormon culture.[143]

While it did not destroy Mormon culture, the Edmunds-Tucker Act forced Mormons to reassess their place in American society and whether conforming to broader American culture represented their best interest. In 1890, Mormon president Wilford

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[141] For more details of the case, see Edwin B. Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press., 1988), 151-59.

[142] Shipps, "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream," 97-98.

[143] Ibid.

Woodruff made the decision. That year, the Mormon president issued the "Manifesto"—a "revelation" that outlawed polygamy as a central tenet of the Mormon faith. In his own words, Woodruff denounced the practice and any other practices deemed "unlawful" in the broader American sphere mistakes of Mormon belief.[144]

In the twentieth century, the Anglo-Saxon mission towards the Mormon Church calmed down. With the most serious threat to American society, polygamy, effectively outlawed in Mormon law, Protestant leaders claimed both a moral victory and a victory for American Protestantism. Yet the specter of polygamy never went away in the national sphere. In the years 1904-1907, the Senate hearing of Utah senator and Mormon Apostle, Reed Smoot, brought the issue of polygamy back into the national debate. Acting more as a check on the state of polygamy in the Mormon community, the four-year hearings confirmed the death of polygamy and effectively ended the Mormon crusade.

In the years following the Smoot hearings, perceptions towards the Mormon Church shifted despite several attempts to get a Constitutional amendment banning polygamy between the years 1909-1920. In these years though, Protestant Americans slowly accepted the Mormon faith as a distinct, American religious tradition.[145] Mormonism, likewise, began to present itself less like a "foreign" religion and more like a "typical" American faith. In the end, the Anglo-Saxon mission towards Mormons and the Mormon Church seems almost paradoxical. The Mormons, as a group, consisted of

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[144] For details of Wilford Woodruff's "Manifesto," see Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, A Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1991), 266-73.

[145] A majority of these Constitutional campaigns came from the leadership of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (FCCCA) or from groups of organizations directly associated with them. From 1908-1914, there were over 30 attempts to amend the Constitution to outlaw polygamy. Yet these requests never made it out of the Judiciary Committee. List of proposed amendments and judicial discussions found in Susan L. Fales and Chad J. Flakes, *Mormons and Mormonism in U.S. Government Documents* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1989), 274-279.

largely white, middle-class people born and raised in the Protestant traditions. In the lexicon of the Anglo-Saxon mission, these men and women comprised the very people "chosen" by God to transform society and usher in the kingdom of God. Because Mormons existed outside the Protestant mainstream and attempted to change it away from Protestant designs, however, the color of their skin matter little compared to their beliefs.

The Anglo-Saxon Mission: The Catholics

The groups target by the Protestant Anglo-Saxon mission generally represented minimal threats to the dominant Protestant worldview of creating a Kingdom of God. Even the Mormon Church, whose rise to power in the West threatened the social order, represented a minimal threat to Protestant dominance. In fact, many of the crusades served no purpose other than to reaffirm the dynamic of Protestants on top and Mormons on the bottom. Within the context of the American religious sphere, only on group posed a serious threat to Protestant designs—Catholics.

Similar to the Mormon crusades, Protestants attempted to halt the influence of Catholicism early in the nation's history. Unlike the Mormon mission, anti-Catholic missions were not straightforward legal battles marked by occasional instances of popular outrage. Instead, the Catholic crusade consisted of a long and varied campaign that went through multiple phases, constantly changing based on external and internal events or shifts in power between the two groups.

In the centuries since the Protestant Reformation, Catholics and Protestants battled for religious dominance in the Christian world. The theological "warfare" raged across Europe following the Reformation eventually making its way to the New World in

the seventeenth century.[146] In the English colonies (and later the United States) especially, anti-Catholic sentiment grew even though Catholics relegated themselves to a relatively small area of the eastern seaboard. This hostility reached a new mark as Protestants acquired power following the American Revolution.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Protestants fought hard to maintain the socio-religious dynamic won at independence. Yet the growing Catholic population in Maryland and increased Catholic immigration to places on the outskirts of the U.S. boundary threatened that dynamic. To keep Protestants aware of the dangers of Catholics a Catholic myth, which claimed Catholics were "un-Christian" or that Rome represented the "mother of harlots" and the "Beast" with the Pope as the "Antichrist," grew among Protestants in the first decades of the United States.[147] This myth fueled peoples' assumptions that a despotic and un-Christian Rome held lascivious plans for the new nation.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Catholic myth continued defining the Protestant-Catholic relationship and provided the bases for marginalizing Catholics in American society. Yet the Industrial Revolution began to shift the balance of religious power in the country as an upsurge in Catholic immigration, mostly German and Irish, swelled the Catholic population to 9 million, making them the largest, unified religious group in the country.[148] Across the country, especially in the old Spanish West, the

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[146] The only exception to this conflict in the New World existed in the West where Spain, a Catholic country, maintained complete control

[147] Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963). For the Protestant indictment of Catholicism as a menace, see *The Trial of the Pope of Rome: The Antichrist, or Man of Sin … for High Treason Against the Son of God,* 2nd American ed. (Boston, MA: Tappan and Dennet, 1844), 9-27.

Catholic presence exploded. By 1840, the Church established six seminaries, nine colleges, thirty-three monasteries and houses of religious women, and numerous primary schools and hospitals.[149] Not surprisingly, the rapid growth of Catholicism was cause for alarm for Protestants, who in the nineteenth century, began to envision the United States, not only as a Protestant nation, but also as the seat of God's Kingdom on Earth.[150]

Furthering anti-Catholic tensions were issues of race. As immigration increased, the ratio of "non-white" immigrant Catholics exceeded acceptable limits. American attitudes toward race, which up to the 1840s relied on a unified perception of "whiteness," transformed into a two-tiered system of racial identification where religious affiliation factored one's racial standing. Pure whiteness, for example, included a strong connection to mainline Protestantism and consisted of Nordic (Anglo) and Germanic (Saxon) ancestry. This distinction helped ethnic German Catholics despite their adherence to Catholicism. Other groups, specifically the Irish and immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (Poles, Slavs, and Italians) did not fare as well. These groups did not qualify as pure white but rather "probationary" whites, or whiteness based on conditions.[151] Whatever the racial distinction, the exponential growth of the non-white immigrant affected the relationship between Protestants and Catholics greatly.

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[148] Totals added from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970,* 106-07.

[149] Thomas O'Gorman, *History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States* (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), 470-74.

[150] In the 1840s, Horace Bushnell's "New Theology," which emphasized the creation of a temporal Kingdom of God, attracted attention across the Protestant sphere. Although that attention was mostly negative. Conservatives generally tried to repress Bushnell's work and they would be successful until the 1870s. For "New Theology," see William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 44.

[151] These new arrivals were mostly Irish, who were fleeing Ireland in droves following the 1845 potato famine. Irish constituted nearly one-third of the total immigrant population, other groups—Germans and

The issue of race, along with the consequences of unchecked Catholic growth,

formed the ideological base of the anti-Catholic Anglo-Saxon mission, which in these

early years consisted of violent clashes between Catholics and Protestants in the form of

gang warfare, church burnings and riots. While the Catholics often pleaded self-defense

in many of the clashes, Protestants justified the violence as necessary to maintain the

Protestant dominant social order.[152] Yet violence itself proved ineffective in assuring that

Catholics did not integrate themselves into American cultural life. Instead, anti-Catholic

sentiment (and this early Anglo-Saxon mission) manifested in more potent and lasting

ways—large scale rhetorical and propaganda campaigns.[153]

In this use of the public forum, Protestants revealed Catholics' "un-Christian"

nature to the country. These "reveals' often took the form of anti-Catholic sermons and

debates where Protestant clergymen challenged Catholics on points of Christian dogma

and theology.[154] Although these debates did not necessarily involve anti-Catholic

nativism, for theological sparring also occurred among denominations of Protestantism,

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Italians mostly—made up a significant bloc as well. See specific figures in United States Bureau of the Census, 106-7. For an in depth discussion analyzing the perceptions of "whiteness," see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigration and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1998), chap. 2.

[152] Carleton Beals, *Brass-Knuckles Crusade: The Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy, 1820-1860* (New York, NY: Hastings House Publishers, 1960), 36-40.

[153] Generally, early nineteenth century anti-Catholic writings were theological, political, or sensational in content, although a single work frequently contained all three of these elements. A good example of this type of multi-faceted and often influential writing is Reverend William Nevin's *Thoughts on Popery* (1836). In this work, Nevin outlines a theological argument against Catholicism by drawing distinctions between Catholic and Protestant practice. Moreover, Nevin makes his easy enough so that non-theologians could understand and be influenced by his anti-Catholic rhetoric. For specifics, see William Nevin, *Thoughts on Popery,* (1836; New York, NY: Arno Press, 1977), 37-40, 56-60 (citations are from the reprinted edition).

[154] Joseph G. Mannard, "American Anti-Catholicism and its Literature," *Ex-Libris* 4 (1981): 1-2.

they did, aggravated existing religious and ethnic animosities. More importantly, these debates kept alive the Catholic myth.

Anti-Catholic sentiment also manifested in writings that questioned the Catholic Church's plan to disrupt American stability and prevent America from seizing its destiny. In works by Samuel F. B. Morse, later the inventor of the telegraph, and Lyman Beecher, Presbyterian minister and father of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher, fears and presumptions regarding Catholicism relied on "exposing" Rome's designs on the young republic. Of the two, Morse's *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States* (1835) receives the dubious distinction of being the first book to connect the flood of foreign immigrants to Vatican plans for world conquest.[155] Thanks to Morse, the idea of a "Papal Conquest," which Morse designed by drawing parallels to the "Mongrel Horde" of the Russian Steppe, became a favorite theme of the anti-Catholic writers throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The work's central tenet, which painted the immigrant as the Pope's vanguard in his struggle against true religion and free government, appealed to many Americans and united them behind the anti-Catholic mission.

Expanding on Samuel Morse's revelations of the Papal Conquest, Lyman Beecher's *A Plea for the West* (1835) discussed the more subtle sides of the Vatican's to "Catholicize" the American West and prevent America from claiming its rightful destiny in the region. Embracing the mythological character of the West, which would play a major role in "Manifest Destiny" and in later works on crafting an American identity by Frederick Jackson Turner, Beecher prophesied, "It is equally plain that the religious and

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[155] Plots noted in Samuel Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States* (New York, NY: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1835), chap. 3 passim.

political destiny of our nation is to be decided in the West."[156] In Beecher's mind, the

West, which in the 1830s remained an undeveloped area west of the Mississippi River

Valley, became the ultimate proving ground for Protestantism and its designs for the

future of America by stopping the creation of a papal throne in the region.

Through the forties and fifties, the character of Catholics as described by Beecher

and Morse found expression outside of fictitious novels. Newspapers, magazines,

journals, and political cartoons proved equally if not more effective at articulating and

fueling anti-Catholic sentiment. Political cartoons, for example, showed visualizations of

the Church's intentions that both the literate and illiterate members of American society

understood. Magazines, newspapers, and journals, while requiring more effort in

comprehension than cartoons, wrote stories in the common vernacular so that even those

with basic reading skills understood the threat posed by Catholics.[157]

Regardless of where anti-Catholic rhetoric emerged, its message trained white,

Protestants to see the signs of Catholic aggression, which included the expanding

Catholic school system in the West and the numerous Catholic missions. Many even

pointed to the "infiltration" of America's political parties by Catholics as evidence of an

immediate plot to take control of the country.[158] In 1854, a contingent of Whig party

members, mostly prohibitionists and Protestant clergy, formed the Native American

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[156] Beecher, *A Plea for the West,* 11.

[157] For examples, see Charles Morris, *American Catholic*, (New York, NY: Times Books, 1997), 66 and David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93-107.

[158] Stephen E. Maizlish, "The Meaning of Nativism and the Crisis of the Union: The Know-Nothing Movement in the Antebellum North," in *Essays on American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860*, ed. William Gienapp (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 166-68.

Party, better known as the "Know-Nothings" to ensure that Catholics never integrated into American political life.

The platform of the Know-Nothings contained two interconnected goals—bar Catholics from attainting political office and ensure that only "native" Americans, i.e. white, Protestants, succeeded in American society. Their methods of acquiring membership were likewise simple. The Know-Nothings appealed directly to Protestant Americans anti-Catholic feelings and nativist ideology, usually by emphasizing the "mongrel" and "un-Christian" character of the Catholic immigrant, to gain a following. Not surprisingly, these rather simplistic approaches worked. The movement gained a following very quickly, reaching over a million members within the first four months of its life.

The exceptional growth in 1854 helped Know-Nothing candidates or supporters gain major political positions in Maine, Indiana, Pennsylvania, California, Washington, D.C., Illinois, and Massachusetts that ranged from Governorships to representative positions in state legislatures.[159] Almost immediately, Know-Nothings began a systematic purge of Catholics from political life. In 1854-55, Know-Nothing mayors in Chicago and San Francisco led successful crusades that restricted their access to city jobs and services. In Massachusetts, the unofficial stronghold of the party, Know-Nothings passed laws barring Catholics and immigrants from holding office.[160] As quickly as they appeared, a mere two years after their establishment the Know-Nothings vanished from the political scene.[161]

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[159] Ibid., 190-93.

[160] Ibid., 187.

The legacy of the Know-Nothings lays not in their success or failures but in their approach to the "Catholic problem." The use of large scale organized political movements, which up to this point did not exist, became the standard approach to dealing with non-Protestant groups. Beginning in the 1880s, schisms in the Protestant landscape, which stemmed from the transition from conservative to liberal theology, weakened the Protestant hold on the United States. Although Protestants maintained successful legal campaigns against Mormons, for the most part, Protestants did so in a state of theological and denominational disjointedness. The Catholic population, on the other hand, thrived. As the largest single religious denomination, with roughly 11 million members, Catholics began to assert themselves more into the "national character" of the United States and to define themselves as an "American church."

Catholic "Americanizers," which were members of the Catholic Church that recognized the utility of integrating the Church to American perceptions, grew in number towards the end of the nineteenth century. Archbishop John Ireland and Cardinal Edward Gibbons, the more prominent of these Americanizers, worked hard bringing the Catholic Church into greater harmony with American society. For the most part, their efforts

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[161] Reasons for the decline vary. One reason for this decline stemmed from ill-conceived anti-Catholic missions. Crusades against Convents in largely Catholic Baltimore and nativist crusades in predominantly non-white New Orleans, for example, drew criticism to the American Party. The most severe criticism came from local Know-Nothings who, after riots and nativist inspire violence, denounced their outsider brethren for "disrupting the peace." In the case of Baltimore, local Protestants and joined Catholics in condemning Know-Nothings' attacks on Convents, which in turn led to an organized campaign against Know-Nothing politicians during the election of 1856. In the end, Know-Nothings lost numerous seats and control of Maryland. Perhaps the biggest reason for the decline of the Know-Nothings was due to internal conflicts. According to most historians, membership of the Know-Nothings included both anti-abolitionists and abolitionists. In the election of 1856, in which slavery, not Catholics and immigration, was the important issue, the base of the party divided over the Slave Question. By 1860, the Northern Know-Nothings, who were predominantly abolitionists, folded into the Republican Party, while the Southern Know-Nothings refocused their attention on protecting slavery. As the country descended into Civil War, the Know-Nothings, composed mostly of Southern membership at this point, faded away. For additional info, see Beals, *Brass-Knuckles Crusade: The Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy, 1820-1860,* 183-84 and Bruce Levine, "Conservatism, Nativism, and Slavery: Thomas R. Whitney and the Origins of the Know-Nothing Party," *The Journal of American History* 88 (September 2001): 455-64.

succeeded. In the eighties, Catholics, borrowing Protestant-style organization, created more stable communities, built schools, and promoted good "Catholic citizenship," which included a social Christian element similar to the Protestant social Christian movements a decade later.

Through these processes, Catholics gained recognition in broader American society for their efforts to integrate into American society. President Benjamin Harrison, for example, publicly supported Catholic efforts to "Americanize."[162] Yet the act of the President of the United States acknowledging, let alone applauding, Catholic attempts at Americanizing caused ripples within the Protestant community. Protestant nativist groups, for example, reacted strongly to the Presidents comity towards Catholic attempts at integration.[163] When Cardinal Gibbons visited to Washington to meet with Harrison following the president's acknowledgement, nativist groups seized the opportunity to expose a blatant example of the power Catholics' exerted over the government and the freedom they had to interact with influential political leaders.

Nativist groups did much to stir support for their anti-Catholic crusade. Yet the most salient means of gaining support came straight from Catholics themselves. Catholic scholars, claiming "the decay of Protestantism" and the "rise of Catholicism" proved the best means of gaining support for this Anglo-Saxon mission because it played right into Protestant fears about a Papal conspiracy.[164] Moreover, Catholic attempts to assert themselves more into the socio-cultural landscape pushed more people to believe the

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[162] Dale T. Knobel, *"America for the Americans": The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 199.

[163] Ibid., 198.

[164] The Catholic rhetoric about the decline of Protestantism in Bishop Bernard McQuaid, "The Decay of Protestantism," *North American Review*, 136 (February 1883): 35-36 and Archbishop John Ireland, *The Church and Modern Society: Lectures and Addresses* (New York, NY: D.H. McBride and Co., 1903), 81.

propaganda of the nativist groups and to unite with anti-Catholic leagues. One of the more popular leagues, Henry Bowers' American Protection Association (APA) became an influential and powerful force in the anti-Catholic movement.

The APA, much like the Know-Nothings, staunchly opposed Catholics and their plots for the country. Unlike the Know-Nothings, the APA proved better at organization and gaining loyalty from its members who, before joining, swore an oath to defend the country from Catholics and disrupt the growth of the Catholic faith by any means.[165] Following a slow start in Clinton, Iowa, the APA gained serious momentum after their endorsement of Republicans in Omaha (then a Democrat city) led to a sweeping victory for that ticket. In the early 1890s, the APA thrived and grew quickly, establishing a powerful presence in at eight states across the country and boasting a membership of over 2 million.[166]

The primary focus of the APA centered on preserving the political order for Protestants. From 1893-96, in fact, the APA attempted to influence several state elections and introduce anti-Catholic laws to not only bar or remove Catholics from office but also to insure that Catholic immigrants held no rights at all. Yet the political crusade of the APA proved partly successful with only a few initiatives, such as stricter voting requirements for immigrants, becoming laws.

Despite these APA's political inconsistencies, the anti-Catholic group maintained a constant presence in American society through anti-Catholic magazines and periodicals.

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[165] To read the Oath of the American Protective Association, see "The Secret Oath of the American Protective Association, October 31, 1893,"in *The Shadow of the Pope,* ed. Michael Williams (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1932), 103–104.

[166] The APA held sway in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, California, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Texas.

At the height of its power, the nativist organization produced over seven weekly

publications that filled readers with anti-Catholic propaganda. These works, which

included such ominous titles as *The Menace* and *The Peril*, focused on outlandish tales of

Catholic immorality or Papal plots to murder Protestants. In a country weary of Catholic

growth, these works became very popular and proved an effective tool in uniting people

with the APA. As quickly as the APA grew, however, it fell even faster. By 1900, the

APA disappeared from American political life.[167]

The legacy of the APA on the Anglo-Saxon mission, much like the Know-

Nothings, exists outside the political realm and rests in the ideological. On the surface,

the APA shared similar views as previous nativist organizations, including the Know-

Nothings. Like other groups, the APA utilized traditional descriptions of Catholic intent,

such as the Papal conspiracy, to rally support and make people aware of the threat

Catholics posed to society. The organization's most effective tool in raising awareness

among Americans, aside from the anti-Catholic weeklies, included using Catholic

ambition against them. The propaganda surrounding Catholics attempts in the 1880s to

"Americanize," provided an impetus for anti-Catholic sentiment to grow.

As the decade of the nineties ended, Protestants gained another means of

attacking Catholics by successfully tapping into growing inter-Catholic dissension and

exploiting the inter-denominational struggle between Catholic Americanists and those

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[167] From the very beginning, the APA believed that their greatest power lie in their ability to influence local and state elections. The APA undertook several political endeavors aimed at limiting Catholic growth and influence. This crusade ranged from petitions to increase federal oversight of Catholic institutions to a complete overhaul of the immigration and naturalization system. The APA was not an official political party, however. Instead, the APA preferred to work behind the scenes to accomplish their goals. Several missteps in the late-1890s, such as a failed attempt to run its own ticket and its alienation of its support base, the Republican Party, severely weakened the organization. Perhaps the biggest mistake, however, was William Traymor, the leader of the APA since 1893, attacking the popular Republican William McKinley as being pro-Catholic. This mistake not only cost Traymor his position as head of the APA, but it also started a domino affect hat led to the organizations demise in by 1899.

following the call of Pope Leo XIII, and later Pope Pius X, to cease modernizing the church and reconciling Catholicism with the modern age.[168] In the end, the two pope's cease and desist orders caused a split between the Americanists and "anti-Americanists" and left the Catholic Church open for renewed attacks by Protestant clergy and laymen.

Using both popes' condemnation of social activism, American Protestants gained new insight into an old dimension by which to attack Catholics. By emphasizing the tyranny of the Pope over American Catholics, citing his repudiation of "Americanization" and the American Churches willingness to obey his commands, the APA claimed, with greater resolve, that Catholics did not belong in a country that held liberty, freedom and democracy to the highest regard. With such a salient example of the power of the Catholic hierarchy on display and the American Catholic Church's inability to reconcile their difference with Rome and their willingness to cave into Vatican pressure made them easy targets for Protestants to launch a new phase of the Anglo-Saxon mission.

The Catholic-Protestant conflict in the twentieth century, in many ways, resembled the previous decade's anti-Catholic crusades. In the twentieth-century crusade, religious xenophobia, beliefs in "anti-clericalism," warnings of Catholic political conspiracies, and widespread rumors that Catholic faithful were preparing for an armed assault on the United States contributed much to anti-Catholic attitude.[169] Yet the twentieth century Anglo-Saxon missions against Catholics benefited from significant changes occurring in the international sphere. The Spanish-American War, where the

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[168] For Pope Leo XIII's full remarks, see Pope Leo XIII, "Testem Benevolentiae", in *Documents of American Catholic History,* ed. John Tracy Ellis (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1967), 539-46. For information of the papal bull by Pope Pius X to cease social activism, see Jay P. Dolan, "Catholicism and American Culture: Strategies for Survival," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream,* ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 77.

[169] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Bruswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 178.

intensity of the Catholic-Protestant dynamic mirrored the fervor to expand beyond America's borders, bound Protestants together and strengthened ecumenical ties. More importantly, the war reconciled ideas of religion and nationalist thought placing greater emphasis on white, Protestant superiority and the need to protect and promote the greatness of Protestant America.

Within the United States, this new attitude translated into a renewed anti-Catholic mission but because the Catholic population continued to grow alongside the Protestant population, using political crusades to marginalize Catholics in society no longer seemed feasible. Instead, anti-Catholic organizations resigned themselves to vast propaganda campaigns aimed at keeping the "amoral," "lascivious," and "un-American" character of the Catholic Church in the national spotlight. The vehicle for this mission was nothing new—print media. The years of this literary campaign, 1910-1920, represented, in many ways the height of the anti-Catholic crusade in terms of making people aware of Catholic intent for the country. Yet the shift from political action to rhetorical campaigns marked the death knell of the movement.[170]

During this decade, anti-Catholic newspapers and magazines existed in literally thousands of iterations across the country, many of which carried over from the previous decades. In the early years of the twentieth century, these newspapers regained popularity as circulation reached anywhere between a few thousand in small towns, to millions in larger urban areas, which at the top end vastly exceeded most non-religious newspaper

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[170] For an excellent look at anti-Catholic crusades in print media, see Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

circulation. More importantly, the number of subscribers increased yearly eventually

topping out at 2 million readers total by 1917.[171]

The real strength of these tracts, despite their ability to gain readership, rests on

their ideological uniformity. Whether the paper sprang up in some small hamlet on the

Western plains or in a bustling city on the East or West coasts, the message, rhetoric, and

overall tone shared many similarities. This meant that, regardless of where a person lived,

they still received the same updates regarding papal plots and, in the case of *The Menace,*

explicit details on how to recognize and stop such plots from occurring in small-town

America.[172]

Despite the successful dissemination of anti-Catholic rhetoric to all corners of the

country, Protestant America in the first decades of the twentieth century slowly moved

beyond their obsession with non-existent papal plots and fear mongering. Protestants

after 1915, in fact, showed ambivalence towards anti-Catholic rhetoric and instead

focused their gaze to the troubles in Europe. Eventually, the start of World War I halted a

majority of anti-Catholic sentiment in the country and during the American phase of the

war, 1917-1919, an anti-Catholic hiatus existed in the country that lasted until 1920.[173]

The path of the anti-Catholic Anglo-Saxon mission changed and adapted itself

over the decades constantly shaping perception of the Catholic Church as a threat to

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[171] Sales figures compounded state by state. Individual state figures found in *N.W. Ayer's & Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory: A Catalogue of American Newspapers* (Philadelphia, PA: N.W. Ayer & Son Newspaper Advertising Agents, 1917), passim.

[172] Some excellent stories printed in *The Menace* regarding general papal plots*,* include, "Poisoning the Wells," *The Menace,* 2 December 1911, 4 and "Girls Hunted by Slave Catchers," *The Menace,* 15 April 1914, 1. The "Girls Hunted by Slave Catchers" was republished and condensed in *U.S. Catholic Historian* 20 (Winter 2002): 57-82. During World War I, *The Menace* ran several stories claiming Catholic subversion and goals to exploit the U.S. in times of war to take over the country. Some stories included, "Pope's Secretary Caught Red Handed Directing Three Plots of Intrigue," *The Menace,* 12 May 1917, 1 and "Does the Church Have Guns," *The Menace,* 4 May 1918, 1.

[173] Nordstrom, *Danger at the Doorstep,* 195-97.

American culture and doing their best to marginalize this group in American society. Although their anti-Catholic sentiment declined during World War I, after 1920 the return of the Ku Klux Klan transformed the Anglo-Saxon mission once more into a violent and nativistic endeavor aimed at denying Catholics a place in American culture.[174] For the next forty years, anti-Catholic crusades remained consistent across the country. By 1960, however, America's anti-Catholic attitudes abated as the American people elected John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, as President of the United States.

The Anglo-Saxon Mission in Closing

The nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon mission fueled peoples' commitment to a nationalistic Protestantism as a deterrent to the perceived "threat" from the Catholic immigrant and the Mormon Church. The mission to indoctrinate, or at the very least impart, the non-Protestant groups with an understanding of their place in society proved successful and even garnered praise from important Protestant leaders. In the 1870s, Professor Samuel Harris, Dwight Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale, claimed "[For] . . . the English-speaking people . . . [the time] is now . . . for the propagation of Christian ideas and Christian civilization," claimed Professor Samuel Harris, Dwight Professor of Systematic Theology in Yale College.[175] In the early nineties, Josiah Strong claimed the Anglo-Saxon mission "does most to Christianize the world and to hasten the

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[174] Some works that examine the anti-Catholicism of the Ku Klux Klan and their attacks on Catholics, see Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), xi. See also, David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 2, 291.

[175] Samuel Harris, *The Kingdom of Christ on Earth: Twelve Lectures Delivered before the Students of the Theological Seminary, Andover* (Dearborn, MI: University of Michigan Library, 2005), 255. For a good discussion on "American Exceptionalism," see Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The American Empire Makes Its Bow on the World Stage, 1803-1845," in *From Colony to Empire: Essays in the History of American Foreign Relations,* ed. William Appleman Williams (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1972), 41-42; W. A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 128; and David Healy, *US Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 139-140.

coming of the Kingdom who does most to make thoroughly Christian the United States,"
warned Josiah Strong.[176] Finally, Walter Rauschenbusch in the twentieth century
applauded the various social crusades for preserving many of America's cultural
traditions, such as democracy and social freedom, from corruptive and tyrannical
entities.[177]

The Anglo-Saxon mission united Protestants by reinforcing an important pillar in
a nationalistic Protestantism—promoting and protecting a Protestant Christian
America.[178] More importantly, the success of the Anglo-Saxon mission brought
Protestant groups together as liberal Protestants earned praise amongst conservative
critics for successfully conducting the various social crusades against Mormons and
Catholics. By the end of the nineteenth century, in fact, many conservatives even
expressed a new confidence in liberal theology, eventually siding with the social
Christian movement. Influential Baptist conservatives Samuel Zane Batten and William
Newton, for example, lauded liberalism as the "highest and purest conception of man and
society" and as making "Christianity the boldest of the religions that lay claim to
universality."[179] Although writing in 1909 and 1901, respectively, these claims
represented a new axiom of liberalism for their fellow conservatives and helped
conservatives see that liberalism fit into the push towards a Christian America.

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[176] Josiah Strong, *The New Era,* (New York, NY: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1893), 3-4.

[177] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1907), 185.

[178] Vinz, *Pulpit Politics,* 2-3.

[179] First quote from Samuel Zane Batten, *The Christian State: The State, Democracy and Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1909), 307. Second quote from William Newton Clarke, *A Study of Christian Missions* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 30.

As the twentieth century dawned, the success of the Protestant Anglo-Saxon mission ingrained a sense of inevitability in the Protestant community that the Christianization of the United States and the kingdom of God inched closer. Yet the new century brought its own problems, many of which carried over from the previous decades, like social discord and economic instability. Unlike previous decades, Christianity entered the new century better prepared to deal with the changing landscape of American society and through the widespread application of the "social gospel" more capable of reforming political and social institutions back in line with visions of creating a Christian America.

The Social Gospel

The Anglo-Saxon mission united Protestant America by strengthening the perception of a Protestant force capable of changing not only the character of the United States but also the destiny of people within the country. Additionally, the success of the social Christian movement legitimized many aspects of religious liberalism in the American sphere. In fact, numerous volumes appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, such as Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1899), codifying social Christianity into the hearts and minds of America's religious institutions. In Rauschenbusch's words, the acceptance of social Christianity amongst the clergy "has made it orthodox."[180]

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Protestant clergy rallied around social reform and activism, now called the "social gospel," integrating their unique brand of evangelization into the process of making society godlier. From 1900-1910, the social gospel spread from region to region and across denominational lines igniting a national reform crusade and invigorated America's Protestant clergy to act in accordance with the philosophies of the social Christian movement—to regenerate the individual and to establish the kingdom of God on earth.[181]

Progressivism and the Social Gospel

The social gospel entered a society in desperate need of reform. Industrialization, which largely dominated economic and social forces in the nineteenth century, continued to dictate the lives of millions of Americans in the twentieth. The gap between rich and

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[180] Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, 20.

[181] Rauschenbusch, *The Theology of the Social Gospel,* chap. 10, chap. 12.

poor, a real problem in the nineteenth century, grew wider as the "pernicious influence of the money trust and the labor laws" constrained workers' wages and lined the pockets of the upper-ten. Moreover, poverty ran rampant among the lower classes, affecting anywhere between 14 percent of the populace during non-recession cycles up to 20 percent during extremely hard times.[182] Finally, civil unrest intensified," writes sociologist Alan Dawley, as "struggles broke out on every hand—strikes and union drives, suffrage rallies, civil rights campaigns, and middle-class crusades against the evils of factories and slums."[183]

The ferment of American life in the early twentieth century, journalist Walter Lippmann argues, destroyed "the sanctity of property, the patriarchical family, hereditary caste, the dogma of sin, obedience to authority . . . the rock of ages has been blasted from us."[184] Not surprisingly, the centralization and consolidation of business, boom and bust economic cycles, and poverty exacerbated already salient fears for a majority of Americans. As Richard Hofstadter noted, these difficulties and struggles fueled a sense of hopelessness among Americans in the early years of the twentieth century and strengthened fears of a declining American society.[185]

The social gospel entered the national stage poised to address these problems and, in the processes, fostered a new optimism amongst the populace. For many, especially the poor, the down trodden, women, blacks, the worker and anyone else coping with the

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[182] Hunter, *Poverty,* 24-25.

[183] Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 2.

[184] Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1961), 16.

[185] Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, 77-86.

lingering effects of depression, social Christianity provided, among other things, hope of a better future. Yet the social gospel did not address these concerns alone.[186] From 1901-1917, a parallel movement developed outside the auspices of the Protestant church that carried the same optimism and spirit for reform as the social gospel. This movement emphasized many of the same tenets of the social gospel and included many the same leaders. Unlike the social gospel, the optimistic spirit this new movement espoused gave its name to this era in American life: Progressivism.

It is not mere coincidence that the social gospel and progressivism emerged at the same moment in American history because of a strong ideological connection between these two movements. Yet the origins of Progressivism and its connection with social Christianity perplexed historians who, over the years, offered different interpretations on the history of the movement. Scholars such as Robert Wiebe and Michael McGerr, for example, believed progressivism originated from above, imposed on the nation by the middle-class and the "better" elements of society.[187] The newer interpretations of J. Joseph Huthmacher and John D. Buenker, however, stressed the working-class and ethnic contributions of past reform traditions, such as the Knights of Labor, influencing twentieth-century reform.[188]

These varying interpretations reveal a progressive mind not driven by a single ideology. Instead, reform held different meanings to different people and manifested in

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[186] An excellent example of this optimistic attitude is Lyman Abbott's address to the Clark College graduating class of 1912. In his speech, Abbott stressed the accomplishments of his generation in eradicating two of the "Four Great Burdens"—famine and pestilence. To the graduating class, he called on them to abolish poverty and war. Lyman Abbott, "The Message of the Nineteenth Century to the Men of the Twentieth," *The Outlook* 102 (1912): 351-54.

[187] Wiebe, *The Search for Order,* 165-66 and McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent,* 79-82.

[188] J. Joseph Huthmacher, "Urban Liberalism and the Age of Reform," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 69 (September 1962): 231-241 and John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1973), xi.

various ways. Some reformers, for example, crusaded for "women's rights, public health, the protection of immigrants, politics that are more democratic, worker's compensation, housing regulations, and child labor laws."[189] Despite these differences in intent, all reform measures stemmed from a singular desire to reform or remake society for the better and return moral and ethical standards to American society that Ferenc Morton Szasz called "the Progressive mood," or the moral commitment to social causes.[190] With the commitment to bringing moralism back to American society, the Progressive mood tied together notions of reform with a religious mission of cleansing away the sins of society. Because of this strong religious component, progressivism draws many comparisons to the social gospel.

The connection between the Progressive mood and social Christianity goes deeper than intentions of social reform. Both relied on an evangelical ethos to guide reform. Both movements relied on the vitality of the church to direct reform. In fact, without the former, the latter would have been less effective. In addition, many of the leaders of the progressive movement were also prominent in the social gospel movement, such as William Jennings Bryan, Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch and Josiah Strong. Finally, both progressivism and the social gospel shared a similar ideology and worldview derived from the same source—the Bible.[191]

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[189] Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 42

[190] Ibid., 43.

[191] Progressive ideology and even the "Progressive" moniker are, in fact, doctrines of liberal Protestantism. Bushnellian disciple Theodore Munger first espoused the term, as well as the ideology, in the late 1880s. Munger's "Progressive orthodoxy" was originally conceived as a critique against religious conservatism. In a nod to his mentor Horace Bushnell, Munger's theory existed primarily as a modified liberalism that emphasized "the belief in a personal God, accepted the theory of physical evolution as the probably method of creation, insisted upon the freedom of the human will, and proposed to read the Bible

In light of these connections, many historians discount the relationship between these two movements as superficial similarities. Critics argue that although distinct Christian elements existed, the progressive movement itself is not a Christian movement.[192] Instead, historians focus on progressivism as a "scientific revolution" led by a well-trained professional class.[193] While it is true that much of the strength of progressivism came from scientific professionals, what Szasz calls the "head," it was the "heart" of progressivism, the social gospel or the progressive mood, which guided reform in the early years of the twentieth century.[194]

Although progressivism emerged independently of the social Christian movement, the similarities in ideology and emphasis on religious based social reform draws a clear connection between the two. In fact, it is safe to say that progressivism is a natural extension of social Christianity and the progressive mood is another name for the social gospel.[195] In the early years of the twentieth century, the social gospel used

as literature." Moreover, progressive orthodoxy inferred a greater solidarity of race while professing a "broad, healthy, social philosophy of human nature . . . " These ideologies formed a "humanistic impulse" that could be modified to fit into Christian activism and social reform. In the 1890s, Munger's progressive ideology found its way into social Christian thought. Washington Gladden and Walter Raushenbusch began to shape it and direct its currents into forming the base for their social gospel. They embraced and emphasized the humanistic impulse (in the guise of Christ emulation) and the idea that society was more important than individualism (a la The Kingdom of God). As such the usage of the social gospel, which was a religious expression of progressivism, represents the only instance of reform centering on Christian ideology. See, Theodore Munger, *The Freedom of Faith,* 25

[192] Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *God's People: A Social History of Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 384

[193] Such studies are undertaken by Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999) and Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

[194] Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930*, 44.
[195] Advocates of this position include Robert Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America, 1830-1930* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1967) and David K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988).

progressivism as a vehicle to enter American society to reform society, becoming a

powerful force for twentieth century spiritual and temporal reform.

The Social Gospel in the North and East

Of the four regions of the United States—North, South, East and West—the social

gospel that emerged in the North and East developed into the most complete and

thorough iteration of the religious movement. Carried out primarily in the urban areas of

these regions, social gospellers directed progressive reform at two specific areas. The first

centered on restructuring the municipal governmental institutions away from corrupt and

machine-like organization and addressing the growing concerns of the people. In the

large cities especially, the need for a concerned government capable of fixing the

problems urban citizens stemming from rapid urbanization became a necessity. Yet most

municipal governments were too inept, too corrupt, or both to initiate the necessary

change.

"Political progressivism," as Arthur S. Link called it, gained quite a following

among a number of groups in the urban sphere.[196] By 1910, labor unions, forward-

looking business people, suffragists, middle-class moralists, educators and clergy in an

attempt to make American society "more fair; more equal, more homogeneous, and more

efficient."[197] More importantly, the uniting of these groups proved successful in fostering

an atmosphere beneficial to the urban worker. In many of America's large cities like

Pittsburgh, Detroit and New York, progressives helped pass several pieces of reform

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[196] Link and McCormick, *Progressivism,* 28.

[197] Spickard and Cragg*, God's People,* 384.

legislation meant to address many of needs of the people, including an expanded welfare system, minor tax relief and stricter regulations on utilities and sanitation.[198]

Political progressivism was not limited to the urban areas of the North and East. In the South and West, the search for "agrarian reform" pushed farmers together under the banner of *populism*. Throughout the decade of the 1890s, the Populist, a political and social group that grew out of the Farmer's Alliance, pushed hard for agrarian reform initiatives to subsidize farmers hurt by a decline in agricultural prices. Some of these initiatives included complicated programs of governmental ownership, taxing the income of rich people to help subsidize agricultural projects and inflationary fiscal policies aimed at reducing farmers' debt. Towards the end of the nineties, famed orator William Jennings Bryan became the most prominent member of the group and its most vocal advocate for widespread agrarian reform.

In Bryan's understanding of the importance of America's agrarian spirit, the famed orator often mythologized the farmer as a paradigm for virtue and "Americaness." To him, the man who tilled the soil of engaged in otherwise "honest" work was the most important asset in the United States.[199] Similarly, Bryan viewed the family farm as the "Gibraltar of security" that held together of a democratic and egalitarian society.[200] In the twentieth century, populist ideology remained strong in the South and West and continued to push for widespread agrarian reform with Bryan leading the charge.

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[198] Ibid., 29.

[199] Paolo E. Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan: Political Evangelist*, *1860-1908*, vol. 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 208.

[200] Ibid.

The emphasis on political reform, according to many social gospellers, was a catalyst for social and, ultimately, spiritual reform. By reshaping the government to fit the needs of the people, reformers enacted laws that would usher in the kingdom of God. This understanding attracted large numbers of social Christians to participate in crusades designed to improve municipal government and the conditions of life across the country. Thousands of Christians joined these crusades resulting in the creation of hundreds of civic clubs and municipal leagues brought together under the auspices of various national organizations, such as the National Municipal League, the Evangelical Alliance, Christian Endeavor Societies, and the National Reform Association. Although different in name, these organizations shared common themes: to upgrade city governments, streamline governmental machinery, shift power from mayors to city managers or commissions and free cities from state control.

For many social gospellers, a top down approach in spreading the social gospel led by large organizations meant real and lasting change. Yet individual crusades similarly contributed to successful reform. In New York, for example, Pastor Charles Parkhurst led a successful campaign against the corruption stemming from the Tammany Hall political machine. Likewise, William Radar, a pastor of the Calvary Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, lead a fight from 1906-1909 against *graft*, or the private profiting from political corruption. Perhaps the most influential of these religious leaders was W.T. Stead, head of the Civic Federation of Chicago.

Stead, a prolific writer with the publication of *If Christ Came to Chicago* (1894)*,* energized social Christians in the late 1890s and early twentieth century to address Chicago's social ills, which he believed stemmed from a corrupt and inept municipal

government. Through the articulation of the Civic Federation of Chicago, which Stead

called his "civic church," this outspoken minister fought hard to reform the cities

infrastructure and bring accountability to the city's government. From 1895-1900, Stead

and his followers actively fought for his church by initiating crusades that reorganized the

city and county governments, setting up a system of vocational schools and, as the

nineteenth century closed, worked to upgrade the primary election process. In the early

twentieth century, the Chicago Civic Federation continued to support reforms in health

and sanitation, public safety, education, politics and the judiciary.[201]

With the exception of Stead's Chicago crusade, large-scale political reform

proved difficult to achieve. Instead, successful attempts at reform happened within the

social sphere. At this level, reformers could better address specific problems and craft

solutions for those problems. Social Progressivism, like political progressivism,

manifested in various guises yet the most common was the "settlement house"—places

setup in the slums of large cities that focused on providing social and education services

to a wide range of individuals.

Inspired by the example of Toynbee Hall in London, the settlement houses of the

United States sought to give people both material and spiritual support and to address

many of the social concerns associated with industrialization. In the large urban areas

around the United States—New York, Detroit, Chicago—these places provided

education, aid, and various professional training to immigrants, women, and children and

established various social services for those needing them. Additionally, settlement

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[201]For the ideology of the Civic Federation, see W.T. Stead, "The Civic Church," in *The World's Parliament of Religions,* ed. John Henry Barrows, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893), 1209-15. See also, Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880-1925* (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2000), 80.

workers taught classes that developed practical skills, fought for fair labor and wage laws and took the lead on small scale local and municipal political reform campaigns for things like improved sanitation services and better child caring services.

Women made up a large portion of both the settlement leaders as well as many of its workers. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, leaders of "Hull-House," were the most famous in the Chicago area for their successful lobbying for tenement-house reform, the public-playground movement, and a series of efforts at city planning.[202] Other important woman, like president of the National Conference of Social Workers Mary Glenn, established programs from Boston to San Francisco that fought for minimum wage, reduced working hours and child-labor laws.[203]

Perhaps the most vocal of these women leaders was Vida Scudder, a Christian socialist firebrand who many compared to Walter Raushenbusch and Richard T. Ely. From 1890-1920, Scudder fought hard to elevate the status of women in society and change perception of women away from the Victorian stereotype of women as decorative and fragile. During her tenure at Wellesley College , Scudder often incurred the wrath of parents by infusing socialist ideology with Christianity to encourage young women to seek careers or religious organization that were active in social reform efforts. She did this not only break the notions of a separate "women's sphere" but also to encourage women to get involved in the "Christian Revolution," which she believed characterized the social gospel.[204]

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[202] The importance of Hull House to the reform effort is underscored in Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Commentary of Women Reformers," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10 (Summer 1985): 685-87. Also presented in Link and McCormick, *Progressivism,* 78.

[203] Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation,* 178.

[204] For an insightful look at the separate "women's sphere," see Sheila M. Rothman, *Women's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present,* (New York, NY: Basic Books,

The social mission of Vida Scudder was not limited to education. Outside of the

education sphere, Scudder was a leader in the emerging settlement movement. In 1889,

along with Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, Scudder established one of the earliest

settlement houses on Rivington Street in New York City. Its mission, much like her

directive at Wellesley, centered on teaching young women how to survive in the real

world while breaking down barriers associated with the Victorian woman. In the logbook

of social reform, Vida Scudder was instrumental in encouraging women to involve

themselves in the creation of the kingdom of God.

Because of the strong presence of women, settlements tended to focus on subjects

within, what Link and McCormick call, "the woman's sphere"—such as the home and

family.[205] As a result, many of their reform measures tended to favor issues relating to

children, women and the preservation of moral values that directly affect these groups.

Yet the idea of a "women's sphere" was not limited to the confines of the settlement

house. When the settlement workers ventured out beyond the settlement walls, their

campaigns focused on preserving the morality of these two institutions. The two most

obvious examples were their prohibition and temperance crusades.

Although women are associated with the settlement movement, the creation of the

settlements went beyond gender or race. Reverdy C. Ransom, perhaps the most well

known black religious leader in early twentieth century Chicago, created the Institutional

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1978), 4-5, 23. For Vida Scudder's understanding of a "Christian Revolution," see Vida Scudder, *On Journey* (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1937), 163 and Vida Scudder, "The Kingdom of Righteousness in American Life," *Dial* , 16 February 1913, 130.

[205] Link and McCormick, *Progressivism,* 74.

Church and Social Settlement (ICSS) to provide Christian social programs and to aid the 15,000 African Americans who lived on Chicago's Southside.[206]

The ICSS was an organization of many first. It was the first black owned and operated settlement in the United States that included a cross-section of Chicago's black elite, including prominent surgeon Daniel Hale Williams, famous for performing the first successful suture of a the human heart and Oscar DePriest, the North's fist African-American congressman.[207] More importantly, the ICSS was one of the first black organizations to treat, directly, the myriad of social and economic problems affecting America's black population in a genuine desire to affect real and lasting change.

In general, the ICSS mimicked Hull House and the Chicago Commons on a number of programs, such as children's services, professional training, and providing social services for men, women, and children. Yet the ICSS stood out in many important ways. One of which was founding an employment agency to help black migrants to Chicago find jobs.

In the early 1900s, the ICSS gained support from many prominent individuals ranging from Jane Addams to Robert Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's son. Ransom's tenure with the ICSS did not last long, however. In 1904, attacks by conservative black ministers drove him from Chicago and into private work. Yet his mission to preach a black social gospel did not end. In fact, Ransom continued to press his fellow ministers into a more active social role in the black community. Towards the end of his career,

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[206] Reverdy Ransom, "The Institutional Church and Social Settlement," *Christian Recorder* 48 (November 1900):1 and David Wills, "Reverdy C. Ransom: The Making of an A.M.E. Bishop," *Black Apostles: Afro-American Clergy Confront the Twentieth Century,* ed. Randall K. Burkett and Richard Newman (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1978), 181-212.

[207] Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation,* 214-16.

Ransom went on to play significant roles in the American Council, the Constitution League, and Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which he helped found, fighting for the preservation of African-American rights. [208]

The settlement mission defined a particular type of reform movement and a very popular expression of the social gospel. Within the social sphere of the North and the East, Stanton Coit's Neighborhood Guild (one of the few settlements run by men), Jane Addams' Hull House and Vida Scudder's Rivington Street settlement were the most recognizable. Yet Reverdy C. Ransom's ICSS was gaining notoriety within both black and white communities.[209] During the early years of the twentieth century, numerous other settlements sprang up across the region. The Lillian D. Wald settlement in New York, Mary Simkhovitch's Greenwich House in New York, Robert Wood's Andover House in Boston, Graham Taylor's Chicago Commons and branches of the Rivington Street settlement in Philadelphia and Boston represent just a handful of settlements. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the number of settlements grew exponentially and by the 1920s, a little over 500 such settlements existed across the United States.[210]

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[208] Ibid., 216-220

[209] The ICSS helped mediate a violent stockyard strike, "which pitted hundreds of imported black strikebreakers against the largely white ethnic union workforce in a confrontation that created racial tension all over the city. Angered by Ransom's efforts to investigate and publicize their activities, the racketeers planted a bomb in the ICSS office area. The explosion damaged the building, but no one was hurt. For original story and more details of Ransom's life, see Reverdy Ransom, *The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son* (Nashville, TN: A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1949), 117-135.

[210] Johnson, Mary Ann, "Hull House," in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating and Janice L. Reiff (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 402

The creation of religious settlements, Allan F. Davis notes, spearheaded other social Christian endeavors.[211] Davis noted the commitment of the settlement workers to their ideals and their willingness to throw themselves into social crusades embodied the Christian activism of the social gospellers and inspired a myriad of changes on both the state and national level. The creation in New York State of the Tenement House Commission by then Governor Theodore Roosevelt and the creation of a Children's Bureau that outlawed the transportation of goods created by children offer good examples of how settlements effected lasting change.[212]

The settlement movement also inspired the creation of groups and organizations that strove to rid the urban areas of threats to the nation's moral order, namely alcohol, prostitution and poverty. The Women's Temperance Movement and the American Christian Commission became important moral groups leading the charge against the sin of alcoholism, temperance and prostitution. Other organizations, such as the Y.M.C.A and Y.W.C.A., and the Salvation Army, addressed social issues related to creating productive and moral citizens and poverty.

Because of the actions of the settlement workers, the first decade of the twentieth century saw a rise in religious based reform that was within the framework of the social gospeller's mission. Christian moralism (built around the ideology of individual regeneration) became the guiding force to address long standing social issues, such as alcoholism, prostitution and intemperance, and poverty. Before 1910, their social reform endeavors inspired a broad range of reform movements and created a myriad of

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[211] Allen F. Davis, *Spearhead for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), 344.

[212] Link and McCormick, *Progressivism,* 80.

organizations willing and able to go out into their communities and preach the social gospel. Moreover, their efforts trained a new generation of professional, which Robert Wiebe called "the new middle-class," who could lead the progressive movement.[213] Yet the scope of social progressivism was not limited to addressing only social concerns relating to the "women's sphere" or those felt by blacks and immigrants. In fact, issues of women, blacks, immigrants, and other groups were secondary to the concerns of the working class, at least in the minds of the majority of social gospellers. As a result, the social gospel in the twentieth century was aimed, predominantly, at labor and the industrial sectors and how best to improve the situation of the worker.[214]

Historically, the relationship among America's labor and industrial institutions and religious bodies existed in a tenuous state shaped by the workers' willingness to embrace radical ideologies like socialism and Protestantism's denouncement of such ideologies. Following the Civil War and lasting through the 1880s, fear of socialism and the backlash from industrial elites and religious conservatives marred attempts by liberal Christians to address directly the needs of America's workers. Yet the attitudes towards socialism cooled in the nineties. Liberal denominations, which at the time slowly supplanted religious conservatism, eventually accepted socialism into new theology. The relationship between socialism and new theology grew closer towards the end of the decade as publication of numerous volumes detailing Christian Socialism helped ease this controversial ideology into discussions on its utility to the social Christian cause.

As a new wave of industrial and social tensions arose in the twentieth century, the acceptance of Socialism grew stronger. The literary endorsements at the end of the 1890s

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[213] Wiebe, *The Search for Order,* 125.

[214] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 246.

found new audiences in the twentieth century. In the tradition of George D. Herron, whose work *The Call of the Cross* (1892) was one of the first to synthesize Marxian socialism and Christianity; new volumes appeared espousing the utility of further constructing that relationship. [215] Social gospellers, some ardent socialists themselves, worked to promote a greater religious responsibility on the part of Protestantism towards American labor institutions. Their campaign was ultimately successful as it led to the creation of the Christian Socialist Fellowship, an organization that built a bridge between the workers and America's religious institutions.[216] In the early years of the twentieth century, the CSF became an important catalyst for change as social gospellers across the North and East and led to churches accepting trades unionisms almost without question.

The crusade to help address the plight of the worker took on many forms. The most practical was through print campaigns. Social Christians, working closely with the Socialist Party of America, developed special denominational editions of the controversial *Christian Socialist*, a magazine aimed at giving the reader insight into numerous issues relating to both religious and socialist concerns. With a larger than

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[215] One good example of this literature in the twentieth century was *The Call of the Carpenter* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1911) by Bouck White. In this work, which would be instrumental in uniting the Protestant churches on the side of a national Protestantism, White made a valiant attempt to fuse Marxian socialism, Jeffersonian democracy, and the message of the Galilean carpenter into an eloquent intellectual discourse. It brought White real prominence in radical circles as it was talked about on both sides (liberal and conservatives). Moreover, many on both sides saw the book as a successful attempt to capture Jesus for the workers in the ongoing battle between capital and labor. Mary E. Kenton, "Christianity, Democracy, and Socialism: Bouck White's Kingdom of Self Respect," in *Socialism and Christianity in Early 20th Century America*, ed. Jacob H. Dorn (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 173-75.

[216] The CSF grew out of the desire of a small band of ministers and lay people to bring Christianity and socialism into what they considered a natural friendly relationship. In a statement adopted at an initial meeting in Louisville, this group declared its intentions to "permeate" the American churches with the "social message of Jesus." In addition, the CSF to demonstrate not only that socialism and Christianity were compatible, but that in fact socialism was "the necessary economic expression of the Christian life," and to end the struggle between social classes by establishing "justice and brotherhood" upon earth." See Jacob H. Dorn, *"The Oldest and Youngest of the Idealistic Forces at Work in Our Civilization,"* in *Socialism and Christianity in Early 20th Century America*, ed. Jacob H. Dorn (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 2.

normal press runs, over 20,000 paid subscribers representing all major Protestant denominations, the *Christian Socialist* became an important tool in bringing the social gospel in line with the socialist movement, at least for a while.[217] Eventually, the *Christian Socialist,* along with numerous other Christian socialist publications, fell out of step with the social Christian mission as it began to drift too far towards radicalism. By 1912, the magazine stopped influencing the direction of the social gospel in matters pertaining to the working class.

Aside from the print campaigns, social gospellers became actively involved in the labor reform movement. One of the more active Christians socialists was the Reverend Charles Stelzle. Growing up in the Bowery of New York, Stelzle witnessed the problems of the poor and the plight of the worker from first hand experience.[218] As an adult, he took his affinity for the working class and dedicated his life to reconnecting the church back to the laborers. Known as the "apostle to labor," Stelzle improved the relations between the churches and labor groups through an honest and open dialogue. In the early years of the twentieth century, Stelzle established the New York Labor Temple, a place dedicated to strengthening the relationship between Protestantism and the worker and fostering open dialogue between them.[219]

Stelzle's "open forum," which promoted un-restricted freedom of speech, grew very popular amongst New York's working class as well as area churches. Over the years, the forum hosted several speakers including Theodore Roosevelt, Leon Trotsky

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[217] *The Christian Socialist* was an effective propaganda tool for the Socialist Party in becoming part of the social gospel movement. For thoughts on how socialism represented a "distinct religious expression," see "Christian Socialist Conference," *The Christian Socialist* 3, 1 May 1906, 1.

[218] For details of his life, see Charles Stelzle, *A Son of the Bowery: The Life Story of an East Side American,* (Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publisher, 1926).

[219] Szasz, *The Divided Mind of America's Protestant Clergy,* 54.

and Samuel Gompers. In 1907, the forum held over 1,000 meetings with a total audience of 200,000. In 1908, one meeting alone contained 15,000 people. In the end, the Reverend Stelzle succeeded in his mission to unite labor and the church, as many denominations began to support his cause. By 1912, in fact, eleven denominations along the East coast joined Stelzle's social crusade.

Aside from crusades for the family and for the worker, social gospellers strongly advocated education reform, specifically reform that brought religion and education closer in harmony. The hope of such a union, according to Josiah Strong and Shailer Mathews, was training individuals to follow the teaching of Jesus to not only better themselves but also to teach others to do the same. In short, social gospellers believed education should focus on creating and training good Christians to carry out the missions of social reform.

In the broader context of American life, the twentieth century brought new emphasis on intellectualism and the necessity of education. People were becoming better educated and receiving a higher number of degrees than in previous decades. Despite the focus on education, many of the social gospellers, specifically Josiah Strong, Shailer Mathews and Washington Gladden, believed people denied their Christian obligations as defined by the ideology of the social gospel. Individuals, for example, failed in addressing the needs of the people and failed at bettering themselves on a spiritual and moral level. The reason, Gladden argued, was that people lacked the educational training to better themselves morally and ethically. In many respects, this criticism was apt.

Although education was becoming more prevalent, according to Matthews, it was not teaching morality and ethics to individuals based on social Christian idealism.[220]

Of these individuals, Josiah Strong emerged the most practical advocate on establishing a moralist stream through education. Strong, having gained prominence following his dismissal from the Evangelical Alliance of the United States in 1898, planned an ambitious program of popular education on teaching children how to address the various social issues facing American society. In the same year as his dismissal, Strong founded the "League for Social Service" to develop processes of education to teach people how to be good and active Christians.[221] Instead of relying on formal instructional education, the League relied primarily on printed materials to educate, as well as to sway people to social Christian ideology. The *Truth for the Times*, which was a series of pamphlets devoted to teaching "Christian" themes, was an early attempt by Strong to create a workable lesson plan for Christian education. Much of the lessons found in this pamphlet focused on character development and included instructions on things like good citizenship and fundamentals of state laws, which promoted more active participation by Christians in national politics.

In addition to teaching civics lessons, The *Truth of the Times* fostered a sense of Americanism within Protestant America. In overtly nationalistic tones, the messages and

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[220] Shailer Mathews, *The Individual and the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: Laymen's Missionary Movement, 1914) and Washington Gladden, *Applied Christianity: Moral Aspects of Social Questions* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1887) were two works that advocated the need for a Christianized education. Yet they had no concrete plan how or in what form this mission would undertake. As a result, their works were utilized more as inspirational texts rather than practical ones.

[221] The League for Social Service did not last long after its inception. In 1904, The League reorganized into the American Institute of Social Services (AISS), which held creating good Christians and fostering an American religious identity. The popularity of Strong's League did not diminish even after it restructured. In fact, the AISS lured a number of contributors to fund its mission. These sponsors included several high profile individuals such as Mrs. Andrew Carnegie, Grover Cleveland, Woodrow Wilson, and Francis Peabody.

education training within these tracts exalted American Protestantism as *the* cultural and religious tradition in the United States. At the same time, these works connected the evils of society with various groups that did not fall into that purview, such as immigrants and non-whites, Mormons, Catholics and Jews, fostering strong nativist tendencies among students and filling them with pride in protecting and promoting the core socio-religious values of the country.[222]

The Truth of the Times series, while popular, was not the most famous treatise on creating a program for moral education. That honor goes to Strong's *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (1908). In this text, Strong outlines a course study for Christians on how to address the most common problems of the new civilization and offered tips in finding solutions to those problems using Christ's teachings. Initially, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* started as a Sunday school literature series, but its message gained the widest circulation of any social Christianity literature during the first half of the century. Before the end of the decade, Strong's educational theories enjoyed widespread application across the country as many influential ministers adopted Strong's rhetoric.[223]

The works of Strong and the insights of Gladden and Matthews proved beneficial in creating programs essential to the development of moral and ethical citizens. Together, their ideas on teaching moral and ethical ultimately reached more than 40, 000 readers in churches, YMCA, YWCA, colleges, universities and theological schools across the

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[222] Commentary on the *Truth for the Times* and the other social gospel tracts in Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 260-61.

[223] Many of Strong's thoughts on education were dissemination through the Yale Divinity School (YDS). Once there, famed minister Charles S. MacFarland compiled them and added several other areas where Christianity needed to be applied. See Charles S. MacFarland, *The Christian Ministry and The Social Order: Lectures Delivered in the Course in Pastoral Functions At Yale Divinity School, 1908-1909* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1909), 1-10.

United States.[224] Their success, along with the broader success of the social gospel in the

North and East highlight the massive undertaking by the urban social gospellers to spread

practical Christianity to a part of the country in desperate need of its services.

The Social Gospel in the South

In the areas of the North and the East, the path of the social gospel carried it

through every dimension of American life—political, social, industrial, and educational.

Although it was not consistent in its successes, no one can deny the impact it had on

America's urban sphere or the influence it had on other areas of the country. In other

regions of the country, particularly in the South, the social reform of the social gospellers

maintained many of the North's machinations, such as thoughts on education. Yet it also

varied greatly from its urban counterparts. In the North and East, the social gospel

embodied an idealistic crusade by a group of individuals who believed that salvation lay

in transforming the earth. As such, their reform measures characterized a deep optimism

and hope that they could influence their fate through social works. In turn, they believed

that they could reconnect people with their faith and transform the United States into

God's Kingdom.

The social gospel in the South took a markedly different path. While northern and

eastern interpretations of social gospel embodiment hope for society, in this region fear

was the principal catalyst for social reform.[225] Historically, this fear derived from several

sources—rural isolation, poverty, ignorance—resulting in the people in the south to take

an overly harsh stance on the world around them. The continuing advances in

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[224] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 262.

[225] Robert Moats Miller, "Fourteen Points on the Social Gospel in the South," in *Modern American Protestantism and its World: Protestantism and Regionalism,* ed. Martin E. Marty (New York, NY: K.G. Saur, 1992), 99.

industrialization at the turn of the century did little to assuage these feelings and, in fact confirmed many of their socio-religious beliefs. Because of these perceptions, the direction of the social gospel in the south took a different path. Instead of a means of total social and spiritual reform, the social gospel in the rural areas of the country became a means to emphasize traditional *mores* and to preserve a socio-cultural identity under constant attack by *industrialization*, modernization and immigration.

Compared to the North and East, the Southern social gospel is the more enigmatic and suspect of the regional social gospels for being not as progressive as its northern iteration or for not existing at all. In fact, the notion that the social gospel did not exist in the south has been the prevailing myth and a general misconception amongst religious historians.[226] In spite of these claims, the social gospel did exist in the South. Yet it existed in a fundamentally different form than in the North and the East.

First, unlike the reform campaigns in the North and East, no one individual emerged a leader in the movement. Instead, the movement was largely collective by nature, which reflected the cohesive and communal dimension of southern life. The "mob mentality" of the Southern social gospel proved a powerful force in the region's religious reform. The social gospel in the South would take on the guise of reform, or what Arthur Link and Richard McCormick call, "coercive progressivism."[227]

At the heart of the South's coercive progressivism was the desire to preserve, what Charles Reagan Wilson called the region's "civil religion."[228] In the decades before

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[226] One of the major southern historians to press that theory is C. Vann Woodward, *The Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 1951).

[227] For a detailed account of "coercive Progressivism," see Link and McCormick, *Progressivism,* 96.

[228] The term "Civil Religion" is used to describe the indistinguishable relationship between the South's religious and cultural identity." For a detailed description of "civil religion," see Charles Reagan Wilson,

the Civil War, the south developed a unique culture that aligned with an orthodox and conservative understanding of Protestant Christianity. As a result, much of their worldview stemmed from a strict Calvinist doctrine of social control. Over time, this understanding defined everything from economics, where churches tended to side with business leaders rather than workers, to their social and political organization.

In the decades following the Civil War, Reconstruction and the abolition of slavery upset that worldview, at least in a legal sense. Unlike the people living in the North and East, who distanced themselves from their faith as industrialization bore down on them, southerners found comfort in their beliefs. People relied more and more on their local churches to the point, Robert Miller argues, that religion became the "opiate" of the agrarian masses.[229] Because of this reliance, or over reliance, on the church, the gap between Southern civilization and religion grew together quicker than in other areas of the country.

This trend of dependency continued throughout the 1890s and defined a new culture in the South in the form of a civil religion. Preachers became both spiritual and secular leaders, speaking out against those who wished to upset the mores of Southern society. More often than not, this meant repudiating those who expounded philosophies or ideologies that threatened fundamental beliefs of these preachers.[230] These

"The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920," in *Modern American Protestantism and its World: Protestantism and Regionalism,* ed. Martin E. Marty (New York, NY: K.G. Saur, 1992), 44-5.

[229] Miller, "Fourteen Points on the Social Gospel in the South," 100-01.

[230] One such instance occurred at the Southern Baptist Convention in 1899. George W. Truett, a pastor of the Dallas First Baptist Church, verbally attacked Southern ministers who spoke on worldly issues such as philosophy, science and culture. This scrutiny extended to members of the church as well. Communicants were reprimanded or purged from their rolls is their behavior is deemed "unchristian." See

individuals, according to Edmund Brunner, shaped perceptions of the world that fit their own emotional experiences and nothing else.[231]

The means by which the preachers coerced people to following them varied. The use of hymns, for example, warned people of the uncertainty of human existence and the futility of trying to alter one's destiny. Instead, they emphasized that the church was the only certainty and that God was the only means to a better life. Yet the best method of asserting control remained the revival, which in the 1890s grew to take on social and cultural significance in the South. In fact, the revival season of July and August were important times to reaffirm ones faith but also to reaffirm ones commitment to the community.

Preservation of this socio-religious theology became the number one goal of southern religious clergy in the twentieth century. The social gospel, as coercive progressivism in the region, became the means to accomplish that. Church leaders used themes important to their flock–the protection of the family, preserving societal balance (i.e. segregation), and the destructive nature of alcoholism—to encourage people to preserve these traditions. Church leaders, such as the Reverend Edgar Gardner Murphy, appealed to people's sense of honor, or their *noblesse oblige,* and charged them with upholding a moral responsibility to address the evils of society. In this regard, the emphasis on personal responsibility took on an eerily similar tone to the social Christian movements of the north and the east. While men like Walter Raushenbusch and

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sermon in Henry T. Louthan, *The American Baptist Pulpit at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Williamsburg, VA: Henry Thompson Louthan, 1903), 254-73.

[231] Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner, *Church Life in the Rural South: A Study of the Opportunity of Protestantism Based Upon Data from Seventy Counties* (New York, NY: Negro University Press, 1923), 74.

Washington Gladden emphasized this mission for everyone—rich, poor, middle-class—religious leaders in the South placed this duty solely on people of "intelligence and property," which usually meant white elites and those in the upper tiers of society.[232]

The spiritual significance was also different. The social gospellers of the North and East urged reform to better oneself and then to better the society as a whole. This process, according to northern and eastern clergy, ultimately led to creation of the kingdom of God. In contrast, the gospellers of the South did not share in the utopian vision of an earthly Kingdom. Instead, they believed that the Kingdom was only possible in the afterlife. Despite these differences, the various Southern denominations were surprisingly receptive to social Christianity. The reasoning was not hypocritical, nor was it an affront to their Calvinist doctrine. Many clergy simply saw the utility of this theology as a means of maintaining the regions civil and religious traditions. With this understanding, the Southern social gospel became a crusade of social preservation through a rigorous program of societal betterment.[233]

Over the decade, the southern social gospel took on a broad humanitarian effort to protect Southern society by identifying and eliminating dangers to the integrity of its foundation, such as the importance of family and a social and racial order. Everything that challenged or confronted these traditional *mores* was designated "sin." Therefore, it became the mission of the social gospellers to eradicate this sin in order to save southern life. In the first decade of the century, Edgar Gardner Murphy, along with Graham Taylor, identified four broad movements where sin was prevalent. The most prominent

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[232] Edward Gardner Murphy, *Problems of the Present South* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1904), 7, 194.

[233] John Lee Eighmy, "Religious Liberalism in the South during the Progressive Era," *Church History* 38, (September 1969): 361.

crusade related to alcoholism in the South and the attempt to prohibit, legally, the sale and consumption of alcohol.

The anti-saloon campaign was not new. The Southern Presbyterian General Assembly crusaded against liquor as early as 1891. The Southern Baptists addressed liquor question even before that in the 1870s. In the context of the twentieth century, prohibition gained new life as the three Southern denominations offered direct contributions in an effort to prohibit, through legislation, the sell and consumption of alcohol and used a variety of tactics to accomplish that goal.

One tactic, according to historian James Timberlake, appealed to southern awareness of race. For many prohibitionists, equating alcohol with African-Americans, Hispanics, or even those of the lower classes strengthened the issue of prohibition, especially amongst respectable Southern whites and nativist groups.[234] Although this approach strengthened the cause, the most effective method was social evangelism, or going out into the communities spreading "dry" propaganda while preaching Christian moralism and ethics to dissuade southern citizens from imbibing. The Anti-Saloon League in the South, formed in the late 1890s, became the directing body of this movement and, in the years 1907-1915, successfully campaigned for total prohibition in all but two Southern states.

Prohibition was not the only issue for the mission of social betterment. Prison reform and health care reform ranked high in importance for Southern Social gospellers.[235] Yet these movements were secondary compared the overwhelming desire

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[234] James Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement,1900-1920* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1970), 119-120

for racial and ethnic reform. In fact, this movement, like prohibition, formed one of the seminal crusades of the Southern social gospel.

Racial reform movements in the South targeted two groups. The first group was the South's African American population. At the turn of the century, states and cities throughout the South enacted a myriad of laws completely separating black and white life. "Jim Crow," as the compiled body of legislation became known, defined racial relations in the South in social, political and religious contexts. Local and state governments legally mandated segregation on public transportation and social situations using race "place-cards" to designate how blacks and whites could or could not interact. The use of "Whites Only" or "Colored Only" designations and the separation of black and white religious spheres established "powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods . . . by forming conceptions of a general order of existence."[236]

Across the region, whites became obsessed with making sure blacks knew their place in the racial order. In parts of the South, this obsession often took violent turns in the form of "social justice," such as lynching and other forms of violence against blacks. Although liberal reformers in the south (there were a few) to equate social justice as a failure of societal betterment, segregationist attitudes continued to dominant the region culminating with the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in 1920.

The second group targeted was the immigrant. As numerous historians have observed, the identification of various social and political evils often rested with foreign-

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[235] "The Prison Reform Association successfully secured the abolition for the convict-lease system in 1919. Likewise, public health advocates initiated successful campaigns to eradicate a number of maladies such as hookworms, pellagra and malaria." See Eighmy, "Religious Liberalism in the South during the Progressive Era," 362.

[236] Donald G. Mathews, "Lynching is Part of the Religion of our People," in *Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture,* eds. Beth Barton-Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 155.

born Americans. In the South, as in the North, this perception formed a core belief that wherever immigrants lived or congregated, immorality, illiteracy and corruption seemed to flourish. In the early twentieth century, a haphazard program of "Americanization" emerged in the North and East to address many of these problems. The leading figures in this movement, which included patriotic societies, churches and some municipal governments, made it their goal to "inculcate the rejection of alien habits and a submission to the 'the spirit of true Americanism.'"[237] This included teaching immigrants about American culture through civics lessons, English-only programs and religious education aimed at removing the influence of foreign faiths, particularly Catholicism and Judaism.

In the South, this program of Americanization often went to extremes. In the North and East, for example, social gospellers attempted to work with immigrants to rectify their situations with little impact to their cultural identity.[238] The only exception was the patriotic societies, which comprised nativist organizations that sought legal means to marginalize immigrants. Southern reformers, by contrast, "helped" immigrants by breaking down their culture and forcing them to accept a completely different socio-cultural identity, which echoed tactics in the early nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon mission. After 1910, the South's approach would be more widely accepted as the number of immigrants increased across the country.

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[237] Link and McCormick, *Progressivism,* 101.

[238] Jane Addam, "Immigrants and Their Children" in *Twenty Years at Hull House: With Autobiographical Notes*, ed. Jane Addams (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1910), 231-258, offers a good insight into this process as she explains the utility of maintaining an immigrant's culture. Not only for their sake, but also for the addition it makes to the broader American culture.

Along with prohibition and racial reform movements, the Southern Social gospel took on issues relating to the region's agricultural and educational spheres. The agricultural reform movements in particular became an important cause for the social gospel as the ideals of the South's agrarian past defined many important aspects of the traditions and culture of the region. In other words, the Jeffersonian notion of the "yeoman farmer" still resonated with Southern society even in the twentieth century.

Because of the importance of the South's agrarian heritage on their socio-cultural identity, reform aimed at protecting this identity took on significance with social gospellers. In fact, many crusades emerged to protect this idea. "The Gospel of the Farm," first articulated by Jenkin Lloyd Jones, was one such crusade. At the heart of the gospel was that message that Southern moralism was tied to its agriculture. Jones describes the importance of the farm on shaping the Southern identity. More importantly, his gospel of the farm offers a compelling plea on why it is worth saving.[239]

Of the four reform movements, education received the least amount of attention from the social gospellers. Instead of new or innovative programs, Southern gospellers borrowed the Northern ideas of fostering the development of moral and Christian idealism as core values in their own society. Like their northern counterparts, schools in the South taught the superiority of the Anglo-white culture compared to others, and infused its lessons with themes of moral and civic responsibility as indicative to being a good Christian. For a time, this approach to education drew high praise. Northern

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[239] Thomas E. Graham, *The Agricultural Social Gospel in America: The Gospel of the Farm by Jenkin Lloyd Jones* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), xxvi-xxi.

philanthropy groups, like the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations, donated millions to Southern education to further these courses.[240]

The Social Gospel in the South existed as an attempt to hold on to an image of a society that, for all intent and purposes, did not exist in the twentieth century. The "Agrarian Myth," defined by the white, Anglo-Saxon yeomen life, remained strong in the minds of the rural clergy and the poverty-stricken masses. Yet the reality of the South in the early twentieth century did not fit within this worldview. Instead of the homogenous society this myth attempts to reconstruct, the South in the twentieth century was a pluralist society of different traditions and cultures. Despite this change, the clergy succeeded in preserving semblances of that image through the application of a civil faith and the social gospel, as a process of societal reform and social control, became an important means of aiding in that preservation.

The Social Gospel in the West

The social gospel in the North, East and South represented a drive by Protestant clergy and laity (along with various groups in secular society) to expand the traditions and values of Christianity to evangelize American society. Moreover, the social gospel in these regions served to create a common identity amongst Protestants that would contribute greatly to the emergence of a nationalistic Protestantism. In the West, the social gospel movement maintained a very similar theological and social mission. Yet the character of the social gospel in the West was fundamentally different from its regional counterparts. Instead of a homogenous movement (i.e. solely Protestant), the social gospel in West reflected the complex socio-cultural nature of the region, which contained a myriad of different cultures and racial and religious identities.

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[240] Eighmy, "Religious Liberalism in the South during the Progressive Era," 359.

122

The West, argues Ferenc Morton Szasz, existed as a "semi-sacred space, different in character from both North and South, perhaps less bound by traditional mores and conventions."[241] Unlike the other regions of the country, the West did not have an evangelical Protestantism shaping the religious character of the region. The Protestant moral ideology, social identity and cultural mores that existed in the other areas of the country, did not necessarily define the character of the West. Across the region in fact, mainline Protestantism (which included Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians) existed as minority religious denomination. With the exception of Protestant strongholds in Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Nebraska, Catholics and Mormons made up the largest and most influential religious denominations in the region.

The religious and cultural pluralism that existed in the West shaped the social gospel so much so that its ideals often traversed denominational lines. Although there were different religious currents flowing through the region, Catholics, Mormons, Jews, and mainline Protestants held similar concerns over the "social question" relating to sin in American society. Moreover, these denominations all directed reform movements that sought to eradicate that sin from society. Yet the most important similarity between the groups was the common drive towards fulfilling a higher purpose, in this case, the creation of God's earthly kingdom. Reflecting on this shared mission, famed preacher Lyman Abbott poignantly remarked, "My Roman Catholic brother, and my Jewish brother, and my agnostic brother and I, an evangelical minister, have started in various

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[241] Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 2.

quarters, and are going in different directions, but we are all aiming for the same place . . . [The kingdom of God]."[242]

The idea of a pluralistic social gospel is not exclusive to the West. Catholic and Jewish denominations in the other areas of the country utilized Raushenbusch's principle of applied Christianity to develop specific reforms catered to their communities' needs.[243] In the urban and rural areas of the North, East and South, these movements developed outside the dominant Protestant culture. Yet Protestant visions and power kept these movements in check. In the West, the religious pluralism and the minority status of the mainline Protestant denominations ensured that no one denomination directed the course of reform. Instead, the social gospel manifested as a series of religious crusades that saw multiple denominations sharing in the burden of societal reconstruction.

Historians such as Szasz and Charles Hopkins point to this uniformity of goals as indicative to a unique religious experience in the West. These historians, along with many others, paint a picture of Catholics, Jews, Mormons and mainline Protestants working together in the ungodly frontier to bring morality and law into a lawless region. While there is no doubt that cooperation occurred at some level, especially considering the isolated nature of the area outside urban centers like Denver, Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle, each denomination held different designs for the region based in their own ecumenical worldview. The Protestants, although sharing similar aims as the Catholics, Mormons or Jews, had no interest in creating a multi-religious kingdom. For

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[242] Abbott, "The Message of the Nineteenth Century to the Men of the Twentieth," 354. Allusions from Abbott's speech to the "Kingdom of God" came from H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America,* (1937; New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 1984), chap. 3 passim.

[243] The "social gospel," as a religious theology, is not solely a product of liberal Protestant theology. Jewish concerns for a moral social order date back to the religion's founding. Similarly, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerun Novarum* mandated social works for all Catholics. See Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West,* 6.

many clergy, particularly those who drew connections between the health of the American Republic and its level of "Protestantism," the only way to maintain a strong society meant the continuance of the United States was to make the region Protestant. This meant that Protestants, although in the minority, found ways to limit the influence of non-Protestant religious groups while simultaneously increasing their own power.

One of the ways Protestants accomplished this goal was through limited sectarian cooperation. In the West, theological differences, such as liberal versus conservative, mattered little to the relatively small mainline Protestant population. Clergy, knowing that both Catholics and Mormons outnumbered them, realized that sectarian strife amongst mainline Protestantism was detrimental to their cause. Because of this, many churches moved away from theological issues that traditionally separated Methodists from Baptists and both from Presbyterians and instead focus on moral and social problems that each faced in the West. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Protestant clergy influenced by Denver's Thomas Uzzell (Methodist) and Myron Reed (Congregationalist) and Topeka's Charles Sheldon (Congregationalist) brought forth reform that capitalized on Protestant cooperation. Surprisingly, this pact of inter-religious cooperation worked. The Protestant social gospeller's mission of social and spiritual reform remained firmly within the context of the social Christian mission of creating a Protestant kingdom of God.

The Protestant social mission under the Western gospellers reflected the close-knit dynamic as it existed as an amalgamation of the ideologies and beliefs from both liberal and conservative theologies. Much like the southern gospel, for example, the Western gospel meant preserving an imagined cultural identity from the threats of outside

and inside forces. Social gospellers embraced largely conservative societal and religious views, particularly when it came to things like ethnic and racial orders, as well as on issues relating to preservation of a white, Anglo identity. On the other hand, western social gospellers also expressed a very liberal eschatological perception. Many social gospellers, for example, held the belief that Western society needed saving and they had the ability to accomplish that through individual regeneration and social works. This perception draws a clear connection with the millennialism views of Raushenbusch, Gladden and the other social gospellers of the North and East.

The other distinction of the Western social gospel is in its organization. Charles Hopkins once argued that the social gospel "never became an organized movement." Instead, he argues, it was "a crusade by men and women, who used the framework of conventional denominations to enact their social reform programs."[244] Although that assumption is not true for the North, East and South (at least after 1908 when it *did* become an organized movement), in the West, Hopkins' observation is mostly accurate. The social gospel in the West was not an organized movement like in the other areas of the country but a lay movement initiated by, what T. Scott Miyakawa calls, "intimate voluntary groups."[245] The denominational oversight that existed in other regions, whose directive to missionaries was to "preach the old Gospel," did not exist in the context of the West. Instead, pragmatic clergy tailored the social gospel to the diverse landscape of the region.

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[244] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 319.

[245] T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier,* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 3.

In the urban areas in and around the large cities of the West, religious reform took on issues relating to urbanization, specifically sanitation, immigration and social works programs. In Denver, a city greatly affected by social problems dating back to the silver rush days, Thomas Uzzell and Myron Reed worked diligently to ameliorate these social problems using the social gospel. Reed, before his death in 1899, fostered close connections with the areas working class and direct much of his energies at helping them. Beginning in the early 1890s, Reed advocated, successfully, numerous reforms ranging from improved safety measures to guaranteed worker's compensation.[246] Yet his close ties with the region's labor alienated him from the cities middle and upper class populations. By the end of the decade, Reed broke with the Congregationalists and founded a nondenominational church, which he ran until his death.

Thomas Uzzell, by contrast, worked closely with the areas elite. Thanks to large donations by the wealthy, he established a very popular welfare program. His ministry, the People's Tabernacle, used the funds donated by the city's elite to create numerous social works initiatives aimed at helping the poor and included a low-cost transit program and classes that taught sewing, cooking and other important skills to many groups, including immigrants, Native Americans, and blacks.[247] In many respects, Uzzell's ministry resembled the settlement house project of the North and East, particularly with its emphasis on skill development and immigrant care. Uzzell carried on Herculean

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[246] For insight into Reed's attitude towards social activism, see entire Myron Reed, *The Evolution of the Tramp: Sermons Preached in January and February, 1886,* (Denver, CO: Rocky Mountain News Print, 1886). See also Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West,* 9.

[247] For an important look at the impact of Thomas Uzzell's work, see William Dwight Porter Bliss and Rudolph Michael Binder (eds.), *The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform: Including All Social-Reform Movements and Activities, and the Economic, Industrial, and Sociological Facts and Statistics of All Countries and All Social Subjects* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908), 383.

reform efforts until is death in 1910. His impact on the city was apparent following his death. According to Szasz, he "was one of the most deeply mourned men of Denver."[248]

In the few years before Uzzell's death in 1910, Baptist Jim Goodheart and Methodist Francesco P. Sulmonetti inherited Denver's social gospel mission. Like their predecessors, both men built extensive social work programs that focused on training and care for the poor, particularly for children, the unemployed and immigrants. Goodheart's Sunshine Mission, for example, operated as an unemployment bureau, a shelter and a soup kitchen to the homeless, and an orphanage. Sulmonetti, on the other hand, made a name for himself amongst Denver's Italian and Spanish population. His Holy Trinity Italian Evangelical Institutional Church (est. 1910) provided free medical and legal services, as well as classes that taught English. The Spanish Methodist Church (est. 1915) provided the same, but included care for children, provided a library and taught music and craft skills to the areas Spanish residents. [249]

In the rural areas of the West, religious and social reform followed a course similar to its urban counterparts. In fact, social gospellers in the rural areas of the plains states Nebraska, Kansas, Utah, the Dakotas, West Texas and Wyoming utilized many of the same institutional reforms and social outreaches found in the larger cities. This included the creation of things like immigrant clubs, English language classes, Sunday schools, night schools, and domesticate classes. In Topeka, the Reverend Charles Sheldon, whose work *In His Steps* was the ideological inspiration to Walter Raushenbusch and the other social Christian intellectuals, worked hard to promote these institutions. Early in his career, for example, Sheldon worked closely with the black

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[248] Szasz, *The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915,* 196.

[249] Ibid., 197-198.

community in the area's "Tennessee Town" creating programs to increase their quality of life.[250] By the mid-1890s, the young minister began to attack other issues, such as alcoholism, and became an active supporter of prohibition. In the twentieth century, Sheldon aligned himself even more with the social gospellers in advocating solutions to things like unemployment, poverty and becoming increasingly vocal against church apathy to social reform.[251]

For the most part, urban and rural reform occurred independently from one another, in spite of the fact that they shared similar directives. Moreover, social and religious reform remained separate from the larger Western phase of Progressivism, which at this time trended towards large-scale political reorganization.[252] As with most national movements, secular and religious missions tended to intertwine, particularly as two important regional concerns issues brought these two movements together. The first dealt with sanitation issues against the backdrop of a national epidemic of "the White Plague," or tuberculosis.

In the early twentieth century, tuberculosis wreaked havoc on the nation killing over 150,000 people a year. Although there was no cure, rest and the high altitude and dry climate of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and West Texas proved beneficial for the tens of thousands suffering the disease.[253] Yet many of these areas, specifically Arizona

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[250] For Sheldon's own interpretation of his actions, see Charles Sheldon, *Charles M. Sheldon: His Life Story* (New York, NY: George H. Doran, 1925), 82-92, 245-47.

[251] Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West,* 10-11.

[252] For Progressive agenda, see Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of my Own:" A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 378-386.

[253] Figures from the National Tuberculosis Association (NTA) estimated about 7000 people migrated to these areas annually seeking a "cure" from their ills. S. Adolphus Knopf, *A History of the National Tuberculosis Association: The Anti-Tuberculosis Movement in the United States* (New York, NY: National

and New Mexico, lacked the capacity to handle the flood of immigrants. Very quickly, these areas overflowed with sick and infectious people. Cities, fearful of the disease and unwilling to care for infected individuals, forced those with TB into makeshift "tent towns" located in the outskirts of town.

Amongst the immigrants that descended on the Southwest were numerous clergy who, like many other "health seekers" came to the region looking for a cure. Instead, they found a deeply fearful society unwilling to care for or even sympathize with the plight of the infected.[254] Seeing their plight as a legitimate religious concern, many clergy, such as Hugh A. Cooper, expanded the existing religious clinics into important health care facilities. From 1904-1912, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians opened several sanatoriums (Presbyterian Hospital of Albuquerque, Saint Luke's Hospital in Phoenix) providing much needed care for the poor. The work in the religious sanatoriums was hard and the risks were great, but for the workers, it was an important religious obligation. Until doctors discovered a cure for TB in the World War II years, the religious sanatoriums remained an important institution devoted to the ideals of the Western social gospel.

The other social concern that brought rural and urban gospellers together related to the care and education of the regions Chinese immigrant population. Making up the

Tuberculosis Association, 1922), 157-67. Also in Szasz, *The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915,* 203.

[254] Although there were numerous church run hospitals in the region, the ones owned and operated as private "Sanatoriums" were the best equipped to care for the infected. Yet these institutions were privately owned and catered to those of considerable wealth. NTA estimates put that over half of those who came to the area were at the poverty line or below and could not afford such care. The lack of concern drove one Presbyterian to note that those who could not afford care deserved sympathy because "they are a thousand miles or more from home and friends, regarded with fear, and excluded from honest hotels" See Knopf, *A History of the National Tuberculosis Association: The Anti-Tuberculosis Movement in the United States,* 3-22. Account also found in Szasz, *The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915,* 204.

largest immigrant population in the West, Chinese individuals entered the country,

voluntary or in bondage, to construct the nation's rail system. The "coolies," as they were

called, lived and worked in abhorrent conditions and existed, in many respects, as slaves.

Once constructions of the railroads finished, many of the rail companies dumped the

Chinese into the larger population. With their strange customs and overall appearance,

the region's nativistic tendencies found an attractive outlet for violence and racial

prejudice. Beginning in the mid-1880s and lasting well into the twentieth century, the

Chinese endured unyielding violence and discrimination from westerners as anti-Chinese

riots and near-riots broke out in towns in Colorado, Wyoming, and Arizona. [255]

The only group willing to come to the aid of the Chinese was the churches. In the

late 1880s, Protestant churches set up a number of Chinese schools that undertook a

spiritual mission of "Americanizing" the Chinese immigrant with the hopes of better

integration of the immigrant into American society. Yet Americanization was not a

process of cultural training and cross-cultural understanding. Instead, Americanization

simply meant teaching Chinese immigrants English and converting them to Christianity.

At each of the schools, whether it was the Tucson Episcopalian School or the Chinese

School of the Central Presbyterian Church in Denver, the Americanization process

followed a uniform course: English lessons supplemented with rudimentary liturgical

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[255] Labor disputes were often the spark for anti-Chinese riots. In 1875, the Union Pacific Railroad Company first hired Chinese as strikebreakers in its Rock Springs mines in the Wyoming Territory. The bitterness this caused between the (largely immigrant) white miners and the Chinese festered for a decade before exploding in the fall of 1885. The attack on September 2 by 150 armed white men against the Chinese miners had calamitous results for the Chinese community: 28 deaths, 15 wounded, the expulsion of several hundred, and property damage of nearly $150,000. After the Rock Springs riot, anti-Chinese violence quickly spread to other areas in the West. On September 11, Chinese were attacked in Coal Creek; on October 24, Seattle's Chinatown was burned; on November 3, a mob of 300 expelled the Chinese in Tacoma before moving on to force similar expulsions in smaller towns. The Washington governor requested federal assistance to restore law and order and on November 7 President Grover Cleveland sent the U.S. military to Seattle and Tacoma to suppress the riots. See Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 173-188

teachings, either through hymnals or through missionary tracts.[256] Upon learning English

and the fundamentals of Christianity, missionaries believed that the immigrant would

shed his identity as a "greatly neglected and pitiful class" and become productive

American citizens.[257]

On the surface, the churches seemed genuinely concerned about helping the

Chinese assimilate into American society. Yet the process of Americanizing the Chinese

bore a striking similarity to earlier Indian missions, in both church naivety and their

overall failures. Much like the Native Americans of the region, a majority of the Chinese

showed no interest in Christianity. Instead, the Chinese used the churches to learn

English in order to find better jobs or make money to return home. In fact, the Chinese

immigrant often went back and forth from Protestant and Catholic schools learning

English while paying only lip service to Christian teachings. More often than not though,

the Chinese immigrant outright rejected the teaching of Christianity.

The Americanization missions did not fail completely. A few Chinese immigrants

did in fact learn English and convert to Protestant Christianity, about 50,000 joined

Protestant churches according to Szasz. Many of whom then returned home to evangelize

others.[258] In the end, the focus on Chinese salvation and education, along with the

sanitation movement represented a unique facet of the Western social gospel. Both

highlighted the breadth of Western reform and both reflected the inherent pragmatism of

the Western phase of the movement.

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[256] Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930,* 202.

[257] Helen Webster, "The Chinese School of the Central Presbyterian Church of Denver," *Colorado Magazine* 40 (January 1963): 57-62.

[258] Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West,* 13.

The reform crusades mentioned above reflect a small percentage of the social gospeller's continuous pursuit to "save the West." Other crusades, such as the ones against societal vice—gambling, prostitution and Red Light districts, drugs and alcohol—represented concerns that were more important to Western Protestant clergy. These crusades, which existed off and on since the 1850s, faced continual resistance stemming from the varying sectarian issues of the region. Through the first decade of the twentieth century, the more pragmatic social gospel movements permeated the urban and rural spheres and fostering theological cooperation towards eradicating many of these vices from western society. By 1920, Protestant clergy in the cities of Albuquerque, Phoenix, El Paso and Denver led successful campaigns against these vices, finally achieving victory in a long fought moral crusade.

The unique nature of the western social gospel played a crucial role in Western moral reform and societal development, particularly for the Protestant minority. The amorphous nature and ideological neutrality of the Protestant gospel allowed it to cross denominational and sectarian lines and reach a much broader audience that its regional counterparts. Because of this nature, the Protestant gospel in the West brought varying groups together under the banner of a unified Protestant spirit and a shared cultural identity. Ultimately, this spirit moved beyond the region forming strong connections to the nationalistic Protestantism present in the other areas of the country.

Beyond the Social Gospel

The social gospel spread across the United States, gaining both power and influence within the country's urban and rural centers. Within the first decade of the twentieth century, against a prevailing view that Americans had lost a passionate

commitment to their faith, a high level of religious energy existed in the United States as citizens firmly embraced social revitalization. Gaius Glen Atkins, Professor of Homiletics at Auburn Theological Seminary, would argue in fact, that the commitment of faith was so great that it created a "superabundance of zeal" for the prospect of creating a Christian America. The first fifteen years of the twentieth century, he argued, may "sometimes be remembered in America as the Age of Crusades" that imparted on the people "unusual moral idealism, excessive confidence in mass movements" and "reverence for the rare gifts of religious leaders."[259] In the end, the reform programs of the social gospel helped the various Protestant denominations establish a permanent place in society. This not only closed the gap between church and the people that had existed since the 1870s but it also reignited a commitment among the populace to create a Christian America.

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[259] Dr. Atkins reflecting on the social gospel in the early twentieth century, in Gaius Glenn Atkins, *Religion in Our Time* (New York, NY: Round Table Press, 1932), 156.

V

Christian Consolidation in the Twentieth Century

The prewar years of the twentieth century saw the rise of support for the social gospel in America's religious communities as prominent metropolitan ministers, obscure country preachers, college and theological school professors, religious journalists, and certain social scientists embraced its philosophy of social activism. The widespread support of the social gospel created a swelling chorus of individuals committed to not only individual perfection and social salvation, but also to the power of the Protestant faith to change and shape society.[260] Walter Raushenbusch, reflecting in 1907 on the state of social Christianity in the nineteenth century noted the difference. "All whose recollection runs back of 1900 will remember that as a time of lonesomeness," Rauschenbusch claimed. He concluded that, "We were few and we shouted in the wilderness."[261]

The appeal of the social gospel across all regions revealed a doctrine that enjoyed overwhelming denominational and lay support. On the surface, this social movement brought together liberals and conservatives for a common purpose, much like the social crusades of the nineteenth century. Yet the popularity of the social gospel is deceiving to its actual place in the religious sphere of the first few years of the twentieth century. Although the social gospel became popular for its temporal doctrine of societal reform,

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[260] Some of the works included Josiah Strong, *The Next Great Awakening* (New York, NY: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1902); Washington Gladden, *Social Salvation* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1902); Shailer Mathews, *The Church and the Changing Order* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1907). For additional works see Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 245.

[261] Raushenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order,* 9.

the social gospel remained a minority *theological* movement until 1907. Even as its

theories and ideology integrated into the larger social sphere, which saw a complete

evolution away from conservative Protestantism, regional perceptions of the social gospel

continued to define how and to what extent social Christianity existed. This was

especially true in the regions of the country were enclaves of conservatism remained,

such as the South.[262] The attitudes of Southern Protestants would cause problems for the

aims of the social gospellers, so much so that many prominent figures in the movement

reassessed the viability of a social Christian doctrine. In his work, *Christianizing the*

Social Order, (1908), for example, Walter Rauschnebucsh concedes that the social gospel

in the early twentieth century was "too optimistic and too progressivistic" because it

relied heavily on religious liberalism.[263]

As the decade progressed, a shift occurred in not only the understanding of the

social gospel, but also in its acceptance amongst the fundamentalists. In conservative

enclaves in the South, where a more pronounced resistance to the social gospel existed,

prominent conservative ministers preached the merits of social activism as an important

mission for the white race, especially as a means of preserving the region's social

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[262] In the South, unlike the rest of the country, the acceptance of the social gospel was conditional and based on Southern Protestants presumptions of the place of religion in society. Most denominations in the South, such as the heirs of the "colonial" big three, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and the "frontier" big three, the Methodists, Baptists and the Disciples of Christ, held on to Calvinist orthodoxy and, because of this, still viewed the social gospel as a radical *theological* doctrine. These church bodies disagreed with the social gospel goals of rewriting the social contract of American (based on Calvinist theology), which their traditions helped to write and promote as the normative and timeless Christianity. Combining Christian duty and the preservation of the white, Anglo culture was the only way Southern Protestants could be persuaded to join the social gospel. See Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York, NY: The Dial Press, 1970), 205.

[263] Ibid.

dynamic.[264] Although the theological issues lack resolution, the appeal to the region's attitudes on white supremacy and racial obligation worked. By 1906, the acceptance of the social gospel across denominational and sectarian lines was uniform.

The social gospel became a national force and reformed American Protestantism back into a powerful and a monolithic faith that could wield great power and hold great influences in American society. Yet a growing number of social Christians expressed the need to control, and ultimately direct, that force into a true national movement. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, created in 1908, became the largest federative body in the world at the time and the means of organizing Protestantism and creating a program of national reform. Within a year after its creation, the Federal Council succeeded in doing both.

The Call for Cooperation and Unity

The birth of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, for all intent and purpose, came from necessity. The growth of liberal Protestantism into a monolithic faith proved too much for the "scattered forces" of America's Protestant institutions. The varied nature of the social gospel, determined more by regional needs than national concerns, was largely inefficient at a local level and, according to the social gospellers, was ill equipped at facing problems on a national level. The solution, many believed, meant creating a central religious authority capable of bringing efficiency to the movement by guiding denominations towards fulfilling specific aims, such as national education reform or federal political reform.

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[264] For a partial list of these clergy, see Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930,* 56-67.

In staying true to the utopian idealism of the social Christians, many envisioned a "national church," a church setup in a way similar to the Catholic hierarchy, to replace the myriad of disorganized churches and to ensure maximum efforts at social reconstruction. Rather surprisingly, many social gospellers, including many anti-papists, threw their support behind the idea of a national church body. Josiah Strong, for example, claimed that a national church was the *only* way the kingdom of God could happen. "Let the Church fully accept her mission," Strong proclaimed, "and she will furnish this needed ideal, viz., her Master's conception of the kingdom of God come upon earth."[265] Shailer Mathews, Josiah Strong's friend, likewise supported and advocated a national church claiming, "No man is a thorough Christian who holds himself apart from social endeavors and . . . should join together in efforts to help men live."[266] Although there would be no national church, replaced instead by a national council, Mathews never lost hope for the creation of a national Protestant church. In fact, Mathews, writing years later, still believed that the need for a national church was "the agent for ordering life . . . in accordance with good will like that of Jesus Christ."[267]

Of the social gospellers, none was more adamant towards the idea of a national church than Walter Rauschenbusch. In numerous writings, Rauschenbusch proclaimed the necessity of a national church, which he sometimes called "The American" church.[268] This church, Rauschenbush argued, "Was to become the nation's greatest source of moral

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[265] Josiah Strong quoted in Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism* 135.

[266] Shailer Mathews, "The Affirmation of Faith," in *American Protestant Thought: The Liberal Era,* ed. William R. Hutchison (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 89.

[267] Shailer Mathews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1924), 171-72.

[268] Walter Rauschenbusch discusses the specifics of the "American Church" in Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* chap. 12.

health, good will, moral aspiration . . . and capacity to sacrifice for higher ends."
Additionally, the theologian believed that such a church could become the most potent
force for social amelioration and reconstruction because "the church's potential to affect
public opinion and action was almost incalculable." Finally, Rauschenbusch believed that
the creation of such a body was, not only important for the moral health of the nation, but
also important in creating a unified theological and socio-cultural character amongst
American Protestants capable of ushering in the kingdom of God. [269]

The over exuberance of Walter Rauschenbusch, Josiah Strong and Shailer
Mathews on the idea of a national church blinded them to realities around them. The most
important that many churches did not want a "national church" for fear of losing their
autonomy. For smaller churches, especially those that ministered to small towns,
communities, or minority groups, autonomy was important. In the case of the Friends
(Quakers) and the Welsh Presbyterian Church, for example, the church went beyond the
religious context and formed a vital connection to who they are as a people. If a national
church happened, smaller churches feared they would lose important elements of their
identity. In a similar vein, African-American Protestant churches characterized loss of
autonomy and being places back under the rule of overseers comparable to a return to
slavery.[270]

Despite the rejection of the idea of a national church, liberal, conservative, large
and small denominations understood that the need to organize was imperative, especially

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[269] Ibid., 95, 184, 279.

[270] The attitudes of the African Protestant Churches were expressed at the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1904). At this conference, several influential black clergy and social leaders expressed concern of a national church. The specifics of the idea that a national church would equal slavery for black congregations can be seen in various speeches reprinted in *Journal of the Twenty-second Quadrennial Session of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Washington, D.C.: Board of Publications of the Methodist Protestant Church, 1904), 65, 74, 96.

to reshape American society. To replace the idea national church, many denominations opted for the creation of a religious council large enough to direct reform and built on bureaucratic ideas to prevent control by one denomination. Because a council was more about oversight and aid than direct control, the idea was an attractive prospect among Protestant denominations. In fact, compared to the development of social Christianity, which went through several changes before it became an accepted part of Protestant theology, the acceptance of a national council amongst American Protestants seemed almost effortless.

In December of 1908, the creation of a national council officially happened. In an annual conference of Protestant clergy in Philadelphia that year, over thirty denominations came together and formed the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which, at the time was the largest representative body of Protestant churches in the world.[271] At the first meeting the following year, William H. Roberts, clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) set the agenda and described the purpose of the federative body. The Federal Council, Roberts claimed, was to "blend missionary, social, and cooperative enterprises" in order to seek the "thorough Christianization of our country."[272]

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[271] Constituent Bodies Included: Baptist Churches, North; National Baptist Convention; Free Baptist Churches; Christian Reformed Church in N.A.; Churches of God in N.A. (General Eldership); Congregational Churches; Disciples of Christ; Friends; Evangelical Synod of N.A.; Evangelical Association; Methodist Episcopal Church; Methodist Episcopal Church, South; African M.E. Church; African M.E. Zion Church; Colored M.E. Church in America; Methodist Protestant Church; Moravian Church; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (South); Primitive Methodist Church; Protestant Episcopal Commissions on Christian Unity and Social Service; Reformed Church in America; Reformed Church in the U.S.; Reformed Episcopal Church; Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod; Seventh Day Baptist Churches; United Brethren Church; United Evangelical Church; United Presbyterian Church; and Welsh Presbyterian Church.

[272] William H. Roberts, "Speech to the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America," in *Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America: Report of the First Meeting, Philadelphia, 1908*, ed.

The Federal Council

The establishment of the Federal Council of Churches was a new phase in the
evolution of American Protestantism. For the first time in the nation's history, the vast
majority of Protestant denominations united not only in social and theological creed but
also in their desire to confront an increasingly hostile and "irreligious" social order. As
General Secretary Emeritus of the Federal Council Charles Macfarland noted, this in
itself was "amazing."[273] Yet the Federal Council went beyond simply stating that
society's problems could be solved from "Christian unity," as the earlier federative
(which were denominational in design) had done. Instead, leaders of the Federal Council
envisioned the various constituents working together, blanketing the country with
missionaries capable of attacking the various issues plaguing American society.[274] As the
regional variations of the social gospel showed, there was little uniformity in action or
intent.

At the first meeting of the Federal Council in 1909, the Council, embracing the
so-called "efficiency craze" of early twentieth century progressivism, initiated a program
to reorganize its un-ordered and "scattered" constituency into an efficient, well-organized

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Elias B. Sanford (New York, NY: The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Press, 1909),
323, 325.

[273] Charles S. Macfarland, *Christian Unity in the Making: The First Twenty-Five Years of the Federal
Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1905-1930* (New York, NY: The Federal Council of the
Churches of Christ in America, 1946), 46.

[274] The goal of order and efficiency is where the Council differentiated itself from earlier federative
organizations. At the first meeting of the FCCCA in 1909, for example, the Council articulated a "rhetorical
linkage" for creating efficiency. The "production of power," which was characterized by Protestant
cooperation, "will surely follow the reduction of waste" the council predicted. Many within the Council
traced this path in a rather strait forward manner. According to the FCCCA, church efficiency would lead
to an "increased efficiency in Christian service." This in turn, would lead to "the maintenance of social
righteousness," which would lead to "the abatement of civic and national evils." Finally, after these other
steps "the broad interests of the Kingdom of God" would be achieved. See, James H. Moorhead, *World
Without End* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 124-125.

ecumenical body. They did this by drafting a constitution of sorts, which articulated five objectives member churches were to follow. These objectives were the expression of catholic unity of the Christian Church, to foster cooperative endeavors on the part of the churches, to promote mutual counsel in spiritual matters, to broaden the moral and spiritual influence of the churches, and to encourage the organization of local federations.[275] Member support for these objectives was near unanimous and the constitution passed with ease.

In the years following the creation of the Federal Council, the mission of the Council defined itself. Following the first meeting of the Federal Council in 1908 and again after 1911, several new commissions were unveiled that prioritized the social gospel along several different avenues including international affairs, family life, and political reform. At the top of the list were initiatives dedicated to creating a business ethic, protecting the rights of the working class and reforming the labor industry, which fell under the purview of the Committee on the Church and Modern Labor.[276]

The origin of the Committee on the Church and Modern Labor stems from Christians concern for the worker and for the creation of a business ethic, which dated back to the emergence of social Christian theology in the 1880s. In the eighties, Josiah Strong, Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch spoke often on Christian obligation to the working class and on workplace reform. At the height of the depression in 1893, Gladden rallied Christian support against the state of "slavery" imposed on the

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[275] Details of the Constitution in, Macfarland, *Christian Unity in the Making: The First Twenty-Five Years of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1905-1930,* 49-50, 73 examines the amendments to the Constitution.

[276] For an outline on the Committee on the Church and Modern Labor, see Macfarland, *Christian Unity in the Making: The First Twenty-Five Years of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1905-1930,* 44.

worker by the industrial elite. That same year, Strong worked to expose the "industrial

kings" who earned through inheritance rather than through effort. In the early twentieth

century, Walter Rauschenbusch assailed the "gladiatorial" condition of economic

competition and argued that cooperation between the worker and employer was the only

means of reforming the economic system. [277]

In the era of the Federal Council, the fervor to reform the condition of the worker

grew stronger thanks in large part to a passionate speech delivered by Frank Mason

North, first at the 1907 Inter-Church Conference and then the following year at the Plan

for Council Meeting.[278] Titled "The Church and Modern Industry," North's report, which

echoed Strong, Gladden, Rauschenbusch and a myriad of other social gospellers,

described, in detail, conditions in urban factories, the lives of a majority of workers who

worked in those factories and complete disrespect of basic morality and ethics of those in

charge. Yet North's speech hit a crescendo among the audience as the impassioned

minister challenged Christians of all denominations to act, claiming the church was in a

position to change, finally, the nation's economic dynamic. The audience erupted as the

fiery North demanded a "fearless" and "passionate" commitment to reform on behalf of

America's workers. [279]

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[277] Washington Gladden, *Tools and the Man* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1893), 122. See also, Strong, *The New Era,* (New York, NY: Baker & Taylor, 1893), 165 and Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis,* 265.

[278] For details of the Inter-Church Conference, see "Inter-Church Conference on Federation," *Church Federation,* The Second *Annual Report of the Executive Committee* (New York, NY: The Committee Press, 1907), 3-9. For a brief discussion on the importance of labor to social salvation, see: Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 18.

[279] Frank Mason North, "The Church and Modern Industry," in *The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Commission on the Church and Social Service* (New York, NY: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1908), 14, 226-43.

North's speech, while a passionate telling of worker's lives and experience, revealed little in the way of insights or suggestions on how to confront industrialization. His call for fearless and passionate reformers drew unanimous support, particularly from the younger and more activist oriented social gospellers. More importantly, his speech impressed the leadership of the Council, including council president Elias B. Sanford. Following the meeting, North's call for action became the "Social Creed of the Churches," which served as the driving philosophy for almost all of the Council's social missions and the core of the Committee on the Church and Modern Industry.[280]

With its support for economic and labor reform, the Federal Council took a large step towards social reconstruction and the kingdom of God. However, change could not happen through these acts alone. Political leadership and activism, as well as legislative measures, became important facets of change recognized by many social gospellers. In *Christianity and Socialism* (1905), for example, Washington Gladden contended, "if the kingdom of heaven comes . . . it will be come in and through City Hall." Similarly, religious thinker Samuel Zane Batten spoke often that "politicians . . . were important to the establishment of a social order in which the great ideals of the kingdom shall be realized."[281] In the years following the creation of the Federal Council, Gladden, Batten and others led crusades to reform America's political institutions they believed a necessary step towards the creation of the kingdom.

The question of political reform, like labor reform, dated back to the corrupt and "treasonous" Senate and "boss" politicians of the post-Civil War era. As cities and towns

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[280] For a detailed examination of the "Social Creed of the Churches," see Harry F. Ward, *The Social Creed of the Churches* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1914).

[281] Washington Gladden, *Christianity and Socialism* (New York, NY: Eaton & Mains, 1905), 243-44 and Samuel Zane Batten, *The Social Task of Christianity* (New York, NY: Revall, 1911), 112.

expanded and society bowed under the weight of industrialization, citizens expected politicians and other leaders to provide comfort during trying time, including making sure citizens had clean water and safe food. As businesses expanded in the decades after the Civil War, so did their control over local, state, and, occasionally, national political organizations. Cities fell into despair, as did their denizens, but politicians and other civic leaders remained ill motivated to act, for fear of losing their (financial) support from businesses. Throughout the eighties, social Christian forces attacked the controlling machinations of society for their lack of morality or initiative in pulling society together, yet they attacked these institutions alone. Social Christians, because of their controversial nature, received little support within in their own sphere from the dominant conservatism. In the late nineties, however, progressivism, a secular movement of social reform, emerged dovetail (although its ideology was derived from new theology) social Christian activism and tipped the scales towards the social Christians.

As Progressivism emerged in the late-nineties and early twentieth century, religious institutions gained secular allies in political reform crusades. [282] More importantly, they gained political leaders who could serve as symbols for their cause. The most notable of whom were Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, two men lauded by social gosepellers for their ability to preach moralism and then act in the best interest of everyone. As Gladden and Rauschenbusch noted in a few of their respective works, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were paradigms for how politicians should be—"Christian soldiers" and "ministers of reform."[283]

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[282] Curtis, *A Consuming Faith,* 130-133. See also Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 302-317.

[283] Gladden, *Recollections,* 389-93 and Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis,* 255.

The task of the Federal Council in the early nineteen-teens resolved to seek out moral leadership in America's politicians and reform the system to meet the standards of a Christian civilization.[284] Yet the establishment of Federal Council came too late as progressivism and the regional social gospels successfully overthrew the old political order. Instead, the Council focused its resources in strengthening the relationship between the church and the state in order to ensure that enlightened progressives continued to set the political course for the country.

In the years immediately proceeding, during and after World War I, the Federal Council acted on its desire to integrate into the state becoming "liaisons" between mainstream Protestant American and federal, state and local governments. More specifically, the Federal Council became heavily involved in the Wilson administration, showing that the political forces of the nation and the moral forces of the church could work together for the social and spiritual well being of the church. Emanating from this relationship, the Federal Council became, in affect, an advisor to Woodrow Wilson. On more than one occasion, representatives from the council guided Wilson in numerous domestic and foreign policy issues, ultimately gaining access to the departments of Europe and Far East affairs.[285]

Labor reform and political reform were not the only reform efforts directed by the Federal Council, just the most important. Yet these campaigns led to important catalysts for a myriad of other crusades of the Federal Council, such as the protection and

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[284] Curtis, *A Consuming Faith,* 141-42.

[285] Correspondence from Woodrow Wilson to Charles Mcfarland reprinted in, Charles S. Macfarland, *The Churches of Christ in Council* (New York, NY: Missionary Education Movement, 1917), 81-82. Details on Federal Council foreign policy initiatives in *The Churches of Christ in Council*, 85-89. 198, 268, 268-269.

promotion of the family, the regulation of a moral approach to international relations, the "Americanization" of immigrants, and reforming education along Christian standards.

Using local federations, which included specialized ministries, lay organization, and denominational organizations conventions, the Council began a vast program of social reorganization and societal betterment aimed at addressing these issues. After 1912, the Council passed numerous acts that addressed these concerns. Yet these reform initiatives followed closely the path set by the social gospel, including continued support for settlement houses, religious based education (and repression of non-Protestant education institutions) and crusades against alcohol and other social vices. In the end, the Federal Council's ability to restore efficiency to churches and continue the spread of the social gospel proved attractive to its member churches, which grew to over 17 million communicants by 1914 and to over 20 million by 1919.[286]

Church Cooperation in Context

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America did two important things upon its formation. First, the Council's creation represented a great victory for the "institutionalist" social gospellers, a group who fought for decades to reconcile liberal and conservative churches into a temporal and socially relevant institution.[287] Second, the Council codified Bushnellian new theology, which by 1910, drove social movements across the United States.[288] Yet the creation of the Federal Council in 1908 was not the

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[286] Elias B. Sanford, *Origin and History of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America* (Hartford, CT: The S.S. Scranton Company, 1916), 328 and *Annual Reports of The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America* (New York, NY: The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1919).

[287] Handy, *The Protestant Quest for a Christian America,* 15.

[288] It is important to note, however, that not all denominations readily embraced the institutionalization of liberal theology. Strong fundamentalist currents in the Baptist denominations of the Northwest (around

first attempt at a denominational unification. Instead, it represents the culmination of years of attempts at church unity and church desire to establish a Christian America.

The desire for church unity was a salient feature in American Protestantism dating back to the late nineteenth century. Yet church consolidation amongst the mainline Protestant groups (Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, etc.) in the late nineteenth century varied and proved futile in execution. More over, these organizations, consisting of lay organizations and missionary associations, proved extremely limited in their scope. Despite these flaws, the first attempt at a national organization emerged in 1887, 1889, 1894 with the Evangelical Alliance.[289]

The Evangelical Alliance conferences existed as directive driven crusades of Protestant branches meant, "To bring conscience to bear on the life of the nation."[290] The Alliance, like most social Christian movements in the late nineteenth century, equated the creation of the Christian conscience with helping the poor American worker. Yet the Alliance stood apart from other contemporary social Christian organizations and treated the problems of the working class as symptomatic to larger problems in society. In fact, following the organizations' president Josiah Strong delivered fiery speeches on the needs for an aggressive and proactive church, several campaigns were waged that covered the gamut of social activism, including crusades to end political corruption to the

Minnesota) led by William Bell Riley and Lyman Stewart attempted to halt the spread of liberalism through *The Fundamentals*, a conservative tract that articulated a hybrid Calvinist/new theology called *Dispensational Millennialism,* for its followers as an alternative to pure liberal theology. In the 1890s, these tracts would not find an audience outside of specific denominations, such as Baptists. When these tracts were published in 1910, *The Fundamentals* began to make inroads into Protestant thought eventually gaining national support during World War I and supplanting new theology as the dominant theological trend.

[289] Other attempts at church consolidation around that time were The Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (which were interdenominational derived), the United Society of Christian Endeavor, the joint mission movements into the West and into the Caribbean and the Philippines.

[290] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 303.

establishment of boy's and girl's clubs.[291] Despite the fervor to conduct these social missions, the Alliance eventually succumbed to the static state of inaction and debate that characterized nineteenth-century social religion.[292]

The year after the last Evangelical conference, the churches again tried to unite and the result was the Open and Institutional Church League (OICL). The platform of the League built on the national vision of the Alliance and articulated a platform to "take the leading part in every movement which had for its end the alleviation of human suffering, the elevation of man, and the betterment of the world."[293] More succinctly, according to the body's secretary, Elias B. Stanford, [the League] was to be an, ". . . organic union promoting Christian unity as a spiritual reality and as a practical factor, brining the denominations into federative relations through which they can work out the problems of Christian service in city, country, and abroad."[294]

During the last few years of the 1890s and into the early twentieth century, the OICL addressed many significant urban social reform measures that emerged in the twentieth-century social gospel crusades. The education missions of Josiah Strong, Washington Gladden and Shailer Mathews are one such example. The settlement houses and the "intuitional" programs of the settlement workers represent another example.

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[291] For additional programs, see John Henry Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions,* Vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: The Parliament Publishing Co., 1893), 1449.

[292] Although the Evangelical Alliance failed, in many ways, it set the tone for the social gospel crusades in the early twentieth century. Its doctrine of clerical involvement to "close the chasm between the churches and working men," for example, was the impetus for several crusades that emerged in the urban areas of the North and East, such as the settlement missions and the tenement reform crusades.

[293] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 303.

[294] Sanford, *Origin and History of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*, 37.

Finally, the OICL directed clerical action against political corruption and graft in the urban areas of the country.[295]

The evolution of Protestant cooperation, from the Evangelical Alliance in the late nineteenth century to the Open and Institutional Church League in the nineties and early twentieth century did much to unite American Protestants on numerous social and religious issues. More over, the ideas these organizations developed played an important role in driving the ideology of the social gospel and Federal Council. Yet the failure of these organizations, at least in sustaining themselves long-term, resulted from the fact they lacked any true representative spirit. The Alliance, the OICL, and other national organizations comprised almost entirely of liberal denominations. Conservative Churches, which allied with liberal churches on the principle of the social gospel and its practical application, remained outside of the national federative scene. Instead, they existed largely in cloistered, regional organizations directing reform efforts based on their specific desires.

Beginning in 1902, Protestant leaders attempted to reconcile liberal and conservative churches into a united and cooperative federation. Elias Sanford, who spoke on numerous occasions on the need for a federation representing "all denominations," founded the National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers in an attempt to entice a union between conservatives and liberals. Although the Federation established itself as the "forerunner of an official Federation of Churches," it did little to entice conservatives to join a national effort of social reconstruction and regeneration.[296] Again,

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[295] For the purpose of the OICL on an ideological level, see Strong, *Religious Movements for Social Betterment,* 42.

[296] Sanford, *Origin and History of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America,* 120.

issues of theology impeded any ecclesiastical reconciliation. A few years later in 1905,

the Inter-Church Conference on Federation, considered "the most officially representative

gathering of the Protestant forces of the United States . . ." succeeded in bringing together

conservatives and liberals on a number of issues, including liquor trafficking, gambling,

prostitution and poverty.[297]

In the years leading to the creation of the Federal Council of the Churches of

Christ in America, the social gospellers appealed to these commonalities and hoped that

those "who differed theologically could sociologically unite" to fight sin in the creation

of the kingdom of God.[298] The appeal was successful. The "Plan of Federation," carried

the support of a majority of the members of the Inter-Church Federation, which included

over 30 denominations, and ratified interdenominational cooperation for an active

"crusade" of social problems. In the end, the ratification of the "Plan" signaled the birth

of the first successful Protestant governing body, the Federal Council of the Churches of

Christ in America.

The Federal Council in Retrospect

Whether or not the Federal Council succeeded in its mission to reform society is

up for interpretation. Regardless, the impact this group (and its successors) had in

strengthening Protestant nationalism is undeniable. The consolidation of Protestant

churches into a coherent, powerful and, most importantly, a nationalist body, unleashed a

force on the country able to connected American Protestantism with fundamental notions

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[297] Described in this manner by President *emeritus* of the Federal Council Charles S. MacFarland in *Christian Unity in the Making*, 54.

[298] Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism,* 306.

of American identity and purpose, such as democracy, exceptionalism and socio-cultural superiority.[299]

As the Council continued its integration in American society, specifically in the political sphere, the line between the country's secular and religious dimensions blurred significantly. Many individuals within the church and within society (even the Council's critics) saw the successes of the Federal Council (and its later iterations, the National Council and the World Council), the social gospel and the various social crusades over the last half-century, as indicative to the strength of the nation, and vice-versa. In short, the Federal Council did much to strengthen Protestant nationalism well into the twentieth century.

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[299] For detailed discussion on how these interacted, see Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities,* 128-129.

Conclusion

The reemergence of a nationalistic Protestantism proved a long and trying process. In the years following the Civil War, the United States underwent profound changes in the economic, political, and most important, the social sphere. Protestant individuals, greatly affected by these changes, turned to their respective faiths for guidance, support, and most importantly, compassion in dealing with these changes. Yet a conservative Protestantism ignored the pleas of the worker, the poor and the destitute and instead relegated the fate of society to God's will alone. The individuals, slighted by their faith, withdrew from the religious sphere and, in the case with the newly anointed labor class, sought change often through violent strikes or industrial uprisings.

As tensions mounted in American society, a movement of Christian activism, which stretched back to the ideology of early nineteenth century theologian Horace Bushnell, emerged in the Protestant sphere. Led by famous and soon to be famous clergy, these individuals sparked a revolution in American Protestantism culminating in a complete transformation in America's religious orthodoxy. From the 1840s until the 1890s, clergy slowly refined Bushnell's theory into a socio-religious doctrine. After 1890, acceptance of this theology grew, bringing together American Protestants on the idea of temporal salvation and the creation of an earthly kingdom of God. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this religious doctrine merged with secular reform movements and had major successes in societal reform. More importantly, social activism made its way into conservative following a successful social crusade and an equally successful thrust into empire. In the end, the continued support by conservatives

and the continued dominance of social activism dominated the early-twentieth century with the promulgation of the social gospel in all corners of American society.

The years following Bushnell's vision of an active and righteous Protestantism, defined by crusades to reshape America, saw Protestantism get closer to its dream of a Christian America and the kingdom of God. By 1914, the social crusades were so successful that many in the religious sphere interpreted these developments as a sign that the kingdom was imminent. Washington Gladden, one of the original vanguards in spreading social Christian theology, remarked in a well-known 1912 sermon that he believed this to be the case.[300]

Not everyone was content with the progress of social Christianity and religious reform as segments within the Protestant sphere, namely conservatives, grew tired of waiting for the kingdom to appear. As the twentieth century progressed, conservatives criticized the perceived failure of social reform to bring about a Christian America claiming that poverty was still a problem and that threats from immigrants, specifically Catholics, persisted. In the years leading up to World War I, conservatives would push the perceived failure of the liberals in a very popular twelve-volume work *The Fundamentals*, which seriously undercut the role liberals built in society following the Civil War.[301] These attacks would weaken the unity between Protestants, eventually shattering them following World War I. Yet the outbreak of war in Europe and America's involvement in 1917 gave liberal Protestants a moment of reprieve as the country once again rallied around notions of Protestant nationalism believing that the war was

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[300] An aged Washington Gladden quoted in an interview by Clark MacFarlane, "Washington Gladden: The First Citizen of Columbus," *Collier's Weekly,* 29 January 1912, 24.

[301] For specifics, see any one volume of the twelve volumes *The Fundamentals: A* Testimony *to the Truth* (Chicago, IL: Testimony Publishing Co., 1910-15).

necessary to make the "world a home in which God's children can live in peace and safety."[302]

In pulpits across the country, ministers of every stripe and denomination appealed to their flocks' sense of duty in faith and in country by echoing the sentiment that the war was a "great crusade." Through the Federal Council, which became the focal point of Protestantism during the war, clergy created and funded several commissions for supporting the United States in many different ways during the American phase of the war. This support, for example, ranged from simple moral support, such as prayer clubs for troops, to active involvement with organizations like the Red Cross.[303]

Despite the appearance of cracks in Protestant unity, when war between the United States and Germany American Protestantism remained largely unified politically, socially, and culturally on the idea that their faith and culture was the standard-bearer for civilization. In many ways in fact, the global war helped bolster Protestant, as well as American, nationalism by focusing a rhetorical campaign against all things German. This included German culture and thought, which many Protestants believed retarded the spread of the social gospel on several important issues, such as prohibition and temperance. Some parishes even associated Germany as demonic forces, with the Kaiser representing the Devil himself.[304] Not all clergy embraced this anti-German sentiment. Walter Rauschenbusch, who believed that Germanic and Teutonic peoples shared a

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[302] Lyman Abbott, *The Twentieth Century Crusade* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1918), 25.

[303] For specifics, see Charles S. MacFarland ed., *The Churches of Christ in Time of War* (New York, NY: The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1917), 142-150, 173-79.

[304] E. W. Thornton, "Made in Germany," *Christian Standard* 53 (1918): 761 and Charles Stelzle, *Why Prohibition!* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1918), 23.

common ethnic heritage with America defined by Anglo-Saxonism, emerged a vocal critic of anti-Germanism even calling the war a tragedy.

Following the growth of Protestant nationalism during World War I, liberal Protestantism and new theology lost its grasp on society after the war. In one respect, this loss of power resulted from the changing culture of post-war America, which became hostile to one of the primary ideologies of the movement—socialism.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the fear of radical movements in the United States, particularly revolts among the working class, manifested in the first "Red Scare," which lasted from 1917-1920. During these years, paranoia griped American society following a series of anarchist bombings, shipyard strikes in Seattle and riots in several large cities—New York, Boston and Cleveland. The liberal churches, which supported the workers and their right to strike for over two decades, split between maintaining that support and siding with the growing patriotism of those attempting to quell the birth of American radicalism. Yet the pull of Charles Stelzle on the Federal Council and his close ties to the International Workers of the World (the I.W.W or "Wobblies") ensured that the support of the workers continued. While no outright denouncement of liberal churches' support for socialist ideology occurred, at least in secular society, the Council and its affiliates aired on the side of caution. [305]

Perhaps the biggest reason liberal Protestants lost control was the resurgence an organized Protestant fundamentalism and the loss of key figures in the liberal movement. Beginning in 1916, liberal Protestants lost many of the leaders—Josiah Strong (d. 1916), Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch (d. 1918). With the deaths of these

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[305] On how the "Red Scare" influenced Protestant thought towards the worker, see Murray B. Levin. *Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1971), 31.

powerful and influential figures, the liberal Christian movement floundered, particularly as the country moved into a new phase of socio-cultural development, which included more pro-business (anti-Communist) and conservative, ultranationalist, social rhetoric. New efforts in Christian consolidation by liberals, such as the proposed Interfaith Council that united Protestants, Catholics and Jews, appalled a xenophobic and increasingly skeptical society which ultimately rejected the proposed measure.[306] In the end, the failure of this body represented, according to one scholar, the "final bloom" of Progressive movement and social gospel spirit.[307] As the liberal spirit declined, religious conservatism refocused and, as a result, rapidly gained support among Americans.

Following World War I, conservative churches became more popular, especially as American society responded to fears of radicalism and looked to return to a more traditional way of life. Yet conservative churches lacked organization and competent leadership to capitalize on their newfound support. The lack of leadership did not last, however. William B. Riley, editor of *The Christian Fundamentalist,* emerged in 1918 tired of the lack of action among conservatives to reclaim their status in society and stake their claim to creation of the kingdom of God.[308]

Beginning in 1918, and then again in 1919, Riley organized or helped organize the New York Prophetic Conferences, a gathering of conservatives that met at Carnegie Hall to discuss not only the state of the post-War world but also how best to assert

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[306] This desire to unite the different churches was expressed in Charles S. MacFarland, "The Progress of Federation among the Churches," *American Journal of Theology* 21 (July 1917): 392-410 and George Cross, "Federation of the Christian Churches in America—An Interpretation, "*American Journal of Theology* 23 (April 1919): 134.

[307] Eldon G. Ernst, *Moment of Truth for Protestant America: Interchurch Campaigns following World War One* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 128-132.

[308] William B. Riley, *The Menace of Modernism* (New York, NY: Christian Alliance, 1917), 167.

Protestant dominance in plans to rebuild Europe. Yet the primary goal of these meetings addressed the perceived failures of the liberal churches to establish the kingdom of God. This led to widespread criticism of numerous liberal ideas like the Interfaith Council and liberal failure to throw their support behind the failed League of Nations, which Protestants on both sides viewed as America's foothold to spread American Christianity and "the autocracy of Christ" worldwide.[309]

The more damning accusations leveled at liberals and progressives attacked their failure to address the threats at home from the various "-isms" affecting society, specifically Bolshevism and Modernism. The changing social conscience, conservatives believed, dictated the need to prevent the decay of American society from these two threats. Yet liberal churches, aided by the Federal Council, embraced many facets emanating from these "-isms," such as the worker's right to strike and emphasis on cooperative development. At these conferences, and in other avenues, conservatives tapped into the fear and anxiety of American society regarding the moral decay of society and liberals' tacit support of that decay to proclaim the failure of liberals in their mission. Utilizing the newly created World's Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA), Riley embarked on a multi-state tour, gaining followers with sermons by tying the ultranationalist spirit of American society to duties as Christians and denouncing the failures of the Federal Council.[310]

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[309] For the specifics of see, Arno C. Gaebelein ed., *Christ and Glory: Addresses Delivered at the New York Prophetic Conference, Carnegie Hall, November 25-28, 1918* (New York, NY: One Hope Publications Office, 1919). Quote taken from W.H. Griffith-Thomas in Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930,* 90.

[310] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 153-164.

The gathering of conservatives to discuss reforming the post-war United States and bring about the kingdom of God signaled a significant change in conservative orthodoxy. Instead of the inert and apathetic doctrine of the nineteenth century, conservatives combined traditional Calvinist though, characterized by puritanical moralism and a literalist premillennialist theology, with an increased emphasis on social activism. According to Riley this new approach, essentially the conservative version of new theology, "would be a powerful influence" giving purpose to "the body of God-fearing, righteous-living men" wanting real change in American society.[311]

This new religious orthodoxy, coupled with a more organized conservatism, meshed with the changing face of American society, which drifted towards an ultranationalist approach to numerous facets of life, including religion. In fact, the growing support of Riley and the Fundamentalists caught liberals completely off guard and forever altered the dynamic of religion and society in the United States.

Conservative dominance following the war happened, in large part, because they embraced the change in American culture, while liberals ironically fought against it. In doing so, and espousing ideas more in line with the general populous, they gained unprecedented support within American society. In the years following World War I, in fact, fundamentalist churches challenged liberal Protestants on a number of relevant issues facing American society ranging from the fight over evolutionary theory to the status of immigration in society and, in the 1920s, issues of morality concerning the flapper-culture of the "Roaring Twenties."

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[311] William Bell Riley quoted in, Edward J. Larson, *Summer of the God: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997), 35-36.

The clash between liberals and conservatives, known as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy after 1920, broke down the barriers of Christian unity. Yet Protestant nationalism continued to grow through the years of the Great Depression, World War II and the Cold War, albeit on a far different course than the nineteenth century. During these decades, the ultranationalist spirit and trend towards traditionalism that emerged during World War I evolved and integrated itself into the religious fiber of American society even more. In the end, conservative Protestants, only beginning their long reign of theological dominance, shaped this spirit into a new understanding of what defines the character of American and, more importantly, the destiny of the Protestant dream of protecting and promoting the United States as Protestant Christian country.

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Blake Erickson Williams was born October 24, 1982, in Midland, Texas. He is the son of Jackie Ray and Donna Jan Williams. A 2001 graduate of Permian High School in Odessa, Texas, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Political Science and History from Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, in 2006. In August 2006, he enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University pursuing a Master of Arts in History.

ABSTRACT

CREATING A CHRISTIAN AMERICA: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTESTANT
NATIONALISM IN THE GILDED AGE AND PROGRESSIVE ERA

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Religion, particularly the Protestant faith, is a fundamental component of American life that defines the country's socio-cultural identity. Following the Civil War, religious leaders and laymen tapped into the country's religious devotion in an attempt to reunite the country. The mission worked. Between 1870-1920, religious nationalism emerged and united a majority of Americans along both secular as well as theological goals, which ranged from social reform and activism to Christianizing the nation and bringing about the kingdom of God, or Christ's thousand-year rule over Earth. The goal of this paper is to show how this religious nationalism developed and shaped America's socio-religious thought into the early-twentieth century. This paper identifies changes in theology and biblical interpretations, social reform movements meant to Christianize the country, crusades against non-Protestant threats, and acts of Protestant consolidation and cooperation as the means by which Protestant nationalism developed and thrived.