THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SALT AND LIGHT: FREE CHURCHES, SUBURBAN EVANGELICALS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE UNITED STATES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2020

For my family, to whom I owe everything

If perchance [Jesus] is not in the ghetto, if he is not where men are living at the brink of existence, but is rather in the easy life of the suburb, then he lied and Christianity is a mistake.
—James Cone, *Risks of Faith*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .... *v*

Preface: Evangelicals and Race in America 1

Introduction: Reframing Religion, Capitalism and White Supremacy in Twentieth-Century United States History 14

I. "The Scandinavian Fibre in Our Social Fabric:" Immigration, Race and Ecclesiology in the Late Nineteenth Century 51

II. "We Evangelical and Fundamentalist People:" Doctrinal, Economic and Racial Contours of Free Church Fellowship, 1900 to 1930s 87

III. "By Tomorrow, We'll All Be Americans:" Fundamentalist Fellowship, Corporate Blessings and Racial Ambivalence Through World War II 125

IV. "A New Reformation …with Ecumenical Significance:" Spiritual and Institutional Bodies of White Evangelicalism through Depression and War 167

V. Sacred Developments: The Suburban Mission of Postwar Evangelism 213

VI. Long Shadow: The Suburban Transformation of Postwar Evangelicalism 264

VII. Salt and Light: Suburban Evangelicals and the Transformation of White Supremacy 306

Bibliography 333

Acknowledgments

I have dedicated this work to my family, and so it seems appropriate to begin by acknowledging their contributions to this work first. Without a doubt, I would have despaired and crumbled from the weight of this work and the pursuit of my doctoral degree had it not been for my wife, Isabella, and the two delightful, charming and silly boys we brought into the world, insanely, in the midst of my doctoral program: Martin and Simon. I almost crumbled regardless, and I certainly despaired; but, through it all, I looked to Bella and the boys for all the reasons I needed to continue, and I found those reasons overflowing.

Family, however, is a capacious term, and I owe my entire family my sincerest thanks for supporting me as they have been able, even when I gave little reason for them to do so. I thank my five siblings for the irrational solidarity of kinship: my sisters, Arianne, Mandy, Maja and Katie, and my brother, Brad. I thank my parents, Matt and Ruth, for raising me and my siblings in a home where we all learned to cook for ourselves, to work hard for what we needed, to respect public education and to question authority when its dictates became overbearing or cruel. Although I no longer share my parents faith, I thank them as well for raising me in the Mormon church, a fact to which I credit my enduring interest in American religion—not simply religion of the United States, but religion of a particularly ideological "American" variety. My efforts to understand that religious ideology, to make some sense of the very real work it wends in the world, has led me to this moment.

I owe significant thanks as well to my family-in-law, my Milwaukee family who adopted me (perhaps a bit hesitantly at first) after Bella brought me shaggy haired and listless from Grinnell College to her home one Thanksgiving break now so many years ago. I doubt they expected then to know me for so long! Regardless, to Ruth Tamayo, Juliana Horning and Marty Horning, I owe a great deal for their unconditional welcome, love and support. Over the past few years, especially, Marty has been a

supportive father-in-law to me, a patient grandfather and caregiver to our children, a forgiving landlord to our family and exemplary comrade to innumerable many in the long and varied fights for social justice in Milwaukee and across the United States. This work simply could not have been finished without his support.

For the particular work of this dissertation, I owe a great deal of thanks to many mentors, colleagues and close friends at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Like many millennials of my age, I entered graduate school after the 2008 financial crash, not knowing what my future career options might be. I had then only a vague idea of the kind of work I that interested me, let alone of the work *I* wanted to do. Fortunately, the faculty of the Divinity School were willing to drag me along until I uncovered my own intellectual curiosities. In that regard, I owe particular thanks to Dr. Catherine Brekus for challenging me—for challenging all her students—to treat the work of history seriously, carefully and with respect for what has gone before. There is, however, one person in particular who deserves most credit, without any hyperbole, for my intellectual development and for my success as a graduate student and junior scholar: my advisor, mentor and friend, Dr. Curtis Evans. There are few scholars in the academy who treat their students with more respect and trust than Dr. Evans. Over the last ten years, he has guided me to my best ideas; he has supported me without reservation through my most difficult academic work; and, he has provided an open ear and honest evaluation of every subject, academic or personal, that I have brought to him. Dr. Evans' enduring patience for the development of student thought given his own remarkable genius and the consistent and seemingly effortless acuity of his insight has set a standard to which I will compare myself for the remainder of my life in higher education.

As an advanced graduate student, I have also benefitted greatly from the support of and owe significant thanks to Dr. Richard Rosengarten, with whom I connected first not on academic terms, but rather on mundane administrative ones—he, the Dean of the Divinity School, and I, the mere

student manager of the Divinity School's coffee shop, Grounds of Being. Since then, and for no reason immediately apparent to me, Dr. Rosengarten has been most generous with his time and resources on my behalf, guiding me through the slow-developing work of this project and mentoring my early work as a college instructor. After Dr. Evans, I have found no better mentor to have in my corner at the Divinity School than Dr. Rosengarten. Beyond Drs. Evans and Rosengarten, I owe special thanks to Dr. Jane Dailey who offered to join my dissertation committee and review my work in its later stages, despite her unfamiliarity with me. Dr. Dailey's expertise has been exceedingly welcome here.

Since I have broached the subject, I will take a quick detour to heap superlatives and accolades on the Divinity School Coffee Shop and to give sincerest thanks to my many peers and colleagues who worked with me during my tenure as its manager. In short, as far as I can see it, Grounds of Being is the heart of student life at the Divinity School (apologies to esteemed professors: your intellectual subjects—our shared intellectual subjects—have their social limits). Grounds of Being employs upwards of twenty students every year, mostly Divinity School graduate students, paying out over a hundred thousand dollars each year in student wages upon which student workers rely to make up for the deficiencies of their institutional financial aid. In return, those students pay out a major consumer service and maintain a serious community center that keeps the Divinity School and much of the central campus that surrounds it alive and humming. Even in sight of my academic accomplishments at the Divinity School, I am proudest of my contributions to our community made through the coffee shop, and I remember each of my co-workers there with great fondness. I owe particular recognition to my co-managers over the years: the Georgias, Dye and Maul, the incomparable Bethany Lowery, the fearless duo of Danielle DeLano and Juliana Lock, and the unflappable Viraj Patel. To all others who worked alongside me (there are probably over 70 individuals): thank you. Here, I should also thank two other administrators who supported and trusted my efforts at the Coffee Shop: Dr.

Margaret Mitchell, who in her tenure as Dean was one of the shop's greatest friends and who remains one of the kindest people I have met at the Divinity School, and retired Associate Dean Sandra Peppers—a true professional who deserves far more credit than she will likely ever get for keeping the Divinity School running.

Finally, I have to thank my closest friends at the Divinity School, without whom I would have left in isolated misery some years ago. Some of you left wisely without me but stayed my friends nevertheless, and I greatly appreciate your continued presence in my life. In no particular order, and with great hope I leave no one out, all my love to: Danny Gibboney, Zeke Goggins, Stanton Kidd, Davey Tomlinson, Hannah Roh, Sean Hannan, Emily Crews, Katharine Mershon, Daniel Wyche and Adam Paradis. What a fine crew you all are.

Lastly, I would like to thank two of my historical subjects for inciting the curiosity that produced this work: L. Nelson Bell and Carl Gundersen. I have no doubt these men would have disliked me profoundly, if only given my professional ties to that bastion of apostate liberal modernism that they so despised: the University of Chicago Divinity School. I am sure I would have had my own disagreements with them. But here we are together, nevertheless, and hopefully all better off for it.

Preface
Evangelicals and Race in America

"Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will."

—Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1963[1]

Over the last half century, few of Martin Luther King Jr.'s words have been shared and studied more than his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," especially its statements on "the white moderate" and "the white church." Written in 1963 at the height of the Birmingham campaign against public segregation by race and corollary anti-black employment discrimination, King's letter responded specifically to eight Alabama clergymen who conceded the need to secure southern blacks' legal rights in the same breath that they rejected the means of civil disobedience by which the Birmingham campaign sought to gain those rights. In King's estimation, these clergymen and the white moderates they represented preferred "order" to "justice," and their arguments against black activists' disruptive methods entrenched the racial status quo more effectively and perhaps more dangerously than "the White Citizens' Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner."[2] As for "the church" that Alabama's religiously diverse ministers similarly represented, King called it "…an archdefender of the status quo." Among other critiques, he argued that "the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent—and often even vocal—sanction of things as they are."[3]

From the publishing of King's letter through his death and well beyond to the present day, the enduring qualities, apparent influence and related legacies of the white moderate and the white church have been contested in public and academic spheres. On the one hand, the civil rights era has been largely characterized as a turning point or fulcrum in American history, religious or otherwise, whereby

[1] Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson, *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: New American Library, 2000), 97.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 107.

white Americans learned among other things to chastise white supremacist extremism and to lessen if not jettison racism and white supremacy in American social orders.[4] On the other hand, many white moderates and white churches never acquiesced to King's vision of racial justice in American religion or wider society even after his assassination and the ensuing and largely positive public memorialization of his life and mission.[5] In fact, many scholars have claimed that the civil rights movement ultimately inspired a white conservative interregnum in American society, culture and government organized around issues well beyond race that has since slowed and increasingly reversed a wide range of progressive social policies in the United States, including civil rights gains.[6] To add fuel to this fire, a similarly wide range of measures shows that racial inequality in the United States has increased in recent decades, returning employment, earnings, wealth and education gaps to pre-1970 levels and worse, in some cases.[7]

As a conceptual starting point by which to evaluate the contestations above, King's characterization of "the white moderate" and "the white church" generalizes too much, capturing in singular concepts a broad swathe of heterogenous political and religious identities that are impossible to represent and analyze cogently in one brief historical study. Nevertheless, by winding and often

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[4] See for instance, Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Paul Harvey, "Religion, Race, and the Right in the South, 1945-1990," in Glenn Feldman et al., eds., *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 101-124; and, Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), especially chapters four and five.

[5] See for instance, Joel Alvis, *Religion & Race: Southern Presbyterians, 1946-1983* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994); Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); and, Mark Newman, *Getting Right with God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

[6] See James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945 - 1974*, (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 637-790; Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008). For a critique of the political uses of "the conservative interregnum" narrative, see Jacquelyn Down Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* (March 2005), 1233.

[7] See for example "Demographic Trends and Economic Well-Being," *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project* (blog), June 27, 2016, https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/; and, "Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America (Updated)," *The Urban Institute*, October 5, 2017, http://urbn.is/wealthcharts.

unexpected paths, this dissertation makes sense of King's claims about white moderates and the white church by analyzing the historical contexts, social orders, material structures and ideological articulations of one influential white religious tradition of the civil rights era: white evangelicalism. More specific than King's "white church" but certainly representative of it alongside Birmingham's clergy, white evangelicalism has been credited similarly as an opponent of civil rights activism in the 1950s and -60s and also as a moderate voice in American 'race relations' of the same period.

Of crucial importance to this study then are my own decisions to identify and interrogate particular locations of the white evangelical church, specific power structures to which it related and "average" communities in which it operated. These decisions are significant not only given King's commentary, but more importantly given the long and broad historiographies of American religion, race and the classical civil rights movement. Of those southern ministers and white southern communities that King targeted in his letter particularly, much has been written over the decades, a good deal of it incisive, compelling and comprehensive.[8] However, the geographical limitation of that analysis obscures on the one hand a larger national reality about white Protestant traditions of the United States in the mid-twentieth century: their competing projects to reunify or newly unify Protestant churches and denominations during the classical civil rights era, despite deep and long-lived doctrinal, institutional and geographical divisions between those institutions. On the other hand, the geographical circumscription embedded in analyses of Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement elides non-southern social and legal systems of racial discrimination as well as alternative yet influential American racial ideologies not entirely grounded in the history of slavery.[9] This dissertation claims

[8] See among others Alvis, *Religion & Race*; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying;* Glenn Feldman -- et al., eds*., Politics and Religion in the White South;* Charles Marsh*, God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008)*;* Steven P. Miller*, Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Newman, *Getting Right with God*.

[9] See for instance Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011). See also the introduction to this dissertation.

accordingly that underappreciated religious histories, racial ideologies and patterns of racial discrimination in the north and midwest—particularly in the region's urban settings and most especially in its postwar suburbs—help to explain and even better explain the sources and qualities of King's greatest stumbling blocks: the white moderate and the white church. From this geographical perspective, key conclusions reached regarding white evangelicals and race in the white south—especially white supremacy declension narratives—are of consequence revised here.

With respect for King's learned social analysis and a desire to take it seriously in contemporary historical terms, this dissertation also documents and analyzes the kinds of "order" that white evangelicals sanctioned by sundry means, that sustained white evangelical social worlds—in church communities and common spaces, with shared doctrines and collective moral ethics—and that made them critics of non-violent direct action. In other words, this dissertation pursues and expands upon King's reasoning by interrogating social orders, material investments and related ideologies of "the church" in broad relation to "the power structure of the average community." Accordingly and ultimately, the historical analysis here shows that "the (white evangelical) church"—as rhetorically defined and socially structured in historically contingent ways—sanctioned racial power structures by religious discourse—silence in the face of white supremacy or vocal apology on its behalf—but also and *more importantly* by religious social action: by organizing, building and managing churches and "*the* church" in circumscribed communities and with material structures of American society and its capitalist economic systems. More than sanction, therefore, the white evangelical church, or white evangelicalism, was and became ever more so an active player in the power structures of United States communities that shaped and maintained the so-called racial status quo: white supremacy.

A number of definitional and categorical difficulties arise in this historical analysis and therefore require some attention as a matter of clarifying the claims of the work at hand. First in matters of definition, although not implying priority, are prevailing definitions of evangelicalism that obscure the

tradition's relation specifically to understandings of "the church" in both ideal and sociohistorical conceptualizations. In that regard, the present work dissents from overly broad definitions of evangelicalism that appeal to largely symbolic doctrinal "distinctives" or implicitly inherent activist "character," in large part because these definitions can be and have been used to obscure important social and historical particulars of an organized American conservative religious movement that first claimed evangelicalism to be a distinct Christian tradition—the conservative movement's tradition—rather than an adjective, "evangelical," that qualified a missionary emphasis in a variety of distinct Christian traditions. For the purposes of modern evangelicalism in the United States in particular, David Bebbington's description of evangelicalism's core characteristics has been especially useful; as of July 2020, the National Association of Evangelicals still cited Bebbington's quadrilateral on its webpage as the "distinctives and theological convictions [that] define us—not political, social or cultural trends."[10] As the NAE's copy expressly reveals, Bebbington's definition analytically obscures "political, social or cultural trends" that both he and the NAE reject as reasonable limits on the meaning of the term, each for their own reasons. Accordingly, Bebbington's rubric—while helpful for grand historical narration or typological generalization in academic discourse—does not adequately define the evangelicals described in this work, nor does it capture definite social factors prevalent in the formation of modern American evangelicalism in the postwar era[11]

Therefore, I define evangelicalism as (1) a conscientious religious movement organized in the mid-

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[10] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1992). See also "What Is an Evangelical?," National Association of Evangelicals, accessed June 2020, https://www.nae.net/what-is-an-evangelical/. Bebbington has delimited conceptually four characteristics of evangelicalism in modern Britain, concepts since transplanted to American contexts without modification, that define a cogent if exceedingly broad historical tradition in Christian groups committed to (1) the necessity of a conversion experience; (2) a profound effort to express the implications of conversion in society; (3) the paramount historical and theological authority of the bible; and (4) the supernatural saving power of Christ's blood sacrifice.

[11] Nor does it capture common understandings or representations of evangelicals in modern and contemporary America. For a characteristic example of Americans' uncertainty over what it means to be evangelical, see "Are You An Evangelical? Are You Sure?," NPR.org, accessed August 2020, https://www.npr.org/2015/12/19/458058251/are-you-an-evangelical-are-you-sure.

twentieth century by an elite white male vanguard of denominational leaders, preachers and businessmen who (2) consolidated, augmented and circumscribed as the true "spiritual church" diffuse conservative Protestant social projects of the early twentieth century in order to (3) more effectively challenge institutional liberal Protestant hegemony in American society and culture.[12] This definition is of necessity historically and culturally particular. It does not aim to describe an "evangelical" thread in all Christian history nor a distinct "evangelical" orientation inherent to particular Christian communities. It suggests to the contrary that the effort to do so has been at the very least co-opted when not authored by interested modern evangelical parties, as I have defined them, in order to obscure the historical and cultural contingencies that drove the conservative movement's *raison d'être* and its subsequent organization. Among the major implications of this dissertation, then, is its conclusion that modern, organized evangelicals are best understood not by appeal to overly broad doctrinal "distinctives" or even activist "character," but rather by understanding the tradition in concrete sociohistorical terms—by analyzing the kinds of church order that evangelical leaders inherited, imagined, reimagined and attempted to build anew, including especially a focus on social and material methods or strategies beyond discourse by which they built their nebulous "spiritual church."

As this implication suggests, in historical humanistic terms it is impossible to qualify here the social boundaries of the *spiritual* church that evangelicals with great frequency imagined, described and

[12] Accordingly, when I refer to evangelicals or use the adjective evangelical, often in connection with the complementary adjectives "organized"or "modern," it is to this particular definition of activist evangelicalism that I allude, unless statement or context suggests otherwise. As for analysis of "grassroots" evangelicals, folk evangelicals, common or plain evangelicals, cultural evangelicalism or popular evangelicalism, among other related terms, I yield to the vast corpus of scholarly work available on those subjects, adding only the caveat that such categories circulate in American society and in specialized religious historiography as a direct consequence of organized evangelicalism and its postwar social influence. See for example, Randall Herbert Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*; and Axel R. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), among others.

defended. Accordingly, in its evaluation of the movement defined above and as further evidence of evangelicalism's "political, cultural or social" interests, this dissertation pays discrete attention to the economic and institutional means by which evangelical leaders literally constructed their *vision* of the church in social and material realms. As a consequence of evangelicalism's business affiliations and by measure of its concrete organizations, moreover, the dissertation argues that the social, material and financial organization of the evangelical church—its ecclestiastical order—as well as the capitalist economic ideologies that backed such organization were paramount to both the movement's identity and the movement's growing success in extending its political, cultural and social influence. In this regard, the dissertation adds to a growing corpus of work recently described as "the business turn" in American religious history, a turn that has most often concerned itself, for good reason, with modern American evangelicalism.[13] Alongside that corpus, this work qualifies the effects of evangelicalism's corporate entanglements as they shaped the historically contingent organizations, programs, ideologies and accordant social and racial characteristics of the evangelical movement itself.

Specifically, this dissertation claims that evangelicalism's doctrines of the church—or their ecclesiology—and their church orders—or their ecclesiastical structures—relate directly by concept and by concrete historical circumstance to the racial orders of American society. Second, then, in matters of definition for this dissertation are an array terms related to race, including the term "race"

[13] See Larry Eskridge and Mark A. Noll, eds., *More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000); Timothy E. W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Darren E. Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Sarah Ruth Hammond and Darren Dochuk, *God's Businessmen: Entrepreneurial Evangelicals in Depression and War* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); James David Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty's Dollar: A History of Money and American Protestantism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Kevin Michael Kruse, *One Nation under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Bethany. Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009); Amanda Porterfield, John Corrigan, and Darren E. Grem, eds., *The Business Turn in American Religious History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Robert Wuthnow, *God and Mammon in America* (New York: Toronto: New York: Free Press; Maxwell Macmillan Canada; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994).

itself, or "racism" and certainly "white supremacy," as well as more specialized terms like "racial ideology," "racial formation," "racialization." In regards to race, this dissertation adheres to scholarly consensus across disciplines that race is a mutable social reality, not a fixed biological one.[14] To paraphrase Michael Omi and Howard Winant: as social realities, racial categories and the very meaning of race emerge in and are expressed by particular social relationships and historical contexts that change over time, changing in turn racial categories and their meaning. Accordingly, this dissertation adheres to and expands upon Omi and Winant's conceptualization of "racial formation"—a sociohistorical process whereby "social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories"—as well as their conceptualization of "racialization"—an "ideological process" whereby "[r]acial ideology is constructed from pre-existing conceptual (or…'discursive') elements and emerges from the struggles of competing political projects and ideas seeking to articulate similar elements differently."[15] To these conceptualizations, the present work adds only the distinctly religious forces that Omi and Winant neglect in their own analyses. As a result, the sociohistorical processes that this dissertation describes by which white evangelicalism organized and lent significance to their church quite neatly overlap with the forces that "determine[d] the content and importance of racial categories" in the postwar era. Similarly and moreover, the ideological assemblages of competitive evangelical religious unification projects overlapped with and gave conceptual and discursive purchase to developing racial ideologies of the same period.

Remaining, then, are the controversial terms "racism" and "white supremacy," two categories with which few wish to be associated. Ironically, white evangelicalism's own insistence that racism is an

[14] See, for instance, Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London: Verso, 2014); John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015); Painter, *The History of White People*.

[15] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 61 and 64 respectively.

individualistic sin expressed through interpersonal relationships as hatred has informed white Americans' great reluctance to be named racists or white supremacists. Moreover, this insistence on individualism and interpersonal relations has worked again to obscure the sociohistorical particulars that form race and inform racial ideology, just as evangelicals' definition of their own tradition obscures the sociohistorical particulars of their church.[16] In fact, as sociohistorical constructions, neither racism nor white supremacy require an individualistic ethos nor interpersonal relations—not that such an ethos nor such relations are imaginary, but rather that they are consequences instead of causes of racism and white supremacy. As Karen Fields and Barbara Fields have argued, if racism were "an emotion or state of mind…it would be easily overwhelmed; most people mean well, most of the time, and in any case are usually busy pursuing other purposes."[17] In Fields' and Fields' estimation, to which this dissertation also adheres, racism is "a social practice" that applies a "social, civic, or legal double standard based on ancestry" and that justifies or explains that application with racial ideology.

In the lexicon of this dissertation, therefore, white supremacy similarly lacks reference to "an emotion or state of mind," particularly those of so-called extremists, and its analytical use pays little deference to interpersonal relations. Rather, this work understands white supremacy to be the historical outcome of white racial formation in the United States—an array of social power embedded in human communities and the structures they build together that applies, often without conscious understanding or conscientious assent, the application of racist double standards in social, civic, legal, economic and *religious* circumstances. Accordingly and in short, racism and white supremacy in the white evangelical tradition are treated here as contingent, historical and structural social orders in

[16] See for instance, Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and J. Russell Hawkins and Phillip Luke Sinitiere, eds., *Christians and the Color Line: Race and Religion after Divided by Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[17] Fields and Fields, 17.

American society over which the vast majority of individuals—although not all individuals—hold little power. For white evangelicals, given their doctrinal commitments and church orders, this conceptualization may present and arguably has long presented an even more difficult problem than that of extremist hatred, bigotry or violence in individual sentiment and action.

In sum, put as directly as possible in light of the definitions and themes described above, in this work I claim that theologically conservative Protestant church traditions in the twentieth-century north and midwest established distinct and powerful white supremacist social orders and articulated popular white racial norms that came to transform outmoded southern evangelical white supremacy and to realign the economic, geographical and political entanglements of national postwar "white evangelicalism," as the tradition came to be described after its transformation. In particular, I assess the structural ideology and structural formation of northern and midwestern conservative Protestant churches—their ecclesiology, or doctrines of church order, and their ecclesiasticism, or their institutional orders—as they were articulated in the discursive and material development of related "free church," fundamentalist and, ultimately, evangelical movements of that century. Next, I connect and correlate white evangelicalism's racial orders and racial ideologies with the structural ideologies (ecclesiology) and institutional formations (ecclesiastical orders) it promoted as a pro-capitalist religious movement, where possible identifying how those ideologies and formations themselves cause racial order and sustain racial ideology. Ultimately, I conclude that white evangelicals transformed their institutional and ideological white supremacy by obscuring their own social, political and cultural interests as well as by eliding the human social and material forces behind their movement. By lending all credit for their corporate organization to God, by defining their tradition as a spiritual rather than material or social organization and by limiting their social ethics to prioritize both evangelism and individual regeneration on behalf of the spiritual church, white evangelicals secured their white identity, the white supremacist social orders of their church and the anti-structural individualism of

their culture.

To support my claims by argument and evidence, I narrate first a history of Scandinavian-American "free church" communities from the late-nineteenth century through the 1950s in order to document unique and neglected sources for white American racial ideology as they were related to two imbricated structural components of conservative evangelical Protestantism: first, its ecclesiology, or its doctrines of church order and organization, and second, its reliance on the economic "power structures" of capitalism. Next, I connect these structural components and select characters from free church history to larger and better-known fundamentalist and evangelical movements in order to identify a distinct form of white conservative religious activism that worked tirelessly to consolidate evangelicalism's social power and establish a new ecclesiastical order—a new kind of 'church'—especially in America's white postwar suburbs. By their ecclesiastical "sanction" for the economic power structures of newly organized white American communities, I argue, white evangelical churches and parachurch organizations reimagined and rearticulated their support for 'things as they were'—as they had recently come to be—in matters of race and social justice. Accordingly, I end by revisiting conservative white evangelicals' debates over the civil rights movement and racial inequality to show how both southern and suburbanized white evangelicals' modulated their white supremacy through evolving ecclesiological and geographical terms, setting the stage for the so-called "conservative interregnum" of the 1970s and beyond.

This work shares its conclusions primarily with specialists in the study of American religion and race as well as those in the study of American evangelicalism. To those specialists, I suggest humbly a number of correctives highlighted above that do not intend to overturn entirely prior analyses, but rather intend to reframe, augment and expand upon existing work in order to more fully and more accurately describe a particularly influential racialized religious tradition. Historians of so-called secular culture and society may also find this work helpful in its conceptualizations and narrations of

the relationships between religious worlds and economics in the contingent historical settings of the twentieth-century United States. Scholars of religion in general have often argued for others to "take religion seriously," especially their peers outside of Divinity Schools and Religious Studies departments. A meta-concern of this project, therefore, is the effort to show how religion extends its social power through a variety of multivalent social relations. Accordingly, the charge to take religion seriously, as I frame it, is not an abstract one, but rather it identifies and corrects misunderstandings of religion as either an entirely transcendent concept allergic or impervious to empirical analysis, on the one hand, or, on the other, as a mere ideological screen for material economic relationships.[18] On complex social terrain, such fine analytical distinctions rarely find clean purchase, and it goes without saying that complex social relationships do not require fine analytical distinction to operate effectively.

When King spoke of "the white moderate" and "the white church," he described these kinds of complex power relationships, even if he underemphasized the depths of their imbrication by focusing primarily on the church's discursive and moral influence on social power structures. Evangelicals' religious, economic and racial social relations in the postwar and civil rights eras were not in fact distinct from those of larger social power structures nor were they each separate and distinct relations from the others, but rather they were *the very same human relations* of social power only described and treated separately from distinct intellectual, categorical or analytical vantage points. For white evangelicals, religious social relations informed and encouraged certain economic practices and ideologies just as much as economic social relations dictated religious practice and ideology. On top of those multivalent layers, to make matters more analytically complex, various racializations and racial formations encouraged by religious and economic practice and ideology further restricted, shaped and

[18] For a neo-Marxist discussion of the role of religion in determining cultural, political and economic ideology, see Stuart Hall, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies,* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 24-70 and 131-150.

directed the kinds of ideals and social relations that white evangelicals were able to imagine, valorize and pursue. Over time, the cultural end result of white evangelicals' various and sundry social projects was ultimately a change in the *style* of white supremacy rather than a diminution of its power. To better understand the white church, generally, and white evangelicalism, specifically, in its relation to and status among white supremacy's power structures, this dissertation appeals to these complex, overlapping and mutually constitutive conceptual frameworks and to the cultural styles in which they were expressed.

Introduction
Reframing Religion, Capitalism and White Supremacy in Twentieth-Century United States History

"…[W]e are not on a pilgrimage to the shrines of yesterday. We are in a crusade to plant flags in new territories for Christ."
—Arnold T. Olson, President of the Evangelical Free Church in America, December 1958[1]

"…[L]et me suggest that you stop trying to live in a world which no longer exists."
—Dr. L. Nelson Bell to the Rev. W.A. Gamble, August 1961[2]

In 1958, on the eve of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Evangelical Free Church in America (EFCA)—founded in Boone, Iowa as the Swedish Evangelical Free Church in America (Swedish EFCA)—Dr. Arnold T. Olson challenged the people of his denomination to have "the eyes to see the VISION [for] unoccupied territory," "the ears to hear the VOICE of God" and "the courage to launch forth in new VENTURES." As a first generation Norwegian-American, a former member and president of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association (Norwegian-Danish EFCA) and the second president of the EFCA (formed by merger of the dual Scandinavian EFCAs in 1950), Olson celebrated the heritage of immigrant free church forefathers, but he called for his church to "*capitalize* on [their] inheritance" in the coming age.[3]

Olson's sermon, printed in the EFCA's denominational periodical, *The Evangelical Beacon*, spoke in biblical parables. The homily opened with Deuteronomy 1:21: "Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of they fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged." Olson reminded his church that God still spoke, unceasingly with orders

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[1] Arnold T. Olson, "It's the Year of Jubilee!," *The Evangelical Beacon*, December 23, 1958. (Digital copies of *The Evangelical Beacon* are in the author's possession courtesy of Esther Lang, Collection Management Librarian at Trinity International University.)

[2] Correspondence, L. Nelson Bell to W. A. Gamble, August 14, 1961, Folder 26, Box 15, CN 318, Papers of L. Nelson Bell. Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, Illinois. (Hereafter Bell Papers and BGCA, respectively.)

[3] For Olson's biographical details, see Arnold T. Olson, *This We Believe: the Background and Exposition of the Doctrinal Statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America*, (Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 1961), dedication page; and Arnold T. Olson, *Give Me This Mountain: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis, MN: self-published, 1987). Quotations from Olson, "Jubilee!" Capitalized emphases original, italicized emphasis mine.

"…given centuries ago and come to each succeeding generation…with the same authority and urgency." To Olson, the people of his church were the same as "the children of Israel" on the precipice of the promised land and fearful of the task ahead. No survey of needs or challenges faced satisfied God's imperative for the land to be captured, as Olson had it—only "action," the taking and the possession of promised land, met God's command. As the Israelites had come "to a *place* of decision," so did the EFCA, Olson declared, and he asked his members to dare possess new territory, or "…remain on the wrong side of the river with only memories of past progress to bring us comfort." In closing, Olson cited the lyrics of a popular fundamentalist hymn, "The Conflict of Ages:" "*Have your eyes caught the vision? Have your hearts felt the thrill? To the call of the Master do you answer, 'I will!?' For the conflict of ages, told by prophets and sages, in its fury is upon us, is upon us today.*"[4]

While Olson made no reference whatsoever to specific projects or discrete territories to be possessed, his call was neither vague nor abstract. Of course, *Beacon* readers understood the biblical message and its modern day imperative—a call to evangelize the entire world—but they also understood the social trajectory of the EFCA as a forward-looking, aspirational and rapidly growing denomination that saw itself, as it had long seen itself, on the cusp of a new age. After all, when Olson penned his sermon, it had been only eight years since the denomination was two separate denominations defined by ethnic national cultural separatism. The merger itself had required a slow but steady rejection of a precious immigrant past, a payment made to a long and slow working religious project to assimilate in America. As a new "American" church, the EFCA had since launched aggressive efforts to expand its missionary reach not only abroad—especially in Africa, Asia and South America—but also at home, and particularly in the mushrooming suburbs of the postwar era. The call to possess promised land, then, was itself a literal call to take land in the United States, and the

[4] Olson, "Jubilee!"

bible served as an allegory, a figurative literary framing device by which the mundane present became transformed as a living and urgent portion of an authoritative supernatural order where contingent historical distinction counted for very little.[5] Not one year after his *Beacon* clarion call, Olson stumbled into his own opportunity to live out this timeless bible story. In his office, surrounded by eager bureaucratic managers of the EFCA's school, Trinity College and Theological Seminary, Olson signed a check for $20,000 (approximately $175,000 inflation adjusted) to hold a bucolic farm for sale outside Deerfield, Illinois for the potential purpose of moving Trinity from its long-held urban confines to developing suburban fields. In so doing, Olson ignored ecclesiastical protocol to obtain permission for significant financial expenditures from the denomination's Board of Trustees.[6] As Olson likely saw it, he had the vision; he heard the voice; he held the courage to possess new land.

Olson's perspective was only one of many from which that particular story can be told, however. Others more historical and humanistic, to be elaborated in this dissertation, show how the transformation of the EFCA captures an untold but essential narrative of white evangelicalism in twentieth-century United States history. As a conventional church history of denominational change over time, the EFCA's narrative is fairly straightforward, and a mostly marginal one if measured by membership size alone. Olson himself narrated a more or less comprehensive history in a three-part volume on the subject published by the Free Church Press.[7] As a story of white modern American

[5] In this formulation, allegorization is understood in terms of early Christian scholar David Dawson who describes allegorical reading as an interpretive process whereby non-scriptural cultural meaning is read into scripture by figurative association or allegory. In its most effective form, allegorization claims original authority by so fully integrating contingent cultural meaning into scripture that the exegesis appears to modify the culture, and not the other way around. Allegory and allegorization are crucial exegetical methods by which the subjects of this dissertation made sense of their world through biblical literature, and their allegorical work is noted throughout. For more on historical and cultural processes of allegory and acculturation, see David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[6] See Calvin B. Hanson, *The Trinity Story*, Heritage Series Vol. 6, (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 1983), 82-83; and Olson, *Give Me This Mountain*, 155.

[7] Arnold T. Olson, *The Search for Identity*, vol. 1, 8 vols., Heritage Series, 1884-1984 (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 1980); Arnold T. Olson, *The Significance of Silence*, vol. 2, 8 vols., Heritage Series, 1884-1984 (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 1981).; and, Arnold T. Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity*, vol. 3, 8 vols., Heritage Series, 1884-1984 (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 1981)

evangelicalism broadly speaking, however, the story requires the reframing of well-trodden evangelical narratives by critical analytical categories of race—particularly categories of whiteness and white supremacy—as well as further attention to key yet often ignored, marginalized or sublimated contingencies of church order, or ecclesiology, and capitalism as they relate to matters of race in United States history.

Put directly, among the central claims of this dissertation are the following: first, that the history of the Scandinavian immigrant free churches in the northern and midwestern United States—from their mostly insignificant and unremarkable founding through their disproportionate impact on the modern evangelical movement of the postwar suburban era in its rising national power—presents long-ignored but crucial explanations for obstinate inequitable racial formations in the United States, in general; and, specifically, that this history better accounts for modern white evangelicalism's stubborn racial formations by magnifying the role of ecclesiology, pro-capitalist theology and related evangelical social ethics in shaping the material social orders of evangelical religion *and* white supremacy in American society.[8] To this latter claim, the present work attaches the more literary portion of its title, "salt and light." While the phrase itself is derived from ubiquitous Christian appeals to a portion of Christ's sermon on the mount in Matthew 5:13-16, for modern white evangelicals, salt and light social ethics became a circumscribed style of social engagement that implied particularly and simultaneously white racial and religious social locations in the United States. Unlike earlier fundamentalists who appealed to "salt and light" as a unified charge to prioritize evangelism and conversion specifically, later evangelicals in particular distinguished "salt" and "light" in social and spiritual realms whereby their "salt" worked to curb social corruption and lend society righteous 'flavor' while their "light" carried most of fundamentalists' concern for evangelism and conversion.

[8] See Omi and Winant, *Racial Formations* or the Preface to this dissertation for a definition of racial formation. See the preface also for this work's understanding of white supremacy.

By the time Ronald Reagan invoked the "city on a hill" parable in his election eve address in 1980, drawing on the very same section of Christ's sermon, he spoke directly to the white evangelical "salt and light" social ethic, cohering its meaning to a so-called color blind conservative social vision in American national politics that Reagan went on to enforce by law.[9]

Despite an early focus on EFCA history, neither the claims above nor the rest of this dissertation assert that the EFCA and its past ethnic national iterations are fully or even especially responsible for white supremacy in evangelical social orders, but rather that the denomination's history shows how American white supremacy as a matter of racist social *ideology* and racialized social *structure* came to be inflected and transformed through discrete and exemplary historical populations. In the history of American whiteness, for instance, the early ethnic national free churches were exemplary not due to their size or influence, and certainly not due to any inherent racial character, but rather to the ancestry by which Scandinavian immigrants were judged, in explicitly racial terms, on their very arrival. Unlike other, more commonly studied European immigrants of the era, Scandinavian immigrants were often seen as 'model minorities' in the variegated racial hierarchies of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[10] Moreover, the strictly congregational pietism of Scandinavian free church adherents solidified this racial judgement in the eyes of Anglo-American Protestants fearful of dark-haired and dark-eyed European Catholics. Those fears, in turn, secured crucial financial and institutional patronage for free church establishments in the United States, giving Scandinavian free churches and their members a leg up on the path to full social acceptance and assimilation as "Americans." After paying the price for their ticket over decades, the EFCA became a fully-formed, self-consciously

[9] See Transcript, Ronald Reagan, "Election Eve Address: A Vision for America," November 3, 1980, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed July 29, 2020, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/11-3-80. On the colorblind tradition, see again Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation* and Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*.

[10] On the "variegated racial hierarchies" of the turn of the century, see Painter, *History of White People*, 105-326. See also Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1916).

modern American institution and therefore had greater entanglements with and greater responsibility for white supremacist racial formations—a fact which dawned slowly and rather uncomfortably on free church leaders and spokespeople themselves in the postwar era.[11] While important as representative and occasionally archetypical participants in those racial formations, the EFCA and most of its leaders remained nevertheless a minor piece of a much larger cultural assemblage of which they could only see their small portion.

Much greater responsibility for twentieth century white supremacist religious formations in the United States belongs to larger and more broadly influential fundamentalist and evangelical movements that EFCA leaders both joined and helped to organize from the 1920s into the postwar era and beyond. The story of these movements has been told and retold…and retold (and here again) over the last fifty years. Almost always, scholars of American religion narrate the histories of fundamentalism and modern organized evangelicalism in full recognition of their white racial homogeneity, although few address or even recognize the role of ethnic national influences that shaped these white movements—a telling snapshot of the mental terrain of white racial analysis in American religious history.

Moreover, when scholars bring racial analysis of these movements to the foreground, they do so most often from the perspective of the American south, far afield from the urban and rural midwest where the bulk of free church members lived and where most free church institutions were founded and remain.[12] The historiographical emphasis on southern evangelicalism's white racial formations makes good sense, for obvious reasons, and the corpus of important work that traces a century-and-a-half southern history of race and white evangelicalism in the United States—from the days of

[11] See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

[12] See again among others, Alvis, *Religion & Race*; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying;* Feldman, et al., eds*., Politics and Religion in the White South;* Marsh*, God's Long Summer;* Miller*, Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*; Newman, *Getting Right with God*.

antebellum slavery through the rise of the modern so-called "Christian Right"—is essential for any understanding of the longer white religious tradition.[13] Nevertheless, a second set of critical claims grounds the research in this dissertation: first, that the nearly universal historical focus on southern racial formations of white evangelicalism often oversimplifies and even obscures a far more complex and far more pervasive history of continuous yet mutable white supremacy in the United States; and, second, related to those above, that the specific analysis of northern and midwestern white supremacy in the twentieth century, especially in the economic context of postwar suburbanization, *better explains* contemporary national racial ideologies, racial formations and racial inequalities than more indefinite appeals to legacies of slavery or even Jim Crow segregation.

While more important historiographical precedents exist and require reflection, an excellent exemplification of the disconnect between southern history and more recent sociological analyses of white evangelical racial ideology is found in Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith's important and incisive study, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Although Emerson and Smith gathered data from nationwide telephone surveys and, further, from in-person interviews in twenty-three states, their history of "evangelical racial thought" from 1700 to 1964 is a quintessentially southern narrative with only sparing deference to northern evangelicals and northern regions, not to mention much of the western half of the United States.[14] Nevertheless, *Divided By Faith's* discussion of black and white evangelicals who led racial reconciliation movements from the 1960s through the 1990s unfolds almost entirely in the north and northern midwest: from New York

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[13] Here, Bebbington's definition of evangelicalism applies, given the longer historical period and need for conceptual generalization. In addition to those texts listed in the previous footnote, see for antebellum periods: Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, Tenn: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1997); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1997); Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South,* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jeffrey Robert Young, ed., *Proslavery and Sectional Thought in the Early South, 1740-1829: An Anthology* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

[14] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 21-49

City, Detroit and even the suburbs of Kalamazoo, Michigan.[15] Emerson, a white evangelical himself, opens the first chapter of book with a story about his own experience "with race" from his home in Minneapolis.[16]

A more expansive and perhaps more obvious historiographical problem is this: although the history of race and white evangelicalism is written from southern perspectives, the modern evangelical movement that has inspired expansive academic inquiry since the mid-twentieth century was itself organized in the urban midwest and north by northern fundamentalists and northern evangelicals, as Joel Carpenter, Sarah Ruth Hammond and others have documented.[17] Evangelical organizers and financiers R.G. LeTourneau, Herbert J. Taylor, J. Elwin Wright and J. Howard Pew, among others, were northerners, as were influential evangelical preachers and intellectuals, including Harold John Ockenga and Carl F. H. Henry. Influential training grounds and social hubs for fundamentalist and evangelical leaders were found in Chicago and nearby Wheaton, IL at the Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College, respectively.[18] Even the most prominent southern evangelist of the twentieth century, William Franklin Graham, Jr., was educated by northeastern and midwestern evangelicals at Wheaton College, a fact by which both historians and Graham himself have explained his supposed theological, social and racial moderation.[19] To boot, Graham became celebrated nationally as an evangelist first through his work with Youth for Christ (YFC), an organization founded in the north by the Norwegian-Danish EFCA preacher Torrey Johnson. Graham even served for four years as the second president of

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[15] Ibid., 51-68.

[16] Ibid., 5.

[17] See Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Hammond, *God's Businessmen*.

[18] For a compelling analysis of Wheaton College as an evangelical social hub, see Michael S. Hamilton, "The Fundamentalist Harvard: Wheaton College and the Continuing Vitality of American Evangelicalism, 1919-1965" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1994). For insight into the history of the Moody Bible Institute with an emphasis on its business ties, see again Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*.

[19] See particularly Miller, *Billy Graham and the Republican South*, 17-18. See also Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

Northwestern Bible College outside Minneapolis; the fundamentalist college's founder and first president was a famous and broadly influential northerner, William Bell Riley, who organized the World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA). Riley personally invited Graham to be his successor.[20]

Compelling northern biographies aside, how does one explain the regional disconnect between historiographies of modern American evangelicalism and its white racial formations? An ostensibly southern story from the annals of mid-twentieth-century American Presbyterianism, famous as well in chronicles of white southern evangelical responses to the civil rights movement, can help to clarify the points above. Most directly, the story captures the inadequacy of a straightforward southern perspective to capture the transformations of white supremacy in the long civil rights era. The story's details are worth sharing, moreover, given this dissertation's claims on evangelical ecclesiology and its ecclesiastical structures in the mid-century transformations of religion and white supremacy. Finally, the following narrative begins to show the complex structural origins of white evangelicals' three primary cultural tools for assessing "the problem of race," as Emerson and Smith have defined them: namely, "'accountable free will individualism,' 'relationalism' (attaching central importance to interpersonal relationships), and antistructuralism (inability to perceive or unwillingness to accept social structural differences)."[21] On this work's reading, white evangelicals' inequality-reproducing cultural tools collectively constitute a social ethic—salt and light activism—that is, by clear intent of historical leaders who fashioned that ethic and despite contemporary evangelical claims to the contrary, inescapably corporate and therefore clearly structural in its own right. Most importantly, as this dissertation also claims, the white evangelical articulation of its salt and light social ethic in the United States has always been shaped by white supremacy, as well as it has shaped the same.

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[20] For Graham's comprehensive biography, see again Wacker, *America's Pastor*.

[21] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith,* 76.

A Southern Layman Speaks

In 1961, after years of argument—and an abundance of agreement—over a variety of pressing church and social issues, Dr. L. Nelson Bell, a medical doctor, former missionary to China and editor of *The Presbyterian Journal*, ended a six-year correspondence with a long-time supporter of the conservative southern Presbyterian periodical, the Reverend William Arnette Gamble from Mississippi. For the most part, Gamble wrote to Bell to discuss and debate fine points of ecclesiastical politics in the southern Presbyterian church, then formally known as the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), though earlier founded as the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America (PCCSA). As the regional Presbyterian denomination's "southern" adjective might suggest—even more so given the denomination's Confederate origins—debates over ecclesiastical politics and ecclesiological principles within the PCUS were never far removed from racial concerns. While some of these debates contemplated the church's responsibilities as a primarily white institution for its small minority of black constituents, the primary concerns for conservative southern Presbyterians like Bell and Gamble in the mid-1950s were the growing power of theologically liberal representatives in the PCUS General Assembly and, concomitantly, the possibility of an ecclesiastical reunion with the northern Presbyterian church, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA).[22]

At stake in that possible merger, according to both conservatives, was the distinctive theological tradition of the PCUS, especially its doctrine of the "spirituality of the church." *That* doctrine had been developed in the nineteenth century by the proslavery Presbyterian theologian James Henley Thornwell to defend the practice of slavery from what he saw as theologically unsanctioned Christian

[22] See Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 46-76.

meddling in the civic, political and economic affairs of white southerners.[23] For Bell and Gamble, a century later, merger with the PCUSA threatened the church's spirituality due to the influence of liberal Protestant modernism in both northern and southern denominations. Both men believed that influence would turn the church back into an apostate human institution occupied more by politics, economics and other social concerns than by the global promulgation of the gospel and its supernatural promise of eternal salvation. In the south, supposed modernists and other theological liberals were well-represented in southern Presbyterian leadership, as far as conservatives saw it, and they encroached on full control of the denominational hierarchy and its institutional priorities. If the regional churches merged, Bell and Gamble feared, the balance of power would shift dramatically, and the conservative traditions and distinctive beliefs of church they so dearly loved and defended would be ruined.

In the mid-century, southern Presbyterian ecclesiastical dramas ran headlong into swelling nationwide concern for racial inequality in the United States. As a representative of southern white supremacist traditionalism, Bell's conservative periodical regularly ran columns, often written by Bell himself, that defended segregation within the PCUS as a righteous and benevolent religious order while defending segregation outside the church as a social order subject not to the demands of the spiritual church but rather to the free conscience and social preferences of individual Christian citizens. In this context, and entirely by coincidence, a formal vote on Presbyterian merger was scheduled just before the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that declared public school segregation to be unconstitutional. Before the *Brown* decision, southern Presbyterian liberals were nearly certain they had the popular support to win reunion. After *Brown*, as the *Journal* simultaneously ramped up its attacks on the union vote, it amplified its own defenses of segregation

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[23] See ibid, 46. For Thornwell's doctrine in its historical and regional contexts, see Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, 133-318.

alongside new vitriolic condemnations of the Supreme Court decision. By 1955, the merger vote came through: forty-two of eighty-six southern presbyteries supported the union, one abstained and forty-three opposed. The union was defeated by the absolute thinnest of margins. While no presbytery offered explicit confirmation that their vote was swayed by an overriding interest in defending segregation rather than the southern Presbyterian church's unique heritage, both close study and commonsense intuition suggest a strong correlation.[24]

In the PCUS that survived the vote, debates continued to rage over both the possibility of future merger proposals as well as those over the theological and political bases of segregation. On these subjects, Bell and Gamble exchanged their arguments. As the historian David L. Chappell notes, Bell and Gamble agreed entirely on the necessities of defending the integrity of both the PCUS and southern systems of segregation and disenfranchisement known colloquially as Jim Crow. The men did not see eye to eye, however, on the right methods for doing so in either case. For segregation in particular, as Chappell rightly argues, Bell insisted social orders needed no state backing to enforce natural boundaries between the races, just as no laws of man were needed to separate flocks of distinct bird species in the sky.[25] Gamble disagreed. As quoted in Chappell's *A Stone of Hope*, Gamble argued that "'[t]he people of Mississippi know' that racial barriers 'can only be maintained by force.'"[26] In this context, Chappell quotes Bell's final letter to Gamble as shown in part above: "Arnette, let me suggest that you stop trying to live in a world which no longer exists. I am as loyal to the South as any person, but there are higher considerations than any regional loyalty, and those considerations have to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ and our obligation to preach and live it."[27]

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[24] See Alvis, *Religion and Race*, 60-61

[25] Bell drew here on the philosophical tradition of commonsense realism as commonly appropriated by historical southern Presbyterians and other southern evangelicals. See ibid., 4.

[26] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion And the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2005), 118.

[27] Quoted in ibid. For the original, see L. Nelson Bell to W. A. Gamble, August 14, 1961, Folder 26, Box 15, CN 318, Bell Papers, BGCA Archives.

In presenting Bell's ultimate screed to Gamble as a matter of Bell rejecting Gamble's segregationist views in particular, Chappell makes a too-common mistake regularly found at the heart of historical accounts of white evangelicalism and race in the twentieth century: the confusion of specific disagreement on particulars of racial segregation with far more broad disagreements over the shape, style and organization of a true Christian church in America. In fact, nowhere in his letter to Gamble on August 14th of 1961 did Bell mention his own or Gamble's positions on segregation. Rather, the letter concerned Gamble's opposition to two matters surrounding Bell's *Presbyterian Journal*. The first and most pressing issue was a recent *Journal* article by Bell's co-editor G. Aiken Taylor that submitted a conservative Protestant alternative to a fresh liberal Protestant proposal, known as the Blake-Pike Proposal, for a grand American inter-Protestant denominational merger. Gamble found Taylor's essay, "Another Proposal," to be "a counsel of desperation, and an unwarranted and injurious surrender to advocates of union in our church," while Bell found it to be "an adroit move which throws the Northern church on the defensive." After some gossip about Eugene Blake, the northern Presbyterian who co-sponsored the proposal carrying his name, Bell addressed Gamble's second concern: the removal of the adjective "Southern" from the name of *The Presbyterian Journal*. Since its founding in 1942, Bell's periodical had been titled, in fact, *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*. Gamble took great umbrage with the seemingly minor change, at which point Bell suggested pointedly that Gamble consider abandoning his counterfactual fantasies about regional worlds gone by.

All that being said, Chappell is right to soon clarify in his larger argument that Bell's advocacy represented a new style of evangelical "conservative insurgency" and, moreover, that his statements on race and segregation in particular must be considered "in the context of debates and developments

that were, in the minds of most Protestant leaders in the white South, more important segregation."[28] While Chappell treats the new evangelical movement far too narrowly and even erroneously as a southern phenomenon, he correctly identifies Bell's urge to promote a new evangelical perspective as a measure of expanding evangelical influence nationwide by obscuring regional southern evangelicals' troglodyte racism. Again, however, Chappell mistakenly identifies Bell accordingly as a "moderate segregationist" and a leader of this new approach to race in the evangelical tradition. Bell was neither. As Chappell himself oxymoronically admits, Bell considered himself to be a "true friend of racial customs," even truer than scared white men like Gamble, because Bell trusted that God's divine order of racial separation was not contingent on human meddling. Moreover, Bell, like his son-in-law Billy Graham, was no leader on new evangelical approaches to race and racial inequality; he was, rather, a follower of primarily northern evangelicals' lead in the new, fully-nationalized white suburban landscape of residential segregation, including its political and economic practices of urban black disenfranchisement by geographical isolation, coordinated neighborhood disinvestment and state-sanctioned, heavy-handed policing. In other words, Bell was not looking to advance a national expansion of southern evangelical religious and cultural traditions; he had, rather, joined a northern evangelical movement that already displayed its cultural power through organizations like YFC and the NAE and prominent individuals like Graham. Bell's job was to turn the revanchist white evangelical south towards new territories, as Arnold Olson would have it, rather than allowing it to thrash fruitlessly and shamefully in a retrograde public battle for territory already lost and even unecessary to the larger national evangelical project.

[28] Chappell, *Stone of Hope*, 119. See also 117-121 for Chappell's framing of Bell and his influence. This dissertation's argument, in general, refutes much of Chappell's theses regarding white supremacy's disunity during the classical civil rights era.

Other scholars of white southern evangelicalism have followed Chappell's lead by describing figures like Bell and Graham as "moderates" and, moreover, by declaring the decline, demise or death of white supremacy in southern evangelical traditions as a catalyst for the nationalization of a particularly southern evangelicalism.[29] In his analysis of Southern Baptist battles over segregation, for instance, Paul Harvey argues that "[b]y the late 1960s, ….Southern Baptists accommodated themselves with remarkable ease to the demise of white supremacy as fundamentally constitutive of their society," arguing further that while Southern Baptist segregationist "…battles were bitter, …segregation crumbled remarkably easily." As proof of this claim, Harvey notes that more "…recent controversies within the SBC" have been mostly devoid of racial disputes and the divisive rancor that has dogged such disputes historically.[30] A lack of dispute, however, requires consensus, and the long history of white consensus on matters of race is not a happy one. Moreover, while "today's conservatives …have repudiated the white supremacists views *of their predecessors*," as Harvey notes, that does not in anyway mean that they have repudiated white supremacy in other social or ideological forms. In fact, one of Harvey's primary arguments in his essay "Religion, Race, and the Right in the South" is that "…patriarchy has supplanted race as the defining first principle of God-ordained inequality." In so arguing, Harvey recognizes that white conservative understandings of race and gender have been deeply imbricated, especially in their emphases on "social purity." For Harvey, however, "white unity" as a social formation became too fragile for Southern Baptists to prioritize its defense, and so they turned to the far more popular and "…secure fortress of Southern [gender norms]."[31]

[29] On evangelicalism's "southernization," its racial ideologies and its influence on politics, see Darren Dochuck, "Evangelicalism Becomes Southern, Politics Becomes Evangelical: From FDR to Ronald Reagan" in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, Mark Noll, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 297-318.

[30] Harvey, "Religion, Race, and the Right in the South, 1945-1990," in Feldman et al., eds., *Politics and Religion in the White South*, 117-118.

[31] Ibid.

This dissertation argues a similar point, but in reverse: white evangelicals deprioritized explicit defenses of white unity because they reorganized that racial unity on other less controversial and less confrontational principles of social order. They did so, moreover, because they realized that the defense of Jim Crow in particular drew too much attention to the social and material mechanisms by which both American racialization and white evangelical social power was maintained. Their consistent and insistent rejection of social and material solutions to racial inequality betrayed that fact. Conversely, although not elaborated upon here, Southern Baptists and other white evangelicals turned to gender battles not because gender norms were secure, but because feminists were burning their bras in the streets, the Equal Rights Amendment was gaining popular momentum and American women in general were working to promote and defend rights of access to new technologies to more effectively manage their own reproductive cycles. Regardless, while Harvey is most often an exemplary analyst of race and religion in American society, the past half century of racial formation in the United States casts an air of suspicion on claims to the "demise of white supremacy as fundamentally constitutive" of southern society, not to mention American society at large, or those that claim the "remarkably easy" dissolution of southern segregation despite deep and widening forms of persistent racial segregation in the twenty-first century.

Again, these logical mental leaps confuse Jim Crow particulars with white supremacist generalities, especially by missing the social mechanisms by which white supremacy survived the particular death of Jim Crow. The question remains as to how white evangelicals reorganized a statistically verifiable white racial unity in their movement while maintaining veneers of regret and concern for racial inequality. Harvey's recognition of the evangelical imperative for "social purity" lands near the point. The white evangelical movement of the mid-twentieth century did not strive for overriding social purity *per se*, insofar as they needed an impure antagonist against which to frame themselves. Rather, they strove for a pure *church*, sometimes called the "spiritual church," the "mystical church" or the

"body of Christ." This ecclesiological striving was not alone intellectual or theological debate, as it is often portrayed. Rather, "the church" that the EFCA, the NAE, L. Nelson Bell, Billy Graham and many other white evangelicals sought to establish was built on transformed postwar social orders by structural reformation through material development projects, all the while being interpreted and reinterpreted through evangelicalism's intellectual ecclesiological lens. As with Arnold Olson's "action" to take promised land for the EFCA in 1959, modern white evangelicals in general expressed their social ethics through ecclesiastical restructuring that relied on—and broadly celebrated—racially-circumscribed economic capital in the postwar era.

Evangelical Ecclesiology, Corporate Evangelicalism and the White Church in the Urban North and Midwest

In order to best understand the economic and racial import of white evangelical ecclesiastical restructuring in the twentieth century, one must first get a grasp on evangelical ecclesiology or, in so-called secular terms, the structural ideology of evangelicalism as opposed to its ostensible "antistructuralism." The task is easier said than done. As evangelical theologian John G. Stackhouse Jr. has rightly argued, "…evangelicals have implied an ecclesiology more than [they] have articulated one." With particular implication for this dissertation's thesis is the work of "free church" theologian Roger Olson. While Olson is not a member of the EFCA in particular, he subscribes to a radical free church tradition that closely mirrors in structure and ideology the early immigrant Scandinavian free churches in the United States. Even for Olson, free church ecclesiology like evangelical ecclesiology in particular is "notoriously difficult to pin down." Nevertheless, Olson traces an historical free church legacy that progressed from Protestant churches' opposition to the Catholic church (which saw the mystical church and visible church as one) to churches that opposed state-sponsored and territorial churches, to those that opposed all "…formal ecclesiastical hierarchies, sacerdotalism [formal elite

priesthood], creedalism, and 'mixed assemblies' [church membership of true believers and 'nominal' believers]."[32]

Beyond these qualities, Olson notes important free church preferences for voluntary association as a rejection of coerced faith, their "strong distrust" of all forms of "human hierarchal power" and their tendency—although not one obliged—towards congregational polity as a structural reflection of preferences for voluntarism and "the priesthood of all believers." These histories, characteristics and ethoses of free church ecclesiology are all readily apparent in the history of the EFCA, especially in its early development. Moreover, and more important to the larger history of modern white evangelicalism presented in this work, is Olson's argument that free church ecclesiology is "especially compatible" with the "ethos and spirituality" of evangelicalism in general, despite obvious differences between evangelical denominational polities and doctrines.[33] Tellingly, EFCA leaders in the 1940s made very similar arguments when they joined the nascent NAE to battle against liberal Protestant modernism *and* state socialism or 'communism,' both seen as apostate, hierarchical and hungry for global domination. As Olson notes, "[m]ost free churches believe that where bishops rule, kings cannot be far behind…"[34] That specific ecclesiological fear drove much evangelical thought and concordant organization in the mid-twentieth century.

Other evangelical theologians present a far more pessimistic take on the possibility of evangelical ecclesiology that captures yet another essential element of modern American evangelical history: namely, its constant battle for institutional purity in search of the true spiritual church made (more or less) visible. In a doubting essay titled "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?," Bruce Hindmarsh answers his own question affirmatively, calling evangelical ecclesiological history "…tragic in the old

[32] See Roger E. Olson, "Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality: A Unique Compatability," in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?*, John G. Stackhouse, ed., (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2003), 171.
[33] Ibid., 161-178.
[34] Ibid, 169.

sense of the word in which a situation is recognized as especially sad because a fatal flaw brings calamity upon an otherwise noble character."[35] For Hindmarsh, evangelicals have been impotent to reconcile their spiritual power to discern the mystical unity of the church in the world—"the spiritual union of all the truly regenerate"—with their historical movements' proclivity to tenacious separatism aroused by 'cussed' and 'perverse' human hearts. While Hindmarsh speaks of evangelicalism in terms of global Christian history and with supernatural theological implications, for the admittedly limited humanistic purposes of American religious history at hand, his dour analysis is instructive: at the core of evangelical ecclesiology and its historical unfolding are claims to participate in *two* churches: one mystical, unified and true, the other corporeal and compelled to mirror its spiritual counterpart but plagued nonetheless by human interests that proliferate conflict and division.[36] This narrative, in particular, is at the heart of the social forces that forged the NAE out of the divisive and rancorous fundamentalist movement of earlier decades, to which the EFCA also subscribed.

In the twentieth-century United States, fundamentalists and evangelicals expressed their ecclesiological anxieties in social and material worlds more tangible than mental discourse or spiritual sentiment, and they found structural resonance with their ideals and finer feelings in the social orders of American capitalism and white supremacy. By exceedingly straightforward means, more easily explained than those required to make sense of white supremacy, American capitalism provided conservative Protestant churches the means to enlarge and extend their institutions. In the United States, this bare economic fact has been true of all churches since religious disestablishment in the late-eighteenth century, but evangelicals have always expressed their reverence for the miracles of money more explicitly and more proudly than other American religious traditions, especially those

[35] Bruce Hindmarsh, "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective," in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, Stackhouse, ed., 37.

[36] Ibid., 15-37.

that have opposed capitalism's excessively inequitable and often violent social practices, like slavery, urban industrialism or Jim Crow sharecropping, to name a select few.[37]

From George Whitfield—who advocated to extend the institution of slavery itself as an economic practice necessary for growing the colonies, expanding the church and supporting the church's benevolent societies—to Billy Graham—whose revival organizations were funded by preeminent anti-liberal corporate capitalists of the twentieth-century—evangelicals have not merely relied on capital to grow the church as they idealized it, they have celebrated capital as a gift from God and a sign of God's ongoing intervention in both church and secular affairs. At the same time, the evangelical sanctification of capitalism has always responded to and further vilified conservative Protestants' religious *and* political foes. In the early-twentieth century, for instance, fundamentalist pastors actively peddled a religio-economic vision that baptized corporate capitalism. As one example among innumerable others, both the well-known fundamentalist financier R.G. LeTourneau and the lesser known EFCA and NAE institutional manager Carl Gundersen claimed to have been told by their pastors, only one year apart, that God needed them as businessmen as much as God needed preachers and missionaries to spread the gospel.[38] Beyond this minor anecdote, a growing historiography documents 'evangelical business' with great and convincing depth and detail, highlighting a modern conservative evangelical worldview that proclaims corporate capitalism to be the one and only true social gospel.[39] Alongside this new historiographical insight are those that have long pinned fundamentalism and modern evangelicalism as reactionary movements opposed to both liberal

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[37] See Eskridge and Noll, *More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History*; and, Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty's Dollar: A History of Money and American Protestantism*.

[38] See Valborg A. Gundersen, *Long Shadow: The Living Story of a Layman and His Lord* (Beacon Publications, 1966), 29-30; and Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, 17.

[39] See again Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure;* Grem, *The Blessings of Business;* Hammond, *God's Businessmen*; Kruse, *One Nation under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*; and Porterfield, Corrigan, Grem, eds., *The Business Turn in American Religious History*.

economics and liberal religious church orders: for example, fundamentalists against liberal Protestantism's social gospel and fundamentalists opposed to New Deal state socialism, or evangelicals against liberal ecumenical social programs and evangelical opposition to the perceived international and domestic threats of Cold War communism.[40]

Of primary importance here: in *all* these historical moments, fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants concerned themselves not only with theology and political ideology, but with the *ecclesiastical combination* of hierarchical church and state affairs—a fear that bishops would lead to kings, as Roger Olson might put it. Conservative Protestant activists, accordingly, fashioned their social ethics on this understanding, and they waged war, as they often described it, for new social orders that mirrored their ecclesiastical preferences for voluntaristic religion in a non-coerced (deregulated?) religious free market. Fundamentalists and modern evangelicals alike sought *total institutional separation* from heretical theologies and their perceived corollary church and social orders, only disagreeing on what counted as heretical and to what extent they should labor for their own competitive worldly institutions in advance of the millennium. Ideals for separation and institutional competition were understood nevertheless through a field of associations that understood liberal economic, political and religious projects as mutually imbricated and co-constitutive, not as separate secularized spheres. Fundamentalists and evangelicals understood their own church orders similarly to align with and be a part of capitalist economic and conservative political social orders. Both fundamentalists and later evangelicals agreed that their primary ethical responsibility to God-ordained "secular" social orders was evangelism—the essential missionary imperative of "the church—but the modern evangelicals who "reformed fundamentalism" were convinced even more of the need to advance the social power

[40] See in particular Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2014). For further examples see fundamentalist history classics in Carpenter, *Revive Us Again;* and George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

and influence of the fundamentalist gospel by spiritual regeneration, and they expanded their social vision of mission fields accordingly. As evangelical luminary Carl Henry put it in his manifesto, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism,* "[t]he battle against evil in all forms must be pressed unsparingly; we must pursue the enemy in politics, in economics, in science, in ethics—everywhere, in every field, we must pursue relentlessly."[41]

Under this expanding social ethic of reformed fundamentalism, many evangelicals perceived "business," or corporate capitalism, to be an economic tool both lent and directed by God for the global extension of the true, spiritual church. In fact, from one perspective, the reformation of fundamentalism that resulted in the modern evangelical movement was built—literally—by corporate capitalist activists who more strongly advocated for and utilized the cooperative economic social networks newly available to them to advance evangelistic projects. Early to this social experiment were evangelistic fundamentalist projects like the Gideons and, even more influentially, the Christian Business Men's Committee (CBMC) organized by northern fundamentalism's traveling salesmen and corporate middle managers.[42] On the success of these early efforts, modern evangelicals reiterated and more aggressively championed corporate capitalism as a force for evangelism, just as they more vocally defended evangelism as a social project with great material and economic effect. On these grounds the great "restructuring of American religion" commenced, to borrow Robert Wuthnow's framework, as conservative Protestants shed their radical fundamentalist separatism *from one another* to pool their human and material resources in a cooperative fight against the liberal "ecclesiastical octopus."[43] Nevertheless, evangelicals interpreted and described their own corporate (in both senses of the word)

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[41] Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 86.

[42] See again Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, especially 72-97.

[43] See Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1989). The phrase "ecclesiastical octopus" is taken from the title of a paradigmatic fundamentalist tome by Ernest Gordon that indicted the FCC in particular for its associations with communism. See Ernest Gordon, *An Ecclesiastical Octopus: A Factual Report on the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America* (Boston: Fellowship Press, 1948).

efforts as a supernatural spiritual unification grounded in intellectual doctrinal and scriptural agreement that further suggested the unseen presence of the spiritual church in *their* worldly social programs.

For a variety of complex and overlapping reasons—religious, political and economic—both evangelical ecclesiology and related pro-capitalist religious ideology amplified white supremacist social orders in the northern evangelical tradition and in that tradition's overriding influence on the organized, national evangelical movement of the midcentury through the classical civil rights era. Modern evangelicals of the midcentury were, in many ways, like antebellum proslavery evangelicals who deployed their vision of the church to religiously defend the economic practice of human enslavement, its political grounding and its territorial claims from supposed ecclesiastical combinations of radical abolitionist Protestants and the so-called "despotic" American government. Moreover, proslavery southern evangelicals defended human bondage at least in part so they themselves could continue to accrue slave capital not only for the purpose of enriching themselves, but also and more importantly for maintaining and growing the church—to honor and expand God's kingdom.[44] While the comparison is not flattering, and many contemporary white evangelicals may feel hurt by it, key historical parallels unfortunately hold even if they are not exact.

The primary work of this dissertation is to document and analyze these complex social factors, which have not been treated often in concert in American religious history and which cannot be adequately summarized here. Suffice it to say that in the United States, questions of who belonged to "the church" and who did not, or who "the church" served and who it did not, were always tied to the socially and materially racialized society in which these questions were posed. When free churches or fundamentalists or evangelicals sanctified various forms of finance and capitalism to advance their

[44] See again Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*; and Heyrman, *Southern Cross*.

ecclesiastical projects—or their efforts to *incorporate* or *concretize* the spiritual church—they baptized along with their economic practices the racial inequalities built into them.[45] For Scandinavian-American free churches, for example, one stated goal of that baptism was to "become American" by improving institutional facilities and networks; tied to this expressed project was one more implicit—a racial project to become equally "white" with Anglo-American peers. For midcentury evangelical activists, a stated goal of capitalism's baptism was an explicit religious project to colonize the postwar suburbs as territorial battle with liberal ecumenical churches; this project played out alongside another submerged project—heedless for some, tacit for others—to racially segregate postwar America and solidify the white racial unity of the American evangelical tradition.

Ultimately and finally, this dissertation argues for a new understanding of persistent racial segregation in white evangelicalism or, put more accurately and comprehensively, for a new explanation of American evangelicalism's very whiteness: its internal self-racialization and its religious support for structures of white supremacy in American society as required for self-perpetuation. Endemic to this new explanation is a reevaluation of white evangelicalism's opposition to the civil rights movement in light of ecclesiological and economic insights. In the theoretical framework of sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, this dissertation argues, conservative white evangelicals of the civil rights era worked to contain challenges to white supremacy while rearticulating an ostensibly kinder vision of its core justifications. Historian of the American south James N. Gregory comes closest to what the historical claims of this dissertation on the specific issues of civil rights and post-Jim Crow segregation in his work on "the southern diaspora." To the following, only the word "southerners" and the meaning of "churches" require qualification:

> Whether on the front lines of the backlash campaigns or in the suburban background, whether

[45] For the canonical critique of "racial capitalism," Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

loud or "absent," the evangelical churches that white southerners [sic] built played an important role in the spatial and racial politics of the 1960s, offering a conservative alternative to the civil rights liberalism that many other churches now supported. And they would play a bigger role in politics in the decades to come. Having established themselves in the white-flight suburbs, they would benefit from the growth patterns of those spaces and from the fact that the suburbs would be vying with cities as centers of political gravity.[46]

As argued above and below, in much greater detail, northern evangelicals and northern evangelical organizations most often led the charge to build their suburban church, although no doubt aided by southerners and southern transplants. For white evangelicals, moreover, in view of evangelical ecclesiology, "the church" entailed much more than decentralized suburban churches, although they were a essential portion of the evangelical social complex. Alongside the local congregation, however, evangelicals counted a vast network of parachurch organizations that similarly "suburbanized." More importantly, suburban parachurch organizations like the NAE—alongside media operations, publishing houses, missionary organizations and even church supply agencies—collectively centralized, coordinated and amplified evangelicalism's social outreach, more effectively transforming the "spatial and racial politics" of the 1960s and beyond.[47] Lastly, for the purposes of white evangelicals' spiritual discernment or spiritual imagination, depending on your theological perspective, the entire assemblage of evangelical churches and evangelical organizations reflected more or less closely a vision of the mystical church operating in the world. From the perspective of the suburbs, then, the divinely-ordained and God-willed "body of Christ" was visibly white, not unlike like the

[46] James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 234.

[47] For instance, by 1980, the industrial park that hosted the NAE's headquarters in suburban Carol Stream also hosted the following religious organizations: the Association of Church Missions, the Chapel of the Air, Christian Camping International, Christian Communications of Chicagoland, Christian Life Missions, Christian Service Brigade, Christianity Today, the Greater Europe Mission, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association of America, the Evangelical Alliance Mission, Tyndale House Publishers, and Youth for Christ. See List, "Village of Carol Stream - Business License List," June 28, 1984, Box 3, Folder JM15, Local History Collection, Carol Stream Public Library, Carol Stream, IL. (Hereafter CSPL LHC) See also chapter six of this dissertation.

paintings of Jesus hanging in foyers and chapels across the suburban nation.[48]

History is always and always has been written and rewritten from the perspective of the present, and so this dissertation takes on good evidence and, more urgently, on the repeated, pleading insistence of black Americans for past centuries through the very day these words are read that white supremacy in the United States is alive and well, and that it lives and executes its power in the very structural social orders of American institutions, no matter what one may or may not claim about immaterial spirituality, individual responsibility or other anti-structural, anti-humanist ideologies. Ideological or theological debates over race and/or social order are only abstract when probing scholars, well-meaning faithful or rabid ideologues, to name a few accountable parties, amputate social ideals from the social contexts that sustain them. Principled ideals, in reality, can never be dissociated from such conditions—a fact often betrayed, as Carl Henry rightly argues, by an uneasy conscience.

Map of the Dissertation, Sources and Relevant Secondary Literature

In order to make the claims elaborated above, this dissertation proceeds through seven chapters, more or less chronologically organized with some significant overlap between particular chapters, as described below. In order to establish the origins of racialized ecclesiology and evangelical white supremacy in the northern midwest, especially but not exclusively in Chicago, the opening chapter introduces the Scandinavian free church tradition in the United States, its roots in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and its various social locations in the transatlantic migrant narratives of the mid- and late-nineteenth century. In the United States, Scandinavian free churches built new institutions with borrowed money (at reduced rates) that was predicated on mutually reinforcing visions of racial superiority (only slightly lesser than Anglo-Saxon superiority) and ecclesiological harmony with Anglo-

[48] See Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God & the Saga of Race in America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 208-211

American religious ideals and institutions. By the turn of the century, Scandinavian-American free churches were tiny by comparison to the large Protestant denominations and practically non-existent compared to their Catholic immigrant peers, but they survived and thrived on patronage and institutional cooperation with like-minded coreligionists, although they aspired to level fully their social status with Anglo-American benefactors.

The opening of the twentieth century provided Scandinavian-American free churches no immediate path to do so, but a complex array of forces pushed them slowly towards "Americanization." As chapter two demonstrates, ecclesiological controversies, institutional reformations and developing theologies of church capital reshaped free church ecclesiastical orders in their ventures toward American identity. The dual Scandinavian-American free church denominations that emerged from these reformations further benefitted from shifting racial formations in American culture that expanded the boundaries of whiteness, especially the growing "Nordicization" of white supremacist ideology peddled by the likes of Madison Grant and promoted publicly and proudly by American presidents and Ku Klux Klan members alike.[49] From the 1920s and into the 1930s, Scandinavian-American free church leaders took advantage of their raised racial reputation, consciously or otherwise, and reframed their differences with Anglo-Americans as a matter of language alone. Language reforms inspired a new host of infrastructural investment designed to turn the free churches outwards to attract white Anglo-American publics. However, ecclesiological tradition restricted free church assimilationists' scope of fellowship with Anglo-Americans to fundamentalists alone, both strengthening and fashioning new ideological, institutional and—some would say—spiritual bonds with developing conservative white Protestant movements of the twentieth century.

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[49] On the enlargements of whiteness and the Nordicization of American racial ideology, see Painter, *History of White People*. For the role of Nordicization in American religious white supremacy in particular, see Harvey and Blum, "Nordic and Nativist in an Age of Imperialism" in *The Color of Christ*, 141-169.

Chapters three and four expand upon essential themes in free church religious and racial restructuring, covering a period from 1930, when the Swedish EFCA first published its English-language periodical, *The Evangelical Beacon*, to 1950, when the dual Scandinavian EFCAs merged to form the (American) EFCA. While the racial and ecclesiological themes of these chapters overlap analytically, they were kept mostly separate in the public pronouncements and institutional records of free church representatives. Accordingly, chapter three traces mutually constitutive deliberations over ecclesiology and ethnic national identity that helped the EFCAs reimagine and reconstitute their relationship with Anglo-American fundamentalism as well as their relationship to an ethnic national immigrant past. In the end, the EFCAs effectively jettisoned the latter to pursue the former in a slow unfolding process that saw EFCA leaders, activists and public spokespeople collectively adopt, adapt and advance core fundamentalist perspectives. Among those principles were ecclesiastical critiques of modernism, spiritual ethics of salt and light evangelism that rejected material social concerns and a sanctification of corporate capitalist evangelism championed by homegrown fundamentalist crusader and CBMC chairman C.B. Hedstrom. Seeing themselves through Hedstrom as a power in American evangelism outright while simultaneously witnessing the effective decline of their ethnic national institutions, free churches discarded their remaining ethnic national markers and merged their dual denominations even as they expressed ecclesiological continuity with their radically diffuse ecclesiastical past.

At their merger, the new EFCA's first president declared all in the free churches to be, finally, "Americans." While the nationalist orientation of that declaration was apparent, less so was its racial subtext. In fact, despite the overwhelming white racial homogeneity of free churches and their spiritually-bonded fundamentalist partners, the free churches did not come to describe themselves in terms of "color race" by way of their conservative Protestant associations. Chapter four, accordingly, traces the origins of the EFCA's rising color consciousness from the 1930s through the 1950s.

Expressing their rising color sensitivities through mission work, primarily foreign and sparingly domestic, free church representatives generally held to paternalistic and ostensibly benevolent colorism that often declared the spiritual equality of all peoples—as did many southern slaveholders in the nineteenth century and segregationists in the twentieth—but just as frequently, they resorted to facile and often denigrating caricature of black peoples. While free church missionaries, pastors and intellectual leaders aspired to egalitarian universal evangelism and proclaimed themselves members of a fully integrated "spiritual church," social realities grounded in global warfare and obvious domestic inequalities pricked free church and fundamentalist consciences alike. On these grounds and those of related social impotence in a world torn asunder, free church leaders found solace in the new NAE, which promised a larger social impact. Most importantly for free church leaders, the NAE proclaimed a voluntaristic ecclesiology that ostensibly mirrored their own.

Chapter five returns to a more comprehensive analysis of the role of economic practice in shaping the religious and racial orders of modern white evangelicalism at large. While the NAE and its constituents, including the EFCA, proclaimed a desire to expand their evangelistic efforts to reach black Americans and to prove the social power of regeneration to diminish racial discrimination accordingly, their primary home missions project quickly turned to the extensive economic opportunities in segregated postwar suburbs available to them on the basis of their white racial homogeneity, and even better secured by nepotistic social networks of evangelical real estate developers. For the NAE in particular, but also for local congregational organizers like the EFCA's Carl Gundersen, suburban church extension was a "larger phase of evangelism" that directly and intentionally confronted and challenged mainline Protestantism with aggressive, even "warlike" development strategies detailed in this chapter. By these strategies, new white suburban evangelicals *did* prove the social efficacy of spiritual regeneration by building a suburban church that reified and sacralized white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy in local social orders. Those social orders,

acknowledged or otherwise, simultaneously and systematically excluded black Americans from subsidized suburban communities and their material resources, fostering white homogeneity in suburban evangelical congregations.

As noted above in conversation with James Gregory, both the visible and mystical churches of evangelical ecclesiology were seen and discerned, respectively, not only through the local suburban congregation, but through a vast network of evangelical organizations that similarly grasped at suburban economic opportunities. By detailing the institutional suburbanization of the NAE in particular, chapter six shows how deeply implicated suburban finance became in the physical structure and the spiritual imagination of organized evangelicalism. Through modern white evangelicalism's executive corporate managers, suburban finance transformed socially contingent capital flows into divine rewards for faith. As NAE leaders and evangelical developers described their rising fortunes, God was adding riches unto evangelical individuals and institutions as a reward for their prioritization of God's kingdom and his righteousness, to borrow the language of Matthew 6:33—oft-cited by evangelical businessmen. Suburban economies so baptized by white evangelical leadership and its bureaucratic managers accordingly helped to obscure and downplay the racist economic practices and racialized social orders of suburban development. Although key members of Chicagoland's evangelical financial management teams were architects, both literally and figuratively, of segregated spaces and while white evangelicalism's suburban developments were increasingly proximate to rising and public controversies over racist housing discrimination, white evangelicalism's institutional leaders never announced or described or possibly even understood their developments to be part of a comprehensive white racial project; instead, most appeared to believed sincerely in racial egalitarianism and beneficence of the ecclesiological and social projects they pursued.

Finally, chapter seven brings together key themes of the dissertation in the heat of the civil rights era, opening at a decisive turning point or fulcrum of postwar white evangelicalism's rearticulation of

white supremacy in ecclesiological, social and spatial terms. As the NAE came to present and represent itself to larger American publics, it took greater care to distinguish its boundaries, encouraging a deeper entrenchment of its opposition to all forms of liberal social project, religious, political or economic. While that boundary maintenance made good sense of the material rewards evangelicals then pursued in white suburbs, it struggled initially to articulate a racial ideology that did the same for social inequalities prevalent in the United States. In short order, however, both the NAE and leading voices at *Christianity Today*—especially L. Nelson Bell—helped to articulate more clearly if intentionally less directly, or "diagonally," the racial goals of the movement. These goals aligned with increased effort to distinguish evangelical organizations and their structural formations from the goals of liberal ecumenical projects. By the 1960s, the movement rhetorically eschewed its commitments to material ecclesiastical organization altogether in order to project an image of a pure spiritual church, compounding further the racializations and racial formation of evangelical social order and its ideologies. As the civil rights movement of the same era gained more social and legal victories while urban rebellions increased, evangelical public intellectuals like Bell amplified their criticisms of civil rights activism not in terms of race, but specifically as a matter of social disorder that would lead eventually to communism. When cities burned after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., evangelicals were finally forced to reconcile with the new spatial, ecclesiastical and racial orders they had constructed over several tumultuous decades. To this day, we live with the results of that reconciliation.

In order to document the complex narrative and overlapping religious, economic and racial arguments constructed above and throughout this work, this dissertation relies on extensive research from a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. Its narrative of Swedish-American free churches in chapters one through four derives primarily from sources held by Trinity International University either in its library or in its digital collections, including a variety of official church histories

published from the 1920s through the 1980s, official denominational records including yearbooks and general assembly reports, as well as denominational periodicals, especially *The Evangelical Beacon*. As the dissertation's narrative turns to wider contexts of white evangelicalism and suburbanization in chapters five and six, it relies in part on archival records found at Wheaton College, including bureaucratic records, general conference reports, institutionally-published monographs, internal correspondence and other media produced by the NAE. Additional documents pertaining to the suburban development of churches come from municipal collections at public libraries in Wheaton and Carol Stream, IL, as well as from the private collections of the Carol Stream Historical Society and those of Compass Church (Wheaton Campus), formerly home to an early suburban congregation of the EFCA. These collections included newspaper clippings, real estate and church promotional brochures, local amateur histories, private correspondence, church board records and other related documents. Finally, chapter seven draws its conclusions again from NAE records and institutional publications, and moreover from the papers of L. Nelson Bell (both public documents and private correspondence), and published essays in the evangelical periodical *Christianity Today*.

In terms of secondary literature, this dissertation engages no less than three broad and overlapping clusters of American religious history: first, the history of American evangelicalism; second, the history of race and religion in the United States; and third, the new history of business and religion in the United States. As noted in the preface of this work, the dissertation mostly eschews the regnant definition of evangelicalism offered by David Bebbington in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* and since transplanted to American soil by evangelical historians Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch and others in order to describe a long national evangelical tradition from the colonial era through the present day.[50] Both too capacious to be analytically useful on shorter timelines and too doctrinal and subjective to

[50] See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*; and Mark A Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2003).

articulate sociohistorical contingencies of recent evangelical movements, Bebbington's quadrilateral is here replaced by a more precise and historically contingent definition.[51] Similarly, this work recognizes as important the works of Ernest Sandeen and Matthew Avery Sutton in describing the premillenarian zeal of fundamentalists and evangelicals in general; nevertheless, while admitting that those works establish important themes in the "why" of fundamentalist and evangelical activism, their particular focus on premillennialist doctrine and rhetoric is too narrow to explain the "how" of evangelical institutional expansion.[52] On that issue, this dissertation is more sympathetic to the works of George Marsden, Joel Carpenter and Darren Dochuk who more directly engage the cultural and specifically institutional contexts by which fundamentalist and evangelical movements arose. Nevertheless, this dissertation finds lacking in the works of Marsden and Carpenter analytical attention to the material substance of fundamentalist and evangelical institutional development, an elision that obscures clear sight of foundational economic and racial structures of the tradition.[53]

The history of race and religion in the United States is even more broad than the history of evangelicalism, as it engages a wide variety of religious traditions and racial formations over time. In particular, accordingly, this dissertation converses primarily with historical literature that focuses its attention either on evangelicals and race or on the civil rights movement and religion; often these corpora address of historical necessity both evangelicals and civil rights. Of particular motivation for the first research project that led circuitously to this dissertation was David L. Chappell's *A Stone of Hope*. My disagreements with Chappell's central theses led to further engagement with a wide corpus

[51] See Preface, above.

[52] See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*; and Ernest Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism: Toward a Historical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968).

[53] See Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*; Marsden*, Fundamentalism and American Culture*; Dochuk, *Bible Belt to Sunbelt*. Dochuk's work, the most recent of the authors cited here, more generously and insightfully engages the socio-economic boundaries of evangelicalism's colonization of the western south, even if those boundaries are not his primary focus. His most recent work confronts the relationship of corporate capitalism and evangelicalism even more explicitly through the American history of "oil." See Darren Dochuk, *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America*, (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

of southern religious history, including the works of Paul Harvey, Stephen Miller, Mark Newman, Joel Alvis, Charles Marsh, Carolyn Renee DuPont and others.[54] For the most part, all of these historians struggle to weigh conservative evangelical opposition to racial justice movements with the professed spiritual egalitarianism and political moderation of reformed evangelical social ethics—a balance with which white evangelicals themselves have struggled. While this dissertation is more sympathetic to analyses that rest on white evangelical ambivalence towards issues of race, it rejects common claims that white evangelicals increasingly avoided racial discourse or that white evangelicalism abandoned its underlying cultural commitments to white supremacy.[55]

Next, this dissertation engages the new business term in American religious history, finding great sympathy with recent work that rejects artificial distinctions between religious and economic behavior, institutions or ideologies. Accordingly this work draws great insight specifically from the works of Sarah Ruth Hammond, Darren Grem and Timothy Gloege who have analyzed evangelical characters and institutions present herein or proximate to the narratives of this work. More specifically, this dissertation agrees with the joint conclusions of Amanda Porterfield, John Corrigan and Darren Grem who identify the "interdependence," "complementarity," "parity" and "symmetry" of business and religion in United States religion.[56] These scholars and others cited throughout this work clearly identify how religions and businesses take and give from and to each other. In particular moments, as in Grem's analysis of the evangelical business Chick-fil-a in *The Blessings of Business*, religious and commercial interdependence clearly delineates how religion's economic entanglements informed and were informed by racialized social relations in the workplace.[57] This dissertation aims explicitly to add

[54] See again, Alvis, *Religion & Race*; Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*; Dupont, *Mississippi Praying;* Feldman et al., eds., *Politics and Religion in the White South;* Marsh, *God's Long Summer;* Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*; Newman, *Getting Right with God.*

[55] See Preface, above.

[56] See Porterfield, Corrigan, Grem, eds., *The Business Turn in American Religious History,* 1-19.

[57] Grem, *The Blessings of Business,* 121-161.

to the narratives of business and religion that can help to better explain white evangelicalism's racial formation through economic and spiritual complementarity.

Finally, this dissertation engages a broad corpus of non-religious or "secular" American history on race and suburbanization. Starting with Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier*, through Thomas Sugrue's *Origins of the Urban Crisis,* Kevin Kruse's *White Flight* and David Freund's *Colored Property*, the history of urban departure and suburbanization has long since revealed the often subterranean social macro-structures of racist discrimination materially and ideologically laid into this nation's geographical landscapes.[58] Given the essential cultural and ideological forming effects of suburbanization's material and racial restructuring of American society described in these works, historical analyses of American religion in the postwar suburban era require more direct and reflective engagement with the religious consequences of urban disinvestment and suburban restructuring. Religious leaders of the era certainly noticed epochal and problematic social and cultural shifts in their time, most famously but not exclusively captured in Gibson Winter's *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*.[59] More recent work from historians Gerald Gamm, John McGreevy and sociologist Mark Mulder have begun to relate church orders and particularly church polity to the shape and shade of

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[58] See David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America, Historical Studies of Urban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 2007); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[59] Including and in addition to Winter's work: Wilfred M. Bailey and William K. McElvaney, *Christ's Suburban Body* (Nashville,: Abingdon Press, 1970); Gaylord B. Noyce, *The Responsible Suburban Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970); John Berk Orr and F. Patrick Nichelson, *The Radical Suburb: Soundings in Changing American Character* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970); Robert L. Wilson, *The Church in the Racially Changing Community* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966); W. Widick Schroeder, *Suburban Religion: Churches and Synagogues in the American Experience* (Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1974); Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches: An Analysis of Protestant Responsibility in the Expanding Metropolis,* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1962). For an historical monograph survey of suburban religious controversies of the postwar era, mostly from the perspective of mainline Protestants and lacking significant racial analysis see James David Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and Its Critics, 1945-1965* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

urban flight and suburban settlement.[60] This dissertation most directly adds to that important discussion by expanding concern for polity into a wider discussion of ecclesiology and related "theories" or ideologies of "the church."

As with all historical study, this dissertation has its limitations and admitted myopias, particularly in its meager gender analyses and in its lack of representation of black voices in the history it documents. Of course, in a study of white patriarchal social networks, such omissions are not out of historical place. That is not to say that women, in particular, were not present in the documents I reviewed (although blacks often were not). Carl Gundersen's biography, for instance, from which I traced many of the narratives of his life in institutional records, was written posthumously by his wife, Valborg. Without Valborg, Carl would not be here, nor would be much of the rest of this dissertation given the role Gundersen's discovery played in subsequent research. Additionally, much of the missionary writing focused on in chapter four of this work was written by women who had an under-reported presence in home and foreign evangelistic projects because they were not often in "the leadership." As another example, NAE records themselves, dominated as they were by the voices and perspectives of white men, were maintained and managed by white women, as were many of the financial "books" that white male corporate evangelical executives "cooked." Much more could be and should be written about these women and their role in the larger white evangelical projects of the mid-century.

Nevertheless, the work described here claims only to represent rather than comprehensively or exhaustively document the history of northern white evangelical racial ideology and its institutional or structural support for white supremacist social orders in the vast fields of American social

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[60] See Gerald H. Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999); John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Mark T. Mulder, *Shades of White Flight: Evangelical Congregations and Urban Departure* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

racialization. By tracing one particular northern denomination with ethnic immigrant roots into the postwar development surge of white evangelicalism at large, I aim to highlight a largely ignored or otherwise under appreciated narrative that transforms historical understandings of white evangelical opposition to the civil rights movement and ultimately, I argue, explains better the national, religious, economic and racialized world that has spun wildly into existence in the twenty-first century. To that explanatory end and those related, I hope that this project is only a beginning to more comprehensive and inclusive analyses, and not a final word.

I.
"The Scandinavian Fibre in Our Social Fabric:" Immigration, Race and Ecclesiology in the Late Nineteenth Century

"Our present inquiry concerns the quality of a part of our social fabric, the Scandinavian element in our population. What has been its use and its influence in the older nations, and by what processes does it find its place in the new?"

—R.A. Jernberg, 1895[1]

Taking the lectern at his inaugural address as head of the young Dano-Norwegian Department at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) in 1895, the Reverend Reinert August Jernberg—a Norwegian-born, Yale-trained minister—delivered a new religious vision for the United States' small but growing Scandinavian immigrant population. In his speech, Jernberg looked forward to a day when the great loom of time wove seamlessly a "Scandinavian fibre" into the social fabric of the American nation. Accordingly, Jernberg warned against the growing insularity of ethnic Scandinavian enclaves, insularity which he believed was fostered by autocratic and apostate Scandinavian Lutheranism and its American transplants. While Jernberg retained hearty sympathy for Scandinavian history and culture, he asserted that Scandinavian immigrants could gain much more than pride of a foreign parochial past.

As Jernberg saw it, Scandinavians were, in fact, owed the promise of America in full, by right of history and culture. In order to gain that promise, Jernberg promoted foremost a voluntary congregational organization of religion best suited to the American tradition of religious freedom. He further advocated for Scandinavian education in American public schools to foster "a spirit of patriotism and of loyalty to the flag that floats above [them]." As the founding editor of a Scandinavian-American newspaper, *Evangelisten*, Jernberg finally praised Scandinavian immigrant press that promoted such "hearty sympathy with American institutions." He encouraged his audience to

[1] R. Arlo Odegaard, *With Singleness of Heart* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 1971), 219.

support their work, for doing so "…mean[t] the emancipation of a race, and a larger life for our republic."[2]

For good reason, few contemporary Americans would associate Scandinavian immigrant assimilation with racial emancipation that enlarged the life of the republic in the nineteenth century. Jernberg himself may not have recognized the import of his word choice, although the choice seems more than merely accidental. Born in Norway ten years prior to the onset of the Civil War, Jernberg emigrated to the United States in 1871, six years after the war's end. In his writings and public addresses, however, Jernberg spared little if any commentary on race as a matter of slavery or even color.

Nevertheless, Jernberg's address spoke in terms clear and pressing to his audience at the time., and his declarations on race, ethnicity and religious institutionalization reflect foundational and influential racial ideologies and related ecclesiastical critiques often elided in the study northern conservative Protestant groups. As the United States received vast waves of European immigrants to its shores in the second half of the century, the demographic composition of the American republic shifted dramatically. Native-born Americans and new immigrants alike debated the consequences of that shift with racial, religious, economic and nationalist rhetoric that attempted to make sense of new social orders. Since most of the immigrants of this era were Catholic, much of that rhetoric came to be inflected through Protestant-Catholic conflict. Simultaneously, mythologies of Anglo-Saxon heritage measured the supposed fitness of the newly arrived "lesser races" of Europe to contribute to nationalist projects.[3] Jernberg and his Scandinavian contemporaries thus occupied a social position between Anglo-American Protestantism and immigrant Catholicism: distinct enough to be considered

[2] Ibid., 225.

[3] See Painter, *History of White People*, 133-189. See also Noel. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

racially and ethnically different, but similar enough to be considered racially and religiously compatible with Anglo-American institutions. Jernberg looked forward thusly to a day when Scandinavians would be emancipated from those lingering racial differences to become "truly" American.

In the nineteenth century, religious activism among European immigrants in the United States was often an essential component of social organizing, social service and social uplift within mostly homogenous ethnic national populations.[4] Religious imperatives also framed understandings of racial and cultural difference between those populations. Starting in the midcentury, early religious organization by and among Scandinavians in America attempted to spiritually and socially uplift agrarian and early urban industrial workers out of their impoverished virtues as well as their proximate associations with 'lesser races.' As immigration loops calcified around urban centers like Chicago, Scandinavian religious leaders organized new Lutheran-style churches and synods that mirrored familiar religious institutions from the homeland, albeit devoid of formal relations to official Scandinavian state churches. This routinization of Scandinavian immigrant religious organization in America helped to solidify ethnic national homogeneity in Protestant immigrant churches nearing the turn of the century, especially as religious leaders joined forces with immigrant industrialists who coordinated working class labor in ethnic enclaves.

While mainstream Scandinavian-American Lutheranism reinforced ethnic national homogeneity that favored the preservation of Scandinavian culture and traditions in America, a small minority of Scandinavian immigrants carried with them and came to further adopt radical evangelical Protestant traditions and conventions that disrupted ethnic national religious insularity. Entirely marginal at the time, numbering in the mere hundreds or low thousands of members, this group of pietistic dissenters from Scandinavia's "inner mission" movements gained nevertheless significant spiritual support and

[4] See for instance Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, eds., *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995).

material resources from American Protestants, especially the evangelically-inclined Dwight Moody contingent, and Congregationalists who favored both revivalist pietism and voluntary, locally-controlled congregational ecclesiology. In addition to religious affinities, Congregationalists held explicit racial views that rationalized their support for generous religious aid in financing and education of these Scandinavian "free churches." Especially in the American "west"—now the northern midwest—Congregationalists and other Americans fearful of racialized Catholicism promoted Scandinavian immigrant settlement and uplift as an experimental project in "race influence" that could set a stalwart and vigorous character upon the region and the nation.

By the end of the nineteenth century, R.A. Jernberg championed these developments and pushed them forward with his own triumphant vision as the head of a department founded by Congregationalist patrons at CTS. As they were for Congregationalists, Scandinavians were one people according to Jernberg, despite their national antipathies, differences and self-segregating affiliations. Moreover, Jernberg maintained and celebrated Scandinavians' purported special character and mission in both matters of spirit and in world history, and he looked *forward* to a time when complete assimilation in America was achieved: when Scandinavian immigrants through race, religion and other forms of culture would join their "kith and kin" as a thread in a mythical Protestant nationalist fabric. For the time being, however, the foreigner was a foreigner still. The "free churches," as an exceedingly loose and tiny religious organization, were a Scandinavian transplant to America, speaking primarily in Scandinavian tongues, serving entirely Scandinavian peoples—a mission field green with shoots, but not yet white unto harvest.

Immigration and the Development of Scandinavian-American Churches

Like most nineteenth-century immigrants in the United States, Scandinavians came to America to escape social disruption and environmental disaster caused by agricultural revolutions and

industrialization in Europe. They also came to pursue better opportunities, informed by similar social and economic developments, in the United States. In the early- to mid-nineteenth century, small-scale Scandinavian farmers were displaced by agricultural innovation and land consolidation as well as the population explosions and urbanization that followed. Poor land maintenance on new large-scale farms later resulted in widespread crop failures that further impoverished farmers and led to national food shortages. Improvements in transatlantic travel offered many Scandinavians—primarily men in search of resources to support a family or to start one—a way out. In the United States, Scandinavians who were uprooted from their farms or cut off from the food supply found better access to fertile land and its produce and they staked claims widely across the midwest in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. Prior to expansive urbanization in the late century, Scandinavian immigrants remained primarily rural, pursuing vocations in agriculture, fishing and logging at scattered midwestern outposts. For some who braved conditions in young cities like Chicago, work in Lake Michigan shipyards and newly carved urban canals was available for those with experience traversing the fjords and seas of northern Europe.[5]

Beyond shared economic opportunity and limited geographical mobility, religious concerns also shaped early Scandinavian-American identity, and early missionary work among Scandinavian immigrants tied the moral character of Scandinavian immigrants to racial, ethnic and class hierarchies of frontier and developing urban life. Since most early Scandinavian immigrants travelled to pursue secular economic success, religious leadership among them consisted of sparse and irregular itinerant mission work by fellow migrants. The Reverend J.W.C. Dietrichson, an aristocrat from Norway's

[5] See Odd Sverre Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Northfield, Minn.: Champaign, Ill.: Norwegian-American Historical Association; Distributed by University of Illinois Press, 1988); Anita Ruth Olson, "Swedish Chicago: The Extension and Transformation of an Urban Immigrant Community, 1880-1920" (PhD Diss., Northwestern University, 1990); and, John R. Jenswold, "In Search of a Norwegian-American Working Class," *Minnesota History*, Summer 1986, 63–70.

Lutheran state church who emigrated in the 1840s, was the first university-trained Norwegian minister to visit the midwest settlements. In recounting his travels, Dietrichson spared little restraint indicting his countrymen for their moral failures. On arrival at Wisconsin's Muskego outpost, Dietrichson was appalled by Norwegian immigrants' proclivity to drink and brawl in frontier saloons, vices which gained them the epithet of "Norwegian Indians" among Americans. In his travels to Chicago—a city quickly gaining reputation for inducing the worst behavior in immigrants, especially among the growing Irish population—Dietrichson lamented over a brutal incident in which a group of Norwegian men clubbed an Irish man to death in a brawl on city streets. In both cases, on the frontier or in the city, Dietrichson's upper class despair over Norwegian immigrant morality came through figurative or literal associations of Norwegians with the lower echelons of the American racial hierarchy of the time.[6]

Early missionary efforts to improve the lives of Scandinavian immigrants were often hampered by the American religious landscape due to differences in language, theology and formal church order. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark, Scandinavians were Lutheran by law, and Scandinavians imported a good deal of their national religious culture. Upon emigration, however, Scandinavian migrants to the United States lost formal association with their respective state church traditions, even while retaining affinity for Lutheran creeds and rites. In the early nineteenth century, scattered Scandinavian immigrants often sought refuge in the Lutheran churches of the United States, but few of those were equipped to speak to diverse foreign language populations. Scandinavians were also repelled by the relative liberalism of American Lutheranism given the strictures of Lutheran orthodoxy at home. University-trained Scandinavian missionaries like Dietrichson neither held the resources necessary nor served a population sufficiently dense to replicate the institutions and ecclesial hierarchies of

[6] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 28-9. For more on Scandinavian and Indian relations in the 19th c. midwest, see Gunlög Fur, "Indians and Immigrants: Entangled Histories," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 33., No. 3 (Spring 2014), 55-76.

Scandinavian state churches in the United States. The national churches of Scandinavia, moreover, showed little interest in providing institutional support for emigres who "abandoned" their home nations in times of crisis. Accordingly, lay initiative and charismatic leadership—often of questionable credentials—birthed nominal approximations of Scandinavian state Lutheranism in America to serve the linguistic and cultural needs of Scandinavian populations.

Some early Scandinavian immigrant Protestants, however, found the American scene more amenable to religious preferences formed by dissent from state church traditions and the embrace of industrial capitalism. While state Lutheranism was the legal standard in all Scandinavian countries, none were immune to the transatlantic pietistic revivals that swept through Protestant countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[7] Revivalism in Scandinavia—led by the efforts of the Norwegian farmer Hans Nielsen Hauge, the Swedish ministers Lars Levi Laestadius and Carl Olof Rosenius, and the Norwegian professor of theology Gisle Johnson, among others—started as informal social networks but eventually coalesced into formal "home" or "inner mission" movements that challenged state church authority and advanced the spiritual authority of regenerate Christian communities. Revivalists took advantage of very same shifting social orders of industrializing Europe that precipitated mass migrations. State churches, for their part, reacted slowly to population growth and suffered from a dearth of trained leadership at the local level that created a vacuum of religious authority. Hauge capitalized on that shortfall through popular preaching, but he also literally capitalized on the shifting economy, becoming a leading Norwegian industrialist. Like many Calvinists of the time, he championed a Protestant ethic in capitalist endeavors and bourgeois morality that challenged aristocratic orders of the state and the high church. Scandinavian state churches generally opposed and sometimes criminalized the theological and ecclesiastical revolution that revivalists

[7] For more on the transatlantic relationships of American revivalism, see Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2001).

encouraged, causing many inner mission devotees to flee to the United States.[8] Upon arrival in America, Scandinavia's pietistic dissenters found ideal social conditions to found informal and socially isolated churches with lay leadership and membership conditional on visible regeneration rather than universal fellowship.

As the twentieth century approached, Scandinavian immigration to the United States rapidly increased, albeit on a different social and geographical trajectory. This second wave of Scandinavian immigrants, much larger than the first, tended to be more highly skilled, better educated and relatively affluent in comparison with the rural vanguard. At the end of the nineteenth century, urbanization and industrialization intensified in both northern Europe and the United States, and cities offered more economic opportunity for rapidly growing populations than could be found in the countryside. While Scandinavian cities doubled and tripled in size, they could not keep pace with population growth, and their economic expansion paled in comparison to that of their American counterparts. Emigration, accordingly, became more appealing to the growing Scandinavian working class who could better afford transatlantic travel and its risks. Late-century migration far outpaced that of prior decades, hitting its peak between 1880 and 1895. During that peak, the number of Norwegian immigrants to the United States alone averaged over 10,000 per year as a quarter of a million souls fled Norway.[9] In the 1880s, Chicago's Swedish-born population grew by over 230%, representing a similar spike in migration from Sweden.[10] While widespread settlement in the midwest continued—eventually reaching the west and Pacific northwest, as well—most Scandinavian immigrants to the

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[8] See "The Nordic Countries" in Joris van Eijnatten and Paula Yates, eds., *The Churches: The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Church, State and Society in Northern Europe, 1780-1920* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2010), 227-276. See especially Chapter 10, "The Limits of Ecclesiastical Reform in Norway," 261-276. See also Frederick Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism in the Evangelical Free and Mission Covenant Traditions* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 28-63. For the classical take on the influence of Protestantism on the growth of capitalism, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings*, Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

[9] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 151.

[10] Olson, "Swedish Chicago," 2.

United States near the turn of the century ended their journeys in the metropolitan areas of Chicago or the Twin Cities of Minnesota. In the urban United States, Swedes, Norwegians and Danes, who often arrived on the same boats and travelled the same land routes to their destinations, came to live in close proximity with one another.

In the late nineteenth century, ethnic ties shaped Scandinavian's intraurban immigrant settlement patterns more prominently than differences of class (or religion). New immigrant arrivals from Scandinavia coincided with the economic and residential succession of a small cadre of established Scandinavian immigrants who gained from early industrial growth, growing housing availability and strong social institutions. By those measures, Chicago's original Scandinavian populations—once concentrated in shipping and canal neighborhoods now known as the Gold Coast, Streeterville and River North—invested their growing capital in new factory neighborhoods of West Town, including areas now called Wicker Park, Ukrainian Village and Noble Square. The utilitarian ethnocentrism of immigrant-powered industrialism played a leading role in Chicago's Scandinavian neighborhood succession. Since factory and business managers prized workplace efficiency and labor force stability, they sought laborers with shared language, culture and nationality to ease communication and strengthen group solidarity. Industrialists from immigrant backgrounds themselves preferred to hire new immigrants of their own ethnicity or nationality. Andrew P. Johnson, for example, employed more than five hundred workers at the Johnson Chair Company in West Town by 1900. Johnson emigrated from Norway in the midcentury, and nearly all his workers were Norwegian immigrants as well.[11]

For Scandinavian immigrants, like most other immigrants of the era, ethnic allegiances in labor markets encouraged the growth of residential enclaves, as did improvements in residential infrastructure. Before the advent of widely accessible mass transit, factory work compelled immigrants

[11] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 159.

to live in close proximity to their places of employment. In the mid-nineteenth century, urban immigrants most often relied on rented tenement housing, but home ownership became accessible for some immigrants as the century advanced. In Chicago, working class immigrants—including some Scandinavians and others from northern and western European groups—organized to secure home ownership rights from the municipal government as a "working man's reward" for their labor.[12] This working-class revolution in urban property rights did more than aim to secure the comforts of innovations in indoor plumbing and municipal water and sewage infrastructure. Rather, property rights activists of the 1880s and -90s explicitly aimed to establish easier routes to generational wealth by allowing the working class to invest not only in their own homes, but in the ballooning market of land speculation.[13] New investors—often ethnic immigrants—followed factories north and west to build factory-proximate residences outside Chicago's "fire limits," a zone that curbed timber-frame house construction in the core city after 1871's great fire. Frame houses further lowered the bar for working-class entry into the private housing market by reducing building and ownership costs. Waves of housing construction thus amplified neighborhood succession and economic advancement for Scandinavians under ethnocentric industrialism.[14]

Increasing wealth and growing but concentrated urban populations also bolstered social cohesion and social opportunities for Chicago's Scandinavian immigrants near the turn of the century. Industrial managers, like Andrew Johnson, benefitted from the ethnic enclave's ability to obscure widening class differences between factory bosses, retailers and workers within ethnic groups. Residing within proximate geographical boundaries surrounding factory centers, these disparate classes appeared to

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[12] See Elaine Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward: Chicago's Early Suburbs and the Roots of American Sprawl* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014).

[13] See Margaret Garb, *City of American Dreams: A History of Home Ownership and Housing Reform in Chicago, 1871-1919* (Chicago: UC Press, 2005).

[14] By ethnocentric industrialism, I mean the social arrangements of industrial capitalism that encouraged for the purposes of productive efficiency and worker solidarity an ethnic homogeneity in workplaces and their proximate residential neighborhoods.

work "together" as a cohesive social unit rather than as competitors or antagonists. Moreover, a growing array of ethnic institutions, funded by capitalist philanthropy and community charity alike, offered significant material aid, social support and ethnic, racial or national pride within the enclave. Ethnic lodges and fraternal orders promoted social cohesion with nationalist messaging and offered social services to co-nationals alongside ethnic benevolent societies, children's homes and orphanages, hospitals, mutual aid organizations and immigrant assistance groups. Shared cultural and leisure spaces in social institutions, or even in parks and retail districts, strengthened ethnic community boundaries by inviting the working class as well as the desolate into bourgeois social spheres, further lending bosses and investors cover from the critiques of growing labor activism.[15] The cumulative strength of neighborhood space and social organizations both reflected and reproduced distinct cultural chauvinism within enclaves.

Churches, once lacking in social impact among Scandinavian immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, came to occupy the center of social service in Scandinavian ethnic communities. Through charitable and missionary impulses common to the "progressive city," both American- and immigrant-led churches mobilized significant resources to aid new arrivals and foreign-language populations. American Congregationalists built settlement houses like Chicago Commons to provide housing and social clubs for mixed ethnic groups, including Scandinavians, Polish, Irish, and Italians. Some Christian organizations, like Dwight Moody's Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) or the Salvation Army, formed distinct ethnic branches within their larger organizations to better serve particular immigrant enclaves. Other groups, including the Norwegian Tabitha Society and its various offshoots, formed under the direction of Norwegian Lutheran pastors and deaconesses to create a variety of service institutions for Norwegians specifically, including hospitals and child welfare

[15] Ibid., 165-183.

orphanages.[16] Churches thus fashioned a plethora of satellite service organizations to help meet the needs of ethnic immigrant communities.

Considered collectively, churches were themselves the largest non-labor social organization in ethnic enclaves, and they were often among the first social institutions to be established in new neighborhoods.[17] Most importantly, ethnic churches served to institutionalize native country traditions while adjusting to American religious standards. Among Scandinavians, turn-of-the-century churches had routinized through decades of ad hoc, charismatic organization into fully developed denominations. After the Rev. Dietrichson's initial foray, foreign-university trained and ordained pastors from state-church traditions travelled migration loops with greater frequency, or they emigrated themselves to build new lives in America. Trained and ordained religious leadership deemed prior efforts to serve the religious needs of Scandinavian immigrants to be insufficiently Lutheran, so they set about replicating, as much as possible, the ecclesial hierarchies and institutional organization of state churches in home nations—an effort more feasible with the growing human and material resources available to the Scandinavian immigrant community. Norwegian ministers formed the Norwegian Synod that preserved all but state-church amalgamation, including styles of worship, liturgy, vestment, doctrine and even the "aristocratic qualities of the Norwegian clergy."[18] Swedish ministry in the United States often sympathized more strongly with pietistic movements in Sweden, setting them at odds with high-church neglect for evangelization. Nevertheless, Swedes formed the Augustana Synod in 1870 to fashion their own version of Lutheranism in the new country, complete with their own training institutions for ministry.[19]

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[16] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 203-225. See also 111-12.

[17] Olson, "Swedish Chicago," 125.

[18] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 63. For more on the Norwegian Lutheran establishment in Chicago, see also 28-9; 54-65; 114-120; 236-7.

[19] Olson, "Swedish Chicago," 118-120.

Alongside economic factors or ecclesiastical formations, national inheritance and language differences drove the ethnic division of immigrant churches. As noted above, the spiritual allegiances of early leadership shaped the doctrinal positions and established the organizational structures of Scandinavian-led denominations in America. The Swedish Augustana Synod materialized only after a failed attempt to organize a mixed ethnic Lutheran Synod in northern Illinois, comprised of Germans, Swedes and Norwegians. Preferences for creed and training standards for clergy split along national lines, resulting in a schism that first excised the Germans, then the Norwegians.[20] At the neighborhood church level, membership growth and retention demanded practical concern for preaching in common tongues. Growing waves of migration had heightened the demand for familiar religious services, and for most of Chicago's Scandinavians, the nearest Lutheran-identifying congregation with native language preaching provided sufficient religious sustenance despite high-minded doctrinal disputes.[21] Accordingly, most church-going Norwegians and Swedes attended Norwegian or Augustana Synod churches, respectively, that worked to preserve more than they abandoned of Scandinavian ecclesial inheritance, thus informing distinct religious dimensions of ethnic identity.

Love of "Liberty and Religion:" Ecclesiology, 'Race Influence' and Financial Patronage among the Scandinavian-American Free Churches

On the margins of Scandinavian immigrant religion, a small but militant group of dissenters from the Scandinavian "inner mission" tradition imported distinct opposition to most forms of denominational organization and control that was unique to American culture at the time. These dissenters came to form the core of a new self-identified "free church" tradition in the United States. Unlike nineteenth century Americans, who had long grown accustomed to Protestant denominational

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[20] Ibid., 119.

[21] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 117.

heterogeneity and who primarily feared the growing ecclesiastical power of immigrant Catholics, Scandinavian dissenters directed their ecclesiastical critiques at fellow Protestants. Informed by their experience of oppression at the hands of Scandinavian Lutheran state churches at home, dissenters "had positive convictions about 'the evils of denominationalism,'" as one Swedish-American church historian later described it, to the extent that they were, in the view of one later commentator, "almost violently opposed to the establishment of a new denomination."[22] Norwegian and Danish dissenters, too, held to this opposition—perhaps even more virulently. Described by church historians as "militantly independent," Norwegian and Danish immigrants rejected formal fellowship with any denominational order that imposed external limits on spiritual matters of conscience, and they refused further to impose any such order on their own local congregations.[23] While dissenters most often distinguished themselves by rejecting the impositions of others—a freedom *from* denominational control—they also recognized sympathetic views in a broad though disparate and diffuse collection of pietistic, locally controlled congregations. They asserted, therefore, a freedom *to* collaborate with one another as conscience, but not ecclesiastical imposition, dictated. Despite increasing collaboration and organization over time, anti-denominational congregationalism would remain a core practice and key identity for the free churches for decades to come.

Due to this unique inheritance and the relative freedom of religious institutional life in the United States, ethnic loyalty failed to produce ecclesiastical hegemony as imported religious controversies broke open on new terrain. Denominational synods founded under American principles of disestablishment could not retain exclusive control over church order, as state churches did more forcefully in Scandinavia, and dissenting Scandinavian immigrants more freely broke from the ethnic

[22] H. Wilbert Norton et al., *The Diamond Jubilee Story of the Evangelical Free Church of America* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Publications, 1959), 127.

[23] Ibid, 65.

Lutheran Synods and eventually formed congregational rather than hierarchical churches. Swedish leadership had capitulated to some pietistic sympathies in the formation of the Augustana Synod, but a minority of ministers, especially those influenced by the theologian Paul Peter Waldenström, found Augustana's Lutheran retentions insufficient for true reformation. In Sweden, Waldenström founded the Swedish Mission Covenant to oppose the state church just as his acolytes in the United States formed the Ansgar Synod—which nevertheless retained a Lutheran confession and a requirement for trained ministry despite a pietistic doctrine—and the Mission Synod—which emphasized pietism and revivals, allowed for untrained ministry and deemphasized the Lutheran confession.[24] The formation of competitive separatist Synods forced Augustana to abandon its pietistic sympathies and move closer to traditional state Lutheranism, thus strengthening dissenter critiques and promoting further antagonism and schism.

Dissent from the Scandinavian Lutheran mainstream intensified as new church leaders steeped themselves in American culture and pursued training at American universities rather than Scandinavian ones. In turn, these "Americanized" leaders would become the true forefathers of Scandinavian-American free church evangelicalism in the United States. Both John Gustaf Princell of Sweden and Reinert August Jernberg of Norway, two such forefathers, immigrated to the United States at an early age, and neither retained loyalty to Scandinavian state customs or mainstream religious culture. Jernberg, in fact, only converted to Christianity after he became a merchant seaman. Princell, for his part, had even changed his name (neé Johan Gustav Gudmundson) to signal his commitment to his new nation. Both men were eventually educated at American seminaries then committed to evangelical principles: Princell at the (Old) University of Chicago and Jernberg at Yale. Accordingly, both men came to promote congregationalist ecclesiology in addition to pietistic revivalism and evangelistic

[24] Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism*, 188-198.

missionary work as the foundation of true scriptural Christianity, similar to immigrants of the Scandinavian "inner" or "home mission" traditions.

Both men became activists for their principles, and Princell's career, in particular, typified the advancing energy and collaborative organization of Scandinavian dissenters under American influence at the turn of the century. Although Princell became a minister under the authority of the Scandinavian Lutheran Augustana Synod, he was forced out of the Augustana church for restricting communion to regenerate believers only. Princell then took a position as President of Ansgar College, the Ansgar Synod's seminary, and was removed after four years for attempting to make the school independent from Synod authority. When the Ansgar Synod and Mission Synod attempted to merge in the late-nineteenth century to better oppose Augustana, Princell's continuing ecclesiastical critiques caused instead the dissolution of Ansgar. The Mission Synod, never properly high church, became the Swedish Mission Covenant in the United States, and leaders from Ansgar who sympathized with Princell began to organize the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America. R.A. Jernberg's influence on ethnic free church organization was more direct. After a year at Yale Seminary, he transferred to Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) where he was soon installed as an instructor in the school's new Dano-Norwegian Department. By Jernberg's leadership, as well as that of others from the CTS department, the Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association later came to be formalized.[25]

As Princell and Jernberg's personal histories suggest, Scandinavian immigrant initiative did not exclusively dictate the organization of free churches, nor was it exclusive in the development of their distinct doctrines. Rather, American influences came to shape free church associations and belief commitments more strongly than they did for mainstream Scandinavian-American Lutheranism. While ethnic, racial or national identity remained a key feature of dissenting Scandinavian-American

[25] See Olson, *The Search for Identity*, 50-55.

organizations in the late-nineteenth century—even free churches continued to recruit their immigrant compatriots exclusively—participation in the long American tradition of ecclesiastical conflict and denominational schism precipitated free church assimilation more quickly. In fact, assimilation itself became one of the featured resources that free churches offered.

Whereas Scandinavian-American Lutheranism relied on the cultural momentum of high-volume immigration and the resource gathering of intra-ethnic social networks, free church organizers required material and cultural support from like-minded believers in the United States. They found that support in cooperation with two strains of American church life that may appear mutually exclusive, but nevertheless shared important qualities: American Congregationalists, who provided financial and educational resources intentionally directed to immigrant populations, and Dwight Moody, who provided more direct access to the doctrines and worship of pro-capitalist, industrial-era revivalism that dissenting Scandinavians in the United States preferred. Free church leaders promoted both Congregationalist cooperation and Moody affiliation as means of joining American communities.

Like other social aid projects of the era, American Congregationalist outreach to Scandinavians arose from missionary impulses that were couched in themes of American nationalism, Protestant chauvinism, ethnocentrism and racial hierarchy. At their 1888 Triennial Convention, Congregationalists fretted over new "alien element[s]" that caused many to "tremble for the future of the nation." At Chicago Theological Seminary, similarly, Congregationalist leaders argued it was "imperative …to Americanize all immigrants *for the safety of the country*."[26] While similar xenophobic commentary had most often been directed at immigrant Catholics who had arrived in vast waves even

[26] Cited in David M. Gustafson, "Evangelical Convictions in Response to Liberal Theology: The Bible Institute and Academy of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church, 1910-1949," *Trinity Journal* (Vol 40, Spring 2019) 42-43. Emphasis mine.

prior to the end of the century, Congregationalists were freshly concerned for the astonishing growth of Germans and Scandinavians in the northern midwest. In Minneapolis, the Reverend Marcus Montgomery witnessed first-hand the coming waves of Scandinavian migration, and by 1884, one quarter of the population of his home state was of Scandinavian birth or descent. As the regional superintendent for the Congregationalist American Home Mission Society (AHMS) in Minnesota and North Dakota, Montgomery became Congregationalists' first and most committed advocate for ministry to the Scandinavian populations.

Montgomery, however, soon came to believe that Scandinavian Protestants gave more cause for hope than fear. In the early 1880s, Montgomery crossed paths with a pastor from the Ansgar Synod, the Rev. George Wiberg, who promoted the Swedish free church movement. Wiberg's public address gave a positive review of his Scandinavian compatriots, and Wiberg stressed the popular devotion and universally Protestant belief that Scandinavian immigrants carried with them. When Wiberg was asked why Scandinavians attended church more than Americans, he responded, "Because they are so much better people!"[27] Duly impressed, Montgomery took it upon himself to visit Scandinavia. The journey resulted in an 1884 treatise and travel journal, *A Wind from the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Norway,* wherein Montgomery argued for an aggressive platform to serve and assimilate Scandinavian immigrants for the good of the American Protestant republic.[28]

For Montgomery, religion was at the root of Scandinavian promise in the United States, and Scandinavian pietists promised the most to American national projects of civil and religious liberty. Montgomery's assessment of Scandinavian religion reflected prevalent Protestant fears over encroaching waves of immigrant Roman Catholicism that were assumed to threaten the foundations

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[27] Marcus Montgomery, *A Wind from the Holy Spirit in Sweden and Norway* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1884), 4

[28] Ibid, 2-4. See also Olson, *The Search for Identity,* 82-91. For a more complete account of Montgomery's life and his support for Scandinavian mission work, see Hale 215-30.

of relative religious freedom in the United States, on the one hand, and the dominance of Protestant social hegemony, ironically on the other. In Scandinavia, Montgomery found a population "almost universally Protestant," lacking in "sceptics" [sic] and reared from childhood in the belief of "…God, the Bible, the Sabbath, and in salvation through Christ." While all of these qualities derived, also ironically, from the dominance of state religion, Montgomery was most effusive in his praise for the congregational inclinations of dissenting pietistic movements, which he deemed to be providential. "I found," he said, "that the Lord was repeating in Sweden and Norway the historic providences by which three centuries ago, He led forth his people from the National Church of England to plan churches on the new Testament plan…."[29] Seemingly unaware of the continuous transatlantic migration of evangelical revivalism, Montgomery found the congregational organization of the Swedish Mission churches to be "surprising" because Scandinavians were, in his imagination, "isolated from the world highways, are of a different language, have had no congregational missionaries sent to them…and have thus had no help from their experiences and precedents."[30] For Montgomery, then, Scandinavian Protestant dissent was a miracle and a sign of divine favor. Accordingly, he declared that "*[t]he Scandinavians are, all things considered, among the best foreigners who come to American shores*. For a republic where there is civil and religious liberty," he added, "and especially where these principles are the very corner-stone of the state…[t]hey who love liberty *and* religion will make the best citizens…. Just such are the Scandinavians."[31]

By the same pen strokes with which Montgomery defined Protestant nationalism and its divine favors, he embraced Scandinavian fitness for the American experiment by appeal to ethnic and racial

[29] Montgomery, *Holy Spirit*, 18.
[30] Ibid., 32.
[31] Ibid., 6.

reasoning. "After careful observation of these people in this land and their native countries," he proclaimed,

> I am clearly of the opinion that *they are more nearly like Americans than are any other foreign peoples*. In manners and customs, political and religious instincts, fertility of adaption, personal appearance and cosmopolitan character, they are strikingly like native Americans [sic]. *No peculiar physiognomy is stamped upon them to point them out the world over; they find the English language easy, and quickly acquire it and lose their own brogue*. The first generation of American-born Scandinavians, when they reach the age of twenty years, cannot generally be distinguished from Americans *by either appearance, language or customs*.[32]

In addition to the apparent absence of a peculiar racial stamp—a wink, conscious or otherwise, to the mark of Cain or the curse of Ham that supposedly colored "black" Africans or designated them as servants—Montgomery noted a series of other Scandinavian characteristics that reflected nineteenth-century racial standards: Scandinavians had "large, strong bodies;" they were "industrious, …modest, intelligent;" their girls were "honest, quiet, faithful, cleanly and pious."[33] Incorporating common economic or classist measures of racial fitness, Montgomery also noted Scandinavians' supposed professional and business savvy, finding signs of their success "in every profession," and proclaiming that, "[t]hey come here to stay; [to] buy real estate, build good houses, [and] found academies and colleges…."

Montgomery's racial thinking was not merely incidental to prevalent racial biases or personal sentiments of the day, but rather was a fully conscientious appraisal of the superiority of Scandinavian stock for explicit projects of national racial formation. After enumerating the growing rates of Scandinavian immigration to "the Western States"—then including Illinois, Nebraska, Iowa,

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[32] Ibid., 6-7. First emphasis original, later emphases mine.

[33] Ibid. For more on the history of the "myth" of Ham, see David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005); Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Sylvester A. Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas—Montgomery allowed an extended citation from *The Century*, a conservative northern periodical with southern sympathies, to interpret the statistics. In the view of the author for *The Century*, Montgomery's "Western States…present[ed] by far the most inviting field for the study of race influence in America." Moreover, the author credited Scandinavian influence as that "…likely to do most to fix the permanent national type and character" of the area due to Scandinavians' sizable presence in the states' populations. The author saw "…promise of a fair and stalwart race" by influence of the growing Scandinavian and German populations of Wisconsin, but added "[h]ardly so blonde in type will be the future man of Wisconsin, however, as his neighbor the Minnesotian." On these grounds, the author distinguished Montgomery's AHMS territories in Minnesota and the Dakotas as "the promised land" for Scandinavian immigrants, "promised them by their deities"—a racial and religious appraisal Montgomery was happy to disseminate.[34]

In Montgomery's treatise, as elsewhere, call for material support followed quickly on the tail of racial analysis, and Congregationalists' response to that call effectively gave rise to ethnic free church institutional life. Given the apparent promise of Scandinavian populations in America, Montgomery called for fiscal investment in missionary and educational work among Scandinavians, both at home and abroad. In addition to providing funds from AHMS "to support the [Scandinavian] missionaries to preach the Gospel among their countrymen in this land," Montgomery asked the Congregationalist Church to send financial assistance to Sweden, Norway and Denmark to establish Congregationalist schools. Most importantly, he called for CTS to establish two professorships at the seminary: "one in Swedish and one in Norwegian or Danish…[to] be filled by native Scandinavians."[35] This request resulted in the formation of the Dano-Norwegian Department in 1884, later led by Jernberg, and the Swedish Department in 1885. As the decade advanced, Montgomery resigned as a regional

[34] Montgomery, *Holy Spirit*, 11

[35] Ibid., 111.

superintendent for AHMS and became its "Scandinavian Superintendent." From that post, he further helped to organize Congregational financial assistance—through loans "on easy terms"—to build meeting houses for new Scandinavian-American free churches and to pay the salaries of free church pastors. In sum, the AHMS lent an estimated $386,625 of assistance to Scandinavian projects (over $10 million, inflation adjusted), including staffing and ministerial training costs.[36] Montgomery's financial wrangling thus functioned to fulfill his own promise that Scandinavians came to stay, buy real estate, build houses and found academies.

However, Montgomery's self-fulfilling racial activism for Scandinavian congregationalism also blinded him to significant religious and cultural differences that eventually spelled demise for the Congregationalist coalition with ethnic free churches. In part, Montgomery's enthusiasm was fed by Congregationalist mythologies that rooted their own historical inheritance in New England Separatism of the seventeenth century. This mythology allowed Montgomery to consider Scandinavian free churches to be a providential extension of Congregationalist spiritual heritage, but the nineteenth-century Congregationalist Church retained little similarity to New England Separatism, if it ever had any.[37] Historical differences only compounded as the denomination liberalized over the course of the century. Even in 1858, CTS founders considered themselves "open-minded" and "polyglot," declaring to their students at the opening of the Seminary that "[w]e hold you to no school in theology or philosophy. We have come to this faith by way of Geneva and New England…[b]ut we hold you not to Calvin, or even to New England."[38] This open theological stance retained the structures of congregational polity that paralleled Scandinavian free church organization and invited cooperative

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[36] Olson, *The Search for Identity*, 81 and 88-90. For a list of further financial support lent by Congregationalists to free church organizations, see ibid., 92-93.

[37] See Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism*, 230-240. As Hale notes, the classical historian of colonial New England Protestantism Perry Miller refuted any effective influence of Separatists on the formation of American Congregationalism. He argued, instead, that Congregationalism issued from mainstream Puritanism, which did not separate from the Church of England despite its de facto congregationalism.

[38] Odegaard, *With Singleness of Heart*, 72-73. See also 80.

structural projects, but it also promoted increasingly universal standards for membership that more closely mirrored the state church tradition that Scandinavian dissenters despised. Montgomery thus further underestimated the power of free church anti-denominationalism. The Scandinavian free churches would not long abide communion with a denomination that promoted theological views antithetical to their own vision of a fully regenerate Christian church.

If Scandinavian dissenters in America were to become indistinguishable from "native Americans" as Montgomery hoped, they would not do so by way of "polyglot" theological liberalism. Rather, they would seek fellowship with collaborators that sustained their own theological views. Accordingly, the second religious force behind Scandinavian-American free church assimilation came from the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Unlike the Congregationalists, Moody made little attempt to cooperate with or form particular ethnic organizations, although he did call one pastor in 1873 to serve the growing Swedish population in his church.[39] Moody himself preached widely in revivals open to all, always in English, and he directed his considerable financial holdings to his own institutions and programs. In the end, however, Moody's influence provided doctrinal commitments, institutional models and business-oriented ethics that turned dissenting Scandinavian immigrants toward wider evangelical projects and eased their turn away from Congregationalist patronage. Scandinavians were often so taken by Moody that by 1938 one Swedish commentator asserted that nearly half of the attendees at Moody's church in Chicago were of Swedish descent.[40]

Moody's influence among Scandinavians in the late-nineteenth century grew simultaneously in the United States and abroad. Moody himself toured internationally, and while he never set foot in Scandinavia, news of his evangelism in Britain from 1873 to 1875 reached the Nordic nations and

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[39] See Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity*, 76. The only evidence of a Moody-affiliated "ethnic department" comes from the YMCA, an organization whose social services were limited in scope to specific neighborhood populations that required some cultural and language-based considerations.

[40] See ibid., quoted from Erik Brolund, *Missions Vanarna: Ja Forelse*, (Chicago, 1938), 110.

were translated widely, especially in the periodicals of theologically sympathetic inner mission leaders, like P.P. Walendström's *Pietisten*. The pietists of Sweden and Norway were thus well familiar with Moody by the mid-1870s. Moody's influence among Scandinavian immigrants in the United States grew from his Chicago base outward, primarily through the efforts of Swedish-born immigrant Frederik Franson whose parents were both active in the Swedish inner mission of the mid-century. After Moody returned from his widely-publicized tour of Britain, Franson moved from Nebraska to Chicago to join Moody's church. Franson was soon commissioned as a missionary for Moody's enterprise, and he took it upon himself to adopt Moody's revival techniques and to spread Moody's message among immigrant Scandinavians. In Chicago, Franson met fellow Swede J.G. Princell, who had attended Moody's meetings since the 1860s and had formed his own Swedish YMCA, modeled after Moody's but not partnered with it, in 1868.[41] At the time he met Franson, Princell was president of Ansgar College, and the two organized a "nonsectarian convention" in 1881 to address increasingly influential post-millenarian themes popularized in America by Moody. *Chicago-Bladet*, a periodical operated by the Swedish Ansgar Synod and edited by Princell after 1884, covered the convention's proceedings and disseminated its discussion to the dissenting Scandinavian immigrant public.[42] The periodical came to routinely publish Moody's sermons next to theological treatises from Sweden's Waldenström.[43]

For a time, Moody's influence coexisted peacefully with and even augmented Congregationalist support for free church institutionalization. While Montgomery's Congregationalist funds built free church chapels and founded Scandinavian-American educational institutions, Moody's institutional

[41] David M. Gustafson, *D.L. Moody and Swedes: Shaping Evangelical Identity among Swedish Mission Friends 1867 - 1899*, (Linköping: Univ. Dep. of Culture and Communication, 2008), 53.

[42] Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism*, 123-5.

[43] For more on Moody's influence among the Swedes, both in the United States and abroad, see Gustafson, *D.l. Moody and the Swedes*.

model wove its way into the organization of Scandinavian free churches through Franson's leadership. In 1880, Franson travelled across Colorado and Nebraska to organize congregational Swedish free churches, introducing to each the "Principles of Organization" used at the original Moody Church in Chicago, itself originally organized under Congregationalist principles.[44] Franson suggested that each local congregation "act as its own synod," that its leadership derive from its own members, and that it "should express its solidarity with other congregations…on the pattern of the New Testament local churches…through the ministry of itinerant evangelists and missionaries…" rather than through centralized ecclesiastical orders.[45] In addition to his work in home missions and local church organization, Franson pursued international missionary work on Moody's behalf, organizing mission agencies in Europe to train missionaries and send them to China. In 1890, Franson extended that work by founding the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM) as a training organization for international missionaries from Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American free churches.

In Swedish free churches in the United States, Franson's Moody model resonated with Congregationalist principles to draw a fine line around free church ecclesiology through a denominational organization that sustained an assumed spiritual unity of regenerate believers, autonomy of the local church and voluntary association with trusted individuals and groups alone. When the leaders of the independent Swedish free churches that Franson organized met in Boone, Iowa in 1884 to contemplate a formal union, they prioritized local church authority and appealed to denominational organization primarily on spiritual grounds. They explicitly borrowed ideals from an 1883 declaration that organized a National Council within the Congregationalist Church. In so doing, Swedish free church leaders declared that,

> [t]he Church of God on earth consists of the entire multitude of born-again and to Christ-

[44] See Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity*, 76-80.
[45] Olson, *The Search for Identity*, 67-8.

> baptized persons wherever they may dwell. …[I]t behooves each group of believers to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free; …we have the right and obligation to remain independent of all forms of church authority and to keep ourselves out of all obligations that might curtail such privileges and perfect liberty. *But the local churches should therefore cooperate among themselves by means of conferences and societies as well as individuals in whom they have confidence.*[46]

The statement also reflected Franson's position on church organization, despite his strong anti-denominational inclinations. Affirming that regenerate Christians had "a natural oneness" in Christ, Franson argued that "[a]s such, they are responsive to each other, sense their participation with each other and, when the need arises, seek in all respects to help each other *voluntarily*, as they did in the day of the apostles."[47] In Boone in 1884, these principles birthed the Swedish Evangelical Free Church in America (Swedish EFCA), imagined to be a voluntary organization that cooperated by choice and through real spiritual unity, in contradistinction to state churches or hierarchical denominations that supposedly forced union with illegitimate worldly authority founded on theological apostasy.

Scandinavian Fibre: Religion, Race and Assimilation at the Turn of the Century

Congregationalist projects, Moody influence and Scandinavian 'inner mission' inheritance also combined to great effect for Norwegians and Danes at CTS in 1884. Following Montgomery's educational plan, seminary leaders called the Danish Reverend Peter Christian Trandberg to lead their first new ethnic department. Trandberg first came to the United States after resigning his post in the Lutheran Danish state church given their strict opposition to revivalism and evangelism within the Danish inner mission movement. In Chicago, Trandberg was impressed by Moody and Ira Sankey, who preached primarily to the English-speaking working- and managerial-classes. Wishing to extend their work to his own ethnic compatriots, Trandberg pursued revivalist preaching in Danish. Once

[46] Ibid. 76-7. Emphasis mine.
[47] Ibid., 148. Emphasis mine.

installed at CTS, he gained a reputation for passionate sermons, commitment to home missions for Scandinavian immigrants and continued support for the free church movement in the United States, Norway and Denmark, even as he remained committed to particular Lutheran traditions.[48]

Trandberg's tenure, however, revealed a significant tension between Congregationalist interests and ethnic loyalties in immigrant mission work that pushed free churches further toward assimilation. Devotions to congregationalism and assimilation were dual priorities at CTS. Like other Scandinavian-trained ministers, Trandberg retained a commitment to both the Lutheran ecclesial model as well as Danish ethnic identity, despite his pietistic inclinations. As such, he ran afoul of Marcus Montgomery and fellow CTS professor R.A. Jernberg, the Norwegian-born, American-trained minister with congregationalist sympathies.[49] Montgomery quickly became frustrated with Trandberg's refusal to submit to "voluntary" congregational ecclesiology, while Trandberg repeatedly asserted the need for total independence from Congregationalist influence in a Lutheran-style free church. Jernberg, for his part, considered CTS to be a "rallying point" for the organization of Norwegian congregationalism, and he spent his time away from the classroom as a pastor of Congregationalist churches and as an itinerant organizer of independent Norwegian churches.[50] Like Frederik Franson a decade before him, Jernberg spent much of the early 1890s forming networks of Norwegian free churches, helping to establish Eastern and Western "Districts" that cooperated only in mission work and Christian education. Content with their Congregationalist patrons, however, Norwegian free churches under Jernberg's direction were so skeptical of centralized organization that they initially refused to form an official denomination like their Swedish counterparts.[51]

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[48] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 82-7. For more on the Danish inner mission movement and its state church antagonism, see Eijnatten and Yates*The Churches*, 229-246.

[49] Olson, *The Search for Identity*, 53.

[50] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 212. For a full account of Jernberg's biography, see 208-32.

[51] See Olson, *The Search for Identity*, 124-5

As a matter part faith and part ethnic loyalty—but both at once—Trandberg rejected Montgomery's ecclesiological demands and decried Jernberg's apparent loyalty to Congregationalists and austere congregationalism. Then he fell on his own sword, resigning from CTS in 1889 and paving the way for new leadership. While he offered a distinct theological defense of his position, Trandberg simultaneously defended the divine design and purposes of ethnic distinctions in religious life. In an editorial announcing his resignation and the reasons for it, Trandberg argued that rapid assimilation to American religious and cultural standards constituted "ethnic suicide," implying that Scandinavians loyal to Congregationalist initiative "…murdered their own peculiar ethnic culture which the Creator gave them."[52] Gladly taking the mantle of ethnic suicide upon himself, Jernberg took over at CTS—first as Dean in 1890, then as head of the department in 1895.

Through Jernberg, the ideology for a racial and religious project of Scandinavian immigrant assimilation first championed by Marcus Montgomery reached its apex. In his inaugural address to the department in 1895, titled "The Scandinavian Fibre in Our Social Fabric," Jernberg stressed the distinct national heritage and ancestral inheritances of Norwegian and Danish peoples, but sublimated them to the cause of becoming American and creating a better America. Jernberg's immigrant nationalism made no appeal to "color" as a feature of the "Scandinavian race" in the United States or Europe. Unlike Italian Catholics, who were considered racially inferior and at an additional remove from the Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority due to their religious traditions, Jernberg's Scandinavians did not have to wait until the black-white antagonism of the mid-century to lay claim to ownership of the religiously and racially circumscribed American dream.

Jernberg framed his address with hearty Scandinavian chauvinism that aimed to reduce and even deny supposed racial differences between Scandinavians, the English and Americans. To do so, he

[52] Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism*, 243-45.

appealed to the influence of "Norsemen" in Anglo-Saxon Protestant history. Modifying the mythology constructed by Montgomery before him, Jernberg did not describe dissenting Scandinavian Protestantism as a second coming of the Anglo-Saxon revolt against Catholicism and the State Church of England. Rather, on Jernberg's reading, Scandinavia was the parent of Anglo-Saxon traditions and the original source of their distinction. According to Jernberg, it was Norse conquerors who stamped "the individuality of [their] vigorous race" on the European peoples they encountered, including the previously weak clans of Britain. Even the name of "England" and the English language, in Jernberg's history, derived from Nordic influence, making English thought and "the keenest feelings of [the English's] inmost hearts" an expression of "…the forms which the Vikings used…in the vigorous speech which the Norsemen taught us…." Jernberg further credited Scandinavians, not "Englishmen," with the European colonization of America by way of Norse explorer Eric the Red. Citing John Fiske's "Discovery of America," Jernberg finally claimed that Scandinavians were even responsible for the United States' Puritan heritage by way of "Pilgrim Fathers" from "East Anglian counties" in England whose ancestors were Norse settlers. "We may observe then," Jernberg deduced, "that the difference of race is not so great as we sometimes think." In fact, Jernberg asserted, the new Scandinavian in America had "come to his kith and kin, to share with them in the fruitage of the early sowing and careful planting of his fathers…."[53]

Despite prioritizing Scandinavian mythology, Jernberg confirmed Montgomery's view that Scandinavians were most fit to "become" Americans, and he elevated Scandinavian cultural distinctions as means for better integrating with American civic life by democratic principle, education and popular media. Taking great care to distance Scandinavians from other ethnic groups who arrived as "the victim[s] of oppression and persecution at home," Jernberg obscured the religious persecution

[53] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 219-20.

of free churches in Scandinavia and asserted that all Scandinavians had already engaged the responsibilities of democratic government in their home countries. This experience, he argued in turn, better positioned them to engage in civic life in the United States. Accordingly, Jernberg reprimanded institutional efforts to foster insularity in ethnic enclaves, starting with educational systems. Unlike Scandinavian-American Lutheran churches that endorsed an ethnic parochial system, Jernberg championed American public schools and encouraged Scandinavian immigrant schools to be more responsive to "their environment in American communities." Nevertheless, he congratulated Scandinavians for their high levels of education and literacy, citing the heavy circulation of Scandinavian-language publications and periodicals in Chicago—one of which he edited. As an editor, Jernberg was glad to report that many of these periodicals derived their viewpoints from "hearty sympathy with American institutions" and their integration with "nearly every phase of American life," rather than from foreign loyalties and ethnic isolation. Putting a fine edge on the importance of education, literacy and civic engagement, Jernberg concluded that the work of these papers "…should be encouraged more than it is, for it means the emancipation of a race, and a larger life for our republic."[54]

Religion, however, figured most decisively in Jernberg's concern for the emancipation, elevation and integration of the Scandinavian race in America. Through Jernberg, antagonism toward hierarchical Protestant denominations, rather than immigrant Catholicism, became part and parcel of the nineteenth-century American nationalist project. As a warning, Jernberg cited the monopolistic ecclesiastical order of Lutheran state churches that stymied religious liberty and kept Scandinavian Protestantism from its true promise. "For three hundred and fifty years or more," Jernberg claimed, "[the Lutheran church] has held undisputed sway over [Scandinavian] spiritual and intellectual life. The

[54] Ibid., 219-225

result fills one with sadness." According to Jernberg, the Lutheran state church "exist[ed] for herself and not for the people; she is not the means to an end, but is herself the end. She bears testimony to this in her attitude of opposition to every effort made by other Christian Churches to elevate and convert the Scandinavian people." Concerned that these trends had immigrated to America, Jernberg noted that 40,000 Norwegians in Chicago were baptized members of the Lutheran church, but "not more than 5,000 could be found in her places of worship." And yet, he went on, the Lutheran church castigated "every attempt by Christians of other denominations to draw some of the remaining 35,000 away from the saloons, beer gardens and Sunday picnics…." In particular, Jernberg vehemently decried the special condemnation that Lutherans leveled against "our Congregational work …[and] all missionary efforts of other denominations among the Scandinavians."

Jernberg's critique of denominational monopoly—or "autocracy," as he put it—further claimed that Lutheran traditions worsened ethnic or racial isolation. In other words, Jernberg ascribed to hierarchical Lutheranism the same "race problem" that Anglo-American Protestants most often identified with immigrant Catholicism. By claiming ultimate authority over "the education and spiritual training of foreigners," the Lutheran church aimed to transplant Scandinavian environments to ethnic enclaves. According to Jernberg, the inclination to reproduce Scandinavia in the United States only "…perpetuat[ed] indefinitely the alien characteristics peculiar to [immigrants]," making "…[t]he foreigner…a foreigner still."[55] In Jernberg's view, hierarchical Lutheranism was structurally incapable of emancipating the Scandinavian race, just as it was incapable of securing a greater life for the American republic.

In order to free Scandinavian immigrants from their religious and racial shackles in America, Jernberg beat the drum for congregational organization, evangelical doctrine and institutional

[55] Ibid., 225-6 and 221.

cooperation with Americans. With "no thought that our labors will overturn nations in a day," Jernberg nevertheless celebrated the growing influence of public schools, evangelical press and institutional backing to meet "…the great needs of these people…[and] …the possibilities for their development along all the lines of a better and higher life…." He argued further that the Dano-Norwegian Department at CTS was "the only one in all the world" where independent Norwegian and Danish churches could train ministers recognized for "making for a Christianity in closest sympathy with Congregational methods, and for a citizenship in touch with American institutions." Drawing on the putative ethnic or racial divisions of the Bible and the possibility therein to overcome them, Jernberg ultimately proclaimed "…no other power on earth can lift a people into the fullest and richest experiences of life, political, intellectual, social or spiritual, like the Gospel of Jesus Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. And He when He is lifted up shall draw all men unto him."[56]

In 1895, Jernberg was a proverbial voice in the wilderness prophesying the coming age while inviting followers to support his faith and his preferred institutions. For a brief period at the end of the nineteenth century, Jernberg's aspiration to overturn nations, if not in a day, was met with profound resources facilitated by American collaborators and Scandinavian colleagues alike, and to great effect. While Scandinavian free churches in America captured a small minority of devotees among a small minority of immigrants, collaboration with Congregationalists and Moody's growing organization ensured that future Scandinavian-American free church leaders, whether Norwegian, Danish or Swedish, would be fashioned in Jernberg's assimilationist image as well as Franson and Princell's transatlantic pietism. According to the church historian of the EFCA and its long-time President, Arnold T. Olson, Jernberg directly trained twenty-eight of the forty-five Norwegian-Danish Free

[56] Ibid. 227.

Church ministers working in the church by 1915. Princell, too, is credited with facilitating the training of twenty-nine out of forty-six Swedish Free Church pastors in the same period. As the twentieth century advanced, a second generation of Scandinavian leaders in the United States pursued a common vision to become American through continued patterns of religious collaboration and schism as the racial and ethnic urban world in which they were born transformed under their feet.

The Foreigner a Foreigner Still…

As the new century approached, the fathers of the Scandinavian free churches in the United States announced a vision for the future that championed subtle transformations of communal identity and historical memory towards a more homogenous American ideal. Prior to Marcus Montgomery's missionary advocacy, Scandinavian immigrant religion remained significantly divided by birth-country nationalism, language differences, class and theology. For a time, these differences filtered through the various dissenting free churches. Despite shared favor for plain pietism and exegetical simplicity, or shared suspicion of Lutheran "autocracy," free churches did not often find cause to unite organizationally across national lines. As immigration increased in the late century, racial ideologies of Protestant American nationalism began to erase historical and cultural memories of Scandinavian difference. Congregationalists' project of "race influence" imagined Scandinavians, despite their national and regional peculiarities, to be one people—those "more nearly like Americans than are any other foreign peoples" in "appearance, character and custom." A decade later, R.A. Jernberg was happy to push this sentiment as far as he could so as to share American produce with "kith and kin." Having left Norway at a young age, having converted to Christianity thereafter, and having been trained at American institutions, Jernberg retained very little loyalty to ethnic, national or cultural distinctions. Despite his Norwegian heritage, despite leading the "Dano-Norwegian Department" to train immigrant ministry in Danish, Norwegian and English languages, and despite the existence of a

separate Swedish Department, Jernberg spoke of and assumed to speak for the uniformly "vigorous" Scandinavian race.

For Scandinavian free churches, ecclesiology was similarly endemic to the reformation and assimilation of immigrant racial identity. Free church leaders and their Congregationalists patrons alike imagined their congregational vision of church order to mirror Protestant movements of the past as well as the biblical organization of the early Christian church. By claiming the great Protestant heritage of New England's colonial fathers who struggled within and against their own Protestant state church traditions, moreover, both Jernberg and Montgomery conflated their ecclesiastical vision with nationalist ideals. To be or to become American, in their view, required an embrace of local church authority that eschewed hierarchical, state-bound Protestantism as much as it rejected "Romish Popery." In this framework, both men narrowly defined the love of liberty and freedom of religion that made for "the best citizens." Moreover, just as free church boosters mythologized and valorized their own ecclesiastical orders, they defined and homogenized their ecclesiastical foes. After all, Jernberg did not critique the Church of Norway, the Church of Sweden or the Church of Denmark in particular, but rather he decried "the Lutheran state church"—as if there were one. While Jernberg's predecessor saw God's design in the ethnic Lutheran culture of the state churches, Jernberg himself saw racial and ethnic shackles of a monolithic tradition. Accordingly, Jernberg championed the rejection of an autocratic Lutheran tradition as a portion of Scandinavian's racial emancipation. For the free churches, ecclesiology thus became fused to racial identity and, moreover, to the prospects for joining a new American race.

Nevertheless, the Scandinavian free church vision was more aspirational than accomplished at the opening of the twentieth century. Most importantly, free church organization and influence remained seriously limited; membership numbered in the low thousands—not near the millions claimed by immigrant Catholicism. However, free churches operated among a larger and growing subculture of

northern European evangelical Protestants—not to mention smaller American evangelical Protestant sects—that all shared pietistic sympathies and decentralized primitivist ecclesiology despite other national and doctrinal differences. Among the Dutch, the Christian Reformed Church organized outside the mainstream of the Dutch Reformed Church. In addition to free churches, Swedes also formed the Swedish Mission Covenant. A smaller cadre of Danes and Finns organized similar churches and, later, denominations.[57] Doctrinally, these churches considered themselves representative Christians; as free church forefather P.P. Waldenstrom once had it, Baptist churches contained Baptist Christians, Methodist churches held Methodist Christians, but free churches housed Christians, simply put.[58] And yet, each of these ethnic churches remained segregated from the others by nationality, language and culture. Jernberg's racial and religious vision offered possible means to overcome these divisions, but even Jernberg recognized that nations could not be overturned in a day. Nor could austere congregationalists overturn the overwhelming power of nineteenth-century American denominationalism. While many ethnic evangelicals defined themselves against denominational hierarchy and state-church traditions, they began to formalize their own ethnic denominational structures as a *de facto* condition of religious cooperation in the United States. As long as a steady stream of immigrants flowed from northern Europe, ethnic evangelical denominations continued to serve distinct, if not entirely segregated, immigrant communities.

As the twentieth century advanced, however, the winds from Scandinavia shifted significantly as new social, economic and religious developments took shape. If nineteenth-century Scandinavian immigrants aspired to become American, twentieth-century Scandinavian-Americans saw the project through. Within fifteen years of the opening of the new century, Scandinavian immigration slowed to

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[57] See Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004), 749-762.

[58] See Arnold T. Olson, "What is the Evangelical Free Church," *The Evangelical Beacon*, April 19, 1955. (Hereafter, *Beacon*.)

a crawl. Industrial capitalism began a long unfolding transition to new forms of corporate organization in real estate development, commercial enterprise and financial services. Perhaps most importantly, epochal schisms in Protestant theology burst open well outside seminaries and divinity schools. By 1915, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy went public, and new generations of Anglo-American and immigrant Protestants openly debated the assumed foundations of Christian faith and practice. This theological battle fed back into concerns for immigrant assimilation, American nationalism, capitalist ideology and matters of church ecclesiology. As Protestant churches began to "restructure" along liberal and conservative lines, Scandinavian free churches increasingly severed ties with liberal Congregationalists just as they strengthened ties to the Moody Bible Institute, fundamentalism and other evangelical groups. Under these conditions, the Scandinavian free churches changed dramatically in structure, organization and, in particular regards, communal identity in their ongoing quest to become American.

II.
"We Evangelical and Fundamentalist People:" Doctrinal, Economic and Racial Contours of Free Church Fellowship, 1900 to 1930s

"Here and there the churches are dying out, and big churches stand closed and locked, the reason being: no loyalty to Christ and the Word of God!"
—Otto Grauer, 1910[1]

"Either we cooperate with other groups of like faith and principles, or we shall be swallowed up by the large denominations and what we have worked so hard to build up will be no more."
—C.T. Dyrness, 1921[2]

By the early 1930s, leaders of the Scandinavian-American free church tradition—then celebrating half a century of institutional life in the United States—declared substantial progress as ethnic national denominations in the United States while claiming nevertheless significant continuity with the spiritual ideals of their immigrant founding fathers. Over the first three decades of the century, free churches saw no less than a continuous revolution of their religious organization: early patrons were abandoned, new schools were formed, denominational orders were strengthened and new efforts to evangelize youth and Anglo-Americans were institutionalized. Across these often radical institutional metamorphoses, however, free church leaders averred unbroken bonds of spirit and providence in matters of church development and fellowship. Moreover, and despite their increasingly regressive view of human history, free church leaders insisted in particular that their own institutional and communal development reflected real progress toward the rehabilitation of a New Testament-style church, as they saw and defined it. In humanistic historical terms, however, free church institutional development—including the human communities welcomed into free church fellowship—reflected modern social dynamics and contemporaneous cultural preferences that free church leaders imbued with spiritual and scriptural significance.

[1] Quoted in Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 147.
[2] Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity,* 27-28.

In the opening years of the twentieth century, free church fellowship continued its rapid development in part through unfolding bible controversies that then rocked transatlantic Protestantism. Even before the century turned, free church leaders began to expand the theological meaning and application of Scandinavian pietist P.P. Waldenström's biblical rallying cry, "where is it written?" For Walendström, the query meant to challenge the creeds, rites and ecclesio-political orders of Sweden's state church, and particularly the Lutheran Augsburg Confession, by demanding a biblical precedent for them.[3] Free church leaders in the United States, however, no longer waged battles against the state church institutions of Scandinavia nor their confession, but they did encounter revolutionary methods of biblical interpretation called "higher criticism" that undermined the very assumption that the bible-as-written had simple and straightforward meaning outside of particular historical contexts, past or present. The biblio-centrism of "where is it written," accordingly, came to be reimagined as a defense of timeless biblical authority specifically, in and of itself—a marked shift from the position's original doctrinal and ecclesial targets.

Ecclesiastical transformations—both institutional schisms and new institutionalizations—followed this reconfigured biblical affirmation, in ways both similar and dissimilar to Scandinavian pietist separatism under state church authority. While nineteenth-century Scandinavian pietists rejected the authority of state church order due to its purported lack of biblical precedent, twentieth-century free church leaders abandoned cooperation with Congregationalist church order despite its biblical precedent. Instead, twentieth-century free church leaders promoted rising biblical 'literalism' as a doctrinal priority that superseded existing ecclesiastical loyalties, and institutional reformations quickly followed apace. This new priority motivated disaffiliation from Congregationalist initiatives, as well as significant leadership transitions in the free churches and the creation of new free church institutions,

[3] Gustafson, *D.L Moody and the Swedes,* 88.

including new "bible institutes" modeled after the Moody Bible Institute (MBI). In the fray, free churches and their institutions became simultaneously autonomous from Congregationalist entanglements and even more collaborative with Chicago's Moody institutions.

Bible controversies at the turn of the twentieth century have long occupied the attention of historians of American religion, and in many ways, the shifting fellowship of Scandinavian-American free churches fits squarely within narratives of conservative-liberal realignment in the nation's Protestant churches at that time. The history of the free churches, however, gives insight into a far less studied aspect of growing conservative religious fellowship at the start of the century: namely, the financial pressures of religious institutional reform in capitalist economies. Beyond those pressures, moreover, came important social, ideological and even theological considerations that developed in concert with economic practice in free churches and other sympathetic religious institutions of the era. Given a variety of pro-capitalist ideological inheritances, as well as a growing cadre of leadership with business connections, free church leaders and their institutions fused innovative financial practices of institutional reform with the divine imperatives of their spiritual mission, lending the material and economic world in which they operated a profound religious significance. Free church leaders and free church institutions, in turn, began to train their youth in business leadership as one indispensable project of evangelism among others.

In concert with revised doctrinal commitment and fresh economic investment, racial formations of the early twentieth century effectively "emancipated" the Scandinavian race in America with profound effect on free church fellowships. From the onset of World War I, European immigration to the United States slowed significantly, but after the war, federal immigration legislation introduced quotas that even more severely restricted foreign arrivals on American shores. Like other ethnic Euro-American organizations, Scandinavian-American free churches faced drastic shifts in the meaning of their ethnic national identity and the scope of their ethnic national service. While many ethnic national

organizations and immigrant service institutions of the era faced impending obsolescence in the absence of incoming immigrant waves, free churches were well situated to handle the transition. Free church leaders had long promoted Americanization as a portion of their religious activism, and by the second decade of the new century, their efforts were aided by emergent racist ideologies that "Nordicized" white supremacy in the United States and Europe. In the 1910s and -20s, free churches in urban centers began to physically distance their communities from "the people of southern Europe and the colored races" as an effort to "minister to the spiritual needs of…[their] own constituency," as one free church publication described it.[4] At the same time, free church leaders reimagined their difference from Anglo-American Protestants to be a matter of language alone—not one of race, as had concerned R.A. Jernberg—and they began another robust series of institutional reforms to become an "English-speaking" church. As with conservative reforms at the turn of the century, English-language reforms spurred new economic demands on free church institutions that reinforced business affinities within the tradition, especially among its leadership.

The Scandinavian-American free churches' 'racial emancipation' certainly broadened the scope of their gospel outreach to include English-speaking Anglo-Americans, but conservative theological commitments both new and old immediately circumscribed Anglo-American outreach to include only those whose spiritual priorities were seen to be compatible with free church orders. By the 1920s, these Anglo-Americans called themselves fundamentalists. Coincidentally—or providentially, as free church historians might have it—at the same time that free churches turned away from independent ethnic national service due to immigration restrictions, the fundamentalist movement ascended the ranks of popular American religion. Both free churches and fundamentalists had ties to Moody's institutions in Chicago, and the minor Scandinavian-American denominations followed the popular

[4] E.A. Halleen et al., *Golden Jubiliee: Reminiscences of Our Work Under God, 1884-1934* (Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America, 1934), 86.

American movement with great interest, attention and, perhaps, a modicum of envy. When free church leaders looked to expand their reach and influence in English-speaking worlds, they did so in the language of, and often in partnership with, fundamentalists. Soon enough, free church leaders and media claimed the mantle of fundamentalism themselves. At the same time, free church leaders adopted fundamentalists' novel fixation on their theological foes, the modernists, who peddled in higher criticism, the social gospel and other forms of supposed liberal heresy.

For free church leaders, ecclesiological visions of a New Testament-style church framed fundamentalist relations, even as other social factors weighed heavily on new alliances and new rivalries. Free church leaders adopted and promoted fundamentalism by allegorizing the new movement in terms of their own ecclesiastical history, tying an innovative present to an authoritative past.[5] At the same time, free church activists claimed a spiritual bond with fundamentalists that affirmed to them the supernatural union inherent to the true church of Christ. Obviously, this ecclesiological understanding of fundamentalist fellowship engendered more collaboration, and free church leaders openly invited independent fundamentalist churches to join the free church denominations outright. Free church ecclesiology thusly ensured that institutional projects and activism—including new partnerships and collaborations in education, publishing and mission work—would certainly include Anglo-American fundamentalists and fundamentalist viewpoints. At the same time, free church activism would exclude as a matter of course any person, any media or any institution that harbored modernist ideals or sympathies. This ecclesiastical split—the very same found at the heart of American Protestantism's nascent restructuring—became a defining feature of the modern free churches' spiritual mission, and especially their material organization.

[5] See again Dawson, *Allegorical Readers* and fn. 5 of the introduction to this work.

Three decades into a new century, Scandinavian-American free church fellowship transformed drastically, regardless of spiritual narratives that were offered to render those transformations traditional to plain bible-believing immigrants and their Americanized children. In historical and material terms, the free churches were on the move; with outdated and incompatible religious alliances behind them, with growing access to capital and its professional management, with a new vision of race and new projects of assimilation, Scandinavian-American free churches embraced religious partnerships and transformed religious identity that reflected not only their spiritual priorities, but also their cultural, economic and racial affinities.

"Where Is It Written?:" Bible Controversies and Institutional Reform in the Free Churches

The opening decades of the century witnessed further growth and maturation of the Scandinavian population in the United States. Between 1900 and 1915, Scandinavian immigration to the United States spiked a second time, with numbers only slightly lower than the high-tide marks hit in the 1880s. In Chicago, the Swedish-born population approached 60,000 individuals and their children raised total Swedish-American population figures to 120,000.[6] Chicago's Norwegians also split evenly among foreign- and American-born, totaling almost 50,000 individuals by 1910 after another 235,000 migrants left Norway in total. As they had in decades prior, Scandinavian enclaves in cities like Chicago initially expanded and then migrated with the growing population. The third phase of Scandinavian neighborhood succession pushed north and west as home building and factory expansion combined with improved rail infrastructure to pull working-class homeowners to Logan Square, Humboldt Park and Irving Park. Scandinavian-American institutional life thrived.[7] With the early financial support of Congregationalists, the persistent inspiration of Moody's institutions and a steady influx of religious

[6] Olson, "Swedish Chicago," 2.
[7] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 226-272.

dissenters from Scandinavia, free churches in particular carved out a growing religious niche in their enclaves, one that offered significant social opportunity to new immigrants who chose to take it.

As Scandinavian-American populations in Chicago grew and matured, however, rising religious controversy forced free church leaders to come to terms with increasing disparity between their own beliefs and the shifting theological commitments of their primary benefactors, the Congregationalists. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Marcus Montgomery's myopia regarding the compatibility of free church and Congregationalist doctrinal commitments finally burst into the open. Primary among those differing commitments was the growing conflict over biblical higher criticism in the United States; long-since committed to "polyglot" liberalism, Congregationalists increasingly accepted historical interpretations of the bible emanating from scholarship in German universities.

Higher criticism, however, ran counter to bible reading practices in Scandinavian-American free churches, and Swedish free church leaders in particular—who aligned themselves more closely Moody's evangelical complex than with Congregationalist projects—led an early charge against new critical liberties in biblical interpretation. Not merely Moody acolytes, however, Swedish-American free church leaders invoked in their battles the spiritual authority of Swedish "inner mission" leader P.P. Waldenström whose famous attack on Lutheran doctrines of atonement cried "*Where is it written?*"[8] J.G. Princell, a long-time proponent of both Waldenström and Moody, directly attacked biblical criticism in *Chicago-Bladet*, the Swedish periodical he edited in Chicago. As early as 1881, in fact, *Chicago-Bladet* affirmed free church commitments to 'literal' biblical exegesis through coverage of Princell's conference with Frederik Franson that same year. The proceedings from that meeting had asserted that "…the Bible must be read and understood according to its simple, literal text."[9] As Congregationalist and other mainline Protestant commitments to higher criticism waxed in the 1890s,

[8] Norton, *Diamond Jubilee*, 45.
[9] Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism,* 271, quoted from *Chicago-Bladet*, August 9, 1881.

Chicago-Bladet took a more aggressive stance against the trend, reprinting a number of 'traditionalist' exegetical defenses by conservative British and American scholars.[10] In 1893, Princell and his co-editors asserted that higher criticism "…lessen[ed] the worth of the Bible's content and reduce[d] it to a common good book written only through and by people, without the help of inspiration."[11] Accordingly, the Swedish EFCA built early fortifications against shifting winds in bible understanding and bible education.

Among the Norwegian-Danish free churches, the controversy over biblical interpretation struck harder at the roots of Congregationalist loyalties. Unlike the Swedes' Princell, Reinert Jernberg had long pledged fidelity to theologically-polyglot Congregationalists, going so far as to chase out his CTS predecessor for challenging Congregationalist initiative. Jernberg, accordingly, sprang to the defense of his Congregationalist partners in *Evangelisten* on matters of higher criticism in 1893, arguing that modern biblical scholarship at CTS only "… disagree[d] with the majority…regarding the way inspiration was given," not by denying inspiration in total.[12] By 1900, Jernberg was defending not only biblical criticism, but also the Social Gospel as means of refuting the formal creeds and doctrines of apostate denominations with practical, Christ-centered ethics. As Jernberg put it, Christ's teachings were "not based on philosophy, but rather on morals. To him the important thing was not what his disciples thought, but rather what they are."[13] Accordingly, Jernberg rejected "confessions of faith" that insisted on biblical literalism as stringently as he rejected Lutheran ecclesiastical orders; both prioritized laws and intellectual doctrines above matters of Christian character. Nevertheless, Jernberg found little audience for his views among Scandinavian pietists and Moodyites, for whom devotion to a divinely-inspired bible had long been paramount. Jernberg resigned as editor of *Evangelisten* in 1904,

[10] Ibid., 272-3.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 279.
[13] Ibid.,281.

and he quickly fell out of favor in Norwegian-Danish free church circles despite his decades of effective activism and organization.[14]

Theological controversy, however, was no mere conceptual debate that required only a purge of wrong-headed intellectuals and ideals to resolve. Instead, theological controversy fomented vast institutional transformations that, on one hand, furthered free church autonomy. On the other hand, institutional transformation under theological controversy increased cooperation with and appropriation of Moody's organizations and, especially, their educational principles—particularly at MBI. At the onset of the twentieth century, Swedish free churches—given their weaker cooperation with Congregationalists and CTS—took the first measures to more ardently institutionalize their doctrinal and spiritual affinities with the Moody community. In 1901, J.G. Princell and P.J. Elmhurst, the first superintendent of the Swedish EFCA, established a 10-week course to train Swedish free church pastors modeled after Franson's courses to train missionaries for Moody. Later that year, Princell and Elmhurst incorporated the Swedish Bible Institute of Chicago (SBIC) as a full seminary with Princell as its first full-time instructor. By 1910, the Swedish EFCA took over control of the school which it retained until Princell's death in 1915.[15] After a leadership crisis in the wake of Princell's earthly departure, the school transferred affiliation to MBI in 1916, becoming its *de facto* Swedish Department.

Since Norwegian-Danish free churches in particular had relied on Congregationalists for institutional support, from educational programs to financial assistance for church building and publications, the growing theological split between the two groups required an even more comprehensive institutional response, despite the Norwegian-Danish group's long held aversion to

[14] Ibid., 278-83

[15] David V. Martin, ed., *Trinity International University, 1897-1997: A Century of Training Christian Leaders* (Deerfield, IL: Trinity International University, 1998), 29-32.

almost any form of denominational organization. Following the Swedish EFCA's suit, a handful of Norwegian-Danish professors and graduates from CTS abandoned commitments to Congregationalist cooperation to start their own seminary on the Moody model in 1909: the Bible Institute and Academy (BIA) in Rushford, Minnesota.[16] Three years later, the Eastern and Western Districts of cooperative Norwegian and Danish free churches, formerly organized by Jernberg, formalized a national organization—a *de facto* denomination named the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association (Norwegian-Danish EFCA).

Like the Swedish EFCA before it, the Norwegian-Danish EFCA publicly eschewed top-down ecclesial authority but nevertheless assumed many of the functions of a traditional denomination. Delegates were elected from local churches and formed an advisory board which held no jurisdiction over local church affairs, including doctrinal particularities or leadership choices. However, the board soon managed the collection and disbursement of both missionary funds and capital resources to finance church building on terms cheaper than those provided by financial institutions, just as the Congregationalists had done in decades prior.[17] The national association quickly took control of the BIA and moved its facilities to Minneapolis in 1916. Finally, the new denomination assumed financial responsibility for Jernberg's *Evangelisten* after decades of financial support from the Congregationalist American Home Mission Society.

Absent Jernberg's vocal support for institutional collaboration with Congregationalists, new leadership in the Norwegian-Danish EFCA directed free church sympathies away from CTS and more explicitly endorsed MBI and other Moody institutions. The Reverend Christian Thorsten Dyrness of Chicago's Salem Evangelical Free Church took over editorial control of *Evangelisten* in 1905 and

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[16] Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism,* 282.

[17] Pamphlet, L.J. Pedersen, "Our Evangelical Free Churches in North America" (The Norwegian-Danish Free Church Association, 1931), http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/ref/collection/tiu_efcalit/id/11237, Trinity International University EFCA Digital Archives, 7-8.

immediately reoriented the paper to align with the growing conservative consensus on biblical literalism and other doctrinal matters like premillennialism. Under Dyrness' new direction, *Evangelisten* took the opportunity to promote not CTS, but MBI. Otto C. Grauer, a CTS professor himself, penned the article despite the apparent conflict of interest. Grauer proudly noted that, at MBI, "[t]he Bible is practically the only school book…" and its curriculum was "…a precise examination of the Bible's words…and a consideration of the Bible's principal teachings."[18]

In ensuing years, nearly all free church institutional collaboration with CTS and Congregationalists collapsed. Both Jernberg and Grauer stayed on at CTS as professors until 1916 when the seminary finally closed its Scandinavian departments and formally affiliated with the University of Chicago, a hotbed of higher criticism and rising theological modernism. Afterward, both men taught in a bilingual ministry department at a new Congregationalist undergraduate seminary in Chicago, Union Theological College.[19] Nevertheless, the long-term damage was done. The Norwegian-Danish EFCA endorsed neither Union nor the University of Chicago; if a new generation of leaders was to receive training in Norwegian-Danish EFCA ministry, they would do so either at MBI or the newly formed Norwegian-Danish BIA.

Financing the Extension of God's Kingdom: The Business of Free Church Institutional Reform

The early-century flurry of Scandinavian-American free church institutional reorganization described above may have issued from theological controversy, but the brick-and-mortar necessities of reorganization simply could not be purchased with spirit alone in a capitalist marketplace. Accordingly, new denominational leaders like the Rev. C.T. Dyrness more actively promoted the necessity of financial reformation as an essential portion of institutional and doctrinal realignment.

[18] Hale, *Trans-Atlantic Conservative Protestantism,* 280-283

[19] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart,* 94-7. For a full account of Grauer and Jernberg's time at CTS, see ibid., 88-97.

While many hands participated in this economic endeavor, Dyrness himself provided a practical business approach to institutionalization and growth that became exemplary and much imitated within the free churches. Dyrness' activism, among its many accomplishments, ensured that pro-capitalist, business-friendly ideologies and practices were taught to new generations as necessary, even divinely-ordained complements to the practical extension of Christ's social body.

Like other early free church leaders, C.T. Dyrness arrived on American shores with pre-existing commitments to local church authority, pietistic evangelicalism and pro-capitalist sentiment. Prior to his immigration to the United States, Dyrness had been a businessman in Norway who converted to evangelical Christianity during the revivals of the Norwegian inner mission movement. Abandoning his wealth to follow a new calling in America in 1884, Dyrness learned of P.C. Trandberg's department at CTS in 1885, enrolled as a student and graduated in 1889. After Trandberg's departure from the school, Dyrness joined forces with Jernberg to assist the editing of *Evangelisten*, Jernberg's free church periodical. In 1890, Dyrness was called to serve as head pastor at First Scandinavian Congregational Church of Chicago (later renamed Salem Evangelical Free Church), a congregation founded in collaboration with CTS. That same year, he met the Swedish free church organizer Frederik Franson and joined the Board of Directors at Franson's Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM). Dyrness would serve both institutions, SAM and Salem, along with the wider Scandinavian free church network, for the better part of the next four decades[20]

As a former businessman, Dyrness advanced the capitalist ethic of Scandinavian free churches, drawing on their Haugeian and Moodyite inheritances while cultivating independence for free churches and increasing reverence within them for the miracles of money. At Salem, Dyrness quickly built a reputation for his business savvy and institutional growth initiatives, especially through prayerful

[20] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 137-140.

fundraising and capital investment in physical facilities.[21] Among his first two initiatives at Salem was an effort to become financially self-supporting rather than continuing to receive resources from the (likely Congregationalist) mission fund; prayers were offered to encourage donations, and faith in their reception was affirmed on payment. The second initiative aimed to faithfully expand Christ's social body—not through evangelism, directly, but through capital building projects that improved the quality of evangelism. Dyrness' first building project was a basement facility for Salem's Sunday School, an investment that required full payment of the preexisting loan that secured the church's property. After a prayer meeting on the financial matter, Dyrness secured donations and "private notes"—loans from individuals on better terms than those offered by financial institutions—that covered the cost. In 1907, only a decade later, Dyrness enlarged his vision for Salem with a proposal to buy a new lot and build a new expansive edifice at California and McLean Avenues in Logan Square.[22] The plan drew vocal criticism, much from pastors of the larger Scandinavian-American Lutheran denomination who insisted the construction would bankrupt the small congregation.

When Dyrness' plan succeeded nevertheless, conflict between the conservative theology of his free church and the liberalizing beliefs of antagonistic Lutherans shaped ensuing interpretations of divine favor and economic success. Speakers at the 1908 dedication of the new Salem edifice spared no accolade for Dyrness or the beautiful new building. However, their praise directed little if any attention to Dyrness' informed and savvy financial maneuvers. Instead, they directed the congregation to view the building as a miraculous sign of the times, an affirmation of God's favor for their church and a condemnation of apostate theology in larger churches. In his address at the dedication, Otto

[21] According to the Norwegian-American historian Odd Lovoll, Dyrness was well known for "cultivat[ing] relations with the Norwegian-American commercial elite." See Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 236.

[22] The building stands to this day, despite some modifications, and continues to operate as a church that serves primarily Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican and Mexican-American populations. See the corner of California Avenue and McLean Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Grauer of CTS admitted his skepticism for the project when it was proposed, and he credited faith, not fundraising or loan financing, for its surprising success. At the same time, he blamed the failure and closure of other "big churches" on their apparent apostasy: "…no loyalty to Christ and the Word of God!" Emphasizing further theological ramifications of Dyrness' capital investment, Grauer called the new church "…more than just simply man's achievement. It is the work of God—the extension of His kingdom." At Salem, money, loans and property fused with faith, doctrine and eschatology into one neighborhood church.[23]

Salem's new building and its expanded facilities worked quickly to draw in Logan Square's Scandinavian residents, but rather than resting content with one success, Dyrness pursued further expansion by directing his attention towards recruitment and training of new, younger leadership from the area's still-growing immigrant population. In addition to offering more church services and Sunday Schools that cultivated religious community, Salem expanded its social programs, especially in the arenas of immigrant housing and youth engagement. Shortly after the new church was built, Dyrness converted Salem's former building into a Christian mission home, or church-subsidized housing, for Scandinavian women without families. Another mission home for men was established subsequently, due to expressed concern for the "many young people from across the sea … immigrating to our shores."[24] In 1917, Dyrness opened a similar home, the Lydia Children's Home, to house Scandinavian orphans. Dyrness further promoted strong youth programming at the church, and he mentored many youth personally. Among his recruits was a young Torrey Johnson, a first-generation Norwegian-American whose parents immigrated in the late-nineteenth century and later raised the Johnson family in Humboldt Park, just south of Salem Church. Some decades after his time with Dyrness, Johnson—

[23] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 141-148.
[24] Lovoll, *Urban Life,* 235.

by then a famous evangelical preacher, activist and organizer in his own right—recalled with deference and admiration Dyrness' unparalleled skills in "organization and administration and promotion."[25]

Dyrness' concern for and mentorship of Scandinavian immigrant youth also reflected his robust fusion of traditional spiritual concern with matters of church finance, business and economics. While some of Dyrness' young acolytes like Torrey Johnson pursued vocations in ministry, others less talented in public engagement were groomed to engage the business side of free church activism. Among those who grew closest to Dyrness was a young Norwegian immigrant by the name of Carl Gundersen. Through Dyrness, Gundersen learned to balance free church doctrinal commitments with aggressive administrative and organizational expansion of church programs and services. As the twentieth century advanced, Gundersen quickly joined the ranks of Salem's administrative apparatus, embarking on a dual career in private business and religious institutional management.

Gundersen's biography, in particular, provides a distinct snapshot of the social benefits and economic opportunities available to male Scandinavian immigrants of his generation, generally, and to those who acculturated under the guidance of free church influence, particularly. In 1904, the same year Jernberg left *Evangelisten*, a nine-year old Gundersen stepped off a train in Chicago with his mother and three siblings after a long transatlantic journey from Moss, Norway. The Gundersens had come to the United States at the crest of mass Scandinavian migration shortly after Carl's father died unexpectedly, and they followed unwittingly the third phase of Scandinavian neighborhood succession on arrival. They were to live in Logan Square with Carl's aunt, Emma, in a "rambling three-story frame home [that] served as a haven for relatives."[26]

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[25] Johnson also credited Dyrness, not Franson, with the success of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission. See Transcript, Torrey Johnson and Robert Shuster, *"Oral history interview with Torrey Johnson by Robert Shuster,"* T1, CN 285, Papers of Torrey Maynard Johnson, BGCA, https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/transcripts/cn285t01.pdf. (Hereafter, T. Johnson Papers.)

[26] Gundersen, *Long Shadow*, 17.

In Aunt Emma's neighborhood, near the intersection of California and Armitage avenues, the Gundersens found housing, education, and employment alongside fellow Norwegians, as well as Danes, Swedes and Germans, in a robust ethnic enclave. Gundersen enlisted at his neighborhood public school, where he briefly faced ridicule from classmates who mocked his lack of English and called him "greenhorn," a somewhat jocular smear for Scandinavian immigrants. By age fifteen, having learned to dampen his "brogue," Carl obtained employment at a local factory, earning "…$24 to $30 per week"—or approximately $750 weekly, adjusted for inflation. That same year, Carl decided to drop out of Carl Schurz High School, a Chicago public school that primarily served European ethnic populations (Germans, Poles and at least some Norwegians), to pursue real estate profits as a homebuilder. He purchased his first lot in 1910 and took on an apprenticeship with bricklayers.[27] By age 16, he contracted out for other builders. By age 17, he finished his first full home, only eight years removed from a childhood in Moss.

Gundersen's economic advancement intersected with a growing religious social life at his neighborhood church, Dyrness' Salem, where free church sensibilities augmented and encouraged his social and professional development. At Salem, he found the support of fellow Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans who helped his transition to American life. As an adolescent, he joined the youth society and youth choir. As a teenager, he began to organize Saturday night "street meetings" with other young men, where he eventually met his future wife, Valborg. Along with his responsibilities in the church, Gundersen's relationship with Dyrness also grew. Valborg Gundersen later described the free church icon as Carl's "chief advisor and confidant," as well as his father figure. In the 1910s, Gundersen and Dyrness' burgeoning relationship established Carl's path as a religious institutional

[27] Ibid. For the high school's place in the history of ethnic language instruction in public schools, see Johnathan Zimmerman, "Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-language Instruction, 1890-1940," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Mar. 2002), 1389. For more on ethnicity and language, see below.

manager. When Carl turned 19, Dyrness installed him as the superintendent of the Salem Sunday School, making him the youngest member of the church's board of directors. Again, Valborg later described this early phase of economic advancement and religious leadership as one where "Carl's construction business prospered. T]hroughout the day, he was busy supervising work on the buildings. The evenings he filled with Christian activities: board meetings, committees and helping out at some rescue mission."[28]

Dyrness' influence and the sensibilities of the free church tradition soon collapsed the line of distinction between Gundersen's daytime economic activities and his nightly and weekend work at the church. By 1917, Gundersen found himself compelled to commit to the missionary mandate of his faith. CTS' Scandinavian departments had shuttered just a year prior, and given his business successes and growing family, Gundersen had no incentive to move to Minneapolis to attend the Norwegian-Danish BIA. He enrolled instead at MBI, splitting time between family, business, church and Christian education. He graduated in three years and faced an existential crisis: should he commit full-time to Christian service, or, in the later words of his wife, "remain in business and serve the Lord by providing financial assistance so that others might serve?"[29]

A few weeks later, his crisis was resolved. As a recent graduate and successful businessman, Gundersen was invited to preach a sermon for a class at MBI. The topic, "Business is Business," focused on church stewardship, or fundraising, and Gundersen utilized Matthew 6:19-21 as his source text. After the sermon, offerings totaled only $15, an abject failure in Gundersen's view. Accordingly, he came to reassess his skills as a preacher. He turned to his closest advisor, Dyrness, for advice, and Dyrness delivered in terms consonant with his influences and particular tradition. "God needs Christian businessmen as much as He needs preachers," he told Gundersen. "You have a talent for

[28] Gundersen, *Long Shadow,* 22.
[29] Ibid., 29.

making money," he went on, "[i]f you will use that talent for God's glory, He can take your service and multiply it many times…"[30]

Dyrness' guidance quieted a personal anxiety for Gundersen by providing a key rationale of pro-capitalist Christian ethics under industrialism. In his sermon at MBI, Gundersen had appealed to a famous biblical imperative regularly interpreted as an injunction against material wealth: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth…[b]ut store up for yourselves treasures in heaven…[f]or where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."[31] In Dyrness' estimation, ironically, that passage need not be taken so literally. What the church needed—as much as devotees who abandoned their inheritance to preach the gospel—was devotees who could lend alms to the penniless itinerant missionary. In other words, earthly treasures could be parlayed into heavenly ones through material investment in religious causes. While the advice freed Gundersen to pursue business success with one eye firmly on God, it also further sanctified capitalist gains for evangelical purposes. In the early twentieth century, Dyrness and Gundersen together took another step forward in a world where miracles of bread and fish or water and wine were supplanted by miracles of finance. They would continue to search for those miracles as they worked together to expand the religious and social services of Salem Church, SAM and the Norwegian-Danish EFCA. Within five years of Gundersen's conversion to the business of salvation, he was managing building operations for new facilities at Salem, including a massive $150,000 expansion of the men and women's mission homes on an increasingly sprawling church campus.[32]

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[30] Ibid., 29-30. According to Sarah Ruth Hammond, the evangelical businessman, activist and organizer R.G. LeTourneau had a very similar experience with his own pastor, around the same time. See Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, 17.

[31] Matthew 6:19-21.

[32] Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart*, 167-8.

Nordic, American, Protestant: Immigration Restrictions and the Language of Scandinavian-American Racial Emancipation

Before more significant gains could be made, however, a number of circumstances sapped the strength of Scandinavian neighborhoods and ethnic institutions. By 1914, the onset of World War I diverted significant human and capital resources from transatlantic migration efforts to the European battlefront, depressing access to migration routes. In Scandinavia, moreover, the mass population exodus of prior decades worked with state efforts to improve social conditions in Scandinavian cities, vastly decreasing economic motivations for emigration. In some instances, it encouraged repatriation. While nearly a quarter of a million of Norwegian immigrated to the United States in the opening decades of the century, almost 50,000 moved back to Norway by the 1920s.[33] Most importantly, restrictive immigration legislation in the United States after 1920—designed specifically to curtail Italian immigration—introduced national quotas that also drastically reduced Scandinavian entry. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 first set immigration rates for European migration to three-percent of the number of nationals in the United States in 1910, a date before which the largest waves of Scandinavians had already arrived. The 1910 baseline, accordingly, still allowed a generous Scandinavian quota relative to prior rates of immigration. The Immigration Act of 1924, however, reduced that quota to two-percent of 1890 population numbers, a date that preceded the second large influx of Scandinavian populations. After 1924, Scandinavian immigration dropped from its peak of tens of thousands per year to no more than a few thousand.

As the immigrant well-spring of Scandinavian culture in the United States dried up, Scandinavian free churches found themselves in an advantageous position to grasp new opportunities in the 1920s and -30s that would pave the way for assimilation into the evangelical mainstream by the middle of

[33] Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 230.

the century. For Scandinavian institutions that had spent the better part of the last half century preserving the cultural heritage of their home nations in order to grow their organizational base and better serve new immigrants, the sudden collapse of fresh arrivals spelled catastrophe. Services that directly targeted immigrants became nearly obsolete. Moreover, a new generation of Scandinavian-American youth matured in the absence of cultural infusions from ancestral homelands. Their upbringing in United States society, including their education in American schools, encouraged the use of English and the adoption of American customs. Suddenly, Scandinavian institutions that fostered the social memory and cultural practices of the old country, including many Scandinavian-American Lutheran Churches, faced a significant decline in audience and attention. Free churches, on the other hand, had long cultivated cooperation with American institutions and strongly promoted the Americanization of Scandinavians in the United States. Accordingly, they were well prepared to encourage total assimilation for the youth generation as well as to pivot toward evangelical projects that reached beyond the ethnic enclaves to a larger American public.[34]

Free church efforts to assimilate were aided, somewhat ironically, by the same shifts in American racial ideology that fomented immigration restrictions after 1924. Although free church leaders of the early twentieth century rarely addressed their own racial identity in explicit terms—as R.A. Jernberg had so clearly done to end the previous century—Scandinavian-Americans of all religious stripes no doubt benefitted from a growing "Nordicization" of racial ideology and Christian iconography in the United States. Most infamously, the lawyer and self-styled naturalist Madison Grant published a new essay of European racial history in 1916 that recast Scandinavia as the "chief nursery and broodland of the master race."[35] In Grant's new history, "Nordics" claimed responsibility for every great achievement of Western civilization, while every great down fall issued from non-Nordic populations,

[34] See Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity*, 17-20.
[35] Grant, *Great Race*, 211.

Nordic displacement or, often, miscegenation. Grant's ideas were not new, of course; in many ways, they mirrored Jernberg's racial sentiments of twenty years earlier, specifically regarding Nordic vigor and language as positive hereditary influences on Anglo-Saxon and wider European civilizations.[36] Grant's influence, on the other hand, was much greater: as a Yale-trained lawyer and popular conservationist, Grant ran in elite social circles that included Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover, both of whom were openly sympathetic to Grant's revised Nordic theory. In later decades, Adolf Hitler adopted Grant's work as his "bible," and Nazi leaders and scientists utilized it to justify mass murder and genocide.

In the United States, Grant's oft-incoherent and entirely prejudicial racial analysis echoed concerns of nineteenth-century Protestant nationalism as immigration from Italy and Poland, in particular, increased dramatically. Politically speaking, Grant's primary object of concern was the restriction of immigration from these supposedly inferior "Neolithic Mediterranean" countries, and his statistics were used eventually to set quotas in the Immigration Act of 1924. While Grant saw "the passing of a great race" in the non-Nordic racial influence of southern and eastern European immigrants who came to the United States, he nevertheless praised Scandinavian immigrants as Marcus Montgomery had done three decades earlier. Grant resented that southern and eastern Europeans, like earlier Irish, came to America persecuted, impoverished and in need—material circumstances that he believed reflected their racial heritage as much as their hair color or height. Racially superior Nordics, Grant argued, historically migrated out of a vigorous drive to explore, to adventure and to expand: "…[N]omadism as well as love of war and adventure are Nordic characteristics," he asserted. Accordingly, Grant viewed Scandinavian immigration—despite its often economic and political

[36] Grant himself directly followed the works of racist taxonomist William Z. Ripley. See Painter, *History of White People*, 212-227.

causes—with more sympathetic eyes. "Denmark, Norway and Sweden," Grant insisted, "…yearly contribute swarms of a splendid type of immigrants to America."[37]

Religiously speaking, Grant's racist nationalism also affirmed the superiority of Protestant church and social orders, especially over and above Catholic "imperialism." Grant held no sympathy whatsoever for Catholics, further compounding his distaste for Italians and Poles. He accused the Catholic church of "everywhere us[ing] its influence to break down racial distinctions" that were essential to civilized society as he saw it. Echoing ecclesiological concerns of the nineteenth century—and further resonant with emerging ecclesiological controversy in the twentieth century—Grant argued that the Catholic church "disregards origins and only requires obedience to the mandates of the universal church. …It maintains the imperial as contrasted with the nationalistic ideal…."[38] While Grant saw the Catholic church taking advantage of subservient, racially inferior populations, he saw Protestant adherence as a reflection of Nordic values. "The Nordic race is domineering, individualistic, self-reliant and jealous of their personal freedom both in their political and religious systems," Grant insisted, "and as a result they are usually Protestant."[39] Among other matters, Grant affirmed thusly that Protestant nationalism reflected prominent, but threatened, Nordic heritage in America.

Grant's racist ideology, and his activist promotion of it, supported other more public efforts to tie Christianity—and Christ himself—to "white" Nordic heritage. For his part, Grant offered approval to European art that portrayed Christ as "the blond Savior," a convention he described as a "quasi-authentic tradition" that "…strongly suggest[s] his Nordic, possibly Greek, physical and moral attributes."[40] Images of a white Christ from this European tradition proliferated in a new global market

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[37] Grant, *Great Race*, 211.
[38] Ibid., 85.
[39] Ibid., 228.
[40] Quoted in Blum and Harvey, *The Color of Christ,* 163.

that distributed mass productions of Christian iconography alongside other material goods. The white Christ of new mass media did not always have "blond" hair, as Grant described, but he almost exclusively had pale white skin, fine features and straight, parted, long hair in a medieval European style. This racial visualization of Christ quickly jumped from print media to the screen with the advent of motion pictures. Most famously, the white Christ appeared to bless the United States at the end of D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, a film that romanticized and then popularized the Ku Klux Klan as a symbol of rightful and righteous white supremacy in the nation. Less politically and racially confrontational depictions of the Nordic Christ received even more positive public appraisal in ensuing decades. When Henry Stanley Todd first showed his new work *The Nazarene, or Christ Triumphant* in 1933, it received rave review from a wide range of Christians and Christian organizations, including the Federal Council of Churches. Meeting Grant's highest ideal, Todd's Christ had—in the words of Paul Harvey and Ed Blum—"…a resolute look, pale skin, blond hair, and clear blue eyes."[41] This "new" Christ may as well have been born in Sweden.

For Scandinavian-American free churches, the social dynamics of 'Nordicized' white Protestant nationalism played out in Chicago's transitional urban neighborhoods. The urban migrations of the 1910s had included the expansion of Italian, Polish and Ukrainian Catholic communities, as well as the growth of black communities brought by the first trickles of a soon-to-be-great migration from the American south. Scandinavian-American social institutions, free church or otherwise, rarely expanded their programs to reach these communities, and the vast majority sold their property and moved elsewhere, or closed permanently.[42] As new migrants from within the United States and from abroad settled in old Scandinavian enclaves, select free churches also responded to neighborhood

[41] Ibid, 168. See 141-169 for Blum and Harvey's full review of Nordic nativism in the early twentieth century.
[42] See Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart,* 273-313.

transition by restraining and redirecting free churches' scope of communal identity and religious service.

Whether a discriminatory preference for ethnic and racial homogeneity, a pragmatic question of operational limits, or a reflection of God's intended social design, urban free churches facing neighborhood transition valued discrete populations over sacred place. Among the historical congregations that moved from its neighborhood was the First Swedish Evangelical Free Church and its Oak Street Hall, famous among the free churches as the home of Princell's original SBIC courses. The hall was located in an old Swedish neighborhood on the western edge of the Gold Coast near present day downtown Chicago, or "the old north side." A 1934 publication that celebrated the fifty year anniversary of the Swedish EFCA laid out an explicit rationale for the move made nearly two decades earlier:

> As the people of southern Europe and the colored races more and more invaded "the old north side" of Chicago, the Scandinavian people sought more desirable residential districts. Because many members of the church joined in this exodus, a new problem faced the congregation. It was readily conceded that if the church should continue to function and minister to the spiritual needs of …its own constituency, it would be absolutely necessary to locate in a community where a large number of the members already resided and where there was greater prospect for future gospel work.[43]

Echoing the racist logic of Grant's Nordic theory, the Swedish free church congregation at Oak Street imagined their former neighborhood's fortunes to be a consequence of degenerate 'races,' rather than one of residential disinvestment, industrial relocation or immigration legislation, among other effective causes. New populations—here "southern Europeans" and "the colored races"—were imagined as "invaders" near the low end of a social hierarchy, not as fellow migrants in need of religious and social service. According to the scribe of Oak Street Hall's history, at least, the very

[43] Halleen et al., *Golden Jubiliee*, 86.

presence of these populations seemed to render former Scandinavian-American neighborhoods intolerable to "the Scandinavian people."

For the purposes of the church, the influx of non-"Nordic" peoples raised a unique quandary: namely, what population does the church serve? Moreover, how does a church increase its "prospect" for gospel work—for the growth of the church through service, preaching and proselytization—given that population? In the opening decades of the twentieth century, the answers to these questions were straightforward for a cornerstone Swedish-American free church: the congregation would serve "its own constituency" in a "desirable neighborhood"—not the foreign, Catholic or "colored" hordes of a dilapidating urban enclave. First Swedish Evangelical Free, accordingly, moved to the far north neighborhood of Andersonville, an area further afield of blacks and southern Europeans and one long-since home to Swedish immigrants and Swedish-Americans.

For the free churches in general, however, not all decisions about church boundaries—racial or geographical—were so exclusive. At the same moment that select Scandinavian-American free churches redrew the physical boundaries of their congregations to distance their gospel work from southern Europeans and blacks, free churches simultaneously re-evaluated and re-conceived their relationship to Anglo-Americans. Under a racial regime even more friendly to mythical Scandinavian heritage, free church leaders no longer imagined their differences with their "American" counterparts to be a matter of race. In effect, they had been "emancipated" as R.A. Jernberg had aspired decades earlier.

Instead, free church leaders supplanted prior racial concerns with exclusive 'language concerns' as the primary difficulty faced by their religious institutions, especially to begin the era of restricted immigration. Free church assimilationists and other like-minded Scandinavian-American pietists had

long anticipated this problem, and they argued dramatically for English adoption.[44] As early as 1899, David Nyvall—a one-time professor in the Swedish Department at CTS and a leader in the Swedish Mission Covenant of America—argued that "…it will not be long before we reach the transition from Swedish to English. …[T]he younger generation prefers [it.]" He recognized, moreover, that the future of Swedish churches in America, and all the convictions carried within them, rested on their handling of this transition. "We need pastors," he continued, "who, in their training among us have become one with us inwardly, one with us in our faith and conviction regarding personal spiritual life and church polity, pastors who are able to transmit to succeeding generations this precious heritage of principle." Nyvall recognized that succeeding generations would transmit the "precious heritage" of pietistic individualism and ecclesiastical localism in the English language.

For C.T. Dyrness and the Norwegian-Danish EFCA, the enduring language problem had simultaneous eschatological and ecclesiological ramifications. In 1921, accordingly, Dyrness painted language concerns with millenarian themes: "We shall soon face the change of language," he proclaimed. "We are looking for the coming of the Lord," he continued, "but must prepare for the change of language if the Lord should tarry." For Dyrness, the solution required not only a transmission of principles, but collaboration with English-speaking groups beyond the ethnic community and against the interests of major denominations. "Either we cooperate with other groups of like faith and principles," he argued, "or we shall be swallowed up by the large denominations and what we have worked so hard to build up will be no more. We can now begin to cooperate in our home missions program, our foreign missions, and the work of the school without difficulty."[45]

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[44] For more on ethnic resistance to ethnic language use, education and retention, see Zimmerman, "Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-language Instruction, 1890-1940," 1383-1404. Zimmerman argues that internal ethnic resistance to ethnic language use rested on variable factors including, among others, immigrant apathy, interethnic conflict, anti-foreign WWI sentiments, and distinct regional rather than "pure" national linguistic preferences. To that list, we can add sources of religious dissent in assimilationist ethnic evangelical churches.

[45] Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity,* 27-28.

With the foresight afforded by their assimilationist drive, the urgency of end times and an open-ended ecclesiological stance at the top of mind, leaders of the Scandinavian-American EFCAs, including Dyrness, were ready to make their pivot away from ethnic language traditions to wider English-speaking projects. As with theological controversy in the opening decades of the twentieth century, moreover, language concerns of ensuing decades facilitated innovative institutional and infrastructural developments that aimed to transform and grow the church. In fact, the dual EFCAs would no longer settle for collaboration with English-speaking organizations, they would become English-speaking organizations themselves. After Dyrness' speech in 1921, the Norwegian-Danish BIA offered its first bible course in English and slowly began preparing Norwegian-Danish EFCA pastors for English service.[46] By 1923, Dyrness pioneered a program at Salem to divide the church into two departments: the first, a Scandinavian department to host the older generation, and the second, an English department to cater to first- and second-generation Scandinavian-Americans *and* their English-speaking American peers. The church board was split in two, the English department constructed its own building a block down the street from the original church, and an English-speaking pastor was called to serve it. Attendance at both churches increased in the ensuing years.[47]

Language changes came to the Scandinavian-American EFCAs' publications as well, and they similarly aimed to widen the audience for free churches. Younger generations were targeted first; in 1920, the Norwegian-Danish Free Church publication for children was transitioned from Norwegian to English. Seven years later, the editors of the Norwegian-language *Evangelisten* faced declining readership, so its editors facilitated another organizational split. From then on, *Evangelisten* was known as *The Evangelist,* and it alternated weekly editions, with one staff writing in Norwegian one week and another staff in English the next week. At the Swedish *Chicago-Bladet*—Princell's former newspaper

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[46] Ibid., 23.
[47] Ibid., 20. See also Odegaard, *Singleness of Heart,* 161-2.

and the official Swedish EFCA paper of record after 1926—readership also declined significantly in the 1920s. By 1931, the denomination began printing an English-only publication, *The Evangelical Beacon*.[48]

The *Beacon's* transition to English-language publication reflected new denominational ambivalence toward ethnic, national and racial identity, especially as efforts to grow the church through Anglo-American engagement met the economic demands of robust media distribution. Despite—or perhaps because of—the shift in target audience, the *Beacon's* first edition made little reference to the denomination's ethnic heritage outside naming local churches with national titles in their official names. Significantly more attention was paid to the need to expand the paper's readership with entrepreneurial zeal in communities within and beyond Scandinavian-American enclaves. Only one short editorial in the first volume, penned by the Swedish EFCA president E.A. Halleen, addressed the language issue itself. In his brief commentary, Halleen noted the palpable anxiety that preceded the publication of the English-language periodical, and he urged readers of *Chicago-Bladet* to subscribe to both papers. Most importantly for the prospects of the nascent publication, Halleen challenged Swedish free church pastors to take responsibility for pushing the paper to "…the outsiders, the new territories, the folk, young or old, who are interested in our work, or should be…." In closing, Halleen encouraged the distribution of the new paper with missionary, or salesman-like, enthusiasm: "The drive is on!" he exclaimed, "Who will be the first to report? Who will report the largest number of subscriptions?"[49]

[48] Roy A. Thompson, *The Dynamic of the Printed Page in EFC History*, vol. 4, 8 vols., Heritage Series, 1884-1984 (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 1981), 37-47.

[49] E.A. Haleen, "A Pastor's Job," *Beacon*, October 6, 1931.

Fundamental Fellowship: Free Church Ecclesiology against Modernism

Despite Halleen's zealous effort to expand the church and its influence, his Swedish EFCA nevertheless continued to be selective in the kinds of community that it aimed to adopt and cultivate. As Scandinavian-American free churches and free church leaders reoriented their institutions to face a wider and whiter English-speaking public in the 1920s, Scandinavian-American enclaves of Chicago continued to diffuse from their strongholds on the north and near west sides to integrate in neighborhoods and new, small suburbs farther north and west. In new confines, evangelistic efforts intensified to reach Anglo-Americans alongside Scandinavian-American immigrants and their children. Nevertheless, free church religious preferences and priorities also fixed free church goals to discrete portions of the Anglo-American Protestant population: particularly, conservative Protestants who proclaimed increasingly strict views on biblical literalism, premillennialism and other related doctrines. Following the release of Lyman Stewart's collection of conservative Protestant thought, *The Fundamentals,* in the 1910s, this conservative cohort defined, adopted and embraced the public title of "fundamentalist," and they emerged from the decade swinging wildly and publicly against higher criticism, modernists, liberal social theologies and myriad other "-isms," religious and political.[50] Free church leaders and organizations adopted this fundamentalist identity in concert with their turn to English-language service and Anglo-American proselytization.

In matters of religious identity and rhetoric, free church leaders embraced the mantle of conservative fundamentalism fully and unapologetically. Of course, long-standing associations with Moody and MBI assured that both the Norwegian-Danish and Swedish EFCAs were familiar with and sympathetic to the nascent movement. In the 1920s, the Swedish EFCA had offered public support to figureheads of the movement, including William Jennings Bryan; as the Scopes trial of

[50] See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 119-120

1925 proceeded, Swedish EFCA leaders telegrammed Bryan directly, describing their solidarity in his fight even as ridicule mounted in northern periodicals.[51] Despite popular public mockery of Bryan and the fundamentalists, the Swedish EFCA maintained and strengthened their fundamentalist loyalties into the 1930s with no apparent embarrassment, no diminution of enthusiasm and no organizational disarray.

In fact, free churches' fundamentalist identity increased in terms of institutional cooperation and religious rhetoric as the Depression era advanced, despite exaggerated rumors of fundamentalism's demise. Editors and regular contributors of *The Evangelical Beacon*—often leaders of the Swedish EFCA denomination, pastors of its churches, missionaries in global fields, or professors at sympathetic bible institutes—expressed a variety of connections to the movement. Swedish EFCA leaders, from President E.A. Halleen down to local free church pastors, regularly attended and reported on meetings of regional "fundamental" church associations. The *Beacon* followed similarly the activities of William Bell Riley's World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA), then led by Paul Rood.[52] Beyond formal organizational participation and press coverage of it, the *Beacon* adopted with vigor the language and rhetoric of fundamentalism. Contributors regularly stressed the need for "fundamental truths of the bible." Key doctrines like the virgin birth, atonement, resurrection and the necessity of regeneration were described as "fundamental" to free church beliefs. Most importantly, authors referred to themselves and to free church members as "fundamentalists." As one Swedish free church pastor proclaimed in the *Beacon's* pages: "Even we evangelical and fundamentalist people need to hear again from the open grave that mssage [sic] of undying hope which then set the world on fire

[51] See also Norton, *Diamond Jubilee*, 106.

[52] See, for instance, "Announcements," *Beacon,* December 6, 1932; "Beacon Beams from Western Nebraska," *Beacon*, September 27, 1932; "News from Our Churches," *Beacon*, November 21, 1933; "News from Our Churches," *Beacon*, July 3, 1933; among many others.

and which has never lost its power."[53] In the words of *Beacon* editor Roy Thompson, there were "few groups that are more united on these great fundamental doctrines…"[54] than the Swedish EFCA.

As self-identified paradigmatic fundamentalists, moreover, Swedish EFCA leaders placed as much if not more emphasis on denunciations of liberal modernism as they did on positive assessments of conservative doctrinal principles. Accordingly, free churches' fundamentalist identity came to be defined by the strength of their opposition to modernism and modernists in addition to their support of fundamentalism and other fundamentalists. In the *Beacon's* columns, as elsewhere in popular fundamentalist rhetoric, modernists were painted frequently with exceedingly broad, unequivocal and universally damning strokes. A positive review of a new fundamentalist book, for instance, detailed modernist doctrinal heresies and described modernism as distinct from Christianity as Confucianism.[55] Deploying another common metaphor with characteristic vitriol, the Rev. Fred Beck of Mckeesport, Pennsylvania described modernism as a rapidly growing "ivy vine" that choked the "…sturdy trunk of Christian character and faith in God…[shut] out the sunlight of grace and truth…[and sapped] the life from many of our splendid Christian people …leav[ing] them …a lifeless, dried up piece of humanity, good for nothing but the fire."[56] Later, Beck compared modernist preachers to "dry-cell batter[ies]—dry, limited and black on the inside."[57] Other contributors tied modernism and modernists to imminent apocalypse, and one even linked modernism to original sin, describing liberal theology and biblical criticism as "a soul-damning message…as old as Satan himself, who induced our first

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[53] Irving A.D. Johnson, "The Sunday School Lesson," *Beacon*, June 5, 1934.
[54] Roy Thompson, "Should the Free Church Have a Creed?" *Beacon*, February 14, 1933.
[55] "New Books," *Beacon*, February 22, 1938.
[56] Fred Beck, "Huge Trifles," *Beacon*, June 28, 1932.
[57] Fred Beck, "Arrow-Heads," *Beacon*, December 3, 1935.

parents to doubt their Creator."[58] In short, the Swedish EFCA's paper of record spared little restraint in their often dehumanizing assessments of the modernist threat.

Beyond attacking modernists with unrestrained rhetoric, free church leaders allegorized their contemporaneous theological battles in terms consonant with their own history, so that present concerns became to them a coherent piece of an unfolding, authoritative narrative.[59] Put otherwise, free church leaders selectively circumscribed their own narratives as Scandinavian pietists and immigrant churches in the United States, just as they simplified the complexities of their present. Twentieth-century free church leaders, for instance, averred ecclesiastical continuity with nineteenth-century Scandinavian inner missions on the basis that both were revival-oriented movements that challenged the authority of dominant ecclesiastical powers—a simplistic claim made despite significant ecclesiastical revolutions (not to mention social and cultural ones) over the prior century. Likewise, free church leaders in the 1930s claimed to uphold the ecclesiological values of the Swedish EFCA established in 1884—including those that required believers to "stand fast in liberty" and "remain independent of all forms of church authority"—despite strengthened denominational authority within free churches in recent years and decades.[60] In 1936, half a century after the Swedish EFCA's founding, the Rev. Arthur Kallman described their ecclesiastical history as the gift to the present from pioneers who "…sacrificed much to give us a **Free** Church, free from popery and subserviency to ecclesiastical lords, each local congregation being an independent unit.[61]" In the early twentieth century, however, dominant ecclesiastical powers and church authority meant something very specific in free church rhetoric: not state churches or denominational organization *per se*, as it

[58] On apocalyptic takes, see "Greetings from the Colorado Conference," *Beacon*, September 12, 1933; Gustaf F. Johnson, "A Vision of Glory in Desperate Days," *Beacon*, February 13, 1934. On original sin, see Merril T. MacPherson, "The Menace of Modernism," *Beacon*, February 11, 1936.

[59] See again Dawson, *Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

[60] See Chapter 1 of this work, pages 75-76.

[61] Arthur Kallman, "Fresh Facts," *Beacon*, July 14, 1936. Emphasis original.

once had been, but rather modernist leaders and *their* denominational institutions and bureaucracies *in particular*. By inference, a *free* church in the 1930s required total independence from modernism, doctrinally, and mainline denominational control, ecclesiastically; freedom could not be found apart from fundamentalist doctrine, just as it could be enlarged only by new, collaborative fundamentalist institutions.

Free church ecclesiology further encouraged fundamentalist identity and cooperation by defining the church not as the institutions of the church, but rather as the divine and spiritual unity of all regenerate souls who recognized one other with supernatural power, granting trust and confidence between themselves. Because free church leaders saw themselves as regenerate souls, their spiritual sympathy for and increasing collaboration with fundamentalists suggested a sacred unity that demanded further amplification. In a Sunday School lesson published by the *Beacon* in 1933, the Rev. H.G. Rodine described the ability to recognize members of Christ's family as a fundamental "heart understanding" among the saved: "all who are made alive in Christ are one in Him," Rodine asserted, and are able to share, he continued, "…the same 'mind' and the same 'judgment' …even though they are not all of the same denominational color."[62] Free church leaders saw these ecclesiological values reflected in the vigorous independence of fundamentalist congregations and, increasingly, in their voluntary cooperation with one another. As Roy Thompson put it that same year, "The independent fundamentalist churches… are beginning to lose their self-sufficiency and are banding themselves together in a union similar in character to the bond that unites the Evangelical Free Churches." Thompson hoped that other fundamentalists, like the free churches, would continue "…to realize the value of fellowship …with other churches similar in faith and practice, and to recognize that unity of purpose and union of energies are essential to …the extension of their influence in the world."

[62] H.G. Rodine, "The Sunday School Lesson," *Beacon*, November 7, 1933.

Altogether, Thompson recognized in the fundamentalist bond the roots of a "new free church movement."[63]

Ecclesiology also provided grounds for constructive critique of fundamentalists, as well as opportunity for free churches to reform the fundamentalist movement in their own "free" ecclesial and doctrinal image. Alongside his praise for growing fundamentalist interdependence, Thompson expressed concern over fundamentalist rigidity, and he offered free church solutions to improve fundamentalist congeniality and cooperation without demanding doctrinal or ecclesiastical fealty. "One of the principles upon which our work is established," Thompson asserted, "is *freedom* to form our own conclusions and statements of doctrinal belief." Accordingly, Thompson criticized fundamentalist efforts underway to unite fundamentalists on the basis of formal creeds, mandatory association fees, membership loyalty tests and disaffiliation with other denominations. These kinds of "impositions," Thompson argued, "savor[ed] too strongly of that much hated term, 'denominationalism.'"[64]

Instead, Thompson recommended that independent fundamentalist churches consider joining the formerly-Swedish EFCA, and free church leaders in general pressed for *less* independence from other "true Christians" in their own work. The new EFCA, in both Thompson and E.A. Halleen's view, offered fellowship and resources that independent fundamentalists sought—no language barriers remained, no modernism prevailed, a vast missionary enterprise already existed and a common 'spirit' of independence reigned. In an editorial titled "Doctrinal Differences," Thompson again reiterated the vital importance of "fundamental doctrines," but he nevertheless insisted there were not so many as "orthodox and evangelical" pastors often made out. Recognizing "our oneness with every other redeemed child of God," Thompson urged those of fundamental faith to "…live together and

[63] Roy Thompson, "A New 'Free Church' Movement," *Beacon*, May 23, 1933.
[64] Ibid. Emphasis original.

worship together and labor together for the Master in spite of our little differences of opinion[.]"[65] In a sermon delivered to the 1936 EFCA General Conference, E.A. Halleen extended this encouragement to those with "independent spirit" in the EFCA who, in his view, "…hindered the growth of the Free Church." Halleen reminded his audience that the EFCA had "…a spirit, a form of government, an organization that is very liberal. We can fellowship with folks that differ from us in the non-essential things. We will welcome those who differ as to modes of baptism, etc. I cannot see that anything at all should hinder true Christians from fellowship with the Free Church."[66] For both Thompson and Halleen, as long as doctrinal differences were "little" or "non-essential"—such as the method of baptism—then fellowship was not only possible, but necessary.

For major or essential doctrinal differences, however, the "very liberal" spirit, government and organization of the free churches met its hard limits. Just as ecclesiology encouraged cooperative efforts with fundamentalists in a free church style, it discouraged any collaboration with the modernistic "ecclesiastical lords" of the major Protestant churches and denominations, whose "apostasy," in the words of Halleen, was "appalling."[67] Halleen's view reflected common fundamentalist assumptions that modernism had left many churches bereft of spirit—not just of spiritual fervor or enthusiasm, but of the Holy Spirit itself. As the Dr. Merrill MacPherson put it, in the pages of the *Beacon*, modernism left the visible church "devitalized… [and] too emaciated and anaemic to function as it should."[68]

In the EFCA's ecclesiological terms, the modernist churches were unable, therefore, to offer "heart understanding," shared mind or judgment, or unity in Christ. Accordingly, free churches had no fellowship for them. In local communities, free church home missionaries organized their own

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[65] Roy Thompson, "Doctrinal Differences," *Beacon*, April 10, 1934.
[66] E.A. Halleen, "Whither Bound and Why?" *Beacon*, June 30, 1936.
[67] E.A. Halleen, "In a Few Years—What?" *Beacon*, October 5, 1937.
[68] MacPherson, "Modernism."

congregations as alternatives to existing churches supposedly "ruled by modernism."[69] Free church editorials urged new pastors to avoid any education from the "great modernistic school[s]."[70] Others warned local churches to be wary of "modernism in Sunday School literature," recommending that pastors switch from literature subscriptions that overtly or subtly promoted apostate theologies.[71] All in all, EFCA leaders warned of spiritual death *and* subsequent organizational collapse should any roots of modernism's "little ivy" spread in their fields, and they followed practical institutional measures to prevent modernism from taking root.

Free Church Fellowship Beyond Doctrine and Spirit

For the free churches, fundamentalist fellowship in the 1920s and early 1930s became a defining, perhaps even central feature of their religious self-identity. For good reason, fundamentalist fellowships of the early twentieth century have long occupied the attention of scholars of United States religion as well, and the free churches' embrace of fundamentalism largely fits known narratives of doctrinal controversy, intra-Protestant acrimony and ecclesiastical restructuring of the era. Nevertheless, a wider view of free church ecclesiology and its accordant institutional reforms reveals that fundamentalist fellowship relied on social transformations well outside circumscribed theological, doctrinal or scriptural concerns. So-called secular issues, like those of economic concern, came to the fore as doctrinal controversies threatened extant institutional structures of an immigrant church. In order to become a 'pure' church, then, free churches required new access to capital, innovative financial practices and business expertise that ensured their brick-and-mortar institutionalizations. When capital succeeded in building the church as desired, free church leaders retroactively sanctified

[69] "A New Free Church at Radisson, Wisconsin," *Beacon*, February 16, 1932.
[70] Irving Halleen, "How Much Education Do Our Preachers Need?" *Beacon*, December 31, 1935.
[71] Irving Halleen, "Spiritual Responsibility of the Sunday School Worker," *Beacon*, November 5, 1935.

the financial mechanisms that brought such success. Finance became God's will, and material structures were viewed as an extension of God's kingdom.

Matters of race and ethnic national identity were no less essential to the development of free church fellowship, and fundamentalist alliances were deeply predicated on free churches' long-held desire to become 'American'—shorthand for white English-speaking Anglo-Americans.[72] Just as R.A. Jernberg had championed sympathy for American institutions in order to free Scandinavian immigrants from the shackles of foreign difference and ethnic isolation, so did leaders like C.T. Dyrness encourage English-language reforms to save the free churches from obsolescence after global war and racist immigration restrictions severed Euro-American institutions from their primary source of new recruits. Moreover, the very ability to focus on language reforms alone required new popular visions of Nordic racial heritage and white supremacy that muted prior perceptions of cultural and racial difference between Anglo- and Scandinavian-Americans. These developments in immigration and racial ideology ensured and even demanded that free church institutions redeploy their human and material resources away from ethnic national service and towards stronger institutional collaboration with Anglo-American fundamentalists.

Finally, free church fellowship with fundamentalists relied on and promoted ideals of American religion that reified popular racial understandings of a superior, white-skinned and civilized people. Free churches—as their name constantly reminds—concerned themselves incessantly with matters of religious freedom as they saw it: the right to worship with whomever one wished based on the individual's own rational understanding and spiritual feeling. As Madison Grant described the concern, with far more explicit racial terminology, "[t]he Nordic race is domineering, individualistic, self-reliant and jealous of their personal freedom both in their political and religious systems."[73] Lesser races and

[72] On this usage of "American," see Painter, *History of White People*.
[73] Grant, *Great Race*, 228.

religions, in this view, were incapable of securing the freedoms that free churches and Protestants in general worked to secure.

As the twentieth century advanced, free churches and fundamentalists alike grew increasingly alarmed to see what they understood to be a sinister retreat from religious freedom in mainstream Protestantism itself. Free churches and fundamentalists, accordingly, raised their banners of religious freedom—"free from popery and subserviency to ecclesiastical lords"—in an effort to maintain not only their ideological claims to domineering, individualistic and self-reliant religion, but also to strengthen the institutions that reified those claims in human social orders.[74] More often than not, fundamentalist 'freedoms' were defined as freedoms *from* supposed external influence and control. What mattered, then, was which powers were internal to and authorized by a "free church" and which powers were external and opposed to a "free church." As the economic devastations of the 1930s marched the world towards another global war, free church fundamentalists continued to expend significant energy discerning who belonged within and who resided outside their fellowship, and their divinations increasingly relied on matters of economics and race in addition to well-known doctrinal and theological positions.

[74] Kallman, "Fresh Facts," *Beacon*, July 14, 1936. Emphasis original.

III.
"By Tomorrow, We'll All Be Americans:" Social Order, Corporate Blessings and the Demise of Ethnic Nationalism in the Free Churches, 1930-1950

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
—Psalm 11:3

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
—Matthew 6:33

In mid-June of 1950, exactly halfway through the twentieth century, two small Protestant denominations met in Medicine Lake, Minnesota to hold three conferences: one for each denomination and a third to formalize and celebrate their merger. The newly formed denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), took its name from the larger of the two groups, although the smaller group, the Evangelical Free Church Association, lost little of their remaining identity in that compromise. Both denominations had already dropped more distinctive monikers in the 1930s and -40s: the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America (Swedish EFCA) and the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association (Norwegian-Danish EFCA), respectively. Dr. E.A. Halleen, former President of the formerly-Swedish EFCA and the inaugural President of the new EFCA, invoked Psalm 44 to mark the occasion of their merger in a speech given at evening services: "[w]e have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." Halleen interpreted the text by appeal to his own place in the life of the new denomination: "I am looking west tonight. I feel that I am the connecting link between yesteryear and today," he said. "It is an honor to be a Norwegian," he continued, "—nearly as much as it is to be a Swede. By tomorrow, we'll all be Americans."[1] Half a century after R.A. Jernberg championed a religious project of 'ethnic suicide,' 'racial emancipation' and Americanization of Scandinavian immigrants in the United States, the new EFCA quietly, perhaps even wistfully for some,

[1] Norton et al., *Diamond Jubilee*, 242.

announced its completion.

Through the 1930s and -40s, the EFCAs' path to 'becoming American' through religious devotion and its institutionalization continued to be winding and often indirect, shaped as it was by other social and cultural formations—especially in matters of economic and political ideology as the social implications of the Great Depression bled into those of renewed global warfare. In addition to refining their religious orders, free church leaders also envisioned national social orders and social projects that would best or worst aid their fundamentalist religious project. With Anglo-American fundamentalists, they identified their preferred orders as national ideals. Social orders and social projects that challenged those preferences were deemed dangerously un-American and unchristian. In particular, free church leaders like E.A. Halleen announced increasing alarm for the spread of international communism, a political 'menace' taken to be a direct, often violent force against the social and spiritual priorities of all religions—but evangelical Christianity in particular. Free church critiques of communistic social order mirrored those leveled against modernism, but they were also used to characterize domestic political events and leaders. As free church leaders turned against a supposedly communistic American president and his New Deal policies, they lambasted most forms of humanistic social reform as reflections of severely disordered—even demonically inverted—social and spiritual priorities.[2]

While leading free church evangelists maligned "worldly entanglements" typified by disordered modernism, communism and humanistic social service, they simultaneously claimed and sanctified the material economics of corporate capitalism as a matter of anti-socialist identity, as well as a financial engine of evangelism and institutional expansion. In so doing, the free churches helped to establish a corporate managerial vanguard of fundamentalist and evangelical activism. Most

[2] On fundamentalism and the New Deal, see Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 232-262.

prominently, the Swedish-American preacher C.B. Hedstrom led a new organization of "Christian business men" that prioritized the evangelization of the growing corporate and managerial middleclass. Although Hedstrom and other free church leaders asserted that class status had no bearing at the foot of the cross, they embraced business evangelization and pro-business ideology as a major plank of their religious expansion efforts and as a cornerstone of their fundamentalist identity.

As Scandinavian-American free church communities merged with and helped to shape Anglo-American fundamentalism and newer evangelistic organizations, free church leaders expressed increasing ambivalence, and possibly some internal confusion, in matters of their own shifting racial or ethnic identities. While racist ideologies and growing violence of international fascism chastened the "pride of race" carried by many in the Scandinavian-American free church tradition, free church leaders also expressed an increasingly romantic nostalgia for the "old countries" and their cultures. Ironically, shared nostalgia for a pre-immigrant past combined with new forms of evangelical organization to further break down walls of institutional separation between the historically-distinct ethnic national branches of the free church denominations. By the late-1940s, the dual EFCAs recognized with pride their cultural heritage, but they looked even more favorably upon the nearing completion of their project to 'become American.'

Rhetorically, this project relied most directly on discourse of shifting nationality—Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, American—that transformed prior concern for language differences into more existential, even spiritual questions of institutional and personal self-identity. In matters of ethnic national identity, most free church leaders of the 1930s and -40s plead that such distinctions were human and historical in nature with no bearing "at the foot of the cross," just as they alleged for matters of class difference. Seemingly egalitarian, this message of "spiritual equality" was nevertheless theologically specific: in drama of salvation, the work of atonement or the "economy of grace," as E.A. Halleen described it, ethnic national standing meant nothing to God. For the true Christian

church, or the body of Christ composed of all regenerate souls, "spiritual equality" similarly applied: no saved person was excluded from supernatural fellowship. Free church leaders deployed this logic of spiritual equality to convince their ethnic national denominations to jettison Scandinavian religious identity alongside its languages. Similar logic was applied in efforts to work more closely with Anglo-American fundamentalists just as it was, eventually, to merge the two EFCAs. When theological argument failed to persuade fully, pro-business leaders within both EFCAs buttressed spiritual rationales by appeal to the economic benefits and corporate efficiencies of cooperative religious ventures.

Ecclesial politics played a final role in the latter stages of the EFCAs' Americanization. For all of the free churches' claims to freedom and independence in matters of non-essential doctrinal differences, pro-merger leaders' ecclesiastical efforts to extinguish ethnic national division proved that full appropriation of American identity had become an essential, even a "fundamental" concern for the free churches, at least in the eyes of some. Ambivalent ethnic national pride and lingering ethnic national loyalties required pro-merger leaders to exercise ecclesiastical power and deft bureaucratic maneuvers to gain slow approval for their projects. When initial attempts to merge outright failed in the last years of the 1930s, pro-merger forces spent ensuing years merging in piecemeal fashion the denominations' operational arms over which they held more direct control, starting with their seminaries and publications. As necessary, pro-merger forces even resorted to underhanded tactics—including clandestine newspaper censorship and swiftly coordinated parliamentary maneuvers—to secure their efforts. By the late 1940s, as old-guard ethnic nationalists licked their wounds, full denominational merger became a foregone conclusion, as did the "complete Americanization" of free church work.

Evil Powers Organized: Politics, Social Service and the Fundamental Task of Christ's Church

As the EFCA leaders spread a public welcome mat for independent fundamentalists, they welcomed further into the denomination fundamentalist viewpoints that tied the modernist threat to a host of political, economic and cultural issues. Perhaps most clearly, EFCA leaders of the 1930s and -40s openly advocated a pessimistic, mostly-premillennial interpretation of world events that utilized the 'literal' Bible as a social cipher. While premillennialism was not an inheritance of the Scandinavian inner mission movements, it had been favored by select free church leaders as the nineteenth century came to a close—especially by those with Moody ties, including J.G. Princell. Ironically, premillennialism never rose to the explicit level of a "fundamental" doctrine in free church literature of later decades, nor did it even for many fundamentalists; it remained, however, the paradigmatic lens through which fundamentalists viewed, magnified, scrutinized and classified ever-shifting human events and social orders.[3] Fundamentalists' resulting understandings of distinct and competitive human social orders came to be associated with or against one another in grand supernatural narratives.

In the view of ambiguous but always-approaching end times, free church fundamentalists called on such fields of association to assess their own Christian responsibility to contemporaneous social circumstances. Perhaps no biblical verse better captures this social vision and its motivations—in the free churches and elsewhere—than Psalm 11:3: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" No wonder, then, that the Dr. Merrill MacPherson—an independent fundamentalist—called forth that Psalm in his address to the Founder's Week Conference, an opening celebration of the MBI's fifty-year Jubilee. A congenial editorial staff at the *Evangelical Beacon* reprinted key portions of the address under the title, "The Menace of Modernism."

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[3] See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*; and Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism.*

MacPherson's speech, as cited above, contained the usual vitriolic attacks on modernism, but this particular jeremiad laid bare the full social implications of modernism's heresy as MacPherson and many other fundamentalists saw it. In short, MacPherson argued that modernism was to blame for a vast array of social problems, from "lawlessness and crime" to corrupt politics, to "evolutionary, pagan" education. "I even blame the depression on Modernism," MacPherson asserted, "for if people had not turned their backs on God, we would not have had a depression. God can start the wheels of industry over night when the people are ready to repent and return to Him."[4] For MacPherson, social dissolution came as fruits of modernism's "attack on the Bible," a denial of the Bible's historicity and a transformation of its real miraculous events into metaphors, allegories and ethics tailored for rationalistic human understanding. By denying the Bible, in MacPherson's view, "God [was] denied," particularly in schools and colleges, and "man and mind were exalted." Even in churches, as MacPherson witnessed it, "[h]umanism [was] to the fore and Christ [was] crowded out." Again, MacPherson saw this inversion of human value and divine value as a sin "as old as Satan," an incitement to "doubt [the] Creator."[5]

MacPherson's proclamations, accordingly, made crystal clear fundamentalism's consensus of humanism: at the root of all humanistic worldviews, even those that claimed Christian foundation, was a demonic scheme. Within that scheme, prized social institutions that maintained the paternal authority of God's word—and that of his messengers—were undermined. These institutions, as MacPherson described them, included the church, the school and the home. They also included the government whose "American ideals," in MacPherson's words, had been "replaced by an unholy and godless propaganda from across the shore." Without an "old-fashioned message on the heinousness of sin, the necessity of repentance and the new birth, and of redemption through the blood of

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[4] MacPherson, "Modernism."
[5] Ibid.

Christ," America was doomed. Its children would become atheists and humanists whose beliefs and actions would further drive lawlessness, corruption, vice and economic depression. And so, MacPherson asked, "When the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"[6]

Of course, MacPherson's sermon was not the first representation of this 'fundamental' social assessment of modernism and its secular corollaries in the pages of the *Beacon*. From its inception in English, the *Beacon* warned of modernism and humanism, modernism and atheism, modernism and materialism, modernism and socialism and, perhaps most often, modernism and communism. In 1933, for instance, the *Beacon* reported that organized atheists in the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism accepted and revered modernists "in control" of the larger denominations who were supposedly "working from the inside, [to] discredit[] the basic teaching of Christianity in the name of Christianity."[7] Later in that same issue, a summarized sermon of the Rev. William Anderson recognized a sign of the end times in "evil powers organized, such as communism and modernism."[8]

Communism became a regular and frequent topic of discussion in the *Beacon*'s pages throughout the depression and the ensuing war, in large part because fundamentalists viewed communist political order as the most obvious, explicit and violent manifestation of humanistic opposition to religion, in general, and true Christianity, in particular. *Beacon* authors invoked special concern for the treatment of "the Evangelistic denominations" in Russia and China as reports of bloody persecution filtered into the news or as foreign missionaries published first-hand reports of attacks, including the criminalization of mission work, the burning of churches and the murder of congregants in the

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Roy Thompson, "Screening Their Own Unbelief," *Beacon*, September 12, 1933.
[8] "Greetings from the Colorado Conference."

streets.[9] Noting that "[o]ur poor old earth has never witnessed more blood-thirsty movements than these," EFCA President E.A. Halleen reported Russia's "culling-process of 600,000 faithful communists" against whom any suspicion or complaint had been filed.[10] If even the communist faithful were not safe from their own leaders' "blood-thirst," Christians hardly stood a chance.

Free church leaders regularly proliferated anxiety that bloody events would follow communistic individuals and organizations into the United States as a sign of end times,. Halleen often led the charge, guiding his followers to an all-inclusive eschatological vision of economics, politics and religion. In 1934, Halleen suggested that communism may be the "Scarlet-Beast" of Revelations 17—a beastly unification of "devil-possessed government and apostate Christendom" that threatened to create a global state-church order ruled by the anti-Christ. He later wondered if Soviet Russia would soon rule the United States itself. "Is my imagination running wild?" Halleen asked—and rhetorically so, for he believed the signs were clear. Accordingly, his warning for the free churches was dire: "The communistic program for the clergy and the true Church of Christ is *abolition*, nothing less. There is no room for God in the communistic economy. Neither is there room for the Lord's stewards, nor for any of the followers of Jesus."[11] Under communism, as Halleen described it, the authority of God and the church became totally eclipsed and fully displaced, often through violence, by the authority of man and the state. But that penultimate inversion was also an illusion, as Halleen had it: at the true end, the social body of Christ—God's spiritually unified church of truly regenerate believers—would be raptured to eternal glory, while the apostate and damned would remain to suffer and toil under the rule of the Satan.[12]

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[9] On Russia, for instance, see Eric Johnson, "In the Flames of Russia's Revolution," *Beacon*, March 22, 1932. On China see, for instance, Hjalmar Ekblad, "From Missionary Hjalmar Ekblad," *Beacon*, May 19, 1936.

[10] E.A. Halleen, "The Scarlet-Colored Beast," *Beacon*, April 10, 1934.

[11] E.A. Halleen, "Whither Bound?" *Beacon*, February 27, 1934.

[12] Halleen, "Beast."

As it did for many fundamentalists, Halleen's anti-communist fervor created serious and sometimes troubling implications for free church views on religion, race and domestic politics.[13] Halleen himself excoriated Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration and accused its economic policy "brain trusters" of being communist operators who saw Roosevelt as a bridge to a future American leader more like Joseph Stalin. For good measure, Halleen also peddled in vicious anti-Semitic tropes about communism that suggested Jews were secretly in league with the anti-Christ and his plot. "The capital is swarming with these… 'red' Jews," Halleen proclaimed. "They are the cause of the world's distress," he continued,

> [t]hey are behind our depression. They are that because they are the soul and dominant power in the communistic movement. The depression was planned by them. It was instigated by them. …What is the trouble? Ask the communistic Jews. Where is our money? Again, ask the Jews. It has come to the point where it is a matter of life and death so far as our free institutions are concerned, as well as for our country itself.[14]

Other *Beacon* commentators and reports tied communism to the administration's high taxation rates and its humanistic social programs.[15] Yet others tied communism and its propaganda to unions, labor movements and labor strikes of any kind.[16] Politically speaking, these affiliations drew domestic politics into the grand drama of end times, as they had for modernism. Religiously speaking, these affiliations assured that fundamentalists in the free churches came to detest, to reject and then to actively organize against liberal social politics and policies as one front among many in a rapidly advancing spiritual war.

Nevertheless, the social pressures of economic depression ensured consistent and significant public concern for the material welfare and well-being of American citizens, and free church leaders

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[13] In the lexicon of fundamentalism and related anti-Semitic philosophies, Jews were understood explicitly as a race. For other fundamentalist perspectives on these issues, see Sutton, *American Apocalypse*; and Dochuk, *Bible Belt to Sunbelt*.

[14] Halleen, "Whither Bound?"

[15] "Curb U.S. Waste or Face Communism," *Beacon*, March 8, 1932.

[16] E. H. L., "Farthest West," *Beacon*, November 3, 1936.

defined "what the righteous could do"—and what they could not do—in the face of destroyed religious foundations in American society. As to what churches could not or should not do, leaders and commentators in the *Beacon* were consistent and clear. In his recurring column, "Fresh Facts," Arthur P. Kallman put it succinctly: "Strictly speaking, it is not the business of the church to pursue a social program as such."[17]

Kallman's reasons for this formulation, while less explicit than Halleen's anti-communist tirades, repeated similar themes and implied similar conclusions. First, Kallman interpreted recent 'dustbowl' droughts as God's way of rebuking those in power so as to teach them "spiritual lessons"—lessons that they would no doubt ignore by focusing on material concerns. Second, Kallman tied the literal drought to the "spiritual drought" of the "modernistic leaders of a modernized church." He noted that *their* solutions to the problem of literal drought would be to work together with "rabbis, Catholic priests, [and] leaders of fraternal societies," among others, to do *something*, "but only for the betterment and not necessarily the salvation of humanity." Third, Kallman asserted that "the apostate church [had] only become a parallel agency with the national government, which also seeks to bring about happy solutions to knotty social problems." Modernists, rabbis and priests, humanistic social aid, government collusion: for those who read the *Beacon* regularly, or for those who otherwise entertained fundamentalist social perspectives, this indictment of social aid programs was, by association, quite clear.[18]

As with modernism and communism, free church leaders and *Beacon* authors regularly decried most popular, religious and political "social service" as an apostate inversion of "man" over God. As evidence that "the Christian church had forgotten God," the Rev. H.G. Rodine cited churches'

[17] Arthur Kallman, "Fresh Facts," *Beacon*, August 28, 1934.
[18] Ibid.

"…man-made program of social service and world betterment...."[19] E.A. Halleen asserted that "social service programs" were the last vestige of weak churches where "true spirituality" quickly waned.[20] The *Beacon*'s editors noted as well, no doubt with a bit of schadenfreude, Congregationalists' reported concern for seminary students who "[s]ocially and economically …[were] more radical," but were nevertheless "less excited about it." Some students, according to a reprinted Congregationalist column, wondered openly "…if there is a God, [and] how that God may be found" in the contemporary world. Roy Thompson called the atheistic "trend" a "sad condition" in the "great modern religious denominations of the country."[21] Even in the papers' Sunday School lessons, the same message repeated. In a lesson plan titled "Jesus Answers His Adversaries," the Rev. William Hallman closed by declaring that, "[t]o-day there is great evidence of love to man, i.e., philanthropy, social schemes, hospitals and such like, but little evidence of love to God."[22] This general denigration of social service as 'love for man' at the expense of 'love for God' spread across every section of the *Beacon* for the duration of the depression and the war.

EFCA leaders also denigrated social work, broadly conceived, because its distorted theological basis, in their view, warped its ethical motivations as well as the practical consequences of those motivations. In that view, social service—alongside the social gospel, modernism and communism—made "corporate" social behavior the primary point of emphasis, while "individual sin" came to be ignored. This misunderstanding, according to free church pastors, ensured that "social programs" were generally ineffective and possibly even harmful. Like the Rev. William Hallman, Arthur Kallman called human attempts to reform society "utopian schemes," and he asserted they had made the world

[19] H.G. Rodine, "Forgetting God," *Beacon*, December 20, 1932.
[20] E.A. Halleen, "1936—1937," *Beacon*, December 29, 1936.
[21] "From the Social Gospel to a Personal Faith," *Beacon*, February 2, 1932. Reprinted from *The Congregationalist*.
[22] William B. Hallman, "The Sunday School Lesson," *Beacon*, May 9, 1933.

"a bigger mess than ever before."[23] The Rev. A.C. Carlson noted that all the "social revolution" in Europe had failed to root out greed, inequality and tyranny.[24] The Rev. Elmer Johnson—noting a supposed rise in crime, delinquency, adultery and other "vile traffics"—declared that social agencies that worked to "stem the tide" were increasingly "desperate" and even "near hopelessness."[25] Their work, he implied, could not rise to the overwhelming social challenge.

EFCA leaders, however, did not declare hopelessness in social matters, nor did they abandon their own social projects in full. Instead they encouraged "the righteous" to do their part for social welfare by keeping spiritual priorities in place to improve what they could in accordance with God's plan. As Roy Thompson put it in 1932:

> We deplore the shifting of emphasis on the part of the great denominations from the proclamation of a personal gospel of redemption to a mere humanitarian Christianity. And yet, should not the Christian Church exert its influence for good in the world in every possible way? Should not the "salt" be permitted to hinder the process of decay? Should not the "light of the world" be given an opportunity to scatter the darkness and gloom?

Thompson then warned that the real danger of social service was "losing sight of our **fundamental** task," the spread of the gospel message and its saving atonement to all who would accept it. If that priority could be held, Thompson insisted, "we need not be afraid to exert our influence in the application of practical Christianity to our world."[26]

Thompson's vision of "salt and light" social influence affirmed fundamentalists' preferences to revere God and spirit over and above human and material things, and the *Beacon* spread this social vision with great frequency. As usual, authors reimagined exemplary biblical stories to interpret contemporaneous moral and ethical questions. According to the Reverend Arthur P. Peterson, the

[23] Arthur Kallman, "Fresh Facts," *Beacon*, April 5, 1938.
[24] A. C. Carlson, "Some Better Thing," *Beacon*, April 6, 1937.
[25] Elmer Johnson, "This is the Time!" *Beacon*, September 28, 1943.
[26] Roy Thompson, "The Church Utters Her Voice," *Beacon*, July 5, 1932.

imperative "to put spiritual things first and material things in second…" was "**the fundamental law of success**" in life—not only for individuals but also for nations and states. After all, Peterson put forward, did not Lot and his lineage fail because he placed the possibility of material comfort in Sodom above the spiritual influence of Sodom's vice? Did not Moses birth a great nation because he rejected the material power of Egypt to "suffer affliction" in union with "the people of God?"[27] In publication, these exegeses—and many more like them—promoted a particular reading of the bible that affirmed modern free church and fundamentalist social priorities: God and church first, always, and material reward will follow; man and material first, and suffer the damning temporal and eternal consequences.

In this formulation, free church leaders recognized their own understanding of "social reform" as a process that began with the individual, extended through the family and the church, and then exerted its influence through sheer moral force on corporate society as a whole. As the Rev. Elmer Johnson put it, "*[t]he Gospel has the only remedy*" to "stem the tide" of encroaching "sin and degradation."[28] Roy Thompson agreed that the reform process began with evangelization: preaching the gospel specifically to strengthen "the 'sense of personal sin and guilt.'" "The old-fashioned Gospel is still 'the power of God unto salvation," Thompson proclaimed, "and in transforming men," he continued, "it is also transforming homes and communities, thus producing its social effects and by-products." Here again, Thompson reiterated the "salt and light" social ethic of free church and fundamentalist spirituality: Old Testament fire and New Testament ethics preached to sinners who then gain a sense of personal guilt, accept Jesus Christ and repent. Performed in this order, Thompson insisted that the process would "…not cease to produce its beneficial effects upon one's environment and surroundings."[29] As

[27] Arthur P. Peterson, "A Fundamental Law of Success," *Beacon*, February 21, 1933.
[28] Johnson, "Time!"
[29] Roy Thompson, "Waning Sense of Individual Guilt," *Beacon*, August 10, 1937.

William Hallman put it in a Sunday School lesson on "The Effects of Alcoholic Drinks," "…when a person becomes regenerated, …all these moral and social problems will take care of themselves…."[30]

Free church fundamentalists' assessment of individual sin as social disease also served to focus their admittedly secondary 'corporate' concerns on specific and highly-selective social issues. For the most part, these social issues were facilely correlated with individual responsibility—and their only solution remained regeneration through Christ. Throughout the *Beacon* of the midcentury, social issues most commonly addressed included alcoholism, adultery, crime, pornography, juvenile delinquency and other "vices" or "vile traffics," as Johnson called them. In an essay titled "The Church and Social Evils," the pastor Leonard Hagstrom pathologized 'vice' of this class as the effect of humankind's universal spiritual illness. As Hagstrom described it, individuals who indulged a particular vice did so out of "a deep longing in their hearts that was not being satisfied." Hagstrom then warned that proponents of non-evangelical social reform efforts suffered from the same affliction—were "driven by the flesh"—because they too offered material solutions to a spiritual problem, thereby exacerbating the same.[31] Only Christ, Hagstrom affirmed, could satisfy the deep longing of individual hearts.

As for other common depression-era social issues—unemployment, poverty, homelessness and related matters of wealth inequality—free church leaders and publications generally dismissed them as matters of religious concern. The *Beacon* and its contributors never explicitly enjoined churches to abandon material aid programs for the poor or needy, and they occasionally praised the good-hearted charity of particular efforts, especially at children's orphanages. They did, nevertheless, consistently and stridently warn against the practice when service programs threatened to diminish or, worse yet, displace bible preaching or evangelization; as noted above, this concern was a primary critique of liberal modernists. In "Fresh Facts," Arthur Kallman offered another common take on efforts to

[30] William B. Hallman, "The Sunday School Lesson," *Beacon*, March 7, 1933.
[31] Leonard Hagstrom, "The Church and Social Evils," *Beacon*, May 23, 1944.

better distribute material resources in an "imperfect age" of "tremendous maldistribution of everything." Kallman cast a leery eye toward politicians that got fat as others starved, but he shot the same look at California's rainy winter, one that wrought "death and destruction to life and property." The moral, for Kallman, was this: "[i]t seems to be an evil necessity, this, that some have money to scoop while many don't have a dollar to their name. …The pathway of many is strewn with roses while *others* have stress, poverty, disease, war…." Kallman then issued his attack on communistic utopian schemes, insisting that "perfectness belongs to the next age, not this one." In short, wealth inequality was a fact of life, to be washed away *only after* the day of judgment.[32]

Worldly Entanglements Sanctified: Christian Business, Capitalist Ethics and the New Fundamentalist Corporate Middle-Class

In most matters of class distinction, free church leaders proclaimed a spiritual egalitarianism that mirrored their views on evangelism and race, ethnicity and nationality. For C.B. Hedstrom—a businessman, lay evangelist and member of the EFCA's Board of Trustees—class distinctions themselves were irrelevant to the ultimate project of evangelization.[33] In one edition of his recurring *Beacon* column, "Sketches from Life," Hedstrom related the story of his visit to Riverside Church in New York City—the home congregation of modernist luminary Henry Emerson Fosdick. The building, Hedstrom noted, was magnificent, and its congregants, he speculated with good reason, were themselves likely very wealthy. And yet, Hedstrom felt remorse that these "intellectual millionaire[s]" were starved of eternal truth; their real needs, he intoned somberly, were the same as the "ordinary or poorer folks." Hedstrom told his *Beacon* audience that he'd just as soon preach in a jail as in Riverside's

[32] Arthur Kallman, "Fresh Facts," *Beacon*, April 5, 1938.
[33] Halleen, *Golden Jubilee,* 9.

"great cathedral" because "clothes and station" had no standing at the altar of Christ. "I've seen millionaires saved," Hedstrom concluded, "and they come the same way as the homeless beggar."[34]

As unlikely as it sounds, Hedstrom probably witnessed more millionaires come to Christ than homeless beggars. In fact, Hedstrom's role in the transformation of the EFCA captures the true importance of corporate capitalist economics and pro-capitalist ideology for fundamentalism's evangelistic programs in the 1930s and -40s. Born in Sweden in 1881 to a poor, rural and devoutly Christian household, Hedstrom emigrated to the United States in 1893 with his mother. They ended up, like many Swedes, on the north side of Chicago. As a self-described "greenhorn," like Carl Gundersen, Hedstrom picked up work at the age of sixteen, first as a shoe store stocker then as a salesman. Fired twice—once for refusing to work on Sundays and again for refusing to lie to female customer about her true shoe size—but rehired both times, Hedstrom eventually caught the eye of management for his "grit and principle," as he would later recall. He was promoted subsequently to stock manager, then to traveling wholesale salesman. By 1907, Hedstrom opened his own shoe store in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, and business thrived for two decades. When depression hit, Hedstrom's business grew even larger, and he opened two additional Chicago locations in the 1930s.[35]

As the story of his firings suggests, Hedstrom came to fuse his particular religious tradition with his growing business prowess. He did so in broad agreement with what the Rev. Arthur Peterson called "the fundamental law of success" in life: by putting 'spiritual things' before 'material things.' Raised in a pietistic Swedish-American home, Hedstrom worshipped at the Lakeview Evangelical Free Church in his north side neighborhood.[36] Later in life, he remembered fondly a bible verse his mother taught him as a poor immigrant child, Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his

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[34] C.B. Hedstrom, "Sketches from Life," *Beacon*, April 24, 1934.

[35] C.B. Hedstrom, *PAY-DAY—SOME DAY With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1938), chapter one.

[36] See "C.B. Hedstrom in Winnetka," *Beacon*, November 15, 1932.

righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Taking this lesson to its logical extreme, Hedstrom stove to integrate his faith into his places of work so that the Kingdom was always placed 'before,' or at least alongside, business. As a young traveling salesman, he joined the Gideons—at the time, a new organization of itinerant evangelical businessmen who committed to sharing the gospel as they traversed the country. While he travelled, Hedstrom sold shoes and told stories about his faith to whomever would listen. Regaling those listeners with the story of his firings and later promotions, he rarely failed to connect his obedience to God with his success as a businessman. After he opened his first store, he similarly proclaimed that it thrived because he refused, against sound business advice, to open on Sundays.[37] Good Christian citizens, he claimed, came to trust him.

Over time, Hedstrom's church and other regional free churches invited him to share at their pulpits his stories of faith and its rewards—both material and eternal—and Hedstrom became a popular lay evangelist and free church activist. Through a decade of economic depression, he became one of the *Beacon's* most heavily featured contributors. Hedstrom's messages were well-received, no doubt, because he spoke to the prevailing religious and cultural sentiments of his particular free church tradition while affirming a wider cooperative, fundamentalist identity. As a Swedish immigrant, he often preached in his native tongue to Swedish audiences; even when he spoke or wrote in English, he mused regularly over the pastoral Swedish charms of his childhood, and he penned series of travel essays that described with great romance his cruise vacations to the homeland.[38] His stories of success in business, moreover, showed just how far the Swedish people in America had come.

In matters of free church tradition, he further affirmed and amplified central ecclesiological doctrines and practices of a fully regenerate church, insisting that only "saved sinners"—not denominations or even local churches, necessarily—made up the "body of Christ." He lambasted the

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[37] Hedstrom, *PAY-DAY,* chapter one.

[38] On Hedstrom's dual fluency see for instance C.B. Hedstrom, "Life's Contrasts," *Beacon, February 9, 1932.*

"modernistic church" and its carnal devotions, and, he insisted that a truly saved church cut away the "vines" of "unbiblical leadership" and "man-made programs" to build a church of "godly zeal for soul-saving efforts." Hedstrom's ideal church was therefore simple in its bureaucratic organization, evangelistic in its outlook and pure in its rejection of "worldly entanglements" and its denial of "fellowship with the unsaved."[39] Both his free church and his fundamentalist readers could appreciate this vision deeply.

Nevertheless, in light of frequent business allegories and capitalist ethics endemic to his preaching and writing, Hedstrom's denunciation of "worldly entanglements" revealed just how selectively his and others' warnings meant to implicate *particular* social groups (i.e., modernists) and their religious, political and economic practices (i.e., denominationalism, communism and socialism) while raising up others. Put otherwise, while fundamentalists of the twentieth century have often been accused of "otherworldliness," or an impulse to separate from the world and its social problems, Hedstrom's faith in business reveals fundamentalists' significant rhetorical ability to transform their preferred worldly entanglements into examples of spiritually and morally upright behavior.

With capacious business metaphors, Hedstrom taught that the worldly circumstances of business and finance taught spiritual lessons while spiritual faith and righteousness often brought material economic reward. Naturally, Hedstrom appealed to the bible often for allegorical support. In his exegesis of Luke 5, for instance—where Peter, James and John become apostles of Christ after a miraculous fishing haul—Hedstrom abandoned a more common reading (that Jesus bade the men to abandon their profession to become "fishers of men") to insist instead that the Apostles recognized their fishing business would succeed beyond wildest imagination were they only to give Jesus "full control." Hedstrom extended this allegory to apostate churches, as well, noting their 'spiritual

[39] Hedstrom, *PAY-DAY*, chapters 12-14.

bankrupt[cy]" for putting "toiling" operational programs before God, prayer and "soul-saving." "They have gone out of business," Hedstrom declared, "even if they are not aware of it." By returning to Christ, these churches would regain their spiritual wealth and become again fishers of men.[40]

While Hedstrom's captivating business messaging certainly integrated capitalist economic ideals with fundamentalist biblical rhetoric, his evangelism came to be most important for its direct appeal to businessmen themselves, primarily through the activities of the Christian Business Men's Committee (CBMC) and its later "International" incarnation (CBMCI). Hedstrom himself had been introduced to the leadership of the nascent organization through the Gideons, and CBMC's founder, A.H. Leaman—a faculty member at MBI—invited Hedstrom to chair the group's administrative board. While planned initially as a temporary committee tasked to organize a six-week Easter program with noon-day preaching in Chicago's downtown business district, CBMC lived much longer and grew much bigger. Its daily outdoor revival lasted through the summer; preaching was then moved indoors at a downtown theater. MBI's radio station, WMBI, began broadcasting the noon services on a signal that reached a million or more people. Within a few years, CBMC opened branches across the nation, and by 1938, it inaugurated its international operation.[41]

Through Hedstrom, and as a major plank of its English-language, post-Swedish expansion efforts, the EFCA joined a growing interdenominational movement that prioritized specifically the evangelization of the corporate business class—not the "homeless beggars" that "came in the same way." Aside from publishing Hedstrom's essays and sermons at least once a month—about every other issue—the *Beacon* reported breathlessly on his activities with CBMC and within the EFCA network. His travels, health issues and even his family's activities were reported in news sections, while announcements for CBMC rallies and Hedstrom's other speaking engagements could be found dotted

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[40] Ibid., chapter 14.
[41] Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, 78-86.

throughout the paper. These mentions, in addition to articles and event reporting, ensured that Hedstrom and CBMC appeared multiple times in most issues of the *Beacon* for nearly a decade.

For the EFCA, the benefits of Hedstrom's celebrity were clear: one of its own had ascended the ranks of business, class and religion to work within the tradition of a 'culturally' Swedish free church while, at the same time, extending his reach to the "independent fundamentalists" that the denomination claimed it needed to move past its Swedish heritage. In line with EFCA ecclesiological priorities, Hedstrom's business evangelism operated through voluntaristic organization led by trusted and self-described regenerate individuals—often lay people—outside of formal denominational order or oversight. Accordingly, CBMC programs bore no denominational fealty, and its leadership was interdenominational itself. Moreover, CBMC evangelization was understood to be 'doctrinally-sound' and 'gospel-first:' properly oriented to Christ, Hedstrom and other business evangelists offered what they considered to be the "old-time religion" of fundamentalism—of bible truths, the sinful nature of man, and the reality of blood atonement—even as much of their message wholly reworked ancient biblical dramas in fully modern contexts.

Most importantly for the EFCA, the CBMC's activities as overseen by Hedstrom seemed to be working incredibly well as measured by growth of participation, clout of leadership and security of finances. By 1934, at the CBMC's third annual convention, 2,000 attendees packed the largest dining room in Chicago's flagship Marshall Field and Company building. Just two years later, at CBMC's fifth annual convention, nearly 9,000 white men (and some women) in business attire filled the Chicago Coliseum.[42] At CBMC events, Hedstrom worked alongside fundamentalist heavyweights like the Rev. Bob Jones as well as lesser known, but similarly influential ministers like the Rev. Paul Rood, president of the World Christian Fundamentalist's Association (WCFA), president of the Bible Institute of Los

[42] "Immense Crowd at Christian Business Men's Dinner and Rally," *Beacon,* January 30, 1934; and "A Mammoth Rally of Christians," *Beacon,* January 28, 1936.

Angeles (BIOLA) and editor of *The King's Business*, BIOLA's influential fundamentalist periodical.[43] Perhaps most impressively, the organization was financially solvent, even financially comfortable, despite the severe depths of economic depression and a nation-wide downturn in religious giving.[44] In 1934, CBMC received $27,000 in gifts (about half a million dollars, inflation adjusted).[45] A year later, the *Beacon* claimed CBMC reported $50,000 in receipts.[46]

As usual, EFCA fundamentalists credited most of CBMC's success to divine forces, rather than to its people or its finances. Moreover, the growth, influence and financial stability of CBMC affirmed to EFCA leaders God's plan and purpose for both the organization and the denomination alike, which in turn inspired further efforts to promote EFCA expansion. When Roy Thompson described CBMC finances, God—not saved businessmen—paid the bills: "week after week and month after month [CBMC's] services continued, the Lord supplying the means (in spite of 'depression')."[47] Accordingly, Thompson urged free churches and their members to emulate this "aggressive organization" through its "…vision, consecration, cooperation, and sacrifice." With vision to expand the church, with consecrated devotion to execute God's plan of salvation, with cooperation between trusted groups and individuals and with sacrifice of "time and money and luxuries," Thompson insisted that the EFCA "…should be able to double the present number of Sunday Schools and churches within our constituency in a brief period."[48]

The business entanglements of fundamentalist fellowship thus inspired significant optimism for free churches and fundamentalists alike, optimism that tied the voluntary ecclesiastical organization

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[43] On Jones' involvement with CBMC work, see Advertisment, "Spiritual Revival," *Beacon,* June 19, 1934. On Rood, among many other examples, see "Immense Crowd."

[44] See Wuthnow, *Restructuring of American Religion*, 26.

[45] "Immense Crowd."

[46] Roy Thompson, "Needed—A Real Expansion Program," *Beacon,* December 3, 1935.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

of evangelistic activism to the success of capitalist economies and finance. Capitalist practices and capitalist ideologies alike thus became essential facets of EFCA and fundamentalist religious identity. Given the scorn with which EFCA and fundamentalist leaders excoriated communism, socialism and any other ideologically-proximate liberal social service, their support for capitalistic endeavors is hardly surprising. And yet, it is difficult to overstate the importance of this inseparable confluence of religion and economics. By tying successful evangelism to economic growth, by relating the voluntary cooperation of churches to the hand-shake dealings of businessmen, by conflating business ethics with moral or religious ethics, by adopting sales strategies for the purposes of religious persuasion, and through a variety of other religio-economic imbrications, fundamentalists within and without the EFCA fashioned a faith that understood capitalism to be divinely-ordained and even divinely-directed—especially when wielded by righteous men who gave Christ "full control" of their business.

For businessmen who held or adopted fundamentalist religious commitments, evangelism similarly became a method of business and financial growth, thereby reinforcing a reciprocal relationship. Hedstrom no doubt made good on his visibility. When Hedstrom preached about the business of faith, whether in the Loop or at a Minnesota free church, he rarely failed to invoke the Christian character of his own stores. As the *Beacon* ran his articles and promoted his work, Hedstrom purchased significant ad space in the periodical for his stores and their products.[49] Readers and listeners could show their support for Hedstrom and his activist faith by purchasing their shoes, clothing and other goods through him directly—a form of cooperative economic fellowship that relied on pre-existing religious community. No wonder then, that Hedstrom's greatest business expansion—the addition of two Chicago stores while hundreds of similar retail businesses were closing—occurred at the height of his evangelical fame.

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[49] See, for example, Advertisement, "Send Your Orders to Us," *Beacon,* December 15, 1936.

Hedstrom and the *Beacon* also capitalized on the opportunity to produce religious goods for sale to augment their respective incomes.[50] In the 1938, Hedstrom and the periodical compiled a series of sermons and essays—most published originally in the *Beacon*—for publication in a new volume. With significant promotion in the periodical, Hedstrom's *Pay-Day—Some Day* became a fast hit in fundamentalist circles. Ads for direct purchase of the book, either individual copies or in bulk. The paper published as news items positive comments from average readers as well as rave reviews from other fundamentalist preachers and periodicals. Within weeks of the book's release, thousands of copies were sold, and the *Beacon* continued to promote the book for months and years to follow. Hedstrom made sure to return the favor by promoting the *Beacon* to friends and acquaintances throughout his travels, and he pushed the paper and its readers to continue to grow subscriptions by following his example.[51]

By the start of the war, fundamentalist religion and corporate business had formed a nearly inseparable partnership, perhaps one even stronger among the free churches. As the historian Sarah Ruth Hammond has argued, fundamentalist businessmen most often occupied economic stations that "formed a middle-class backbone for corporate capitalism." They were, also, "middlemen" of a new corporate economy who married nostalgia for nineteenth-century economics with their own twentieth-century financial successes. This description is certainly true for a business leader like C.B. Hedstrom—"an immigrant who had made good," in Hammond's words—who came from a ruggedly romanticized agricultural background to become a successful mid-sized retail goods distributor.[52]

However, Hedstrom's story also shows how neatly the economic mythologies of fundamentalism's "corporate middlemen" paralleled the shifting cultural and religious visions of Hedstrom's EFCA.

[50] See, form example, Advertisement, "Pay-Day—Some-Day," *Beacon,* April 5, 1938.
[51] See C.B. Hedstrom, "Just Comments," *Beacon,* April 19, 1938.
[52] Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, 85.

Free church leaders bridged significant nostalgia for nineteenth-century ethnic and national identity—despite its contradictions and inconsistencies—with their nascent self-identity as ideal Americans. Moreover, the free churches recalled their rugged nineteenth-century religious heritage with great fondness—despite its significant conflicts, trials and tribulations—even as they adapted their institutions and organizations in ways that would give at least some among their early leadership significant pause. In the day-to-day workings of EFCA fundamentalist activism, these economic, cultural and religious narratives were co-constitutive; they each informed and reinforced the others. At their foundation, moreover, they all relied on an understanding of old-time bible religion that allegorized and acculturated new social orders into ostensibly ancient and authoritative religious traditions, as if they were meant to be there all along.[53] As such, middle-class economic success became a *fundamental* free church aspiration in the United States by the midcentury, just as free church ethnic national and racial identity waned and transformed, respectively.

An American Free Church: The Demise of Ethnic Nationalism in the Economy of Grace

As the midpoint of the twentieth century approached, the free churches' alliance with fundamentalists and corporate capitalism reflected clear spiritual priorities and religious preferences within the tradition. Nevertheless, as they had in earlier decades, these religious alliances simultaneously issued from and reproduced concern for matters of ethnic, national and even racial identity into the postwar era. By the 1930s, after a decade of immigration restrictions, the drawbacks of maintaining Scandinavian religious identity and Scandinavian-language institutions had become even more pronounced for free church leaders who had long promoted assimilation. Given progress in matters of language, however, free church leaders began working on the old boundaries of ethnic national identity—Swedish, Norwegian, Danish—that still marked them as distinct from Anglo-

[53] See again Dawson*,* *Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

American churches. Over time, ethnic national identity became more fully a reflection of "heritage" rather than a measure of "future prospects," and monuments to a mythical Scandinavian past were erected as a portion of the project to secure identification with an American present. Accordingly, Swedish and Norwegian-Danish free church leaders struck a tenuous balance between eschewing ethnic national identity as a *spiritual* distinction while simultaneously lauding Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American accomplishments in religion, culture and society.

In the 1930s, concern over the continued ethnic national identity of the free churches amplified as the realities of restricted immigration met the passing of older generations, including beloved leaders who directed free churches at the open of the century, like C.T. Dyrness.[54] At first, mutual concern for future survival forced Swedish and Norwegian-Danish free churches to abandon their reluctance to combine their work—a reluctance informed by shared anti-denominational ecclesiology as well as lingering national hostilities. In 1932, select leaders from the Norwegian-Danish and Swedish EFCAs, including C.B. Hedstrom, inaugurated the "Free Church Forward Movement," an effort to save the unique traditions of the free church first by strengthening individual members' devotions to those traditions, and then by spreading those traditions to new populations via evangelism. The second branch of this program, in particular, summoned all local free churches "…to aggressive work for Christ," implemented through a neighborhood-centric evangelistic program that called all members of a congregation to proselytize locally. As the managers of the Free Church Forward Movement described it, "[t]he future of our [free] churches, humanly speaking, depends on…the matter of extending our influence into new homes and over every new generation."[55]

As fellowship with fundamentalists and corporate capitalists intensified, many leaders of the dual EFCAs came to believe that the ethnic national element of their denominational identities now

[54] "Pastor Dyrness Called Home," *Beacon,* November 7, 1933.
[55] "The Free Church Forward Movement," *Beacon,* November 22, 1932.

threatened more than it promised in terms of extending their influence. In 1934, Roy Thompson of the *Beacon* insisted that "the future of the Evangelical Free Church" could not be Swedish or even Swedish-American. Thompson admitted readily that "*Swedish* work" had made "absolutely no progress for a number of years," and that everyone knew the reasons why. Moreover, Thompson argued, "Swedish work" itself dangerously alienated the churches' younger generation—young men and women who found "no inspiration…with an organization which has lost the forward look, 'whose *future* is behind it.'" Thompson also warned that Swedish work gave impression that the free churches intended to serve "those who happened to be of a certain *nationality*" rather than "the community as a whole," endangering prospects for retaining youth and welcoming Anglo-American Protestants.[56]

As a requisite step in the project to join forces with Anglo-Americans in particular, free church leaders implemented new efforts to diminish ethnic national institutional affiliation and identity through continued language reforms. First, leading free church voices advocated to push their institutions beyond bilingual service by abandoning Scandinavian language work altogether. Both Roy Thompson and C.B. Hedstrom tied the most promising work of the church to English language services, and they described Swedish language service as an obstacle or impediment to church growth insofar as it precluded non-Swedish populations from participation. Thompson praised "…those activities where there has been no language barrier," including activities "such as Sunday-School and young people's work, …English worship services, …[and] home and foreign missionary activities."[57] While free church leaders of earlier decades championed bilingual services to accommodate both older and new generations, Thompson insisted that the transition end. "All future building and expansion must be achieved on an all-English program," Thompson argued, because "Americans" had no interest in attending a "bilingual church." Denominational leaders agreed, and later that year the

[56] Roy Thompson, "The Future of the Evangelical Free Church," *Beacon,* January 16, 1934. Emphases original
[57] For Hedstrom's remarks, see C.B. Hedstrom, "Sketches from Life," *Beacon,* May 22, 1934.

Swedish EFCA abandoned their tradition of conducting annual conferences in Swedish, adopting English-only meetings and record keeping. At that same convention, the Swedish EFCA dropped its ethnic national signifier, becoming, simply, the Evangelical Free Church in America (EFCA).[58]

Ethnic national identity reforms emboldened free church activists' efforts to become a power in American conservative Protestantism. For Thompson, a full transition to English service promised to flip the social dynamics of free church mission work as he believed it had existed since the mid-nineteenth century. Thompson claimed the free churches would become a "*force* in evangelization," rather than a "*field*" for it; put otherwise, they would become evangelists rather than the evangelized, the depended upon rather than the dependent—*the* Free Church in America rather than the *Swedish* Free Church in America. As a force for evangelization, Thompson proclaimed, free churches would obviate the need for any new "'independent fundamental' organizations." As Thompson saw it, separatist fundamentalists could voluntarily join the formerly-Swedish EFCA to collaborate in mission work and education while maintaining their congregational independence and doctrinal peculiarities (within defined reason).[59]

Nevertheless, free church media displayed significant tension in matters of Scandinavian identity both within and outside the churches, particularly as rapidly shifting domestic and global events laid new questions at the feet of old ethnic and racial ideals. At the same time the EFCAs curtailed ethnic national identity and bilingual service as a matter of religious survival, reference to Swedish cultural heritage in the *Evangelical Beacon* actually increased. In the early 1930s, for instance, the *Beacon* regularly printed travel ads for cruise line vacations to Scandinavian home countries.[60] For immigrants who had

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[58] For the purposes of clarity, I will continue to refer to this EFCA as the "Swedish" or "formerly Swedish" EFCA, given the continued existence of a second EFCA. On English at the conventions, see Olson, *Stumbling Toward Maturity*, 26. The Norwegian-Danish EFCA adopted English-only conferences in 1933.

[59] Thompson, "Future." Emphases original. See above on the limits of doctrinal deviance in free church ecclesiology.

[60] See, for example, Advertisement, "This Year—Scandinavia!" *Beacon*, December 5, 1933

once found sufficient cause to abandon their ancestral homes, the increasingly routine opportunity to revisit the old country reflected growing comfort gained through racial acceptance, ethnic assimilation and corollary economic class ascension in America. Leisure travel to Scandinavia also afforded Scandinavian-Americans opportunity to imbue their pasts with idyllic, pastoral nostalgia that elided the economic, political and religious controversies of mass global migration. Popular Swedish-American leaders like Hedstrom shared their own romantic and spiritual travel journals from homeland cruises in the *Beacon's* pages across the decade.[61]

More explicit and conflicted reflection on ethnic and racial identity issued from the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany. In the *Beacon*, initial concern for German politics arose in 1933 from a reported suppression of "real gospel meetings" in the nation. According to the Rev. Harry Lindblom, a Swedish EFCA pastor in Chicago and science professor at the Swedish BIA, the new anti-semitic German government suppressed the message of Christ simply because Jesus himself had been Jewish. But Lindblom and the editors of the *Beacon* also recognized that the new government was strictly pro-Nordic, a position that had direct relevance to the free churches' Scandinavian past and its popular mythologies. However, Lindblom's concern for Germany's rising Nordic "racial consciousness" issued not from its troubling social hierarchies, but more characteristically from its displacement of gospel truth as the fundamental religious ideal—in effect, the same concern that undergirded deep suspicions of modernism, communism and social service. In short, Lindblom characterized Germans' "worship [of] the soul of the Nordic race" as an heretical state-sponsored alternative to Christ-worship, but not as a warped imagination of Nordics' position in civilized society.[62] Lindblom and other *Beacon* writers thus considered the Nazi regime troubling in the same way they considered communist Russia troubling, and regardless of the growing political antipathy

[61] See for instance, C.B. Hedstrom, "To the Fatherland," *Beacon*, July 12, 1938.
[62] Roy Thompson, "Nordic Christianity," *Beacon*, November 7, 1933.

between Russia and Germany. Communism, however, not Nazism, remained the primary global threat in free church commentators' analyses of world events.

In fact, free church leaders who advocated for the end of "Swedish work" in the churches simultaneously supported ethnic national pride *outside* of evangelistic outreach and institutional identification. The very same year that Roy Thompson imagined the future of an all-English independent fundamentalist EFCA, he wondered if Swedes and Swedish-Americans had *too little* pride of "nationality." Reflecting standards by which racial superiority has often been judged, Thompson argued that Sweden had "…produced a race of people as intelligent, as high-minded, as courageous, as idealistic, as religious as that of any other nation." Thompson continued to reject Hitler's 'deification' of "the Nordic man" insofar as "pride of race" supplanted pride in "the cross of Jesus Christ!" Regardless of Hitler's views, however, Thompson urged Swedes to "trust in the flesh" of their Swedish heritage as descendants of "stalwart giants," "staunch defenders of the faith of our fathers," and exemplars of "…the high standards of righteousness and honesty and integrity, not a whit behind those of any other nation under the sun."[63]

In sum, free church leaders throughout the 1930s consistently embraced Scandinavian identity as an admirable historical, cultural and sometimes-racial inheritance, but they increasingly rejected ethnic national identity as an organizing principle of religious institutions or gospel understanding, Instead, free church luminaries invoked the spiritual equality of all souls before the cross regardless of historical human origins. In humanistic terms, free church leaders proudly reported on their own majestic vacations to Scandinavia, to visit the "Fatherland" and its heroic historical monuments to free church origins.[64] They occasionally expressed pride in the contributions of their "racial group" to

[63] Roy Thompson, "Are the Swedes an Inferior People?" *Beacon*, May 22, 1934.
[64] Hedstrom, "Fatherland."

American history and American religion.[65] In matters of church and faith, however, explicit Scandinavian identity and limited Scandinavian-American service came to be outright denied. By 1938, Roy Thompson argued that it was "not enough to eliminate the word 'Swedish'" from the denomination and its constitution. "We must eliminate it from our *thinking*," he insisted, adding an important caveat: "so far as our churches are concerned..." Thompson went on to urge free church members to "…forget that we are *Swedish* Christians, or *Norwegian* Christians, remembering only that we are Christians, and real brothers and sisters to all who call upon the name of Christ, regardless of nationality or background." Thompson accepted pride in "our heritage," but not pride as a matter of "superiority" or "clannishness" *in the service of "our Master."*[66] Crucially, feelings of superiority or clannishness, like thoughts of ethnic national identity, were only rejected when in the service of God—or "so far as …churches are concerned"—and not in other social realms.

Alongside doctrinal assertions of spiritual equality, economic thinking influenced and pervaded free church deliberations over their shifting ethnic national identity, augmenting efforts to gain religious authority and influence in larger society by rejecting ethnic identity in evangelism and church organization. Reflecting the corporate rhetoric of the moment, E.A. Halleen reframed Roy Thompson's sentiments on Christian unity as a matter of level spiritual value in the marketplace of salvation. "In the economy of grace," Halleen allegorized, "we are not Scandinavians, but Christians. We thank God for the solidarity of our background, but the background does not constitute our goal." For Halleen, that goal included the possibility of the free churches becoming "a vital power in the

[65] See Frank Anderson, "After Three Hundred Years," *Beacon*, August 9, 1938.
[66] Roy Thompson, "Where There is No Vision," *Beacon*, June 14, 1938. Emphasis mine.

world" due to their ecclesiastical "freedom" and the "liberty and self-governing functions of [free] churches and institutions."[67]

Free church businessmen, like Hedstrom or the Norwegian-Danish EFCA's Carl Gundersen, generally agreed. In a rare submission to the Swedish EFCA's *Beacon,* Gundersen too asserted that free church members "…should not be known as Swedes, Danes nor Norwegians, but as Christians serving our Lord and Master who should be our all and all." While Gundersen reserved belief that Scandinavians had some God-given special purpose—"the Scandinavian people as a whole [are endowed] with a deeper spiritual fervor than most of our American friends," he claimed—he, too, insisted that the background, so to speak, did not constitute the goal. Scandinavians in America were not simply to maintain their deep spiritual fervor in isolation, Gundersen intimated; they were to be, rather, "…a salt in the Nation"—an antiseptic against pervasive corruption, perhaps, or at least the true savor of eternal redemption in a damned world.[68]

As a practiced business manager of free church activism, however, Gundersen, augmented the argument to spiritual equality with financial analyses of recommended cooperative efforts. In 1938, Gundersen wrote the *Beacon* to appeal for new talks on a possible merger of the twin EFCAs, and his economic evaluation of the situation affirmed to him the co-extensive purposes of God's church and corporate finance. In matters of ecclesiology, Gundersen admitted his uncontroversial belief that both EFCAs "…had the most Biblical form of church governance," as well as one that would "…appeal to many independent fundamentalist churches which stand for the same principles as we do, and who would be glad to unite with us in our common purpose." In that regard, his appeal was little different from other large-tent evangelistic proclamations offered by his free church contemporaries. Ever the

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[67] E.A. Halleen, "Gideon's Three Hundred," *Beacon*, November 29, 1938. See also and again Dawson*, Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

[68] Carl Gundersen, "A Layman's View on Union," *Beacon*, March 22, 1938.

bureaucratic manager, however, Gundersen did not hesitate to add that spiritual unity would incur material reward, if only by way of corporate efficiency. By combining the *Beacon* with the Norwegian-Danish EFCA's *Evangelist* (formerly *Evangelisten*), Gundersen guaranteed "…financial profit which could be used [in turn] for the printing of tracts and other useful Christian literature." He asserted "no argument," moreover, that "it is more economical to run one school than it is to run two…and it is better to have one good school than to have two not so good." Claiming similar benefit and advantage to a combination of free church youth work and mission work, Gundersen prayed that "God's will may be done" in the matter.[69]

Gundersen's corporate advocacy produced some immediate result, but lingering pride of nationality and ecclesiastical independence slowed efforts to merge the Scandinavian-American denominations and parachurch organizations permanently. To show his good will to the formerly-Swedish EFCA, Gundersen collaborated with Swedish-American leaders to manage a new combined free church youth summer camp in Cedar Lake, Wisconsin.[70] Although the camp was an apparent success, debates of denominational merger began to stall over matters of ecclesiastical control in missions, publications and education. Missionaries from the Swedish-American denomination, in particular, opposed a merger on grounds of the proposal to transfer control of all missionary activities to the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM), which had been largely under Norwegian-American control since the turn of the century. Gundersen's own Norwegian-Danish free churches showed more apathy towards joining forces—owing, according to some, to Norwegian distrust of domineering Swedes. Only one-third of the Norwegian-Danish congregations replied to requests for

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69 Ibid.

70 Carl Gundersen and Elmer Johnson, "Cedar Lake Conference Call," *Beacon*, January 24, 1939.

comment on a possible merger, and only half of those approved of the measure.[71] By 1940, formal talks around denominational merger fully stalled.[72]

Setbacks in merger planning no doubt frustrated Scandinavian-American free church activists who wished to save and extend their claimed traditions through institutional growth and collaboration, but other opportunities to do so in the early 1940s abounded, especially opportunities to forge deeper alliances with Anglo-American fundamentalists. Perhaps most notably, increasing social connections between Scandinavian-American free church and Anglo-American fundamentalist activists spurred rising reforms of the fundamentalist movement, bolstering the fortunes of new cooperative ventures in evangelism, including the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and Youth for Christ (YFC). For many in the free churches, these new organizations finally corrected fundamentalist doctrinal exclusivity to allow voluntary participation in shared evangelistic projects. More importantly, they invited participation from any and all who were willing to expand the influence and power of conservative Protestantism in American society, and Scandinavian-American free church leaders were primed to do just that.

Free church denominational leaders, mission organizers and activist free church businessmen again led the charge in new cooperative ventures, taking advantage of evangelistic connections and networks built over the last decade, like those established by Hedstrom at the CBMC and CBMCI. Carl Gundersen had also joined forces with Hedstrom as a member of the CBMC in the mid-1930s, and he later claimed he received personal divine inspiration in response to prayer directing him to organize the CBMCI with Hedstrom and R.G. LeTourneau, among others, on its executive board board.[73]

[71] Report, "Report from the Unity Committee," *Yearbook of the 55th Annual Conference of the Evangelical Free Church in America, 1939* (Minneapolis: 1940), 86.

[72] Report, "Unity Committee," *Yearbook of the 56th Annual Conference of the Evangelical Free Church in America, 1940* (Minneapolis: 1941), 95.

[73] See Gundersen, *Long Shadow*, 70. For more on LeTourneau, see Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, 14-43.

When Hedstrom suddenly and unexpectedly passed away in 1942, Gundersen continued on in the leadership of the CBMCI, and he became instrumental in its support for a new program of youth evangelism inaugurated in 1944, YFC, that featured another graduate of Chicago's Norwegian-Danish Salem Evangelical Free Church, the Rev. Torrey Johnson. For the next decade, CBMCI and YFC were, in the words of historian Sarah Ruth Hammond, "joined at the hip;" the former became the latter's earliest and most active fundraiser and promoter.[74]

Gundersen also continued to work closely with SAM and its director, T.J. Bach—a Danish immigrant and CTS graduate—who invited Gundersen to attend a conference in 1942 that promised to "unite evangelical action" across the United States. Unlike the "independent fundamentalists" who free church leaders courted jealously but often chastised for exclusivity, these new "evangelicals" promised a voluntaristic fellowship based on simple yet fundamental doctrinal agreements.[75] Norwegian-Danish leaders like Gundersen and Bach were impressed, as were many other leaders of the free churches, including Swedish-American stalwarts like E.A. Halleen and Roy Thompson who attended as official representatives of their denomination the following year's NAE conference to formally organize the association. Gundersen came to serve on the NAE's various boards from its inception; the Norwegian-Danish EFCA became the first denomination to formally join the association in 1943; the *Beacon* took up formal advocacy for the same within the Swedish EFCA through editorials by Thompson, Halleen, and other Swedish-American representatives; and, finally, the Swedish EFCA formally joined the association in 1945.[76]

Collaboration with and incorporation of Anglo-American fundamentalists—then rebranding under the banner of evangelicalism—further facilitated the de-ethnicization and "Americanization"

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[74] See Hammond,*God's Businessmen*, 124. See also 120-126.

[75] See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

[76] See Olson, *Stumbling*, 140.; see also, Roy Thompson, "United Action of Evangelicals," *Beacon,* April 28, 1942. For more on the EFCAs' affinities with and support for the early NAE, see chapter 4 of this dissertation.

of the free churches. In 1943, as the Norwegian-Danish EFCA formally joined the NAE, leaders at its annual conference finally jettisoned their ethnic national title, as their Swedish-American compatriots had done in 1934, becoming simply the Evangelical Free Church Association (EFCA).[77] That same year, Roy Thompson declared in the pages of the *Beacon* that, "…we are no longer a foreign language church, catering to people of one nationality. The newer names added to our membership lists indicate a decided trend toward the complete Americanization of our work." Adopting the language of Scandinavian superiority while discrediting Scandinavian-centric service, Thompson credited revived "vigor and vitality" among the free churches to "the vision that the *whole world* is our field rather than the people of one nationality."[78]

As Scandinavian-American free church leaders worked together through fresh evangelistic projects, they coordinated newly aggressive bureaucratic efforts to merge their own denominations. While free churches long-promoted local congregational control over non-essential matters, free church denominational leaders nevertheless commanded institutional control of their schools, publications and select mission work. Despite historical and supposed doctrinal distaste for such efforts, denominational leaders flexed ecclesiastical muscles to hasten the demise of ethnic national loyalties and to advance their preferred fellowships, piece by piece. Late in 1944, select board members of the Norwegian-Danish EFCA's seminary in Minneapolis—then renamed Trinity Seminary and Bible Institute (Trinity Seminary)—solicited leaders of the Free Church Bible Institute and Seminary in Chicago, including Halleen and Thompson, to discuss a school merger based largely on the grounds that Chicago's expansive metropolis provided better amenities for education than Minneapolis. Swedish leaders were quick to accept the proposition, and efforts were made to introduce and approve the project swiftly through denominational channels.

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[77] As with the Swedish EFCA, I will continue to refer to this denomination as the Norwegian-Danish EFCA.

[78] Roy Thompson, "The Evangelical Free Church of America Beacon," *Beacon*, June 15, 1943.

At the Norwegian-Danish EFCA, matters of ethnic national fellowship once more returned to the fore to challenge the seminary coup, delaying the measure through 1945. Vocal opposition arose quickly among a Norwegian-American constituency who continued to hold resentment towards Swedes, ostensibly over Sweden's occasional historical dominance and rule of Norway.[79] In the Norwegian-Danish EFCA's periodical, *The Evangelist*, one school merger opponent demanded to know, "What has become of the Norwegian element within us? Have we forgotten what God gave us as an inheritance; the privilege to have been born of Norwegian parenthood?" Viewing merger as a sign of Norwegian-American weakness and Swedish-American dominance, the author fretted over what seemed to be the impending demise of the Norwegian-Danish EFCA. "Is our fellowship dying?" he asked. *The Evangelist* itself then adopted strong editorial opposition to the merger.[80]

As an extension of ethnic national identity and culture, Norwegian-Danish free church fellowship was dying, as was Swedish free church fellowship, and the strength of new fellowships within and between the dual EFCAs hastened that demise. At *The Evangelist*, Norwegian-Danish EFCA leaders clandestinely removed anti-school merger editorials from the paper, sparking significant anger and public pushback from paper editors and Norwegian loyalists.[81] At the same time, both EFCA's leveraged denominational authority matters of education to secure the merger. At the Norwegian-Danish EFCA's annual convention in 1946, Carl Gundersen pressed the charge. After the merger's formal introduction, Gundersen proposed a new amendment to give complete control of merger issues to a "Committee of Five" who would define and manage all corporate, financial and logistical aspects of the institutional combination. Both the amendment and the amended merger proposal passed against the opposition of more than one-third of conference delegates.[82] The Norwegian-

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[79] Martin, *Trinity International University*, 55-56.
[80] Ibid. See also Hanson, *The Trinity Story*.
[81] Martin, *Trinity International University,* 55-56.
[82] See *The Evangelical Free Church Association Annual Reports, 1946*.

Danish conference then telegrammed Swedish EFCA leaders—who were holding their annual conference at the very same time—and the Swedish EFCA quickly approved their own proposal with near unanimity. The school merger was official. Two years later, faculty and students of the Minneapolis school joined their colleagues in Chicago at a combined facility renamed after the former Norwegian-Danish school: Trinity Seminary and Bible Institute.[83]. At the same time that the seminary merger was implemented, members of both EFCAs' publication boards met to discuss similar arrangements "…to increase the effectiveness of their publication ministries," as Roy Thompson later put it. The anti-merger editor of *The Evangelist* resigned in protest, the *Beacon* and its lingering Swedish-language periodicals moved to Minneapolis, and a new denominational publishing agency, the Free Church Press, was established.[84]

In effect, the school and press mergers functioned as an ecclesiastical trojan horse, ensuring full denominational merger by incremental takeover. By combining two essential branches of each denomination, select leaders in both EFCAs had fused a significant portion of their institutional resources into mutually overseen bureaucracies without putting the option of full denominational merger at the fore. These 'independent' mergers conveniently sidestepped the objections of the two groups most opposed to merger proposals of the late 1930s: missionaries and ethnic national loyalists. The fusion of seminaries ensured that, despite whatever other objections, future free church leaders of either denomination would be trained collaboratively with identical curricula offered in English only with no ethnic national loyalty of any kind. The only remaining quarter for independent denominational oversight was in mission work, and since the Norwegian-Danish EFCA operated its foreign mission work through the independent agency SAM, only the Swedish EFCA's mission board needed further convincing—and the new merger plan essentially secured the continuity of their

[83] Martin, *Trinity International University*.
[84] See Thompson, *Dynamic of the Printed Page,* 92-93.

operations. Around the same time, SAM changed its own name to The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), further abandoning ethnic loyalties in Norwegian-Danish EFCA institutions. With little remaining to work out, a new denominational merger resolution was put forward in 1948, and a Unity Committee represented by leaders of both denominations was established. By the middle of 1949, both EFCAs had voted on the official merger plan proposed to formalize their already substantial union. With anti-merger forces in the Norwegian-Danish EFCA depleted and defeated, the resolution passed both denominational assemblies by a combined 269-18 vote.[85] The modern EFCA—the Evangelical Free Church in America—was born.

In a preamble to their formal merger proposal, members of the Unity Committee described a history of incremental forces that they envisioned had brought them, finally, to realize their long awaited transformation. Central to that narrative, once gain, was the romanticization of nineteenth-century ethnic national language, identity and culture as an expression of its own demise for a new generation of twentieth-century Scandinavian-Americans—now simply "Americans," as E.A. Halleen would soon have it. As free church publications had in past years, the committee invoked with pride their heritage as descendants of separatist pietistic revival in nineteenth-century Scandinavia, and it lauded forefathers who became rugged "pioneers of [that] work" on "American soil." At the same time, it defended prior ethnic national division as the inevitable consequence of emigration and asserted that prior ethnic national service in America was, at the time, a matter of "God-given commission." The committee claimed, however, that "…time and circumstances [had] brought many radical changes," and that the new generation was better attuned to assess the pros and cons of revised fellowship.[86]

[85] See *Proposed Merger Plan of the Evangelical Free Church Association and the Evangelical Free Church of America*, (Self-Published, 1949).

[86] Ibid., 3

The new generation, in the committee's view, identified with alacrity the mutually reinforcing spiritual and 'corporate' effects of denominational merger. As that generation supposedly saw it, the providential unfolding of free church assimilation and Americanization secured both a more perfect spiritual unity as well as a variety of "practical" bureaucratic and economic benefits of material unification. According to the Unity Committee, the new generations had decided with clear hindsight that the dual EFCAs had "…*already* united in spirit and purpose, and have *always* agreed on the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith…." The merger, therefore, was seen as a refined external reflection of internal and eternal relations in the true body of Christ. The "practical aspects" of the merger, as the committee had it, included therefore an increased strength of fellowship, a reduction of competitive and redundant gospel work and consequent improvements in the corporate effectiveness of free church efforts to "further the cause of Christ." Among those corporate improvements could be counted as well economic signs of success: "…no little saving of talent and money" and diminished expenses in operational overhead.[87]

(White) American Religious Nationalism and Pro-Capitalist Free Church Fundamentalism

In a *Beacon* photograph that accompanied reporting on the CBMC's 1936 convention, a sea of 9,000 white faces—mostly businessmen and their wives—posed triumphantly for the camera, clear photographic evidence that both fundamentalist and corporate ventures in the free churches remained overwhelmingly if not absolutely racially homogenous by contemporary standards of "color race." However, for all their reflection on the dangers of racial pride, the spiritual irrelevance of ethnic and national identity, or the limitations of foreign language, free church leaders and media commentators of the 1930s and -40s never directly described their growing fundamentalist and corporate fellowships in terms of color. By avoiding that particular explicit association, free church leaders, spokespeople

[87] Ibid., 3-4. Emphases mine.

and representatives appropriated yet another "American" tradition—the very adjective's assumed-but-silent whiteness. As Toni Morrison once described it, "[i]n this country American means white. Everyone else has to hyphenate." Leaders of the Scandinavian-American free churches recognized and attacked the limits of their own hyphenated institutional and cultural identities in the 1920s and -30s with shared understanding that their ethnic national identity overrode their claims to American identity. Many in the free churches worked even more diligently to surpass those identities as completely as possible in the 1940s and -50s, proclaiming an American religious nationalism that left its whiteness bracketed and unspoken.

Free church leaders, pastors and missionaries recognized ethnic national limitations on their social status especially in religious relationships where the flow of institutional resources and evangelical attention intimated greater or lesser social standing, depending on who was giving and who was receiving. As Scandinavian immigrants and hyphenated-Americans, free church adherents were often still "others" in America, identified by the names of their religious institutions, the urban neighborhoods they lived in and the languages they spoke. Free church leaders wished to "de-other" their people, to make them American with no limitations on the possible heights of their social power and influence, by removing othering identifiers. In their English-language pursuit of evangelistic relationships with Anglo-American fundamentalism especially, free church Scandinavian-Americans aimed to flip religious power dynamics by becoming depended upon rather than dependent, the minister rather than the 'ministered unto,' or, as Roy Thompson put it, a "force in evangelism" rather than a "field" for it. Claiming that dominant religious status, for free church activists, was part and parcel of the project to become American and, for pietistic fundamentalists especially, perhaps the most important part.

Racial capitalism offered even more resources, both material and ideological, to this project of (white) American religious nationalism. As Sarah Ruth Hammond's description of C.B. Hedstrom

intimates, the class ascendency and middle-class managerial identity of some free church fundamentalists secured a storybook narrative arc of the "immigrant who had made good," an economic mythology with meaning equivalent to 'the immigrant made American.' Sanctified pro-capitalist economics further helped free church luminaries make plausible sense of their own immigrant institutions' century-long transformations in America. The slow growth and new self-sustainability of the free churches, buttressed by financial support from their own growing business classes, came to be seen as a sign not only of divine favor but also of divine encouragement. Each economic success prodded more investment in the projects of religious assimilation that free church activists pursued. As noted above, the economic successes of corporate class evangelism, in particular, further emboldened the exercise of pro-capitalist ideology and ethics as means of attracting Anglo-American fundamentalists that the free church required to subsume their ethnic national identity,

Regardless, American religious nationalism in the free churches would not become fully conscious white identity through the religious partnerships described here. Instead, white free church identity came as Americanizing free church representatives described and compared themselves with select groups, namely people of color both abroad and at home, to whom they ministered but who were also seen as external to white American communities, even when they lived in and were citizens of the United States. For EFCA leaders, these groups were increasingly important as indicators of the free churches' rising social and religious power, and select populations of color became 'fields' that the EFCA aspired to harvest as a 'force' for evangelism. The story of rising white racial identity in these select mission fields occurred simultaneously with the end stages of the "complete Americanization" of EFCA work, but it occurred also in distinct discourse mostly separate from considerations of ethnic national identity, Anglo-American fundamentalist outreach and corporate capitalist evangelism. However, as the following narrative shows, lingering concern for spiritually egalitarian free church fellowship continued to inform and reform free church understandings of

racial identity, free church aspirations to universal evangelism and free church commitments to circumscribed economic and political social programs.

IV.
"A New Reformation …with Ecumenical Significance:" Spiritual and Institutional Bodies of White Evangelicalism through Depression and War

"Only the Lord Jesus can give us liberty, victory, peace.
This story was told by D. L. Moody:
Two men went riding into the country.
Along the road came an old colored slave,
so they thought they would have a little fun.
'Sambo, how old are you?' asked one.
'I don't know, Marsa. I guess I'se about eighty,' he answered.
'Can you read?' the other asked.
'Yes, sah,' he answered.
'Can you see what it says on that sign post?'
'Yes, sah: it says forty miles to Liberty.'
'Well, now,' one of the men said,
'Why don't you follow it and get your liberty?'
The old man replied, 'Sah, that sign's all wrong.
But if it pointed up there,'
and he raised his hand toward Heaven,
'to the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free,
then it would be right.'
Old Sambo knew 'The Way.'
Do you?"
—as told by Mrs. Olga Larson in "Kids' Korner," *The Evangelical Beacon*, 1947[1]

Clear up all the slums, redistribute the wealth of the world until all have their equal share, amalgamate the races until all distinctive characteristics disappear, outlaw the A-bomb and the H-bomb, promise health insurance and old-age security to every inhabitant of the earth, do all you can to realize the dreams and aspirations for peace, prosperity, and security which lie deep in the hearts of men; but if you leave the heart of man still untouched by divine grace, all your benevolent humanitarianism will only harden and stiffen men against God. Man himself will still be lost.
—The Rev. Wallace S. Johnson, "The Contemporary Scene," 1950[2]

In 1932, the Rev. A. L. Wedell, a professor and administrator at the Swedish-American EFCA's Free Church Bible Institute and Seminary (FCBIS, formerly SBIC), submitted a Sunday School Lesson to *The Evangelical Beacon* titled "Living With Other Races." In the early years of the *Beacon*, Wedell's lesson was peculiar because it described contemporaneous "races" and "racial" issues strictly in terms

[1] Olga Larson, "Kids' Korner," *Beacon*, September 30, 1947.
[2] Wallace S. Johnson, "The Contemporary Scene," March 21, 1950.

of color rather than with more complex and ambiguous racial identifiers more common to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century racial categorization. Specifically, Wedell identified "the problem of the colored races" as a challenge for free church evangelism, and he argued that free church evangelists and missionaries look to the bible for lessons on how to overcome "racial prejudice" against populations of color in particular. Less surprising, given the fundamentalist spirit of the day, was Wedell's simple biblical solution to racial prejudice: namely, universal evangelism to all peoples as a matter of obedience to God or, put otherwise, an unconditional and aggressive invitation to all individuals regardless of skin color to join the spiritual body of Christ.[3]

In the very same issue of the *Beacon*—on the very same page in fact, in a column opposite Wedell's lesson—the periodical first announced the "Free Church Forward Movement," an early co-operative effort between Swedish-American and Norwegian-Danish-American free churches that pinned the future of all free churches on "…the matter of extending [their] influence into new homes and over every new generation."[4] On one page printed in 1932, then, the free churches offered two seemingly compatible visions for aggressive evangelism that would grow their communities and extend their traditions to a broad swathe of humanity, American or otherwise. In reality, however, Wedell's racially inclusive vision of universal evangelism and the American assimilationist vision of the Free Church Forward Movement did not see eye to eye, nor did the projects, if Wedell's one-off lesson counts for one, speak to one another. Over two ensuing decades, the foundations laid by the short-lived Free Church Forward Movement upheld epochal changes in free church religious communities and in their concordant national identities, while Wedell's concern for racial prejudice as a matter of color remained an occasional rumination over persistently inadequate evangelical action.

Rather than an actual evangelistic project, Wedell's lesson on "living with other races" best

[3] A.L. Wedell, "The Sunday-school Lesson," *Beacon*, November 22, 1932

[4] "Forward Movement," *Beacon*. See Chapter 3.

represented a limited but expanding color consciousness in free church thought, especially as it was projected to the regular readers of free church press. Only infrequently did that color consciousness issue from American social contexts, but even in those limited spheres "colored people," especially "Negroes," were viewed as a demographic category fundamentally separate from whites in general and from Americans in particular. The most frequent references to "black races" in particular, however, came from African missionaries abroad managed by the Swedish-American EFCA's foreign missions department. Free church foreign mission advocates did adhere to Wedell's benevolent vision of universal evangelism, but they justified evangelism to black-skinned peoples more explicitly with white supremacist biblical mythologies of racial difference, with pronounced paternalism for "uncivilized heathens" and with a blanket Christian colorism that invariably associated black skin, blackness, darkness and even the continent of Africa with depravity, sin and other demonic forces. In turn, free church missionaries increasingly described themselves as white peoples in comparison to their black novitiates, and they clearly understood themselves to represent divine qualities of whiteness, including claims to purity, righteousness and privileged access to special religious knowledge. From these and other missionary submissions to the *Beacon*, lay readers were provided refined mental orders of color race that had been secondary or tertiary in racial imaginaries of prior decades and centuries.

At the same time, free church representatives claimed to understand the dangers of white "racial prejudice and discrimination" particularly given the increasingly bloody news from Nazi Germany and Europe. Free church leaders recoiled from this extreme political and totalitarian form of "Nordic" white supremacy, and they denounced the "brute force" of white racism abroad. Moreover, some free church leaders and media commentators recognized parallel patterns of white discrimination against populations of color and minority "races' in American social orders, and they condemned such prejudice on religious and political grounds. Outside of a discursive condemnation of white racism,

however, free church leaders continued to offer evangelism and individual regeneration as the only solution to the "problem" of race. As A.L. Wedell had it, egalitarian evangelism itself rendered otherwise political and economic racial divisions moot. For Roy Thompson, the church was the only true "integrating force in the world."[5] Of course, by "the church" Thompson did not mean the Swedish-American EFCA specifically, but rather "the body of Christ" as the spiritual assembly of all regenerate souls. Regardless, both Wedell and Thompson's idealistic religiously egalitarian imaginations ran squarely into the reality that the free churches and their Anglo-American fundamentalist counterparts were lily-white, and Thompson himself, alongside other fundamentalist leaders, censured the visible churches for their failure to evangelize people of color alongside the "Americans" that churches did evangelize. This enlarged concern for black and brown peoples increased their representation in free church media, but not often as direct targets of mission campaigns and too often as racist caricatures.

As the war came to an end and postwar recovery began, the social conscience of the white free church, like the uneasy conscience of fundamentalism, faltered once more over its failure to deliver on its spiritually egalitarian promise, especially given institutional liberal Protestantism's developing interest in social, political and economic solutions to racial and class inequalities. In line with rising liberal views, select new voices in free church public media voiced more sophisticated and sensitive analyses of racial power discrepancies in missions, in churches and in society at large, including the social orders of American democracy and capitalism. Other voices, however, echoed indifference, complacency and outright segregationist white supremacy in response to growing concerns for racial equality during the war and in the early postwar era. At the root of these conscientious disagreements, particularly for free church leaders, was the question of religious

[5] Roy Thompson, "Holding the World Together," *Beacon*, July 23, 1942.

fellowship, otherwise a question of church order. Even as free church leaders confessed to the limits of their purely evangelistic solutions to racial inequality, they professed fear over stressing "the social implications of the Gospel" at the expense of "the Gospel of redemption" itself, as Thompson described the matter.

Into this quagmire stepped the nascent National Association of Evangelicals, an organization officially founded in 1943 specifically to expand the social, economic and political influence of reformed fundamentalism in American society. High-level free church leaders swiftly promoted the NAE despite existing fundamentalist alternatives in large part because the NAE described its own organization in ecclesiological traditions near and dear to free church thought. In particular, the NAE's catchphrase, "Cooperation without Compromise," captured free church fundamentalists' long held aversion to creedal exclusivity as well as their similarly held affinity for voluntary cooperation on "essential matters." At the same time, the NAE fixed its organizational sights on competition with the liberal Federal Council of Churches. Free church leaders again appreciated a strong ecclesiastical adversary against which they could imagine their own beliefs, orders and practices.

Beyond its broad evangelical inclusivity, moreover, the NAE's ecclesiastical battles also offered a new opportunity to cast fundamentalist social, political and economic priorities in a new light. Rather than understanding fundamentalist social priorities as reactionary or defensive social postures deployed to fortify the pure church against rampant religious apostasy and cultural debauchery until the rapidly-approaching millennium, new 'evangelicals' represented by the NAE redefined their social priorities as necessary components of engaged, effective and socially-transformative evangelism. While the millennium still loomed large for NAE-style evangelicals, they aimed also, in the words of historian Curtis Evans, "…to reengage culture on a *broader range of issues* than fundamentalists were

willing to accept."[6] Put otherwise, reformed fundamentalists' rebranding under the NAE loosened exclusive doctrinal purity standards in order to organize a larger coalition of social, political and economic activism. This new organization was not, however, fundamentalism *moderated* but rather fundamentalism *enlarged*. The NAE wished to go beyond repetitive and acerbic rhetorical attacks on the FCC championed by fundamentalists like Carl McIntire. In fact, the NAE aimed more comprehensively to overtake the FCC at every level: ideological, organizational, social, political and beyond. Within the expanded range of issues the NAE confronted were new efforts to analyze and mitigate racial prejudice in the church, efforts that EFCA leaders and representatives were eager to advance given growing confusion and disagreement over such matters in their own denomination.

By the midcentury then, just as the EFCAs themselves merged, a reformed fundamentalism transformed the social ethics of egalitarian evangelism and spiritual integration to include a newly robust approach to economics, politics and other matters of so-called secular or material or humanistic social concern. EFCA leaders followed this new evangelical movement closely and joined its leadership ranks in time for radically new social orders to emerge in the postwar era. Due to their early appreciation of infrastructural investment as means of institutional growth—in short, their reverence for capital—as well as their historical proximity to the city of Chicago in particular, free church leaders led the way in shaping modern evangelical investments, and the spiritual, ecclesial and racial commitments they developed through depression and war followed them along the way.

Depression and Wartime Free Churches in Black and White

Despite their inability to define camaraderie with fundamentalists as a lily-white social formation, free church leaders, missionaries and media were not "color blind" in the prewar era, and were even

[6] Curtis J. Evans, "White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement," *Harvard Theological Review* (Vol. 102, Issue 2, 2009), 248.

less so after the war. Rather than expressing their "whiteness" through solidarity or identification with other whites, free church representatives imagined and cultivated their whiteness explicitly in contradistinction to black peoples—at first, primarily Africans—with whom they had religious relations. This sense of color consciousness rose throughout the 1930s and especially through the war as issues of black-and-white "race relations" in America were thrown into starker relief by a variety of social forces, including intranational migration and most especially global war. While explicit "white" self-identification remained for a time marginal and subordinate to American national, fundamentalist or capitalist self-identification, dramatic shifts in both free church and wider American racial imaginations were well underway by the time the EFCAs merged.

While never a central or overriding issue, color consciousness in the *Beacon* was evident even in the opening years of the 1930s, largely due to both the increase of black American migration to urban centers and, more prominently, the growth of missionary work in Africa through the Swedish EFCA and SAM. Early commentary on American racial issues in the paper was infrequent, but even in limited appearance, such commentary was telling in its portrayal of color, power and social status in black-white frameworks. In the very first edition of the English-only *Beacon*, an exceedingly short story under the headline "Significant News Summary" alerted readers to the growth of a new "brown skinned race" in the United States, a result of "white interfusion" in "Negro blood."[7] Aside from the curiosity that ostensible "race-mixing" was a newsworthy item in a fundamentalist Christian periodical, the brief statement displayed a rudimentary assumption of pure blood colored races that could be 'muddled' by "white interfusion"—a rhetorically antisepticized, declawed and desexualized white agency. Most other references to American "negroes" or "colored people" in the early -30s came anecdotally, here and there throughout the *Beacon,* and they often reflected social and class distance,

[7] "Significant News Summary," *Beacon,* Oct. 6, 1931.

especially as white writers recalled occasional and passing interactions with black train porters and household servants.[8]

Before the end of the decade, occasional and passing references to black Americans still outnumbered any mention of free church missionary work among people of color in the United States. Rare instances of such work nevertheless revealed the nationalistic and concurrent racial biases of free church proselytizers toward unfamiliar proselytes. In a home missions column from 1934, Mrs. Philip Hanson noted an almost accidental project to evangelize an impoverished district of Oakland previously unknown to the area free church pastor. Among the children invited to the a new free church-organized Sunday School were included "Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Negro and American boys and girls," and one of the most committed new followers was, reportedly, "a colored brother" who had prayed for more "gospel work" to come to the area.[9] Telling in its categorical separation of "Negro" from "American" and its simultaneous association of nationality with race, this Oakland mission nevertheless hardly represented systematic evangelization to the poor, immigrants or people of color in the United States—and certainly nowhere near the sweeping extent championed for white businessmen.

Despite its anomaly, the Oakland mission also reveals essential free church visions of evangelism's social power in relation to race and class: namely, its ability to affect personal and spiritual transformations while leaving other social orders fully in tact. In the view of the mission's spokesperson, the people of the impoverished Oakland district had spiritual needs that exceeded their admittedly great "temporal" ones. The district's children were described as "poorly clad, dirty *and* Christless"—maintaining an association of the three qualities while prioritizing the latter. A drunkard

[8] See, for instance, C.B. Hedstrom, "Sketches from Life," *Beacon*, December 19, 1933; or Rosa Osterlund, "Neighborhood Evangelism," *Beacon*, March 7, 1933.

[9] Mrs. Philip Hanson, "The Mission of the Christmas Basket," *Beacon*, May 8, 1934. Emphasis mine.

father and a poor mother, among others, were assumed to be callous and indifferent to these children. "Were all these children to be lost because *no one* cared for their souls?" the pastor wondered.[10] The pastor's question, along with the descriptions of area residents, all implied further that the solution to poverty, alcoholism and a host of other socio-economic issues resided only in the missionary's power to give Christ's message to spiritually and materially impoverished people. When that message was received, as it was by one beleaguered mother in the Oakland mission, a "Mrs. R.," it meant "…a new day dawned in [her] life." For Mrs. R., conversion entailed a difficult separation from "worldly friends and sinful practices," but it promised "salvation, peace with God, everlasting life, and a life of service for the Master." Socially and personally, Mrs. R. gained a new community in the church and a new 'outlook' on life, but no other detail of her racial or economic status remained salient enough for the author to describe. Spiritually, Mrs. R. was supposed to have gained the greatest gift "…*in spite of* her many trials and battles."[11]

Mrs. R.'s racial identity, self-assumed or otherwise imagined, remained obscure in the Oakland report, but conspicuous and regular commentary on "black races" also came from missions—not in the United States, however, but in Africa. More than any other free church population, foreign service missionaries especially pronounced a welcome to black peoples and called for their continued evangelization as brothers and sisters equal in Christ. At the same time, missionaries and multi-racial mission advocates held to white supremacist mythologies of racial difference that reified social inequality despite aspirations to universal evangelism. Even in the white north, the infamous "Curse of Ham" racial theology served as a framing device for white missions' presupposed benevolence. In an editorial lauding African mission work titled "Simon, the Black Cross Bearer: A Message on Behalf of the Black Man," the Rev. Titus Johnson pronounced that "[m]en with black skins are also precious

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

to the heart of the Heavenly Father." Nevertheless, after reciting Noah's tale from Genesis 9, Johnson also accepted that a stain of servitude had been inflicted upon all "…Hamites, the black people of the earth." This curse, Johnson argued, was God's blessing in disguise. "Because the curse made them servants," Johnson professed, "they are to be found in the best homes and most important places all over the earth. Service has given them opportunities and brought them into places they never would have otherwise reached." Continuing to use the bible as an allegory for modern "race relations," Johnson claimed that Simon the Niger, Christ's cross-bearer in the New Testament, represented one such instance of black service in "high places" otherwise beyond any black peoples' reach—even as he noted that the black-skinned cross bearer would be called "Simon the Nigger" in the 1930s.[12] Nevertheless, since Johnson again witnessed black service on behalf of the free church in Africa, he reminded his readers that "…the black man is precious to the heart of our Christ who tells us to take the 'good news' to 'EVERY CREATURE.'"[13]

As Johnson celebrated all black peoples' blessing-by-curse, free church missionaries also regularly exhibited exoticism and paternalism long common to Euro-American Christian evangelism on the continent. Specifically, free church missionaries often fixated on black skin and its supposed qualities in their work among disparate African peoples—a fixation that highlighted to these missionaries their own whiteness and its supposed qualities. In the *Beacon*, free church missionaries regularly reported from foreign fields, and missionaries like Lloyd and Esther Johnson were "…happy to testify that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth, not only to the Jew and the Greek, but also to the black-skinned heathen of Africa."[14] Seemingly unfamiliar with the complex range of melanin in human skin, one missionary, Mrs. Anna S. Tweed, expressed

[12] Titus Johnson, "Simon, the Cross Black Cross Bearer: A Message on Behalf of the Black Man," *Beacon,* Nov. 3, 1931. See also and again Dawson*, Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Esther Johnson and Lloyd Johnson, "From Our Mission Fields," *Beacon*, May 23, 1933.

fascination over the diversity of skin tones and the quality of skin among the Mbaka tribe in the Congo. Noting that "[n]egroes are not usually considered good looking," she found the Mbaka surprisingly "quite handsome."[15] In later correspondence with the *Beacon*, Tweed also reported on "the black faces" she witnessed at a Sunday meeting, behind which she envisioned "…sinful hearts—but childlike hearts, reaching out for the light that these (to them) wonderful white men are bringing."[16] Like Tweed, most free church missionaries from Africa described themselves as white persons or as *a* white people through these and similar ruminations on black skin and black faces.

As Tweed's commentary further exhibits, free church missionaries and their advocates regularly engaged in white Christian colorism that was less formal but more pervasive than storied biblical exegeses of racial origins. Under white Christian colorism, the color black and blackness, or even darkness in general, were reflexively associated with sin, heathenism and barbarity; so, too, was black skin. The color white, whiteness and lightness, were associated with purity, salvation and civilization, as was white skin—i.e., "light [from] these …wonderful white men." After hearing reports from returned missionary Arthur F. Skoglund, the pastor G.E. Hedberg exhibited all these tendencies in one sweeping statement:

> How thankful we should be that we are living in a civilized land and have the privilege of worshipping a true and living God, and that we do not have to live in spiritual darkness but have the assurance that Jesus' blood has cleansed us from all unrighteousness, and that someday we shall see Him face to face. Oh, that more could be done for the ignorant people of Africa as well as elsewhere, to make known God's power to save. Let us pray earnestly for our black brethren across the sea.[17]

No doubt Hedberg considered himself a brother to black peoples across the sea, as did Tweed consider herself a sister to them. Regardless, no doubt either that both Tweed and Hedberg also

[15] Anna S. Tweed, "An Introduction to the Mbakas," *Beacon,* Oct. 20, 1931.
[16] Anna S. Tweed, "From Our Mission Fields," *Beacon*, March 7, 1933.
[17] G.E. Hedberg, "Bay City Echoes," *Beacon*, October 22, 1935.

imagined themselves, through and with color itself, to be in superior positions of social power and religious advancement, if not religious ability, over their black brothers and sister in Africa— 'superior' positions they were sorely and explicitly grateful to God to hold.[18] As free church missionaries shared their stories at the pulpit or in the presses, they taught others in the free churches how to imagine themselves as white people accordingly. This transformation of whiteness into an overarching self-identity was consistently affirmed and reinforced in oblique theological terms—by claims on civilization, on life in the light, on righteousness, on cleanliness, or on ownership of transcendent spiritual knowledge.

"Colorful" visions of racial hierarchy and white supremacy similar to these pervaded free church missionary reports from Africa—as well as Asia and South America—well into the 1940s, but colorism reared its head in other fields as well. In concert, free church representatives quietly projected a vision of color race that maintained sharp distinctions between "white" and any admixture of shade or color. Occasionally, these racial imaginations were quite explicit in their reinforcement of white supremacist mores. In 1941, in an editorial on shedding the light of the Bible in dark times, Roy Thompson declared that there could be no partnership between light and dark despite efforts to "dilute the darkness" with light or "mix a little of the darkness with the light." "The effort has never produced anything but darkness," Thompson concluded, "just as the various 'colored' people continue to be classed as 'colored' in spite of strains of 'white' from intermarriage." Such metaphors no doubt made it all that much easier for readers to draw a straight line from racial intermarriage to "the darkness of …iniquity" over and against the white light of "Truth and Righteousness."[19]

[18] An important reminder here that "civilization" is an economic category as well as a cultural one, insofar as it the term regularly describes inside access to material resources and technologies valued by the 'dominant' cultural perspective. See, for example, David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48-102.

[19] Roy Thompson, "The Darkness Has Never Overpowered It," *Beacon*, December 9, 1941.

Thompson's racial metaphor was made in the service of a seemingly unrelated point, but even when *Beacon* columns addressed race head on—an infrequent incident before the war—they maintained white supremacist views. In his Sunday School lesson column entitled "Living with People of Other Races," A.L. Wedell, president of the Swedish BIA, identified "the problem of race" specifically as "…the problem of the colored races, the black and the yellow races, the American Indian and others," as if the existence of "colored races" itself was the problem in question. He noted, moreover, that "[w]e realize there are certain limits [between races] which are not well to transgress…," and that it was "…always easier to withhold and withdraw ourselves…" from any duty—individual or "national"—to race "problems."[20] In Wedell's language, "we" and "ourselves" represented emissaries of the free church, but also, of course, the unspoken whiteness of those emissaries reflected by tacit sexual and spatial boundaries of shifting free church racial identity.

Egalitarian Evangelism and Spiritual Integration on the Homefront

Despite the prejudicial and paternalistic colorism of free church evangelism and doctrine, free church leaders like Wedell and Thompson alongside lay missionaries like Tweed claimed to reject racial prejudice. And yet, free church efforts to evangelize people of color in the United States remained anemic until the approaching war with Nazi Germany forced a greater reckoning with their seemingly passive indifference. As noted above, free church commentators in the *Beacon* had early decried Nazi's "worship [of] the soul of the Nordic race," even as they defended their own Nordic heritage. Later in the decade and into the 1940s, ruminations over Naziism and war brought increased attention to race and, specifically, to white racism. In a *Beacon*-published sermon on "meekness" in 1939, for instance, the Reverend A.W. Tozer lamented the "terrible fruit" that Naziism had wrought as Hitler and his

[20] Wedell, "Lesson."

government attempted to purify the German race with "brute force."[21] In 1942, after the United States formally entered the war, Roy Thompson described a world torn apart by new emphases on national and racial difference alongside political conflict and militarism.[22] Later that year, he declared that "racial prejudice and discrimination" were "extremely poor strateg[ies]" for maintaining crucial alliances with nations of brown and black people during a global war.[23] Similar denunciations of white racial prejudice and discrimination—almost always tied to some form of war commentary—dotted the *Beacon* through ensuing years.

As free church representatives identified the perils of racial prejudice, they increased their calls to evangelize, especially at home. More importantly, they understood their aspirations for universal evangelism both to constitute and to cultivate racial egalitarianism in the face of racial prejudice. While A.L. Wedell remained obscurant in his Sunday School lesson as to which "limits [were] not well to transgress" between races—indicating, likely, that he believed his readers understood what he meant—he shared biblical allegories inflected through his own twentieth-century imagination of race to show how evangelization itself overcame racial prejudice.[24] On Wedell's reading of the New Testament, for example, religious and political conflict between ancient Jews and Samaritans amounted to a bitter and enduring "race hatred" that caused each group to resent and avoid the other, but Christ's surprisingly gentle treatment of a Samaritan woman showed his intent to overcome racial divisions with gospel truth. Wedell argued that Christ so dutifully spread his own message that "…no racial prejudice or other barriers could prevent Jesus from associating with and ministering to people outside of the Jewish race." Furthermore, it was essential for Wedell that Christ "condescended" to speak to the Samaritan specifically so that he could "…enlighten her and …solve her *religious* problems"—

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[21] A.W. Tozer, "The Blessedness of the Meek," *Beacon*, January 10, 1939.
[22] Thompson, "Holding the World Together."
[23] Roy Thompson, "Racial Prejudice and Discrimination," *Beacon*, November 24, 2942.
[24] See again Dawson, *Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

explicitly *not* her political or economic problems. In another example, Wedell maintained that Peter, a Jewish man, learned to accept Cornelius, a Roman "heathen," despite their supposed 'racial' differences because they shared "a common experience" in the gospel which led further to their "joy of serving each other."[25] In this case as well an evangelist was seen to overcome racial prejudice simply by sharing the gospel with someone outside their own supposed racial group. Accordingly, when Wedell called for free church evangelists to "bury" their own racial prejudice, he meant for them to evangelize "other races" specifically. Put otherwise, he meant to solve a "religious problem," not a political or economic one.

Drawing on missionary frameworks, free church leadership also claimed capacious ecclesial power to discern and embody solutions to the problems of racial prejudice. At the *Beacon,* Roy Thompson appealed again to the Protestant "spiritual church" tradition—the doctrine that only the aggregate of all saved souls constituted the true church—to affirm the gospel's purported egalitarianism, just as he had when the Swedish EFCA jettisoned ethnic national identity from their denomination. Laying bare the ecclesiological sleight of hand necessary to uphold a claim to racial egalitarianism in the "church," Thompson ignored the clear white racial isolation of his own church as well as the tacit ideals of white racial superiority scarcely veiled in free church mission work when he insisted in 1942 that "[t]he Church of Christ is not divided. It has no national boundary lines, and no racial barriers to fight about."[26] Given that regenerate peoples came from every nation and supposed racial group, and despite their distinct denominational affiliations, Thompson declared even more strongly that "…there is one *integrating* force in the world:" namely, "…*unity* in the Body of Christ." Put otherwise, Thompson believed that a second birth in Christ *already* overcame racial prejudice and discrimination

[25] Wedell, "The Sunday-school Lesson." Emphasis mine. The understanding of "Roman" as a racial category here is particularly beguiling.

[26] Thompson, "Holding the World Together."

in spite of economic, political, cultural, and even spatial chasms that separated and socially ordered different races. In short, other social forces divided peoples, but not "the church," singular: "The Church of Christ is not at war, except for its eternal conflict with the powers of darkness." Thompson raised to the level of Christian "responsibility"—for individuals and the "churches," plural—this idealized model of spiritual indifference to temporal and material difference so that universal evangelization could work its egalitarian theurgy.[27]

Free church leaders, missionaries and interracial mission advocates alike were seemingly sincere, by all available methods of interpretation, in their evaluation of racialized social problems and their equally racialized evangelistic solutions to those problems. Nevertheless, even Thompson's reiteration of church responsibilities to "hold the world together" admitted that church institutions were not yet doing enough to solve by evangelistic outreach the perceived problems of racial prejudice. Thompson himself had addressed the problem in 1939 after E.A. Halleen called for a stronger missionary front at home in a *Beacon* editorial titled "*The War is On!*" Halleen's declaration challenged free church members to offer greater financial support to home missions exclaiming that, "[n]ew fields should be invaded for Christ and the Free Church."[28] In the editorial that followed Halleen's call, Thompson pressed for a number of "facts [to be] faced" in home mission fields, the very first of which proclaimed: "1. A soul of an American or Negro or Japanese in our own country is certainly as precious as a soul in a foreign country." Again excluding "Negro" (and "Japanese") from "American" in its classification of peoples, as had the Oakland mission above, Thompson's first fact recognized that for all the universal evangelism pursued in distant Africa, the free church neglected the souls of people of color at home.[29]

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[27] Ibid.
[28] E.A. Halleen, "The War Is On!" *Beacon*, October 3, 1939.
[29] Roy Thompson, "The Challenge of the Home Fields," *Beacon*, October 3, 1939.

In the late-1930s and early-40s, Thompson's *Beacon* also gave space to sympathetic voices from the Anglo-American fundamentalist movement who echoed the self-censure of racial and ethnic national segregation in home missions and called for expanded fields, especially in America's great cities. The call for urban missions in particular made explicit evangelistic associations of urban populations to the so-called "uncivilized heathens" of nations in Africa, Asia and South America. In early 1939, the venerable fundamentalist theologian Carl F. H. Henry sought to enlist free church members in a new effort to buy advertisement space in the street cars of major cities. Rather than posting ads for churches, specifically, the effort sought to place "…bible text[s] in every public vehicle in the nation." Henry argued that the project "…provide[d] fulfillment of Christ's missionary command…" specifically because it better reached the diverse populations of the nation's cities. Henry cited population figures from Chicago to make his point: "Chicago is the largest Polish city in the world and the third largest Jewish city. There are 4,000 Chinese and one of the largest groups of Negroes in any northern city. Here then is opportunity to reach all races and all nations."[30] A year earlier, Paul Rood, president of BIOLA, had offered similar statistics to the CBMC's seventh annual rally, noting that "[t]he city problem in our land should cause us concern." Hoping to impress the urgency of their ever expanding evangelistic task, Rood recognized "…thirteen million Negroes in America," seven million of whom he claimed went unchurched. Adding to these the millions of Jews, tens of millions of unchurched children *and* the needs of 1.2 billion "pagan" and "heathen" around the world, Rood declared, "[o]ur task and responsibility is stupendous."[31]

As calls for universal evangelism in home missions proliferated, free church pastors and home missionaries reported more contact with black and brown Americans, and free church media represented black folk especially with more frequency. However, much of that contact was not directly

[30] Carl F.H. Henry, "Making Churches of America's Street Cars," January 10, 1939.
[31] Paul Rood, "Can the World Be Evangelized In A Decade?" January 25, 1938.

evangelistic in its focus or in its outreach to people of color, nor was black representation necessarily flattering—although some was. Free church representatives and fundamentalist allies in the midwest and on the west coast alike reported with great favor on occasional touring gospel music programs. In Minnesota, free church congregations welcomed the Spiritual Jubilee Singers of Chicago to their pulpits to showcase black gospel music that included "…camp meeting shouts and negro spirituals."[32] In Los Angeles, free church members attended another concert organized by old-time fundamentalist preacher R.A. Torrey's Church of the Open Door. This well-reviewed concert, which showcased "colored" gospel singers alongside Charles Fullers' Radio Choir and "Einar Waermo, Swedish tenor," aimed to raise funds to evangelize—but in Los Angeles' prisons and jails, not necessarily populations of color at the time.[33] For the most part, however, gospel music served primarily as religious entertainment for white churches and white revivals, spiritually effective as it was.

As the decade turned to war, contributors to and editors of the *Beacon* also represented black Americans with greater frequency in their writing, both through good-willed if self-serving intention, or through racist caricature that echoed white paternalism in foreign missions. In the spring of 1943, the *Beacon* ran a flattering five-part series documenting the remarkable life of George Washington Carver. In addition to Carver's significant achievements in agricultural science and education, the series' author took special interest in Carver as "…an earnest Christian" directed by "[God's] Word." For the *Beacon's* editors and its readers, Carver thus represented the possibilities of black perseverance and self-uplift when guided by simple Christian faith. As Carver's biographer put it explicitly: "There is no respect of persons with God. He still gives wisdom to those who ask it, whether their skin be black, yellow or white, *if only* they will keep the window of their souls open toward heaven and are

[32] See David Becker, "From the Land of Lakes," *Beacon*, February 7, 1939; Becker, "From the Land of Lakes," *Beacon*, February 21, 1939; and, "News from the Churches," *Beacon*, September 19, 1939.

[33] E.H.L., "Farthest West," *Beacon*, December 26, 1939.

humble enough to receive it."[34] Advertisements for a pamphlet printing of the Carver series similarly stressed the imperative of faith and humility as prerequisite to God's favor for formerly enslaved black peoples. After listing Carver's many scientific accomplishments, the ad proclaimed, "*[b]est of all*, he is a humble Christian man who believes God has opened up a little of His great storehouse of wonders *in response to faith*."[35] In contradistinction to this mostly sympathetic representation of Carver, many other representations of black Americans in the *Beacon* bordered on crude caricature. Often, that border was well crossed: in column fillers featuring an "old Negro preacher" cracking "goss-pill" jokes in crudely mimicked black English vernacular, or by columnists sharing moralistic tales of a wise "old colored mammy" or even by Sambo tales shared in the paper's "Kid's Korner"—all these among other iterations of deceptively foolish or laughably wise "negro" stereotypes.[36]

For all the increased attention to black Americans, either real or as imagined, the *Beacon* showed little evidence of substantial progress in home missions that served common black people. In most cases, early free church mission work to blacks in the United States remained limited to children and again implemented an order of paternalism that missionaries put on people of color at home or abroad. In Chicago, students in Practical Ministry at Trinity Bible Institute led "…Bible classes for children in different homes, even among the Negro people…."[37] In Austin, Texas one home mission reported weekly bible classes for "Mexican children," noting further that "[s]ome of us wish to continue with our work among the negro children of the community." Austin free church missionaries—at least some of them—prayed for God to "…bless these efforts among the less

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[34] J. H. Hunter, "Saint, Seer and Scientist," *Beacon*, March 9, 1943.

[35] Advertisement, "George Washington Carver: Saint, Seer and Scientist," *Beacon*, March 9, 1943.. Emphasis mine. The same advertisement was printed in *Beacon* issues throughout the year.

[36] See, for example, Anna J. Nelson, "From The Southland," *Beacon*, March 7, 1939; "Trembling Saints," *Beacon*, September 19, 1939; "Pills for Everything," *Beacon*, August 4, 1942; and Larson, "Kid's Korner."

[37] Gustav Edwards, "School News," *Beacon*, June 9, 1942.

privileged."[38] In the foothills of Kentucky, free church missionaries launched a new program to visit local public schools to teach bible classes, including the one "colored school[,] bi-weekly." After praising her black students' singing talents—"[y]ou should hear them sing 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'"—one missionary, Violet Youngberg, savored the "…wonderful opportunity to evangelize these whose ancestors came from dark Africa." Youngberg prayed accordingly for more openings "…among [the] colored people" in her area, so long as it was "…pleasing to the Lord."[39] Efforts to expand mission outreach beyond black children remained either aspirational, as in Kentucky, or "hard and discouraging," as was the case for home missionaries in Madera, California who proselytized mostly unsuccessfully in a so-called "…'foreign' section of that city where there [were] hundreds of Mexicans and likewise negroes."[40]

The Uneasy Conscience of the White Free Church: Ecclesiological Barriers to Spiritual Progress

Free churches' home mission conundrum persisted through the war and beyond, and in the years preceding the EFCAs' full merger, home missionaries and free church leaders professed many of the same problems raised a decade earlier. Home missions remained misunderstood, under-funded and under-served by volunteer missionaries. Home missionaries' admittedly limited experiences, however, affirmed to them the need to imagine "…a new vision of the possible scope of our work." As Esther Byberg, a four-year home missionary to Kentucky, put it once more, "[w]e have been too limited." In yet another home mission boosting editorial, Byberg rattled off her own variation of oft-cited diverse population statistics to make her argument, and she accosted her free church fellows for "shut[ting their] eyes to the problems that these groups present." Like other missionaries and mission advocates, Byberg also circumscribed what the church could offer these diverse peoples:

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[38] Anna J. Nelson, "From Austin, Texas," *Beacon*, August 8, 1939.
[39] Violet Youngberg, "Staking New Claims," *Beacon*, November 28, 1939.
[40] Mrs. H.G. Rodine, "W. M. S. Activities," *Beacon*, May 11, 1943.

> Of course, there are many social and political problems involved here too, but there is also one for us as Christians to face. These people need more than mere livelihood, an adequate standard of living, equality of economic opportunity, or a chance to prove themselves. They need something that we can give them—a friendliness which genders [sic] hope, self-respect, and renewed faith. They need to know through us the love of God which reaches to all men.[41]

For Byberg—as for Roy Thompson and his spiritual integration, or for A.L. Wedell and his egalitarian evangelism—missionaries could only offer true equality and peace across racial divides by sharing the gospel. There was only one problem for "Christians to face," and only one thing that "we [Christians] can give."

However, Byberg's essay—alongside select other racial commentary in the *Beacon* at war's end and after—displayed some new sophistication in its social analysis, including more thoughtful consideration for populations that the free churches aspired to serve as well as for the uneven social power dynamics those populations shouldered in America. Byberg, for her part, seemed to make a concerted attempt to be more egalitarian and inclusive in her language. Radically, for a mid-century evangelical, she expressed a wish to reject the term "mission" altogether "…because it seems to imply that someone who considers himself better than others is condescending to bestow upon less favored ones some of 'his blessings.'"[42] In her count of populations of color, Byberg included "Indians," "Orientals," "Jews," and "Mexicans" alongside "Negroes," but she also counted "…many millions more of other immigrants, mountaineers, share croppers, and migrants," and she did not distinguish any from the others as "Americans." Additionally, Byberg openly decried the rise of anti-Semitism in the United States, rejected similar attitudes towards black and asian peoples, and even denigrated the conditions of migrant work camps in the United States by comparing their conditions to those

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[41] Esther Byberg, "Home Missions," *Beacon*, September 2, 1947.

[42] An interesting point of comparison to Wedell's story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. See above.

"…found in *so-called* dark Africa."[43] In so doing, Byberg undermined crude missionary paternalism by admitting that 'we/Christians/Americans' might not be so bound to the light as previously imagined.

On occasion, other contributors to the *Beacon* struggled with similarly critical evaluations of white racial imagination and white-black social dynamics, although such perspectives remained marginal to orthodox free church thought. Nevertheless, these minority critical analyses are remarkable if only because they capture relatively radical sentiments and quite public statements in a culture often described by historians of white evangelicalism as "captive" to and mostly silent regarding hegemonic racial mores of the age. In a front-page Mother's Day tribute to Mary in 1944, for instance, an unnamed author admitted that no one knew what Mary actually looked like, but that one could safely assume that common representations of her did not capture her "…as she no doubt actually looked, with black eyes, black hair, Jewish nose, and dark brown skin, like that of the modern Arab, perhaps." The author went on to criticize the self-serving imaginations of "….the 'superior' Caucasian with [their] racial prejudice," who despite being a minority in the world, "…nevertheless consider themselves called of God to rule [it]."[44] Later that year, a free church soldier who wrote to the *Beacon's* "Free Church Serviceman" section retold the story of "a young negro girl…in a Northern city" who suggested that Hitler be punished by "…be[ing] given black skin and made to live in the United States!" Concurring with the wise irony of this punishment, the serviceman, one "Private Buck," argued that the war showed what "racial prejudice and minority suppression has caused," and further noted that the United States fought a war abroad "to give minority voices in other countries …voice in government while our own problems are unsolved."[45]

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[43] Byberg, "Home Missions."

[44] "Queen of All Saints*," Beacon*, May 9, 1944.

[45] Private Buck, "Hitler's Punishment," *Beacon*, October 24, 1944.

As the war approached its end in 1945, Dr. Paul Rees, then a pastor at an Evangelical Covenant church in Minneapolis, offered a similar argument in a *Beacon* feature. Alongside other moralistic critiques, Rees indicted America for wild inconsistency in its "…attitude toward the race question." Taking particular aim at voting disenfranchisement and segregation, Rees exposed the poorly-kept secret that "thousands of our citizens" had the constitutional right to vote but were denied the opportunity to do so for no reason other than "…their skin is not of the right color. They are black instead of white." Rees then shared a story from TIME magazine that reported the denial of service to a regimen of "colored soldiers" in a southern restaurant while the Army used the very same restaurant, at the very same time, to feed "German prisoners of war." "If the seeds of future trouble are not being planted in incidents of that kind, then human nature has suddenly reversed itself," Rees insisted before submitting a particularly damning question, given years of bloody global warfare on a scale never before seen: "Does this nation deserve peace?"[46]

However prescient, Rees' acute perspective on particulars of race, disenfranchisement and segregation remained a distinct outlier in free church press, but it displays nevertheless increasing political consciousness around matters of racial inequality in free church public thought as the war progressed and then came to its end. For the time being, however, free church representatives remained equivocal in their evaluation of the social politics of race. While Rees staked his position on segregation and disenfranchisement quite clearly, other contributors to the *Beacon* displayed indifference and even defensiveness toward racial segregation. In an essay titled "Isolationism *versus* Internationalism," the Rev. John E. Dahlin reiterated God's "internationalism" and God's total disregard for—not his condemnation of—"man-made barriers" of segregation. Like paternalistic mission advocates or George Washington Carver biographers, Dahlin argued that "God is able to

[46] Paul Rees, "Does This Nation Deserve Peace?" *Beacon*, January 16, 1945.

produce Christian character anywhere," and that "…heathen peoples whose forefathers sat in darkness for centuries may be awakened…if only the Gospel of Christ is brought to them."[47] In more concrete settings, free church representatives like Army Chaplain Aaron Backus participated themselves in segregated military church services, which Backus explained away with appeal to "colored folk[s']" supposed timidity over "mixing with whites"—with no other explanation for why such timidity might exist.[48] In Austin, Texas, the Rev. Milton G. Nelson outright defended segregation with explicit white supremacist rationales, including "miscegenation" fear-mongering. Nelson accosted "ignorant northerner[s]" for their supposedly erroneous belief that "the South is hard on the negro." According to Nelson, by "knowing his place" the "negro" made himself and "the South" happy, "the South" clearly being shorthand for white southerners. On the other hand, "the mulatto" as Nelson described 'him' was "a sort of 'man-without-a-country,'' resentful of his apparently requisite association with "the colored folks" and eager with pride in his "lighter" skin to remove himself "from the darkies." Nelson warned of "catastrophe and sorrow" on the level of "the race war in Chicago in 1918 [sic]" if "the North"—white northerners, by implication—did not learn itself "to solve this problem" in quick order.[49]

Whichever "race problem" free church representatives perceived, imagined or conjured, solutions were not readily forthcoming, and fortunately no more so for Nelson than for Rees. Nevertheless, for free church leadership and spokespeople, one overriding tension lay at the center of increasing calls for racial equality in the United States, and it was the same tension that lay at the center of the debate over higher criticism and biblical literalism, or at the center of the fundamentalist-modernist

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[47] John E. Dahlin, "Isolationism versus Internationalism," *Beacon*, November 27, 1945.

[48] Aaron Backus, "Chaplain Aaron Backus Sends Greeting," *Beacon*, May 8, 1945.

[49] Milton G. Nelson, "My First Year in Texas," October 14, 1941. It is not entirely clear what Nelson meant here—whether the North needed to solve the purported problem of unhappy southern "mulattos," or if "the North" needed to better segregate its own racial orders—especially restricting interracial sexual relations—to maintain "negro" happiness, as Nelson claimed the South had. Given southerners' long-held suspicion of northern meddling and Nelson's invocation of Chicago's 1919 "race riot," it is probably safe to assume the latter.

controversy, or the increasing "liberal" and "conservative" split in American Protestantism, whatever the scriptural or doctrinal dispute. The tension, in essence, was ecclesiological, a matter of church order. As *Beacon* editor Roy Thompson described it in 1943: no faithful Christian could submit to a compromise of "…the barriers that separate the true believer from the infidel," regardless of stipulated need for improvement in "race relations."[50] Put otherwise, the free churches and their fundamentalist allies rejected any churchly collaboration on behalf of racial reconciliation that connected the institutional work of fundamentalist or evangelical Christian churches and the mainline liberal Protestant churches, the so-called "modernists," or even Catholics and Jews.

The defense of barriers between believer and infidel—which Thompson also described with the text of 2 Corinthians 6:14, "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?"—became a pillar of the *Beacon's* editorial stance towards "race relations" in general, and it fairly represented the priorities of EFCA president E.A. Halleen, among many others in free church leadership. For his part, Thompson wrote his editorial in direct response to that year's "Race Relations Sunday," an annual event sponsored by the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) and joined by Jewish and black Protestant leaders who exchanged pulpits to show racial unity and share its sacred message. Thompson claimed no issue with the exchange of black and white pulpits, and he admitted to the disastrous consequences of "racial superiority" and "racial hatred" in the context of war with Nazi Germany and Japan. Nevertheless, he objected to the possibility of "exchanging pulpits" with "Christ-rejecting ministers," Jewish or "modernistic."[51] According to Thompson, this was a spiritual matter beyond race or "nationality." In the "truly evangelical church," as Thompson had it, any "Negro," "Italian," "Russian," "Japanese," "German" or *even* "Jewish Rabbi" would be permitted "…to preach Christ crucified and

[50] Roy Thompson, "Race Relations Sunday," *Beacon*, February 16, 1943.

[51] Narrowing his objection, Thompson contended that since "liberal Jews" and "ultra-liberal Protestants" both denied the reality of Christ's deity, they may as well exchange pulpits to show "*their* 'oneness' in both racial and spiritual matters," but he insisted the free churches would never do anything of the sort. See ibid.

Christ risen from the dead," but no preacher who "denies those truths," even if "Swedish," "Norwegian" or "English," would ever be welcome. In short, concern for "race relations," whether egalitarian or supremacist, could not override the fundamental necessity of ecclesiastical separation between a true, believing "evangelical church" and the diverse infidels who denied its unshakeable core tenets.[52]

By the end of the war, however, increased censure of indifference to racism by fundamentalists and liberal Protestants alike chastised Thompson's flippant ecclesiastical dismissal of "race relations" work and forced a concession to recognize the "political, economic and social conditions" that shaped "social injustice." Nevertheless, that concession did not resolve the ecclesiological tension of racial reconciliation efforts, and Thompson continued to defend and justify fundamentalists' aversion to engage in social politics by citing the ever present threat of modernism. In 1945, the same year Rees submitted his critique of fundamentalist racial attitudes, Thompson responded to a similar critique of white fundamentalism in *HIS* magazine, a publication of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. The unnamed author of that essay more or less accurately accused fundamentalists of "feel[ing] no obligation" to the social crisis of racism other than to "bring[] individuals to Christ." More acerbically, the author indicted "some of the most ardent Fundamentalist preachers" for inciting "race riots" and, correspondingly, for defending "…the most un-Christian rugged individualism in economic life." In response, Thompson appeared almost contrite, admitting "[n]o doubt we deserve this kind of criticism." Moreover, Thompson confessed that fundamentalists had "…been afraid of the social gospel" as well as the "modernistic" bent of churches and denominations that stressed "the social implications of the Gospel" at the expense of "the Gospel of redemption." However, with this confession Thompson also restated his principled objections to "liberals" and "modernists" who

[52] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

rejected "doctrines which we [free church fundamentalists] consider to be the very heart of Christianity."[53]

Torn between wartime racial censure and loyalty to ecclesial priorities, Thompson once again appealed to biblical rhetoric of "salt and light" as an alternative vision of fundamentalist social concern. In past decades, Thompson had deployed salt and light rhetoric against a "mere humanitarian Christianity" whose social concern obscured the "fundamental task" of the church: to evangelize the world.[54] In 1945, Thompson redefined this formulation in another attempt to resolve the contradictions of modernistic social concern and fundamentalist "other-worldliness." In Thompson's new formulation, Christians-as-salt had a responsibility to "…exert their influence to hinder the process of moral corruption in the community of which they are a part"—a call, in effect, for increased *social and political activism* by fundamentalist Christians. As light, Thompson continued, these same Christians were "under obligation" to project or share their hopeful faith and upstanding moral character "…beyond the little circle of individuals in their home and church"—another call for increased *religious* activism (i.e, evangelization and proselytization) in personal social spheres. Described otherwise as a matter of social-versus-supernatural commitments, Thompson asked, "…why should we neglect **either** aspect of the Gospel of Christ?"—forgetful of the fact that his prior uses of 'salt and light' evangelism argued explicitly against social Christianity of any kind. Putting a fine point on his new formulation, and in direct response to *HIS* censure, Thompson added that fundamentalists should take "frank" liberal criticism to heart without rejecting the underlying premise that "*we*…believe that the regeneration of society can only take place by means of the regeneration of the individuals who constitute that society." In short, Thompson again offered salt and light activism, so

[53] Roy Thompson, "Are We Too 'Other-Worldly'?" *Beacon,* July 24, 1945.
[54] See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

redefined, as the only viable solution to social and racial inequalities, and he maintained the authority of the spiritual church to offer requisite salt and light in all its supernatural power.[55]

As the free churches moved toward merger, Thompson's editorial stance seemed to soften further in a 1947 call for cooperation in "campaign[s] to give justice and freedom" to all races, nationalities and classes, but he remained both exclusive in his particular ecclesiology and vague in his politics. In response to the National Conference of Christians and Jews' (NCCJ) "American Brotherhood Week," Thompson reiterated "Evangelical Christian churches[']" reticence to "co-operate in movements of this kind" exactly because of the modernistic theological implications of appeals to "the brotherhood of man." For Thompson, as always, true "'brotherhood' consist[ed] only of those who constitute the true Church of Christ"—i.e., regenerate believers, not all humans. And again, as he had four years earlier, Thompson bridled at the exchange of pulpits between "Protestant, Catholic and Jewish clergy" as an affront to "the pure Gospel of Christ." Nevertheless, Thompson called for support of the "American Brotherhood Week," because "*American* brotherhood" did not compromise evangelical Christians' "convictions." Put otherwise, Thompson permitted 'secular' national brotherhood as an acceptable framework for Christian engagement with the politics of race. That admission did not, however, clear up his or the free churches' official stance on any specific issues of racism, even segregation in particular. Citing the FCC's "disapproval of the 'pattern of segregation' in our Christian churches," Thompson remained noncommittal over desegregation as "…a method of achieving unity and overcoming prejudice" even as he claimed to "…deplore the tendencies in our country to deny true freedom and justice to large areas of our population."[56]

Free Churches, United Evangelicals and the Social Fronts of Midcentury Ecclesiastical Warfare

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[55] Thompson, "Other-Worldly?"
[56] Roy Thompson, "American Brotherhood Week," *Beacon*, February 18, 1947.

For Roy Thompson and others within free church leadership, rising consciousness for matters of color race and concordant racial prejudice arose at the same moment that free church activists joined forces with a new fundamentalist reform movement marshaled by the nascent National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). In fact, Thompson's racial analyses in the Beacon were not themselves incidental to the EFCA's growing promotion of the NAE and its myriad social causes. When Thompson first maligned Race Relations Sunday in 1943, he attacked a program of the liberal ecumenical FCC, an organization that had not much troubled the pages of the Beacon or the minds of EFCA leadership prior to 1942. Thompson's new concern for the activities of the FCC came on the heels of his reporting on the NAE's preliminary conference in St. Louis, which Thompson described as a gathering of "distinctly evangelical and fundamentalist organizations… [who were] not tied up with the Federal Council of Churches." In so doing, Thompson accepted and proliferated the budding NAE's characterization of the FCC as the preeminent modernist organization in the United States, one that had "lost [its] distinctively Christian testimony" but which nevertheless maintained great power over American Protestantism alongside significant influence in national political and social affairs, including matters of "race relations." Accordingly, Thompson took up vociferous advocacy for the NAE as it defined itself against the FCC.

Thompson's advocacy for the NAE, its "evangelical" branding, its social ethic and its activist programs—rehearsed as well by E.A. Halleen, Carl Gundersen, T.J. Bach and other forces in EFCA leadership—was no foregone conclusion in early 1943, however. Some EFCA leaders held more strongly to militant fundamentalist views, requiring the NAE and its proxies to thread the eye of a needle to win free church fundamentalist support. In January of 1943, for example, the Rev. Wallace S. Johnson of Oakland, California wrote to the *Beacon* skeptical of "…portents of a better age to come" in the material and economic progress of the United States. In fact, due to "indifferent tolerance" in "moral, social and religious spheres" of the nation, Johnson saw more proof for "the

speedy realization of the prophecies …foretelling the eventual dictatorship of Anti-christ." Johnson expressed specific concern for "movements towards unity among religious bodies," especially those that elided important "doctrinal differences" and crossed meaningful denominational lines. "Unity and excessive tolerance are always indicative of weakness and apostasy, never of strength," Johnson declared unequivocally. "When men and movements are strong," he continued, "they dare any opposition for their convictions. When men have no convictions there is tolerance, unity, and decay." Eschewing "world-wide emphas[es] upon new order, a better world, a permanent peace," Johnson plead for action in terms popular and familiar to free church fundamentalists: "While so many are laboring for the betterment of society, let there be a few of us who are laboring for the salvation of souls."

Johnson's classic fundamentalism represented a number of obstacles the NAE faced in recruiting the fundamentalist EFCA. NAE activists were no doubt sympathetic to Johnson's rote fundamentalist critique of religious tolerance and social activism given the field of anti-modernist associations it traversed, but the nascent NAE made its own appeals to doctrinal flexibility, organizational unity and social activism that appeared to run directly counter to Johnson's fundamentalist worldview. Moreover, the NAE was not the only collaborative fundamentalist organization that the EFCA considered supporting. Alongside the World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA), an institution long favored by free church fundamentalists, EFCA leaders saw much of their priorities represented in Carl McIntire's American Council of Churches (ACC), and McIntire's organization detested and opposed the FCC even more virulently than the NAE.[57] In 1944, Youth for Christ (YFC)—led by EFCA-raised

[57] "Four Significant Organizations," *Beacon*, August 31, 1943. Reprinted from *The Sunday School Times*, July 17, 1943. As a run of an essay from *The Sunday School Times*, this essay highlighted the WCFA, the ACC and the NAE, alongside the Independent Fundamental Churches of America (IFCA). Thompson later excused the IFCA from *Beacon* consideration because it was more a standalone denomination than a confederation of fundamentalist churches, denominations and parachurch organizations. See Chapter 3 for more EFCA commentary on "independent fundamentalists."

Pastor Torrey Johnson—added its name to a growing list of cooperative evangelistic projects, and EFCA leaders saw opportunity therein to spread the gospel to a new generation absent controversial and acrimonious debates of the old guard.[58] Leaders at the NAE, hopeful to capture some of YFC's sheen as well, consciously attempted to walk a line between Wallace Johnson and Carl McIntire's exclusivist, socially-restrictive fundamentalism and the "world-wide emphasis" on "new order" that promised a better future after the war, especially for younger generations and growing Christian families.

The EFCA's sudden crusade for the NAE despite its fundamentalist convictions issued from a number of causes, but few were more important to the free churches than the NAE's ecclesiological vision and its ecclesiastical organization. Most importantly, leaders of the new NAE appealed deftly to the spiritual church tradition in ways that clearly overrode free church fundamentalist concern for "weakness and apostasy." In a speech reprinted in the *Beacon* in 1945, NAE founder J. Elwin Wright identified poor organization as a primary failing of "Christian evangelicals," and he maintained that disunity, not minority religious status, lay at the root of fundamentalists' and evangelicals' inability to influence the national social order as they wished. Unlike militant fundamentalists, Wright admitted that both "Modernist and evangelical" could agree that "dissension and division" caused great harm to "the Church" as such. Nevertheless, like Johnson above, Wright cast aspersion on most attempts to unify denominational entities other than those with similar polity, beliefs and forms of worship—an exception that EFCA merger proponents no doubt appreciated. Even more like Johnson, Wright objected strongly to FCC recommendations for a union of all American Protestant churches despite their significant differences in polity, beliefs and forms of worship. More frightening yet, for Wright, were supposed FCC long-term proposals that all religions, including Catholic, Buddhist and Muslim

[58] The *Beacon* first cited YFC in "News At A Glance," *Beacon*, May 16, 1944. Given Torrey Johnson's role in the organization, it received significant publicity in EFCA media thereafter.

traditions, unite under the auspices of one world church. Against all this, Wright offered the NAE's "formula for fellowship…in which every *Bible believing* group will be left entirely *free* to pursue its form of worship and polity without outside pressure and dictation, but upon the basis of [the NAE's] statement of faith…."[59] In short, Wright described the NAE's organizational goals as a reflection of its doctrinally-sound supernatural spiritual unity.

Most EFCA leaders and representatives were so taken with the NAE's "formula for fellowship"—even though it relied on a statement of faith—that they immediately identified the organization as spiritual kin and called for its support. For these EFCA leaders, Wright's formula perfectly split the difference between fundamentalist demands for doctrinal purity and an organizational liberality that allowed for "…fellowship with folks that differ…in the non-essential things," as E.A. Halleen himself had called for in 1936.[60] In his earlier call, Halleen had rejected the "independent spirit" of free church fundamentalists who limited free church growth by their exclusivity, so no wonder he came to support the NAE's vision as a method of expanding the EFCA's influence. Roy Thompson, who earlier chastised fundamentalists for their strict and meticulous creeds, celebrated the NAE's "brief and clear doctrinal statement." Recognizing the free churches' own traditional aversion to creeds, Thompson insisted nevertheless that the statement was "…just exactly what almost everybody in the Free Church believes." For Thompson, moreover, the NAE 'creed' was perfectly "…narrow enough to exclude all Modernists, but… broad enough to include all evangelical and fundamental groups." Putting a fine point on his enthusiasm, Thompson lent the creed his highest praise: "[t]he statement is strictly 'Free Church' in spirit, with insistence on unity in the essentials but permitting freedom of interpretation in matters less vital." On this doctrinal basis and its accepted indication of spiritual unity, Thompson called enthusiastically for concordant organizational unity with the NAE: "[s]o far as we can see, we

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[59] J. Elwin Wright, "Plea Unity of Evangelical Christians," *Beacon*, May 15, 1945. Emphases mine.

[60] See chapter two above.

have nothing to lose but everything to gain by an affiliation with this forward-looking and aggressive association of Bible-believing Christians."[61] The Rev. Elmer Johnson, after attending the NAE's second annual convention, concurred, emphasizing his own "heart-understanding" with the new association. "The Spirit of the conference was one of real brotherliness and unity," Johnson claimed. "The presence of God was felt," he continued, before declaring that, "[w]e [the EFCA] will feel at home among them."[62]

Beyond their professed doctrinal and spiritual affinities, EFCA representatives saw much to admire in the NAE's focused opposition to the FCC as an organization bent on dictatorial, 'Catholicized' control of American religion. Since the early 1930s, EFCA leaders had grown distinctly concerned by modernism not merely as heretical doctrine, but more so as a threat to institutional autonomy—to the freedom of the organized church as they saw it. Given their celebration of a church specifically "free from popery and subserviency to ecclesiastical lords," free church leadership took NAE's charges against the FCC very seriously, and they were eager to proliferate new and dire assessments of the liberal organization's supposedly dangerous ecclesiastical machinations. Early NAE stalwart Harold John Ockenga captured the breadth of NAE and EFCA concerns for ecclesiastical subserviency by blaming the FCC "for exposing a great mass of individuals as prey to the Roman Catholic dogma of an authoritative church" especially through its "…emphasis on the autonomy of the human mind as the ultimate authority." Ockenga's speech to the NAE's 1945 convention, republished in the *Beacon*, accused the FCC of exerting political pressure on the federal government, of scheming with international forces and of spreading media propaganda all to the end of "…transform[ing] a fundamentally Protestant culture to a fundamentally Roman Catholic culture in the United States."[63]

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[61] Roy Thompson, "Strengthening Our Testimony," *Beacon*, May 29, 1945.
[62] Elmer Johnson, "A Movement for Our Times," *Beacon*, May 29, 1945.
[63] "Trying to Make America Catholic," *Beacon*, May 15, 1945.

Ockenga's attack on the FCC, and others like it, gave the EFCA a new centralized target for their long-held ecclesiastical anxieties: no longer the Lutheran state churches of Scandinavia, no longer polyglot Congregationalists, no longer major mainline denominations who absorbed minority ethnic national churches, but instead a powerful, political, pseudo-Catholic national church bent on total religious and cultural domination.

NAE leaders alongside new 'evangelical' partners also inspired EFCA leaders and media in their opposition to old fundamentalist bugbears, including humanism, materialism, socialism, Marxism and communism. When Ockenga attacked the FCC's deference to the "human mind as the ultimate authority," he invoked particularly the long-standing fundamentalist criticism of modernism's supposed exaltation of man over God. In a 1943 speech at the NAE's constitutional convention, also republished in the *Beacon*, Ockenga blamed global turmoil and war on exactly that inverted theological formation. As Ockenga had it, "man" without requisite Christian "moral fiber [or] internal standards …to rule himself" readily submitted to "authoritative rule from above," leading to "…Naziism, Fascism, Communism and other ideologies challenging democracy for world rulership." Ockenga argued that none of those ideologies could have achieved what they had in recent decades "…had we clung to the belief in God, for each of these theories is fundamentally built upon the denial of the Christian tradition."

Ockenga's critique, however, was not merely theological but rather was a matter of direct social, political and economic concern. EFCA representatives, for their part, were fluent in Ockenga's ostensibly submerged social analysis, and they accepted Ockenga's argument on its fundamentalist bona fides. As Ockenga had it,

> [o]ur salvation after the war is not a new economic or social order nor a political new deal, but it must find its basis in Biblical Christianity with Christ the leader and with eternity in view. There must be a resurgence of Christian life, or darkness will claim our age. The hour has

> struck when there is no alternative. No plan, no theory, no hope may be held for men save in this divine source, namely Jesus Christ. It is and must be *Christ for this crisis*.[64]

Ockenga's logic was exceedingly clear if nevertheless revolutionary in the context of fundamentalist social concern. In the lexicon of that tradition, the terminology of "new" economic or social orders or "political new deal[s]" did not reject *all* economic, social or political analysis, but rather had *specific* and broadly understood referents: state socialism, communism, Marxism and related 'man-over-God' economic, political or religious social structures.[65] Moreover, Ockenga's rejection of "new" social orders concordantly functioned as a tacit endorsement of allegedly traditional and polar social orders: namely, American capitalism and circumscribed American-style democracy. In the 1940s, the *Beacon's* regular readers would have clearly recognized this discursive currency.

In heralding Ockenga's position, however, EFCA leaders and other 'new' evangelicals accepted a reformed and activist model of fundamentalist social concern that modeled itself, ironically, after ecumenical liberal Protestants at the FCC. As represented by the NAE and sympathetic parties in the EFCA, evangelicals' jealousy over FCC political and economic influence was no closely guarded secret. When Ockenga insisted that "Biblical Christianity" was all that could offer "salvation" to preferred national social orders after the war, he meant this new style of evangelicalism specifically, not some abstract or simplistic vision of scriptural gospel. As *Beacon* editors described it in their preface to Ockenga's 1943 speech, seven hundred conservative and fundamentalist Protestants met in St. Louis "…to organize a national religious organization admittedly competitive with the [FCC], *and seeking to parallel the council's effort in every sphere of interest on evangelical rather than liberal lines*."[66]

Through ensuing years, the EFCA promoted similar efforts to challenge the FCC with new evangelical perspectives and practices. In a 1947 editorial titled "Applying Christianity to Economic

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[64] Harold J. Ockenga, "Christ for America," *Beacon*, May 18, 1943.
[65] See chapter 3 above.
[66] Ockenga, "Christ for America."

Life," Roy Thompson reported on new FCC proposals to apply, in the words of FCC representatives, "'…the principles of Christ's teaching to our world of business and industry, of agriculture and co-operatives and the professions.'" With multiple common anti-modernist signifiers, Thompson expressed his disdain for FCC economic measures, noting that "…we deplore the tendency of the modern church to depart from the simple teaching of the Gospel and to substitute therefor a 'social gospel'…." Nevertheless, under the new evangelical regime, Thompson also professed admiration for "Christian laymen and ministers" who took "time out" of their primary spiritual obligations to address the "practical, every-day world of business and industry." Thompson concluded, "[e]vangelicals, too, should be concerned with the social and economic problems of our nation."[67]

In sum, the NAE and EFCA took up arms against the FCC with common understanding of the economic and political stakes at play in their search for increased power and influence, especially considering the rising profile of global communism in the American worldview. Coincidentally or otherwise, Thompson ran a second editorial next to "Applying Christianity to Economic Life" that described "Communistic philosophy" as the greatest threat to both Christianity and American democracy. In the short column, Thompson quoted FBI head J. Edgar Hoover who called for "'vigorous, intelligent, old-fashioned Americanism" to combat the "Communists" that supposedly menaced American freedom and democracy alongside Americans' "worship of God" and their "way of life." Thompson modified Hoover's appeal by calling moreover for "*vigorous, intelligent, old-fashioned Christianity*" to adopt "the best strategy in warfare[:...] a strong offensive program." In Thompson's view, an evangelical assault on communism required—of absolute political and economic necessity—"…an all-out missionary program launched by a united evangelical Church throughout the world."[68]

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[67] Roy Thompson, "Applying Christianity to Economic Life," *Beacon*, April 8, 1947.
[68] Roy Thompson, "A Formidable Rival," *Beacon*, April 8, 1947.

These stakes of new evangelical social activism undergirded rebranded evangelicals' approach to every contemporaneous social issue of their era, including and especially issues of race and economy. When Thompson maligned the FCC's Race Relations Sunday in 1943, therefore, he did so to portray an evangelical perspective—newly framed by NAE organization—on the dangers of both modernism as a theology *as well as* other forms of social evil. For the purposes of his attack on Race Relations Sunday pulpit exchanges, Thompson meant to indict FCC tolerance of heretical Jewish and modernist theologies insofar as that tolerance was understood to be a measure against racial prejudice, in and of itself. Thompson argued the direct counterpoint: only agreement on doctrinal essentials could provide a sanctioned foundation for egalitarian racial and religious exchange. In his ensuing editorials on "race relations" and white racial discrimination, Thompson maintained his indictment of the FCC, modernism and liberalism, but slowly introduced an alternative evangelical social ethic—salt and light activism—that reiterated the necessity of evangelism not solely for the divine purpose of saving eternal souls, but more so for the divine purpose of saving the structural social orders of American society. In that framework, as well, Thompson called for increased evangelical concern for the "social and economic problems of our nation" in direct response to FCC economic proposals that promoted "…equal and unsegregated opportunity for all, including members of racial or other minority groups."[69]

Thompson's racial commentary in the late-1940s especially represented new evangelical attempts to build an alternative social ethos and parallel institutional structures to tackle the problems of social inequality, racial or otherwise. Crucially for Thompson and other evangelicals, this effort aimed to completely differentiate itself from liberal programs, religious or political, that held related concerns. In 1947, for instance, Thompson again balanced his disdain for modernists' "social Gospel" with

[69] Thompson, "Applying Christianity."

professed commendation for modernists' "compassion for men of all races and creeds and classes." Most importantly, Thompson urged his evangelical compatriots to "not come behind the Modernists" on this matter, and he cited as alternatives both NAE and YFC efforts to "stress[…] the importance of relief work in foreign countries along with their emphasis of the message of redemption." For Thompson, the key lesson was that, "[l]eaders of these organizations know that the souls of men somehow become more susceptible to the Gospel when some of their desperate physical needs are also provided for."[70] Again, Thompson's organizational and social emphasis described not a humanistic social good unto itself but rather described a social mechanism by which material aid mystically—"somehow"—enabled spiritual progress.

While religious efforts to combat racial inequality usually received some qualified praise from leaders in free church and evangelical thought, political programs for racial equality fared much worse, invoking a primary conflict between the new evangelical Christianity and its fear of global communism. In 1949, the *Beacon* ran a multi-part sermon on the topic by V. Raymond Edman, then President of Wheaton College. Titled "Karl Marx or Jesus Christ?," Edman's sermon took specific umbrage with Marxism and communism as a pseudo-religious "fanatical faith" that professed "loyalty to humanity as a whole, …[and] which proclaimed the universal blood-brotherhood of man."[71] Rejecting these humanistic, racially egalitarian ideals as smokescreens for racial and working class "revenge" as well as "the disintegration and destruction of society," Edman presented what he understood to be the diametrically opposed philosophies of life and programs for human welfare of Jesus Christ and his church, including loyalty to God above all and the universal spiritual brotherhood of regenerate believers only.[72] In his introduction to the printed sermon, Thompson concurred entirely

[70] Roy Thompson, "Sharing Our Abundance," *Beacon*, September 16, 1947.
[71] V. Raymond Edman, "Karl Marx or Jesus Christ," *Beacon*, July 26, 1949.
[72] Ibid. and continued series of the same title in *Beacon*, August 2, 1949.

with Edman's analysis, citing specifically John C. Bennett's argument that communism preyed upon "…the aspirations and resentments of the colored races, and upon the unsolved problems of capitalism…."[73] To these problems, both Thompson and Edman argued, organized evangelical Christianity owed its own entirely distinct and fully oppositional social solutions—a salt-and-light styled evangelical activism.

By 1950, just as the final EFCA merger came to fruition, EFCA leaders and representatives were far more precise in their denunciations of religious tolerance, unity and social activism than they had been a decade earlier. Conceding the need for more of those qualities in their own organizations, EFCA leaders like their NAE surrogates continued to measure and judge their own activism by its concern for social issues of race and class, among others. Seven years after he first decried the "weakness and apostasy" of movements towards religious unity, the Rev. Wallace S. Johnson of Oakland returned to the pages of the *Beacon* with an ostensibly kindred but subtly modified message. This time around, Johnson clearly targeted specific religious institutions and their particular economic programs rather than all social and religious movements toward unity. Among his targets was the new World Council of Churches (WCC), a global Christian ecumenical organization similar to the FCC that formally organized in 1948. Johnson described the WCC in typically anti-modernist terms as "…more concerned with the redemption of society than it is with the salvation of the individual." Johnson admitted, nevertheless, that it was "good in some respects" to see some social concern proliferate in "evangelical ministry," and he called specifically for evangelicals to prove their faith as much by their "attitude on the racial problem" as by their firm Christian testimonies.

However, Johnson deftly imposed new evangelical—or reformed fundamentalist—checks on all humanitarian social concern and related social programs in fields of race, economics and more.

[73] Roy Thompson, "Christianity's Formidable Competitor…," *Beacon*, July 26, 1949.

“[O]ver-burdened with care,” Johnson argued, even the faithful risked “sap[ping] the soul of its spiritual vitality.” In full, Johnson reiterated an fundamentalist old problem, newly qualified for modern evangelicals:

> …it must be remembered that the one primary problem of the world is the heart of man. Clear up all the slums, redistribute the wealth of the world until all have their equal share, amalgamate the races until all distinctive characteristics disappear, outlaw the A-bomb and the H-bomb, promise health insurance and old-age security to every inhabitant of the earth, do all you can to realize the dreams and aspirations for peace, prosperity, and security which lie deep in the hearts of men; but if you leave the heart of man still untouched by divine grace, all your benevolent humanitarianism will only harden and stiffen men against God. Man himself will still be lost. The heart of man was not created to be long satisfied with anything less than fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. The Gospel still remains the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" and the greatest work a man can do is to preach it, teach it, and live it. The world is indeed in great distress and we would not knowingly put any stumbling-block in the way of any man who wants to lift the load and ease the burden of his fellowmen. But neither would we minimize the "ministry of the Word and prayer," and count it labor lost and time squandered which is not occupied wholly with mundane affairs.

In his exhaustive list of “dreams and aspirations” of the new age, Johnson included again caricatures, some more and some less accurate, of supposed state socialism, anti-war activism and racial egalitarianism—the latter of which he imagined with white supremacist vision as a liberal breeding program to eliminate “distinctive characteristics” of race. In this iteration of his argument, however, Johnson admitted the world’s “great distress,” and he professed no desire to prohibit social aid that “lift[ed] the load and eased the burden of …fellowmen.” And yet, Johnson argued, “man” would not be satisfied by such efforts because “man was not created to be …satisfied by anything less than fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.” Accordingly, Johnson defended the primary need to cultivate that fellowship as a matter of true and total social reform in a better world to come.

Ecclesial Social Ethics and the Ecumenical Significance of Evangelicalism’s Troubled Conscience

Halfway through the twentieth century, then, just as the free churches became "American," the ecclesiastical revolutions of the EFCA fused with emergent organized evangelicalism to jointly address rising social problems—of race, class, nuclear war, health care and more—on purely evangelical terms. As they had in past cooperative religious ventures, the free churches both adopted and adapted the aims of a new conservative Protestant religious movement. By way of extant leadership networks in proximate fundamentalist and evangelical enterprises, including CBMCI, YFC and TEAM (formerly SAM), EFCA leaders also directly joined the leadership structure of the NAE, shaping its priorities in the years and decades to come. The EFCA, once minuscule in size and inconsequential in social influence, had become a force in American evangelization just as white American evangelicalism expanded the boundaries of its ecclesiological imagination in order to extend its social reach.

Behind these important particulars of the EFCA's transformation lay the growth of salt and light activism in both free churches and among their associated evangelical partners. Crucially, this organized evangelical activism owed a great deal to fundamentalism's uneasy conscience over social issues of race and economics, among a handful of others—a reality captured well in Carl F. H. Henry's 1947 work, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism,*. First published five years after the NAE's St. Louis conference and three years before the EFCA merger, Henry's text has received much attention in historical analyses of modern evangelicalism in the United States. In light of the ecclesiastical projects that white evangelicals commenced in the 1940s, however, Henry's text deserves some reconsideration here. Primarily considered a work of theological social ethics, the volume presented nevertheless an underlying and essential *ecclesiology* of religious cooperation upon which evangelicals' secular social engagement could rightly unfold as Henry envisioned. As a work of ecclesial social ethics—or a social ethic for the Christian church, alongside one for Christian individuals—Henry's work captures much of the organized evangelical movement's transformed salt-

and-light approach to racial issues, as much as it helps to explain evangelicals' increasing devotion to new racial formations in American social orders from the postwar era onward (see chapter five).

In ecclesiological terms, Henry's carefully delimited social ethic relied on a particular vision of supernatural social order that served to identify and authorize Christ's true church an lend its social causes mystical significance. Underlying this corporate ecclesiology was Henry's imagination of the early Christian church as he presumed it functioned, by salt and light, in its own social surroundings. Professing that biblical Christians carried "[m]etaphysics and ethics …everywhere together," Henry declared moreover that early Christian doctrines themselves "implied a *divinely related social order* with intimations for *all humanity*." In other words, alongside its promise of eternal salvation early Christianity offered, as Henry described it, a vision of human social order as God intended it to be regardless of one's spiritual status, regenerate or not. These implications and intimations for material social orders were not passively recognized by early Christians, Henry argued. Instead, he continued, "…[biblical] Christian society *throbbed* with challenge to the predominant culture of its generation, condemning with redemptive might the tolerated social evils, for the redemptive message was to *ligh*t the world and *salt* the earth." Doctrinal fidelity was not sufficient to embody Christ's church, Henry maintained; evangelicals needed to mount a "most vigorous assault against evils,"[74]

Upon this understanding of the early Christian church, Henry redefined the scope of modern evangelical social concern in an effort to replicate what he saw as the divinely empowered social engagements of the early church. While well-known for this evangelical social ethic, Henry's treatise moreover articulated and ultimately culminated in an ecclesial teleology whereby fundamentalism's uneasy conscience imbued new social, political and economic projects with divine authority and mystical power found only in Christ's unified spiritual church. As Henry described it in his own words

[74] Henry, *Uneasy Conscience*, 30-31. All emphases mine.

as the final statement of his text, an evangelical social program bathed in Holy Spirit would mold of natural consequence a "…divinely-empowered Christian community [and would] turn the uneasy conscience of modern evangelicalism into a new reformation—this time with ecumenical significance."[75] With these closing words pinned to the doors of the separatist fundamentalist churches and liberal modernist denominations alike, Henry proclaimed in clear terms the ultimate aim of fundamentalism's reformation: to unite the spiritual church in a visible community duly empowered by God to alter the course of human history in advance of an inevitable apocalypse.

Accordingly, just as important to Henry in *Uneasy Conscience* was the effort to discern and distill the mystical church body that held the requisite divine mandate and spiritual authority to do supernatural battle against circumscribed social evils. Outside of supernatural feelings or "heart-understanding" assumed to exist between spiritual kin, Henry's social ethic served to identify a "divinely-empowered Christian community" by identifying the kinds of social work in which true evangelical Christians could responsibly engage. In his own words, Henry specifically qualified an ethic that authorized support for "remedial efforts [made] in any context" to improve the "social, moral and political conditions" of the world *if only* those efforts were "*not specifically anti-redemptive*." Under qualified "non-redemptive" (rather than strictly 'anti-redemptive') frameworks, Henry argued, the evangelical could still offer their social and material support "…while at the same time decrying the lack of a redemptive solution." Essential to this ethic, then, were contextually-grounded distinctions between "redemptive," "non-redemptive" and "anti-redemptive" and social work.

Of great importance to Henry's central ethical and ecclesiological call, then, was the effort to define "non-redemptive" social work by which corporate salt and light activism could transform

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[75] Ibid., 88-89. By "this time," Henry suggests that the original Protestant reformation had little 'ecumenical significance,' insofar as early Protestants were radical separatists and creedal zealots who would not cooperate with one another.

society with divine power. To that end, Henry offered unambiguous contemporaneous examples of his meaning that placed both race and economics at the core of conservative evangelicalisms' ecclesiastical and social battle with liberalism, be it Christian, economic or political. Moreover, and of equal importance, Henry's grounded examples lent white evangelical thought well-defined social parameters by which one's style of engagement with particular social issues revealed almost entirely their place in the grand ecclesiological teleology of the "new reformation." On matters of race specifically, Henry authorized alone evangelicals' support for efforts to end "…racial hatred and intolerance"—hatred and intolerance, *alone*—so long as they maintained their protest against "…the superficial view of man which overlooks the need of individual regeneration." Similarly, in the fields of class and economics, Henry supported alone the "non-redemptive" promotion of "…justice for both labor and management in business and industrial problems"—equal justice for both labor and management, *alone*—under requisite protest of "…the fallacy that man's deepest need is economic."[76] While Henry's examples left much to the imagination in terms of practical programs that engaged non-redemptive efforts in a complex social world, they established nevertheless specific policies by which white evangelicals came to disentangle both themselves and their social concerns—including and especially concern for racial and economic justice—from "specifically anti-redemptive" forces.

In keeping with its fundamentalist roots, much of Henry's volume took aim at those anti-redemptive forces: in general, the apostasy of liberal Protestant Christianity, its social engagements and its ecclesiastical orders. Specifically, Henry took clear aim at the FCC as the precise church body that a fundamentalist and evangelical assemblage needed to confront, and he imagined morevover the battle between Carl McIntire's ACC and J. Elwin Wright's NAE to be the primary obstacle to effective conservative unity against the Christian liberalism in general and the FCC in particular. While Henry

[76] Ibid., 87-88. Emphasis mine

hoped to resolve the doctrinal conflict between the ACC and FCC, he found it "*impossible* for the evangelical to cooperate for social betterment with any group…when that group clearly rules out a redemptive reference as a live option for the achievement of good ends."[77] Importantly, this statement helped to split the difference between separatist fundamentalists and evangelicals loyal to their denominational cultures: Henry did not preclude certain evangelicals' loyalty to liberal denominations, so long as those denominations' evangelicals maintained their protest against "admitted evils." It did, however, justify the right to leave liberal denominations as a matter of conscience for evangelical individuals or groups that so wished. Regardless, the great ecclesial concern for Henry remained the FCC, its ecclesiastical reach, its political connections and its social power. In short, if anti-redemptive forces had a church body (an anti-church?), it was for Henry the FCC. Accordingly, cooperation with FCC programs, and even sympathy for social concerns framed by the FCC's rhetoric of Christian liberalism, became an impossibility within Henry's reformed fundamentalism.[78]

As the second half of the century opened, Henry's ecclesial ethics promoted a vision of divine social order that mid-century white evangelicals offered to the predominant culture of their generation. Likewise, the EFCA merger that occurred shortly after Henry published his treatise modeled new white evangelical ecumenicity on terms consonant with Henry's vision. Crucially, both of these midcentury ecclesiastical touchpoints—one ideological, the other practical—displayed the deep and abiding influence of racial and economic social factors in the development of postwar evangelical thought and institutional life. For the EFCA, ecclesiastical ecumenicity both in their own merger and in their partnership with the NAE meant becoming fully "American"—a national cultural identity steeped in whiteness and white supremacy. Moreover, both the EFCA and NAE's evangelistic projects, like Henry's theology, imagined evangelicals' increasing social influence with a conscience

[77] Ibid., 81.
[78] See chapter seven of this dissertation.

troubled over matters of race, class and other forms of social inequality and social corruption. For Henry, fundamentalism's uneasy conscience was a blessing in disguise; approached rightly, he argued, it would catalyze the ecumenical reformation needed to unite the true body of Christ in visible and effective social organizations. As the postwar era advanced, evangelicals would have plentiful occasion to test this vision in real time with fresh opportunities in new geographical territories. In pursuit of those territories, however, new and developing racial formations would greatly affect and be affected by evangelicals' positive vision to expand their social influence as well as their exclusivistic vision to separate from, confront and overtake liberal Christian ecumenical projects.

V.
Sacred Developments: The Suburban Mission of Postwar Evangelism

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."
—Psalms 127:1

"While human instruments have been mightily used of God in every department of this endeavor, we are all extremely conscious of the fact that God has done it all, and that every bit of the glory belongs to Him alone!"[1]
—Wendell P. Loveless, Pastor, the Church by the Side of the Road, 1954

"We lift up Christ for all to see and invite all men to come to faith and commitment to Him. Will you join with us in sharing the full implication of the Cross?"[2]
—Unknown speaker, Service of Dedication for Village Church, September 1966

In 1957, Professor Neil A. Winegarden, a Bible scholar at Wheaton College, described what he recognized to be a positive "trend of decentralization" in church building across the nation in a new NAE pamphlet titled "New Churches for a New America." Recognizing the rapidly accelerating postwar baby boom, Winegarden noted the insatiable need for more and more churches to meet the spiritual needs of 'new' Americans, and he argued that "[t]he answer to our church housing problem seems to lie in numerous church buildings scattered the new communities rather than in centralization and concentration of membership." Winegarden recognized this trend as a reflection of modern business as downtowns of major cities were vacated for "neighborhood shopping areas," but he also called decentralized church planning "a Biblical principle, too." As for early Christians who left the city of Jerusalem to expand their Mediterranean reach, Winegarden encouraged evangelical church planners to pursue systematic, fiscally responsible land and property investments for new churches

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[1] Brochure, "Dedication Day: April 4, 1954," April 4, 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, Compass Church (Wheaton Campus) Private Collection, Wheaton, IL. Collection hereafter "CCWC Collection."

[2] Brochure, "Church History: Village Bible Church, Carol Stream, Illinois" in Cabinet 1, Drawer 2, F17, Historical Records

Collection, Carol Stream Historical Society, Carol Stream, IL. (Hereafter CSHS HRC.)

from rural counties to "the vastly expanding suburbs."[3]

As Winegarden's concern for "centralization and concentration" intimates, his purportedly biblical decentralization theory of church extension meant as well to challenge and compete with liberal Protestants and Catholics who valued expansion in the very same 'new communities' of postwar suburbanization. Moreover, and with no sense self-contradiction whatsoever, Winegarden promoted an materialistic, economic strategy for postwar social reform that evangelicals otherwise derided in liberal, modernist or socialist approaches to similar problems. Winegarden took special care to target the National Council of Churches (NCC), the organizational successor to the FCC, founded as such in 1950. Since that founding, white evangelicals—as represented by the NAE and its sympathetic churches, denominations and parachurch organizations—modified little of their antagonism towards the organization. Reporting on the NCC's birth, Verne P. Kaub of *United Evangelical Action*, the NAE's in-house periodical, announced via provocative headline: "SUPER-CHURCH IS BORN." "Like that of its predecessor-parent, the FCC," Kaub claimed, the NCC would give its primary attention "…to matters social-economical and political rather than to religion."[4] Six years later, Neil Winegarden continued to share concern for the centralization and concentration of a liberal ecumenical super-church, and so he encouraged evangelical church planners to ignore and, if necessary, disrupt liberal Protestant efforts to organize collaborative church extension plans called "comity agreements" in new suburban communities.[5]

While not all evangelical planners agreed with Winegarden's characterization of suburban decentralization as direct parallel to early Christian practices, his view of these issues shows one way by which the liberal-conservative ecclesiastical battles of the midcentury ran headlong into state-

[3] Brochure, "New Churches for a New America" (circa 1957), Box 65, Folder 10, National Association of Evangelicals Records (SC/113), Special Collections, Buswell Library, Wheaton College (IL). (Hereafter NAE Records and SCBL.).

[4] As reported in *Beacon*, '51, 34.

[5] Brochure, "New Churches for a New America" (circa 1957), Box 65, Folder 10, NAE Records, SCBL.

sponsored, racially-exclusive postwar suburbanization projects. However, only a quiet handful of white evangelicals in the 1950s recognized what they saw in new suburbs as entirely unbiblical segregation by race, ethnicity and class, and most evangelical churches and institutions followed Winegarden's competitive and aggressive suburban extension model, whether they were aware of his rationale for it or not. After all, nationwide suburban decentralization *was* a very real trend from the late-1940s through the 1960s. For the majority of lay white evangelicals, moreover, suburban migration was a simple matter of economic opportunity, so far as they understood it, made available to them by their hard work and good character as American citizens under free market capitalism. For modern evangelicalisms' church planners and institutional managers, furthermore, capital investment in land and infrastructural projects was simply a wise investment of the good Lord's resources, especially considering the ready availability of resources through loose federally-subsidized loan markets, commonplace resource-hoarding social networks and rising expendable incomes of the white suburban middle class, both blue- and white collar, among other sources of potential income.

While suburban church extension was a national religious agenda for rebranded evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic and Jewish institutions alike, local conditions for suburban growth dramatically influenced how church extension unfolded in discrete communities. Outside of Chicago—the urban home to MBI, CBMC and influential free church institutions, among other evangelical groups—Wheaton, Illinois attracted significant religious attention and activity in its transformation from late-nineteenth century rural town to mid-twentieth century upper-middle class suburban archetype. Wheaton's religious history and particularly its famous evangelical liberal arts college helped to cultivate a robust social hub of evangelical activists and institutions in the early suburban era. As urban evangelicals, including ethnic national urban evangelicals, abandoned the city for Wheaton's friendly suburban confines, they brought with them expertise in institutional management alongside professional access to human and capital resources that fed the development

of the area's evangelical institutions. This expertise only compounded upon figurative and literal religious marketplaces flooded with unclaimed spiritual seekers, plentiful development cash from a variety of sources, and a host of investment opportunities in church building from high-end architectural masterpieces to dirt cheap, fully-financed model homes for aspirational bible groups and their could-be congregations.

Two stories told below capture the some of the material and spiritual intricacies of evangelical church development across a decade of suburban growth in Wheaton and its new suburban neighbor, Carol Stream. The first, the story of Carl Gundersen's Wheaton Evangelical Free Church (WEFC) completed in 1954, highlights the unparalleled benefits of professional development management for aspirational evangelical congregations with high-status evangelical backers. At Gundersen's church, also known as "The Church by the Side of the Road," detailed planning, expert financial maneuvering and savvy promotional efforts launched an early model for suburban evangelical megachurches made famous later in the century. The second story, concerning the drawn out construction of Village Church in Carol Stream completed by 1966, highlights the often reciprocal relationship between evangelical activist social networks and secular municipal planners who wished to add a religious sheen to their freshly-painted subdivisions. In both stories, practiced evangelical managers, enthusiastic suburban congregants and sympathetic local developers, both religious and secular, organized to cooperatively fashion sacred meanings out of new suburban geography and its novel social and cultural formations. Most importantly for the purposes of religious and, eventually, *racial* investments in the suburbs, both stories show how new white suburban evangelicals recognized God, his continuous presence and his transparently intentional interventions in their materially-secured and structurally-reordered social lives.

As suburban evangelicals described God intervening in their communities, neither members nor most church planners explicitly described their own material interventions into the social order of

new suburbs in terms of race. Like the "American" aspirations of early-century Scandinavian free church immigrants, the racial implications of moving to the suburbs were usually unspoken unless otherwise directly provoked. Regardless of white suburban evangelicals' relative silence over their own unfolding racial segregation, the suburban communities of Wheaton and its churches remained, for the time being, lily white. Subdivision sales packets alongside slick church promotional materials featured white faces and white families *exclusively*. Despite reinvigorated and persistent white evangelical calls for multi-racial evangelization across the country, neither Gundersen's WEFC nor Carol Stream's Village Church announced designs to attract the area's residents of color. The reasons for that myopia had much less to do with religious institutions and far more to do with historical northern discrimination against black migrants alongside state-sponsored housing market interventions that sometimes openly and sometimes clandestinely closed access to suburban resources to black and brown Americans. While churches evangelical and otherwise clearly benefitted from this racially discriminatory historical, political and economic order—while they often even *valorized* and *defended* that order without explicitly naming it for what it was—they were rarely directly responsible for its macro-structural machinations. Be that as it may, if scholars of American religion wish to describe more completely the origins of racialized religious traditions across the nation's history, they must better account for the supposedly irreligious material and social backgrounds that make styles of religious community and varieties of religious experience humanly possible, and so that story takes precedence here.

Building the White Suburbs in the Pre- and Postwar Eras

Before the white suburban evangelical renaissance could occur, however, complex social, legal and economic conditions refashioned the landscape of opportunity for it. Those structural conditions offer far more explanatory power for the racially segregated social orders that emerged from the

postwar era than any narrow appeal to popular individual bias, despite persistent cultural and scholarly fascination with this latter form of discrimination. Regardless, the documentary record is often unclear on the extent to which individual actors—including evangelical developers like Carl Gundersen—consciously assumed the racist motivations of legal policy or financial mechanisms that built a predominantly white suburbia. Postwar state policy served to compound the frequent inscrutability of racial discrimination's personal sources by dictating impersonal, technical and bureaucratic measures for segregating housing markets. The FHA even marketed its programs to obscure the role of its own interventions and to promote the idea that voluntary individual choices under free market capitalism shaped homeownership trends.[6] Nevertheless, historical practices, both legal and extra-legal, enforced housing segregation and purchased segregation's social effects well before postwar suburbanization and most certainly after it—whether or not individuals understood, let alone consciously approved of the racial project. To fully appreciate how and when religion, broadly defined, engaged these practices at a structural level, one must first get a good view of their structure.

Mid-century suburban forms of racial segregation issued from long legacies of racist discrimination and racist violence that mirrored extralegal enforcement of racial boundaries in the Jim Crow south. In fact, northern farm towns and early suburbs experienced patterns, if not legal equivalencies, of post-Civil War reconstruction and, later, racist "redemption," much like those that built southern racial regimes. At the end of the nineteenth century, many northern towns prided themselves on their support for early Republicans like Abraham Lincoln, abolitionist movements and Union nationalism prior to and during the war. Accordingly, some towns actively welcomed a small stream of postbellum black migrants intent on escaping their trauma in the south and securing prevalent farm work in which they were well versed. That trend reversed in the early twentieth century,

[6] See Freund, *Colored Property*.

in part due to political realignment among northern Republicans and Democrats, as the latter attempted to capture ethnic immigrant votes by stoking racist fears of economic competition and neighborhood succession. Republicans, for their part, lost sight of their prior racial egalitarianism as they followed Democrats' suit to stay politically competitive, justified Indian wars and imperial expansion with racist rhetoric and encouraged the trappings of industrial profit that saved little room for questions of social justice.[7] Northern Anglo-American evangelical "Unionism" in this era also undercut racially egalitarian projects, as northern evangelicals prioritized reconciliation with southern white evangelicals much to the detriment of public concern for formerly enslaved peoples' reparations.[8]

By the early twentieth century, a wave of racist violence along with legal enforcements of absolute segregation swept through hamlets, towns and early suburbs across much of the nation beyond the south, including and especially in Illinois. As a result, early black settlements outside urban centers were forcibly dispersed, and white rural homogeneity was reinforced. In 1909, whites in the southern Illinois town of Anna chased out their black population through the public spectacle lynching of a black resident. White miners of LaSalle, Peru and Spring Valley, Illinois chased blacks out of their city limits, ostensibly to protect their racial monopoly on mining work. In some counties, local sheriffs began confronting traveling blacks at the county line, encouraging them, under threat of state-sanctioned violence, to move along. Many towns—including Naperville, a short eleven miles from Wheaton—enacted open "sundown" laws: explicit ordinances, often announced by signs and even nightly whistles, that restricted black movement or even temporary residence within city limits after

[7] See James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 24-44.

[8] See Grant R. Brodrecht, *Our Country: Northern Evangelicals and the Union during the Civil War Era, The North's Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

dark. Many sundown ordinances remained in effect into the 1950s.[9] Whether or not such ordinances or accompanying violence were pursued in each and every rural town or residential suburb, the cumulative weight of those that did pursue such measures no doubt produced a chilling effect on any attempt at early black rural and suburban settlement.[10]

The legacy of restrictive racial covenants and zoning regulations, which predated FHA interventions, also shaped early urban and suburban segregation in the twentieth century. In fact, early twentieth-century suburbs were ideal proving grounds for innovations in restrictive zoning, local control and protected property rights. Nineteenth-century suburbs had offered little in the way of municipal infrastructure or services, and they primarily functioned as a refuge for wealthy urbanites who could afford the difficult logistics of fringe-area building along with regular costs to make difficult commutes into the city. Many of Chicago's early suburbs eventually sought annexation to gain access to Chicago's formidable infrastructure and municipal resources rather than pursue their own rugged destinies. However, twentieth-century improvements in transportation, plumbing and electrical grids lowered construction costs for infrastructure and encouraged later suburbs to pursue incorporation rather than annexation. Incorporation offered municipalities "home rule" authority: the right to form local government that could levy taxes to fund infrastructure and services, issue ordinances and, particularly after the 1920s, legislate zoning.[11]

Zoning policy gained inroads in municipal planning of the early twentieth century first through the organized advocacy and legal action of private investors and Anglo-American property owners in

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[9] Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 3 and 59-65. See also 90-115. According to Loewen, who has compiled significant data and documentary evidence of sundown towns in the north and west, the extant record of such ordinances likely far under-represents their prevalence in the first half of the twentieth century. In response to many requests issued to local historical societies of known sundown towns for historical signage or photographic records of it, many responded by asking why they would keep such things. Some outright denied multiple substantiated oral accounts of discrimination retold by both whites and blacks who later recalled the events. See ibid., 206.

[10] See also Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), 41-43.

[11] Freund, *Colored Property*, 47.

"high class" neighborhoods across urban centers who were concerned by the effects of unregulated urban expansion on the quality their property. Accordingly, zoning advocates pushed for legal mechanisms by which they could establish the "best use" of land in order to better organize hodgepodge and overlapping residential and industrial districts. Initial concern for pragmatic best-use, however, increasingly gave way to a concerted focus on mechanisms to protect the monetary value of residential and commercial real estate. Accordingly, a growing cadre of private real estate planners promoted what they believed to be scientific measurements of property value, including efficient and impersonal calculations necessary for establishing and increasing it. Crucially though unsurprisingly, those scientific estimations incorporated the popular and mainstream racial science of the day, which included "phrenology, craniometry and eugenics."[12] Increasingly, ethnic and racial identifications of municipal populations were deemed mathematically and sociologically reliable indicators of potential property value.[13] In the 1910s and -20s, municipal planners across the nation then experimented with a variety of measures to quarantine black and mixed ethnic populations, often in proximity to less desirable industrial zones.[14]

The popularization of restrictive racial covenants that barred the sale of white-owned homes to other racial and ethnic groups issued in part from racial science, but the suburban standardization of zoning regulations that deployed the same kinds of logic is largely credited to Herbert Hoover and the Department of Commerce. Already famous as an efficiency guru and standardizer-of-all-things, Hoover led the Commerce Department to promote public-private partnerships between professional planners and the federal government. Moreover, the Commerce Department invested in expansive publicity campaigns to encourage local municipal adoption of professional zoning science and,

[12] Ibid., 55.
[13] See ibid, 45-70.
[14] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 43-50.

ultimately, underwrote the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act of 1922 which "codified and disseminated the new zoning concept" to both urban and suburban confines.[15] Bolstered by several court rulings of the 1920s, zoning science and related property rights were enshrined by jurisprudence and became ubiquitous in incorporated towns and suburbs across the country.[16]

Severe economic depression in the 1930s also served to bolster federal intervention in the housing market, including expanded enforcement of new standards for racial segregation. Some New Deal housing projects, like later war effort housing projects, explicitly mandated segregation, and often, government programs offered public housing assistance only to white populations.[17] Two New Deal era regulatory agencies, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), also worked to codify and implement racial and ethnic evaluation in property value and loan security assessments. The HOLC designed Residential Security Maps and Surveys plotted in collaboration between federal agencies and private real estate boards. Alongside proximity to industrial hazards and the presence of rodent infestations, official measures of market security featured appraisals of "racial, ethnic, and economic homogeneity" and "the absence or presence of 'a lower grade of population'"—with what counted as "lower grade" largely left to the judgment of local appraisers.[18] Appraisers thus gave homogenous white neighborhoods—where "white" covered both Anglo-Americans and some more recent transplants of western and northern European descent—the highest appraisals and loan security grades ("A"). Mixed ethnic neighborhoods were often downgraded to "B" or "C" status, with lower appraisals and less availability of insured loans. Finally, appraisers drew red lines around neighborhoods with significant black populations and some southern and eastern European ethnic populations, deeming them too insecure for lending. Unknown to many

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[15] Freund, *Colored Property,* 77.
[16] Ibid., 71-98.
[17] See Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 1-38.
[18] Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis,* 43.

Americans at the time, this now-infamous practice of redlining—promoted by both the HOLC and the FHA—further closed access to the housing market for many minority developers and home owners alike, but for blacks especially, as home sellers and lending institutions adapted to best profit from official market valuations. As Thomas Sugrue has argued, alongside an ever-expanding cadre of historians and social analysts, federal housing initiatives "gave official sanction to discriminatory real estate sales and bank lending practices."[19]

In the 1930s and early 1940s, economic depression and wartime rationing nevertheless stunted the growth of the building markets—housing, commercial, service and industrial—and allowed for significant decay and dilapidation of existing building stock. Housing stock in particular became dangerously dilapidated and insufficiently dense to adequately shelter a rapidly growing population. Issues of population growth were severely compounded in the mid-40s by millions of veterans returning from war, the resulting baby boom, and growing waves of internal national migration caused by the agricultural industrialization of rural areas and the transitional industrial and post-industrial economies of urban ones. In the years immediately after the war, few in the United States were not aware of the housing crisis. In 1945 alone, over three and a half million families lacked adequate housing. By the end of the decade and into the next, tens of millions of Americans remained under-housed.[20]

The federal government responded to the national problem aggressively and effectively. Until 1943, the FHA had only offered mortgage loan insurance in limited circumstances due to limited financial backing from stretched federal coffers. In 1943, as the economy and war efforts turned, congress authorized an extension of FHA home financing to the tune of $400 million. In 1944, congress passed the G.I. Bill which guaranteed home loans, among other things, to returning veterans.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Joseph B. Mason, *History of Housing in the United States, 1930-1980* (Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1982), 45.

In 1946, after the end of the war, congress appropriated another billion dollars for the FHA's mortgage insurance program, with regular increases of similar amounts in ensuing years. The FHA also largely dictated national mortgage interest rates due to their growing corner on the market, lowering rates to 4.5% in the late-1940s. Down payments could be secured at 5% to 10% of home cost, and twenty to thirty year mortgages with low monthly payments became readily available—as long as the home owner's mortgage could be federally insured.[21] Federal legislative efforts turned the housing market around within a few short years. By 1946, over one million homes had been completed, with gains increasing to nearly two million homes per year by the start of the new decade. While housing starts slowed to an extent in the early-1950s, they did not recede below one and half million homes per year on average through 1960. Over twenty million homes were built in the 15-year period after the war.[22] Legislation kept pace with and encouraged such growth with new housing acts passed nearly every year that both created and responded to market conditions.

At the same time, federal housing initiatives coerced all Americans to join in a dramatic social reordering of race, in concept and in geographical space. Put otherwise, with full federal backing in the 1940s and beyond, racist economic engineering inaugurated by zoning standardization in the 1920s and refined by market manipulation begun in the 1930s dramatically if quietly shuffled massive populations into discrete racial categories and racialized geographical zones. While explicit racial covenants were deemed unenforceable by the Supreme Court in 1948, their use often continued on the "good faith" of parties involved in a sale. When some discriminatory zoning practices were challenged and overturned in court, municipal planners in other locales asserted that specific counter-rulings did not apply to their context, and restrictive zoning practices continued apace.[23] Moreover,

[21] Ibid., 44-47.
[22] Ibid, 61-62
[23] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 46-48.

the racial logic of FHA loan valuations persisted without serious scrutiny or challenge. In Chicago's growing suburbs, where black populations had long been intimidated and exiled, homogenous white populations benefitted from nearly unfettered access to housing and home loan markets to expand and improve their confines. New suburbs were carved whole cloth from farmland, now more valuable as investments in real estate development than agriculture. New suburbs quickly incorporated and new municipal leadership promptly zoned and taxed their territories to provide custom residential conditions for home buyers with varying financial means across a spectrum of class difference. New working-class suburbs for laborers rubbed shoulders with high-end suburbs of the managerial class and middle-class suburbs of new white collar workers, but nearly all suburbs in the immediate postwar period were racially white.[24]

In this marketplace, urban European immigrants and their offspring faced a choice: either stay in the city near other ethnic and racial populations and suffer the increasingly apparent consequences of large scale disinvestment, or abandon overriding ethnic national identities, storied urban ethnic enclaves and declining ethnic national institutions to embrace white racial identity and join the new white America of suburbia, with all its social and financial benefits. Since ethnic institutions and ethnic neighborhood life had since atrophied under the restrictions of the Immigration Act of 1924, many freely chose the latter option.[25] Some were further compelled by predatory, "block busting" real estate agents who often manufactured the specter of invading blacks and home value collapse in order to buy properties for far less than they were worth. These properties were then often resold at a premium to actual black homebuyers, fulfilling the conjured prophecy of racial succession and netting substantial profits for block busters. Nevertheless, urban immigrants had long valued home ownership

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[24] See Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*. See also the foundational study of American suburbs: Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.

[25] For the rise and fall of robust Norwegian ethnic institutions, for example, see Lovoll, *Urban Life*, 273-313.

as a means of assimilation and as a path to generational wealth, and most long-since arrived immigrants had already lived through waves of ethnic neighborhood succession in constant pursuit of improved housing conditions.[26] Given the opportunity, many were more than willing to pursue newly opened paths to invest in real estate outside the city. European immigrants and their subsequent generations thus joined Anglo-American "white flight"—more accurately, white financial coercion—and in so doing reorganized their communal identity and community organizations around previously subordinate color-race markers rather than prior ethnic markers like language, nationality, regional culture or immigrant status.[27] Individuals as well as social organizations, including churches, often erased or sublimated their ethnic traditions to become white and "American" in the suburbs.[28]

On the flip side of suburbanization was what Arnold Hirsch has described as a massive, coordinated effort to "build the second ghetto" in Chicago, with similar processes, locally and contingently varied, occurring beyond. As the extended period of the Great Migration proceeded through the mid-century, black migrants had few choices but to settle in impoverished urban communities subject to the whims of real estate development that blacks could not effectively harness for their own purposes.[29] Urban whites and white institutions that chose to remain in the city often fought vigorously to maintain the racial boundaries and the racial or ethnic homogeneity of their neighborhoods.[30] State policy and municipal zoning regulations combined with open discrimination and financial opportunism to continually subject black residents to substandard housing conditions. Few black residents had a direct path to ownership on fair terms, and opportunities to accrue

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[26] SeeGarb, *City of American Dreams*; and especially Lewinnek, *The Working Man's Reward.*

[27] See David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006), 157-234.

[28] See Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[29] For the authoritative narrative, see Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto.*

[30] See Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Kruse, *White Flight*; McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 79-110; and Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001).

generational wealth and class mobility were routinely denied. FHA loan appraisal practices then combined with new policies of "slum clearance" and "urban renewal" to stack black populations in racially quarantined neighborhoods. The "second ghetto" thus served to insure that significant black populations would remain largely impoverished and isolated within cities for decades to come.[31]

The social and spatial reordering of race in the United States during the midcentury took its toll on churches and their congregations, as churches responded to and directed the shape and shade of white flight and racial segregation. As John McGreevy has shown, Catholic parishes struggled, at first, to resist neighborhood change and, later, to accommodate new majority black populations within parish boundaries. Ultimately, Catholic interracialists convinced church authorities to adopt policies and positions sympathetic to the civil rights movement, even as white Catholics—including those from prior European ethnic national parishes—regularly abandoned the city to establish segregated white parishes in the suburbs.[32] In the late-1960s, evangelicals in Chicago's Dutch-heritage Reformed Church of America and Christian Reformed Church in North America also struggled to weigh place against community in the face of neighborhood change. As sociologist Mark Mulder has demonstrated, differences in church polity and commitment to geographical boundaries (or lack thereof) either hastened or slowed the "flight" of particular congregations under locally and historically contingent circumstances.[33] In sum, current work on religion's engagement with midcentury projects of racial formation shows that churches could effect the speed or style of new racial segregation depending on multiple variable factors of church governance, fidelity to place and commitment or opposition to racial egalitarianism in putatively secular social orders.

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[31] See Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* and Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 57-88 and 209-258.
[32] McGreevy. *Parish Boundaries*, 79-264.
[33] See Mulder, *Shades of White Flight*.

Beyond these factors, churches, denominations and parachurch organizations also effected the shape and speed of racial segregation, as well as the form of racial ideologies behind it, by actively—sometimes enthusiastically—engaging the material world of economics and development that produced new geographical, social and ideological racializations. Religious organizations represent many things to many people, but given common and long-regnant scholarly understandings of religion, one must be continually reminded that religion is itself a material production in addition to an ideological, spiritual or cultural one. A church, for instance, can be understood as a place of worship for the people in it, according to their customs, beliefs and traditions; but a church is also bricks welded together by laborers to the specifications of architects, designers and planners. In economic terms, a church is further a capital asset, contractually held by a legally-defined entity and overseen by duly-empowered leaders. A church, therefore, can be—and usually is—an investment strategy and a financial mechanism for church leaders and for lenders, religious or secular. In the postwar world of racial segregation forged by federal policy, economic regulation and outright discrimination, religious organizations broadly engaged the circumscribed financial mechanisms and developmental strategies available to their institutional managers, often to great effect. For the nascent evangelical reform movement of the midcentury, the economic boon of suburbanization—tied as it was to white homogeneity and its closed social networks—proved to be an invaluable tool for both local church growth and wider evangelical institutional stability, one that would later shape new religious imaginations of and approaches to raced geography and so-called race relations.

A National Religious Agenda

As material institutions, postwar churches faced the same economic and infrastructural woes prevalent in the housing crisis. Prior to the Great Depression, churches directed ten cents on every dollar of collected income toward church building and maintenance. During the depression and

wartime periods, religious giving declined by thirteen percent across the board—less drastic than reductions in personal spending, but substantial nevertheless. Additionally, resources were increasingly directed away from infrastructure and toward social programs. By wartime, churches spent less than two cents on the dollar on construction. Church stock, like the housing stock around it, significantly dilapidated, and wartime rationing further decreased the supply of materials necessary for church infrastructural improvements. By the late 1940s, existing suburban churches were ill-prepared to serve the vast incoming populations—primarily young white families with two or more children—that sprung up around them.[34] Many more churches would be needed to provide for those populations.

Mercifully, for religious seekers at least, the same economic structures that facilitated the racialized postwar housing boom also worked to quickly turn church fortunes, particularly in white suburbs (and nearly regardless of class difference). A rapid increase of populations, materials and loans permitted churches with diverse doctrinal and ecclesiastical traditions to invest aggressively in upkeep and expansion for the first time in almost two decades. Dilapidated church stock and reduced opportunity for land investment in cities often incentivized many white urban churches to abandon old locales—and sometimes ethnic social ties—for growth opportunity in new suburban ones[35]. In the resulting frenzy, churches leaned on an array of church extension techniques and chased a variety of circumscribed financial opportunities to plan and fund robust growth. In the twenty-five-year period after the war, church construction in the United States, at least in terms of sheer numbers, reached heights never before seen.

As the postwar pace of suburbanization rapidly increased, national church leaders organized to analyze, address and argue over growing problems in suburban church planting across the country. Those efforts were aided by a cadre of urban and suburban planners who advised and collaborated

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[34] Wuthnow, *Restructuring of American Religion*, 26. Cited in Hudnut-Buemler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs*, 5.
[35] Wuthnow, 27. See also Mulder, *Shades of White Flight*. See also chapter one of this dissertation.

with ecumenical groups, like the National Council of Churches (NCC), and interdenominational agencies, like the NAE, to devise best-practices for church growth in the postwar era. By the mid-1950s, both organizations, along with representatives from the American Catholic church as well as certain Jewish groups, belonged to the American Institute of Planners (AIP), an organization which lent expertise in urban, suburban and rural development methodologies. Through a series of workshops at AIP annual meetings from 1955 onward, professional planners recommended a handful of programs for suburban church building intended to maximize the growth and spiritual effect of churches on their communities. While most in attendance at the 1955 meeting likely concurred with Archbishop Edwin O'Hara from Kansas City, who proclaimed that "[t]he moral character of a city comes from the churches in it," substantial differences arose around concern for what kinds of moral character should be forged, who should forge them, and where they should do so.

At AIP workshops, liberal or mainline Protestants (represented by the NCC) and their conservative counterparts (represented by the NAE) presented conflicting approaches to suburban church extension policy that displayed deep pre-existing rifts in conventions and philosophies of church organization and growth. The NCC, for their part, presented a full paper prepared by their Department of the Urban Church that strongly recommended interdenominational cooperation through collaborative, though voluntary "comity agreements." These agreements determined, in advance, the distribution of denominational affiliations in church planting, where those churches should be located and which populations they should intend to serve. In order to determine which denominations would be represented in these churches, the NCC recommended "cooperative action." Specifically, they advocated for the creation of "[a]n interdenominationally functioning comity, church planning and strategy, or church adjustment organization which works continually and closely in

cooperation with the city planner."[36] The NCC's proposal drew on urban planning conventions developed by the Department of the Urban Church in 1926 that idealized a densely-populated "three-church neighborhood: …one 'liturgical' church and one 'non-liturgical' church to be located on the common green at the neighborhood center; and …one church at a major intersection to attract membership via major streets from outside the neighborhood unit." Central churches, in the NCC's view, would serve the function of providing a "spiritual center" for the neighborhood, while the peripheral church would service needs beyond the community center, creating spiritual ties and collaboration with bordering neighborhoods.

In adjusting their urban strategy to suburban environs, the NCC did not substantially revise either their center-periphery model or their collaborative recommendations, but they did encourage a broadly-popular, long-term view of non-competitive suburban development founded on economic principles that resonated with theological principles of ecumenicity. Included in their strategies were recommendations to survey trends in population growth and municipal, state and federal infrastructural investments; to acquire land "…on a unified interdenominational basis…as far ahead of actual development as possible;" and a fluid responsiveness to reconfigure land investment and denominational dispersion as populations settled. The NCC's primary concern in establishing this model was a recognition of "…the simple economic fact that when denominations scramble for new church sites in competitive manner, they are inevitably bidding up land values on the properties they hope to acquire." In other words, the NCC wished for churches to collude in their planning to keep property values as low as possible at initial investment stages while avoiding church redundancies that could impede property value growth.[37] In general, professional secular planners within the AIP

[36] Report, "Suggestions for the Coordination of Church and City Planning," presented at the AIP Annual Conference, March 31-Apr 2 ,1955 (Kansas City). Box 147, Folder 3, NAE Records, SCBL.
[37] Ibid.

concurred with this long-term strategy, especially on points of its efficiency and sustainability. Beyond the NCC, ecumenical groups like Chicago's CFGC executed similar comity strategies in suburbs around that city.[38]

In characteristic fashion, the NAE provided an alternative rationale for suburban development that directly challenged NCC authority to organize cooperation among congregations at all. At the same time, NAE leadership asserted a primary constitutional right to unfettered evangelistic development as a matter of conscience. For George Ford, the NAE's representative at the 1955 AIP meeting, suburban planning had its economic facets, but the primary issue was political and theological. According to Ford, suburban churching raised matters of "…religious liberty [that] should include the right of propagation of one's faith."[39] In a later report to the NAE's Board of Directors on the AIP meeting, Ford warned that, in his view, the NCC report affirmed its long-suspected desire to establish a federated super church organization that dictated church development from its first brick to its first prayer, from where property was purchased to how a congregation worshipped. Ford was happier to report that a number of the planners present "personally expressed to me their appreciation for our having representation there and the knowledge that come to them of the constituency we represent." Ford recommended therefore that the NAE pursue its own, separate efforts toward church planning by securing early and direct access to city planners, builders, developers and realtors in order "to more firmly establish the united evangelical voice."[40]

[38] CFGC assigned participating member churches to particular suburban communities under "three categories: immediate development (for churches ready to build in existing population centers), speculative land purchase development (where residential development is growing, but a church is not yet needed) and "wait and see" monitoring (for areas where future residential development was likely or expected)." See Louise Hutchinson, "Propose Plan for Growth of Area Churches," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct 7, 1956.

[39] Report, "Summary Notes on Church Planning Sessions," March 31-Apr 2 1955. Box 147, Folder 3, NAE Records, SCBL.

[40] Report, "Report of the Associate Executive Director," April 18, 1955, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

A year after its meeting at the AIP, the NAE confirmed Ford's position by releasing and widely distributing its own church planning pamphlet titled "New Churches for a New America." The brochure featured two essays delivered to the NAE's national convention that April by evangelical academics Neil Winegarden and David Moberg. In an essay titled "Problems of Church Extension," Winegarden—a Bible professor at Wheaton College and the chair of the NAE's new Committee on Church Extension—echoed Ford's concerns over the NCC's comity agreements, although he took time to note some of their benefits. Winegarden admitted that comity lessened "cutthroat competition" and "…undue duplication of religious activities," as well as it provided "control on the ratio of churches to community populations." However, Winegarden strongly objected to the practice on grounds of religious liberty and unequal representation. In full, Winegarden asserted that,

> …it is questionable that such control should be practiced in the light of our constitutional freedoms and in the light of the fact that the dominant factor in the federation is generally of a liberal persuasion, thus not constituting a truly representative control. The Council of Churches considers itself to be "the coordinating agency and voice of Protestantism .... " Where goes our Freedom of Worship when such assertions are acted upon? There is no one voice for Protestantism.[41]

In so arguing, Winegarden suggested that local churches refuse to assent to ecumenical comity agreements. If those churches then found themselves in land disputes with ecumenical groups or their municipal partners, Winegarden implicitly advised them to challenge any obstruction of competitive evangelism on legal grounds, appealing to higher courts as necessary.

As a direct challenge to organized, ecumenical liberal Protestantism, Winegarden's proposal and its recommended church extension techniques fused modern economic practices with conservative biblical norms in a pragmatic, policy-forward corporate strategy. While Winegarden repeated common

[41] Brochure, "New Churches for a New America" (circa 1957), Box 65, Folder 10, NAE Records, SCBL. The essays by Winegarden and Dr. David Morberg had previously been presented at the NAE annual conference in April, 1956.

evangelical calls to refuse any serious cooperation with ecumenical organizations "of a liberal persuasion," the remainder of his address sustained an ethos of pragmatic, collaborative church planning among "decentralized" congregations that informed an array of locally contingent evangelical church extension practices. Winegarden, then, did not reject development coordination on principle, nor could he. Promoted as they were by the NAE—a cooperative, "conservative ecumenical" organization—Winegarden's recommendations were part of a coordinated, top-down effort to develop evangelical churches at the local level.

Regardless, Winegarden framed the so-called decentralized approach positively as a modern business strategy and a biblical norm that aided the anti-liberal religious project. Like modern shopping centers, Winegarden argued, churches should focus on new plants in local neighborhoods and communities, not the "downtown district." Like early Christian missions, at least by one reading of scripture, they should "aggressively engage[ ] in establishing new churches rather than centralizing membership in Jerusalem." Sustaining the primacy of decentralized, local evangelism as a core Christian principle and a sound business practice, Winegarden then delineated three major styles of church extension, detailing social and financial considerations for new churches in a variety of locally contingent contexts, including a systematic approach to planning new congregations "in the vastly expanding suburbs" through speculative land development and various forms of private or philanthropic financial subsidy.

David Moberg, a sociologist at Bethel College in St. Paul, also affirmed the imperative to evangelize the suburbs by material investment, displaying a keen intellectual awareness of structural social transformations then unfolding. In an essay titled "Population Movements and the Evangelical Church," Moberg cautioned generally against the prioritization of all forms of church organization or institutionalization—matters he considered secondary to gospel principles—although he admitted in business-like fashion that it was "…essential for the church to prosper in order for it to do most

effectively the work that it ought to do for God on earth." Moberg also considered "material things" to be entrusted directly to humankind by God, and he encouraged a sensibility to use those things "in the most efficient way."

Moberg, however, did not see entirely eye-to-eye with Winedgarden. Against Winegarden's decentralization thesis, Moberg considered material efficiency to be rather a project of centralization for evangelicals, at least in part. In particular, Moberg saw evangelical suburbanization as an effort that redirected resources from sparse and decentralized rural areas to new suburban centers. Moreover, Moberg suggested that promising signs of evangelical church growth in new suburbs were not actually a matter of "increased reverence and worship of God," but rather a result of mass national population migrations and the important social benefits church membership provided for constituents of new communities who often came from diverse denominational backgrounds and actively sought a new spiritual home. Suburbs, then, offered evangelicals opportunity to beat the ecumenicists at their own game on a church-by-church basis.

In a move unusual for white evangelicals in church planning debates at the time, Moberg also recognized that church flight from urban centers often proceeded on racial, ethnic and class lines that evangelicals needed to recognize were not biblical and therefore required diligent work to overcome. Nevertheless, he offered little in the way of effective policy to limit potential social dangers. Like Winegarden, Moberg appealed to biblical norms to sustain his approach to problems of modern development. "We need to break down the middle wall of partition," Moberg proclaimed, "not only between Jew and Gentile and between bond and free, but also between Caucasian and colored, rich and poor, common laborer and white collared worker." Unlike Winegarden, however, who detailed evidence-based practical strategies for church extension, Moberg only warned against certain social dangers of suburbanization and recommended further systematic study. He did not recommend any specific or immediate planning strategies that might overcome powerful social trends toward new

forms of racial and economic inequality, thus lending early evangelical suburbanization efforts a modest sense of social awareness and a moderate dose of guilt, but few practical tools to address either.

Local Contingencies of Church Development in Wheaton and DuPage County

Despite high-minded disputes over planning strategies and their social effects—between the NAE and NCC, or even within the NAE—local churches were indeed products of their environment that required practical tools for growth. More often than not, local conditions more strongly shaped local iterations of the postwar revolution in suburban churching than broad recommendations from ecumenical or interdenominational agencies. For Wheaton's evangelical community, a variety of local conditions encouraged vigorous suburban church development far less cautious and studied than David Moberg would have preferred. Wheaton's midcentury religious marketplace featured a distinct religious culture, a flood of church development cash or credit from a variety of sources and a wide array of real estate options in which to invest that currency. Wheaton's historical evangelical community offered further benefit, not simply from its well-established cooperative social networks but particularly from specialized suburban development interests within those networks. Many of Wheaton's evangelical churches opportunistically engaged those development interests to secure new sources of church financial stability and wealth, which were then reinvested in church programs that benefitted local congregations. Far from being a "democratization of wealth," however, Wheaton's evangelical expansion represented more accurately a consolidation of resources where money, property and related professional services flowed from an already racially- and geographically-limited economic system and were streamlined further by anti-liberal zeal and and other preferential subsidies, both secular and religious.

Wheaton's deep-seated religious culture gave early shape to closed, resource-sharing networks in its growing suburban church market. In Wheaton and the surrounding municipalities of suburban DuPage County, religious institutional experimentation had long been a prominent feature of a distinct regional religious culture, encouraged most prominently by Wheaton College and the evangelical network attached to it.[42] Founded on private land donated by village founder Warren Wheaton in 1853, Wheaton College first organized with the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, but the College's first president, Jonathan Blanchard, was a New England Congregationalist. Blanchard soon worked with Methodists to organize Wheaton's famous College Church which was initially Congregational in affiliation, evangelical in orientation and relatively flexible in doctrinal orthodoxy. Nevertheless, a variety of doctrinal disputes and discord over social issues fomented productive schisms that launched new congregations, including a family tree of new Congregationalist and non-denominational bible churches.[43] In the early twentieth century, Wheaton College further typified the institutional activism of the evangelical tradition, encouraging both entrepreneurial experimentation in organizations and populist supernatural modernism in faith and practice. The College's embrace of high quality liberal arts education unburdened by liberal demystification of Christian theology attracted a wide variety of conservative Protestants to the area who were eager to adapt old-time religion to new cultural forms

[42] For more on Wheaton College, see Hamilton, "The Fundamentalist Harvard." While Hamilton prefers the term "fundamentalist" as the most accurate descriptor of Wheaton College, eschewing what he critiques as mischaracterizations of fundamentalist separatism, the College's transformation from an early Wesleyan Methodist institution to a regional fundamentalist stronghold to an intellectual center for modern evangelicalism neatly fits my own definition of evangelicalism. In Hamilton's words, "…the college adopted the culture's prevailing ideas about liberal arts education nearly whole cloth— purposes, structure, curriculum, accreditation, admissions, student culture, and even a good measure of faculty culture—without yielding a fraction of its full-bodied, pre-modem supematuralism. This suggests that fundamentalism's enduring popular success stems not from any tendency to separate itself from its host culture, nor from any tendency to resist change, but from the movement's ready willingness to adapt its pre-modem supernaturalistic Christianity to the shifting forms of modern popular culture." Of course, those adaptation were not merely limited to popular cultural expressions. See Hamilton, "Abstract" and p. 1-28.

[43] Jean Moore, *From Tower to Tower: A History of Wheaton, Illinois* (Wheaton: Gary-Wheaton Bank, 1974). 103-126.

that fostered both conversions and institutional growth.[44] While Wheaton College became a "hub" of evangelical cooperative networks that energized the city's religious activism and its institutional experimentation, the city itself attracted a full complement of traditions, including varieties of mainline Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and even American Theosophy. Unsurprisingly, from its earliest days onward, Wheaton garnered, and continues to maintain, a reputation for its high concentration of institutional religious activity.

As an evangelical hub, specifically, Wheaton and its college also served as a nexus for the greater Chicago area's fundamentalist and evangelical communities, and by the midcentury a cadre of modern evangelicalism's institutional, infrastructural and financial managers visited Wheaton with great frequency and eventually came to call Wheaton home. Significantly, many of those who moved from Chicago to Wheaton were of recent European immigrant descent, coinciding with patterns of economic pressure on European ethnic national populations to leave cities and join a new white America. Among these were institutional managers of the free churches, including construction manager and former Salem Free Church wunderkind Carl Gundersen, as well as Harold P. Halleen, the nephew of EFCA president E.A. Halleen. Like Gundersen, Halleen had risen through free church ranks as a member of its young business class, first at the free church in Lakeview, then as the treasurer at Trinity Seminary.[45] Professionally, Halleen managed savings and loans accounts for various real estate development projects at Bell Federal Savings and Loan Association, and he would later become the association's senior executive. Alongside Scandinavian-American free church stalwarts, other European-American evangelical managers in the Wheaton area included Robert C. Van Kampen, a

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[44] Hamilton, 21-25. Hamilton, again, rightly identifies entrepreneurial institutional experimentation in the service of modernizing supernatural Christianity to be a primary feature of fundamentalism, not merely doctrinal opposition to liberal modernism, and certainly not cultural isolationism. See also Carpenter, *Revive Us Again;* Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*; and Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt.*

[45] See EFCA Yearbooks 1940, 1950, 1954.

first generation Dutch-American and long-time Christian publisher who turned to banking and real estate investment in the 1950s. Van Kampen had also served on the board of trustees at Village Church in suburban Western Springs, where temporarily he oversaw a twenty-five year old pastor by the name of "William (Billy) Graham."[46] Often working together, both stockpiling and sharing a variety of economic and human resources among themselves, these professional real estate developers came to manage significant evangelical institutional investments in and near Wheaton.

In the postwar era, Wheaton's religious atmosphere further amplified church growth in an economy favorable, at least in white communities, to institutional infrastructure investments. National surveys of religious membership, first conducted by the National Council of Churches, capture some, if not all, of the magnitude of that growth. In 1950, DuPage County respondents to NCC surveys reported over 83,000 church members representing a total population market share of 53%. By 1970, the NCC and affiliated agencies estimated nearly 300,000 regular religious adherents for a market share of over 60% of the general population, representing a 360% increase in total church attendance and a 13% increase in rate of religious identification over a twenty year period.[47] In all likelihood, these numbers underrepresented conditions on the ground. The NCC's first surveys, released in 1956 (accounting for the 1950 federal census) and 1971 (for the 1970 census), varied widely in methodology and analytical definition. No surveys captured essential data from 1960. Most notably, the first surveys

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[46] Clipping, "Let's Get Acquainted," *Songs in the Night from the Village Church of Western Springs, IL*, May, 1944, Folder 27, Box 2, CN 313, Papers of Robert C. Van Kampen, BGCA. (Hereafter Van Kampen Papers).

[47] See National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, Bureau of Research and Survey, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration and Analysis By Counties, States and Regions. Ser. A-E.* (New York, 1956), Table 41 (hereafter 1956 survey); and Johnson, Douglas W., Paul R. Picard, and Bernard Quinn, *Churches & Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration By Region, State, and County; 1971* (Washington, D.C.: Glenmary Research Center, 1974), 55 (hereafter 1971 survey). Note should be taken of differing language used in the two studies; in the 1956 survey, the NCC Bureau of Research relied only on membership numbers as reported by various respondents. See 1956 survey, Series A, No. 1, "Definitions." In the 1971 survey, NCC researchers collaborated with a variety of other institutions to define two categories of membership: "full communicant" and "adherent." Churches were asked to supply both figures, but in cases where they did not, the statisticians calculated projections with a uniform formula based on overall population numbers. See 1971 survey, pg. xi.

lack data from known congregations in the Wheaton area, many of smaller size or non-denominational affiliation. Given mutually antagonistic relations between the NCC and conservative evangelical churches, one can safely assume that many churches in the DuPage county area and beyond either refused to respond to NCC surveys or were simply unknown to NCC data collectors.[48]

Regardless, documentary evidence of a wide range of church expansion and facilities improvements in the postwar period abounds. Between 1950 and 1965, dozens of churches in the Wheaton area constructed new buildings, expanded facilities or migrated into existing buildings formerly held by other congregations.[49] Building improvements represented serious investments of financial resources, and Wheaton churches alone spent millions on church infrastructure between 1953 and 1963 alone for a city with a population of few more than 25,000 souls. An incomplete survey of individual church expenditures in that decade captures the diversity of investment opportunities for a variety of congregations with disparate financial means. In 1953, Wheaton's Pleasant Hill Community Church purchased the Old St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, relocated and remodeled it for a mere $18,000.[50] In 1955, First Presbyterian completed a far more ambitious $250,000 building and expanded its chapel for an additional $8,000.[51] In 1957, Trinity Episcopal broke ground for a $200,000 chapel, and the Wheaton Christian Reformed Church broke ground on new facilities costing $167,000.[52] In 1959, Geneva Road Baptist Church built its first new chapel for a relatively modest

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[48] Surveys from the 1980s onward, conducted with more intentionally inclusive and scientifically rigorous methodologies betray the fact; in the surveys from the 1950s and -70s, data from DuPage County accounts for approximately 25 denominations and non-denominational churches. In the 1980s, over 50 denominations and non-denominational churches from the same area are represented. See Bernard Quinn, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1980: An Enumeration By Region, State, and County, Based On Data Reported By 111 Church Bodies* (Atlanta, Ga.: Glenmary Research Center, 1982), 84.

[49] Moore, *Tower to Tower*, 103-126.

[50] "Wheaton Church to Have New Site," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* May 1, 1953. St. Johns, for their part, built new facilities in 1951, the cost of which remains unknown. See Moore, *Tower to Tower,* 113.

[51] Untitled, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 18, 1955

[52] Untitled, *Chicago Daily Tribune,* Dec 30, 1956; Untitled, *Chicago Daily Tribune,* Apr 28, 1957.

$65,000.[53] In 1960, Wheaton Bible Church dedicated a new sanctuary with an exorbitant cost of $540,000.[54] In 1961, Wheaton's DuPage Unitarian-Universalist Church purchased its first building, an old school, for next to nothing, comparatively: $15,500.[55] In 1962, St. Paul's Lutheran Church planned for a two-story Sunday school addition costing $150,000.[56] In 1963, St. Mark's Catholic Parish built new facilities, including a school, auditorium and convent for $350,000, and St. Matthew United Church of Christ initiated a "three-stage expansion" with initial costs set at $95,000.[57] The list could, and did, go on.[58]

The manifold costs and styles of church investments in the Wheaton area reflected a handful of religio-economic contingencies that underwrote the uneven financial power of individual congregations. Church investments certainly reflected the increasing effectiveness of religious fundraising techniques, as well as the growing buying power of suburban congregants. Most often, local congregations relied on the humble fundraiser to amass development capital, deploying common stewardship techniques developed in the 1920s through the 1940s. Church boards organized fundraising campaigns with dedicated pledge cards, specially designated Sunday sermons and Sunday School classes, careful appeals in church bulletins, and even pew rental options.[59] In the postwar era, these techniques were increasingly expanded and professionalized with stronger psychological appeals to responsibility and loyalty rather than theological concerns; some churches even consulted with fundraising counseling firms and employed common sales techniques for concerted appeals.[60] The

[53] "Break Ground Sunday For Church Unit," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr 5, 1959.

[54] "Wheaton Bible Church Ends 7 Day Rites Sunday" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep 25, 1960.

[55] Untitled, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan 29, 1961.

[56] "Break Ground Today for Church Addition: Rites Scheduled After 11 A. M. Services" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep 30, 1962.

[57] Untitled, *Chicago Tribune*, Mar 7, 1963.

[58] For a thorough review of growth in and movement of Wheaton's most well-known churches (though without significant insight into financial costs), see again Moore, *Tower to Tower,* 103-126. For a detailed elaboration of two evangelical church investments, see below.

[59] Hudnut-Beumler, *Almighty's Dollar*, 97-118.

[60] Ibid., 150-86.

growing affluence and financial liquidity of new suburban congregants further aided the success of fundraising appeals. In Wheaton, few churches failed to meet fundraising goals, and some quickly overpledged goals. Members of Trinity Episcopal exceeded their $175,000 goal for a new building in 1956 by $1,500 before the campaign was shut down early.[61] Since final building costs only tallied $167,000, the church netted $8,000 for other uses. In nearby Elmhurst, a similar story unfolded at Grace Bible Church in 1959: congregants raised $135,000 on a $125,000 goal in just one week. Regular charitable donations to church causes, infrastructure or otherwise, became a crucial foundation of the suburban religious economy. "Sacrificial giving is characteristic of our people," reported Grace Bible's Reverend Elmer B. Fritch. "Beside their overwhelming financial support for the new addition," he went on, "the congregation donates an average of $30,000 annually to support 21 foreign missionaries in countries throut [sic] the world. Every fund drive conducted is done so with expectant faith."[62]

Expectant faith no doubt encouraged significant donations, but when expectant faith was not adequate, some churches could further rely on financial backing from national religious institutions and parachurch agencies to close funding gaps. In the western suburbs surrounding Wheaton, the Joliet Catholic Diocese invested an estimated $5 million on local construction between 1946 and 1956 and planned to expend $3.3 million more in the immediately following years; the United Lutheran church spent nearly $1 million on area churches in the same period and planned to spend $1.5 million more; the American Baptist Convention followed suit with another $1 million in the same 10-year period with plans to build forty-five additional Chicago-area congregations in the ensuing decade; finally, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America added $2 million of its own to the

[61] "Suburb Parish Overpledges Building Fund," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 2, 1956.
[62] "Members Give Pastors Proof of Generostiy," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov 22, 1959.

fray.[63] Home mission societies and ecumenical agencies further buttressed the budgets of local churches, including the Baptist Home Mission Society, which lent to churches in the Wheaton area, and the Church Federation of Greater Chicago (CFGC) which established its own $7.5 million loan fund in 1956 for churches who lacked the financial resources to build on their own.[64] Ultimately, CFGC estimated that Protestant churches in Chicagoland would require at least half a billion dollars to fund necessary church expansion between 1956 and 1976, and they quickly initiated collaborative comity plans for efficient and orderly expansion with their twenty-four ecclesial and denominational members.[65] In sum, ecclesiastical authorities and parachurch organizations established a robust secondary loan economy specialized to meet the needs of rapid church expansion, especially in new white suburbs with exploding populations.

An array of entry points to the suburban real estate market further enabled congregations' purchasing power, whether that power was founded in fundraising or specialized religious loan markets, and particular options for church extension projects often reflected real disparities in matters of local church control and the vigor of aspirations to expand. The high-end real estate market allowed established churches with stable, large, affluent populations and, most often, mainline denominational affiliation to draw on significant financial resources to fund spacious and costly new chapels on large plots of land. So many investment dollars flooded the market from these churches in the Midwest alone that a veritable industry of modernist architectural church design sprung up almost overnight. Accomplished architects like Edward Dart, Charles Stade and Edward Sövik soon refashioned the architectural landscape of American religion, popularizing now-ubiquitous A-frame buildings, among

[63] See Louise Hutchinson, "Parish Growth in Diocese is Phenomenal: Postwar Building Boom Continues, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep 9, 1956; Untitled, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 17, 1956; Hutchinson, "Area Baptists Planning Large Church Growth: 45 New Congregations," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* Jun 3, 1956; and "11 Presbyterian Parishes Spend 2 Million on Building," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr 29, 1956.

[64] Richard Philbrick, "Protestants Tell 20 Year Plan," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 10, 1956.

[65] Ibid. For more on ecumenical planning and "comity agreements," see above.

other common designs, as well as open and spacious chapels and sanctuaries that intended to spur deep contemplation.[66] High-end denominational development did provide state-of-the-art facilities, but offered less in the way of local control over, or even local understanding of long-term growth plans. Large-scale church planning often occurred at the upper levels of denominational and ecumenical organizations, and local congregations were regularly subject to the opaque designs and budgetary dictates of church officials.

For many new and aspirational churches, this high-end approach to development was not possible, at least to start; fortunately for those churches, a low-end real estate market nevertheless enabled smaller congregations with fewer financial resources and less denominational backing to pursue more modest, incremental development that encouraged aspirational investments without initially breaking the bank. Some small congregations benefitted from the sale of old buildings, creating a pattern of church succession that allowed easier access to the brick-and-mortar security of established religious infrastructure, as did Pleasant Hill Community Church when they purchased the old St. John's building in 1953. New congregations could also capitalize on the residential real estate market to house their congregations temporarily until financing for more permanent solutions could be secured. This investment strategy was especially useful to evangelical church startups which were often formed by *ad hoc* community bible study groups and Sunday schools that initially met in members' privately-owned homes. Some small congregations even purchased their own homes outright, which were often available for less than $15,000. Grace Brethren Church, for example, occupied a model home in southwest Wheaton for two years prior to constructing their own conventional facility in 1955.[67] Given the economically diverse marketplace for religious infrastructure, local congregations lacking

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[66] See Gretchen T. Buggeln, *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America, Architecture, Landscape and American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xi-xxix.

[67] See Moore, *Tower to Tower,* 121 and 124.

significant denominational support were nevertheless free to pursue a variety of property investments. Free of ecclesiastical oversight, those same congregations were often freer to pursue their aspirations without hierarchical deliberation and intervention.

Sacred Developments: Professional Management in Local Evangelical Church Extension

Wheaton's cooperative, activist evangelical social networks provided further financial and organizational benefit to aspirational congregations early to the suburban boom, most especially through distinct personal relationships with specialized experts in evangelical and real estate development, including Scandinavian-American EFCA stalwarts Carl Gundersen and Harold P. Halleen, alongside the Dutch-American evangelical activist, Robert C. Van Kampen. Those relationships allowed particular churches to leverage suburban markets to maximum effect for rapid expansion and growth. When Gundersen moved to Wheaton from Oak Park in the early 1950s, he worked quickly to establish a new suburban EFCA congregation after decades of service at Salem Evangelical Free Church in urban Chicago. Early in 1952, Gundersen invited eighty-five associates and local acquaintances to his home to discuss the matter of starting a new church in the growing suburban city. One month later, the new congregation held its first public meeting in the local Masonic Hall.[68] Both Van Kampen and Halleen joined the early membership rolls and took positions of leadership on the church's Board of Deacons; Halleen was appointed further as Chairman of the Finance Committee, and all three men (along with a fourth, Tom Buis) formed the core of the new congregation's Building Committee. By year's end, plans were well underway to construct a chapel for

[68] Brochure, "Dedication Day,"

the new congregation, which had since affiliated with Gundersen's EFCA denomination. The church itself, however, would be named and known familiarly as the Church by the Side of the Road.

When Gundersen reported the story of the church's construction to *Christian Life* magazine in 1954, four months after its completion, he credited its success to the "vision" of building planners. Chanelling his mentor, C.T. Dyrness, Gundersen told the magazine that, "[t]he church which intends to grow must build so it is able to grow."[69] In fact, Gundersen and the Building Committee met early in the planning stages with another Dyrness acolyte, the Rev. Torrey Johnson, to discuss best strategies for moving forward. It was Johnson who recommended that the church not only build explicitly to serve young families, but also that it build with an eye toward future expansion.[70] With a cadre of experienced church developers at hand, little about the construction project, or the church's organization in general, was left to chance; planning decisions, made under expert development and financial management, were strategic and competitive. While initial membership in the first year of the church's existence hovered around 100 adults, the church would be built to serve an audience of 1,000 or more. The church's location was selected for its proximity to a new and growing residential district, where homes were "under construction continuously" and where hundreds of new families had moved in recent years. Beyond plans for the immediate neighborhood, the church's lot also claimed direct access to two major traffic thoroughfares that cut through Wheaton, just south of its downtown area and Wheaton College, eastward toward Chicago. To capture the wider suburban driving community, plans included a large road sign and a spacious parking lot, capable of "accomodat[ing] several hundred cars."[71]

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[69] Magazine Clipping, "Building with a Vision," *Christian Life*, July 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[70] Minutes, "Minutes of a Church Council Meeting," August 4, 1952, Folder "Old Records—Wheaton Evangelical Free Church," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[71] Brochure, "Community Project—The Church by the Side of the Road," circa 1953, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection. The size of the road sign became a source of concern and controversy for the City of Wheaton's municipal managers, and the sign was eventually scaled down to meet community standards.

Not content to expect growth by organic convenience alone, the church also initiated a publicity campaign to highlight its services and amenities in order to capture suburban souls in an growing, underserved religious marketplace. In addition to features in *Christian Life* and regular mentions in the EFCA's *Evangelical Beacon*, the Church by the Side of the Road produced its own promotional brochures to match those of secular planners who did the same to pitch prospective homebuyers on their subdivisions. As one brochure put it, the Church by the Side of the Road was not merely "another church in Wheaton," but rather a "community project" and a "high-level missionary project" that would serve a brand new, otherwise unchurched population center.[72] A second brochure emphasized the church's commitment to the very families who had recently moved to the area. The church would be one "designed for the family—" the brochure proclaimed, "to start with the child." The brochure went on to list a variety of family services, which included a mother's room, a nursery, child care services with trained care providers, Sunday School services for children and teens and other youth programming.[73]

More than vision, marketing and social services, however, expert planning meant professional and innovative financial management in the hands of Gundersen, Van Kampen and Halleen. The church's strategically chosen site provided some of that financial benefit; land was simply cheaper on the outskirts of town where the new neighborhood was found. As for most churches, moreover, property tax was not and never would be an issue, despite steadily rising land values.[74] Nevertheless, the church construction project required significant financial means to complete, and the Building and Finance Committees secured necessary resources by diverse means. Gundersen provided much of those

[72] Ibid.

[73] Brochure, "The Church by the Side of the Road—Where Everyone is Welcome," circa 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[74] See Magazine Clipping, "Building with a Vision," *Christian Life*, July 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

resources by way of social connections in the business of suburban construction. In November of 1952, as construction planning commenced, Gundersen told the Board of Deacons that he recognized the "tremendous responsibility" of managing the project, and he promised to do "everything he [could] to get the building as cheaply as possible."[75] In Gundersen's posthumous biography, Valborg Gundersen recalled that her husband became "determined to cut costs to a bare minimum" for the church specifically by "exercising every influence and connection he knew." Working in concert with Van Kampen, Gundersen cobbled together the purchase of multiple lots at the church site for a "nominal sum," as Valborg later described it. Gundersen also pitched his vision for the church and shared his own Christian witness to solicit free material and labor from subcontractors. Heeding the call, one local lumber vendor donated $1,000 to the project in addition to free lumber. Two competing sheet metal suppliers, not wishing to be outdone by one another, reportedly both agreed to furnish metal for the building and its baptistry free of charge.[76] In a brochure for its dedication services, the Church by the Side of the Road eventually thanked nearly forty subcontractors for "hav[ing] effected great savings to the church both in material and labor costs." While the building effort was overseen by a professional architecture firm, the Building Committee further cut construction costs by regularly employing the unskilled, volunteer labor of congregants themselves.[77]

Despite cost saving measures, the building's final tab totaled just over $150,000 ($1.4 million, inflation adjusted), a sum beyond the means of most new, small and aspirational congregations. Nevertheless, the well-connected church met its financial obligations through private loans, charitable giving, conventional mortgage lending and innovative financial products novel to church development

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[75] Minutes, "Minutes of a Deacons' Meeting," November 4, 1952, Folder "Board of Deacons Minutes, June 3, 1952-April 4, 1956," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[76] Gundersen, *Long Shadow*, 59-62.

[77] Brochure, "Dedication Day: April 4, 1954," April 4, 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

of the era. In order to offset land costs, Gundersen loaned the church $3,000 at 5% interest from his own charitable organization, the Epaphroditus Foundation.[78] Deep pockets on the church's Board of Deacons also secured significant cash sums for the effort; the nine-man Board itself offered $23,000 in private donations at the first building planning meeting after lots were secured.[79] Once the Building Committee secured nearly $40,000 in charitable donations—in part by hosting a cornerstone laying ceremony visited by Billy Graham—they initiated a new stage of fundraising.[80] Rather than asking for cash donations outright, Harold Halleen and the Finance Committee recommended that the church sell "Certificates of Indebtedness" to raise cash.[81] The concept, borrowed from national wartime funding in the first and second World Wars, manufactured investment bonds for a "share" of the congregation's future wealth. Investors could purchase a bond for any amount and expect a promised 4% APR return on value once the bond was cashed in, at the purchaser's discretion or at a set maturity date. Over the following twelve months, board members sold $69,025 in private church bonds to fund the new chapel, in addition to raising $56,000 in conventional donations.[82] Finally, Gundersen secured the remaining $30,000 needed after inviting local banking officials to his home to discuss the congregation's plans; although the officials reportedly scoffed at the breadth of church's vision given its actual membership numbers, they lent the full required amount.[83] As bonds were cashed in the following years, the church either paid from its general fund or, on occasion, sold *more* bonds and took

[78] Minutes, "Minutes of a meeting of the Board," June 3, 1952, Folder "Board of Deacons Minutes, June 3, 1952-April 4, 1956," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[79] Minutes, "Minutes of a Deacons' Meeting," November 4, 1952, Folder "Board of Deacons Minutes, June 3, 1952-April 4, 1956," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[80] On Graham's participation in the cornerstone laying ceremony, see Brochure, "Dedication Day: April 4, 1954," April 4, 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection; on the day's fundraising goals, see Minutes, "Minutes of Deacon Board Meeting at Pastor Loveless' Home," May 5, 1953, Folder "Executive Board Minutes (& related papers)," Box "Board Meeting Notes," CCWC Collection.

[81] Minutes, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Council," April 1, 1953, Folder "Executive Board Minutes (& related papers)," Box "Board Meeting Notes," CCWC Collection.

[82] Report, "Wheaton Evangelical Free Finance Committee Report: Building Fund," April 30, 1954, Folder "Board of Deacons Minutes, June 3, 1952-April 4, 1956," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[83] See Gundersen, 61.

out additional equity loans to pay its promised interest; both financial mechanisms augmented not only the building fund, but also numerous other church projects, including a burgeoning radio program.[84] By 1955, the church committed nearly 20% of its annual operating budget to the repayment of bank loans and interest on its own private bonds.[85]

By most measures, the building program was a complete success. After its construction, the church building was privately appraised at a value of $304,000—nearly twice what it cost to build, representing a serious increase in capital equity.[86] In the years to follow, formal membership rose into the high-hundreds, and weekly attendance filled the expansive auditorium. By 1959, the Sunday School alone boasted an enrollment of 800 children. By 1958, a planned expansion added a even more space for youth programming and education.[87] As the 1950s and -60s advanced, the church became one of the largest in the region and church leaders planted new affiliated branches in proximate suburbs, including Naperville. The Church by the Side of the Road, then, became an early harbinger of and model for the modern, suburban megachurch movement.

Nevertheless, the church's success was perhaps most instructive in the way it exalted and sanctified suburban growth and expansion, by whatever means. In private, church leaders credited their success to divine intervention in the church's affairs as much, if not more, than they credited their own savvy planning and management. As the project wrapped in 1954, Gundersen "prais[ed] the Lord for the way He [had] worked things out" to keep costs low.[88] At the chapel's dedication ceremony, thick and

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[84] See, for example, "Meeting of the Board of Deacons," January 11, 1955, or "Meeting of the Board of Deacons," July 12, 1955, Folder "Executive Board Minutes (& related papers)," Box "Board Meeting Notes," CCWC Collection.

[85] Budget, "Wheaton Evangelical Free Church 1955-1956 Budget," circa 1955, Folder "Board of Deacons Minutes, June 3, 1952-April 4, 1956," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[86] See Gundersen, *Long Shadow*, 62. Valborg Gundersen recalled the appraised value to be $350,000, but reports at the time claimed a slightly lower figure. See again Magazine Clipping, "Building with a Vision," *Christian Life*, July 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[87] On Sunday School attendance and the 1958 education building expansion, see Clipping, "Wheaton Evangelical Free Church," circa 1959-60, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[88] Minutes, "Minutes: Deacon Board Meeting," January 4, 1954, Folder "Board of Deacons Minutes, June 3, 1952-April 4, 1956," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

glossy bulletins cited Psalms 127:1 to capture a similar sentiment: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."[89] The congregation's pastor, the Rev. Wendell P. Loveless, elaborated further in the bulletin's "word of greeting:"

> Those of us who have been the closest to the many and varied steps in the progress of this work, and the construction of the new building, have stood in awe as we have seen God move in so many remarkable and mysterious ways. While human instruments have been mightily used of God in every department of this endeavor, we all are extremely conscious of the fact that God has done it all, and that every bit of the glory belongs to Him alone![90]

The dedication service also prominently featured a call-and-response dedication that cemented an eschatological view of the church's development. The 1,200 souls in attendance—which overflowed the 1,000 seat auditorium—rose in unison to declare the building dedicated to "the Lord our God" and to proclaim their "…trust that this new church building shall be used by God, in His own will and way, for salvation and blessing in our beloved City of Wheaton, and unto the ends of the earth."[91] In short, whatever social connections, whatever financial manipulations, whatever market principles were engaged to build the church, its pastors, managers and parishioners viewed them all as divine instruments in the hands of their creator towards fulfillment of an eternal promise.

Sacred Developments: Local Evangelical Churches and Municipal Community Planning

While unique in important particulars, the Church by the Side of the Road was not a significant outlier in the religio-economic realignments of the 1950s suburban boom, nor was the City of Wheaton—with its highly-regarded religious reputation—the only site for religious enthusiasm and competitive growth. In fact, likely due to Wheaton's reputation as well as the success of "community projects" like Gundersen's EFCA church, secular developers in DuPage County took a keen interest

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[89] Brochure, "Dedication Day: April 4, 1954," April 4, 1954, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

in promoting religious infrastructure as a key feature of a well-rounded, market-competitive community. Major developers of new suburbs, especially, labored to draw residents away from more established, religiously-active communities. Secular developers thus enacted distinct church development plans designed to promote church growth and raise religious consciousness in their villages and towns in order to serve their own interests in wider residential development and its economic gains.

A variety of white churches, parishes and even synagogues benefitted from these plans, but some plans outright favored evangelical forms of church organization. Paul Butler—who developed and incorporated Oak Brook in 1958 a mere 12 miles east of Wheaton—later recalled his aim "to appeal to a wide variety of people in the community" by donating prominent village-center land to a hand-selected, young and growing nondenominational congregation, Christ Church.[92] In selecting an evangelical nondenominational church, Butler hoped to avoid denominational controversy that might, in his words, "divide the community." Butler may or may not have understood that "nondenominational" merely represented another kind of Protestant Christian "divide," but his land gift nevertheless immediately secured significant financial security for a growing and aspirational congregation. Members of that church returned Butler's favor, knowingly or not, by purchasing homes in the village or by spending time and money in the village's central district, of which the church became an important piece.

Suburban Carol Stream became Wheaton's immediate neighbor to the north after incorporating in 1959, and its development showed even more explicit concern for religious community in early marketing and planning. At first, the new suburb borrowed Wheaton's religious reputation and services for its own purposes before pursuing independent religious development more vigorously. Carol

[92] Newspaper Clipping, "Differing ideals mirror towns' development," Box 3, Folder JM18, CSPL LHC.

Stream's developer, Jay Stream, had grown up in Wheaton and while Stream was not overtly religious himself, he fully recognized the importance of religious landscape for prospective homebuyers in the area. In sales brochures for Carol Stream's first subdivision, Stream balanced a vision of affordable housing for working-class homebuyers with social amenities to provide "the ultimate in community services" in order to build a "perfect community." Prominently featured among those services, according to the brochure, were "conveniently located churches of all denominations."[93] In 1959, however, when the village of Carol Stream was incorporated and its first subdivision homes were sold, every one of those "conveniently located churches" was in Wheaton. Lacking indigenous religious infrastructure, Carol Stream's first residents made a short commute south to participate in church services, and some of Wheaton's religious leaders took notice. In 1960, a Lutheran pastor from Wheaton reached out to Stream. "He told me that I had done a nice job on my town," Stream later recalled, "but that I had done nothing for the souls of the people."[94]

Understanding the importance of the critique from a local development and sales perspective, if not the eternal one, Stream set about welcoming churches to build in Carol Stream with financial incentives and explicit municipal support. Stream's invitation, unlike Butler's, extended to a variety of bible or community churches, denominational churches and the regional Catholic diocese. However, Stream followed Butler's suit and initially offered churches land *gratis*. Stream set aside ten acres of land for the Joliet Diocese to build St. Luke's parish, and he offered First Baptist in Wheaton a plot on which to build a new chapel.[95] First Baptist turned down the offer but pursued a new church plant in the area nevertheless, founding Carol Stream Baptist Church by 1962. When churches did not accept or pursue offers for free land, Stream nevertheless worked closely with church planners to find

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[93] Carol Stream Estate Sales Brochure (circa 1959) Box 3, Folder JM11, CSPL LHC.

[94] More, *Build Your Own Town*, 35.

[95] Ibid., and "Our History," Fellowship Church of Carol Stream, 2013, http://fellowshipchurch.info/church/learnaboutus/our-history (accessed Dec 2018).

temporary confines to house congregations until permanent infrastructure was completed, as well as to identify appropriate plots to on which to develop that infrastructure. Carol Stream's first congregation, the nondenominational evangelical Village Church, formerly organized in late 1959. The church collaborated regularly with Stream for several years to find adequate accommodations for their aspirational religious community.

Village Church's early development history certainly reflects the influence of major developers on suburban religious growth, but its story, much like that of Gundersen's Wheaton church, further captures the specific ways in which midcentury evangelical activism encouraged—and became inextricably intertwined with—new suburban development projects. The story of Carol Stream's Village Church actually began in the early-1940s, well before Carol Stream was even an idea. In those years, a different congregation by the name of Village Church—one centered in suburban Western Springs, seventeen miles east of Wheaton—sought a new spiritual leader. One member of Western Spring's Village Church board decided to recruit a bright, young pastor from Wheaton College to fill the role. The board member was Robert C. Van Kampen, and the young pastor was Billy Graham. Graham served for one year in Western Springs before joining forces with YFC and catapulting to national fame; he later called Van Kampen the only boss he ever had.[96] Fifteen years later, in 1959, Wheaton College celebrated its 100 year anniversary, and Billy Graham returned to host his now-famous crusade in Wheaton. Among the audience at that year's crusade were soon-to-be founding members of Carol Stream's Village Church, suburban migrants who decided to invest a portion of the crusade's evangelizing spirit into a new congregation for their new community. These early members organized initial support for the congregation's development from the local mission programs of Wheaton's most prominent evangelical congregations, including College Church and one

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[96] Kenan Heise, "Robert Van Kampen; served on Billy Graham Association board," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 23 1989.

of its early spin-offs, Wheaton Bible Church, as well as Gundersen's Church by the Side of the Road and a fourth area congregation, Pleasant Hill Community Church.[97] A handful of members from each church volunteered to form the core of Village Church's early membership, lending the new congregation needed expertise, stability and enthusiasm to entice less familiar suburban seekers and to encourage novitiates.

Early Village Church members derived their energy and activism from evangelical social networks, but they also engaged those networks to secure the needed economic resources required for permanent material infrastructure in Carol Stream. In early discussions of church planning, one member recommended the congregation contact Van Kampen who, since his days at Western Spring's Village Church, had engaged in similar church extension projects and had expanded his professional dealings well beyond publishing into the world of finance and real estate. By 1960, Van Kampen was buying up chunks of farmland around Wheaton with Gundersen as an investment in growing suburban development, including farmland under the newly incorporated jurisdiction of Carol Stream. Van Kampen and another associate, Kenneth Gieser, committed to aid the new church to secure the materials it needed, but only as long as it "establish[ed] a sound doctrinal statement, [was] organized and functioning in a well organized manner, and [was] able to support a pastor."

Van Kampen and Geiser's backing enabled Village Church to actively engage developer Jay Stream's fresh enthusiasm for Carol Stream's soul, and the small church made savvy use of available resources, either from friendly municipal partners or the low-end real estate market that Stream's subdivisions provided. The congregation first obtained permission to hold Sunday services on municipal property in Carol Stream's City Hall while Sunday school classes were held in the privately-owned homes of local members. After two years of steady growth, larger confines were needed, and

[97] Brochure, "Church History: Village Bible Church, Carol Stream, Illinois" in Cabinet 1, Drawer 2, F17, CSHS HRC.

the church obtained further municipal permission to hold both services and Sunday school in the gymnasium at Carol Stream's elementary school, a school built and donated to the village by Jay Stream.[98] For the next two years, church leaders regularly called on Stream to identify and designate land for a new building. In the interim, the church expanded its temporary confines again, this time by purchasing outright a private home adjacent to the school.[99] When Stream acquired eighty acres of farmland to expand the boundaries of Carol Stream shortly thereafter, he finally designated two acres for Village Church. The raw land was appraised at a value of $5,000, a price paid in full by promised private contributions from Geiser, Van Kampen and Stream himself.

Like Gundersen's church before it, Village Church leveraged evangelical development networks, religious devotion and readily-available financing to complete the project, in so doing further sanctifying suburban property development as a new symbol of Christian devotion to evangelism. After receiving its land donation, the congregation hired a local evangelical architect, Walter Carlson of Glenview, to design the church. Carlson estimated costs for the project to reach $88,000, but a Chicago construction outfit agreed to finish the building for only $60,000 if church members donated crucial low-skilled labor in trade. The church secured the $60,000 balance with a 5.5% interest, 15-year mortgage from Bell Federal Savings and Loan Association, where Harold Halleen then served as President and Van Kampen had once served as a director and board member. Sacrificial giving in the form of volunteer labor purchased the remaining expenses, including construction or installation of the church fireplace, roof shingles, floor coverings, the cinder block masonry of the basement, the

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[98] See Moore, *Build Your Own Town,* 34-35.

[99] Brochure, "Church History, Village Bible Church, Carol Stream, Illinois," Cabinet 1, Drawer 2, F17, CSHS HRC. Given the home's location, it was likely built by Stream, in a Stream-owned subdivision and sold by a Stream-operated realtor.

heating system, paint for walls and ceilings, landscaping and, finally, three large crosses for the front of the building.[100]

As at the Church by the Side of the Road, Village Church viewed its financial and material gains with eschatological vision. In particular, the church invested the member-built crosses with "special significance," according to church accounts, as they represented the church's central commitment to evangelize—to grow the church. At the dedication ceremony in 1966, a cadre of local evangelical leaders invited all in attendance to consider the implication of the central cross as well as that of its neighbors. The cross on the left was said to symbolize the thief who recognized Christ's divinity and asked for his forgiveness in the life to come. The cross on the right side was "a symbol of rejection," representing the thief who mocked Christ. The central cross symbolized Christ himself, as well his sacrifice and its promise for eternal salvation. In front of the crosses their hands had built, attendees were told the central cross "sum[med] up the purpose for the existence of the church." All in attendance were asked to "join…in sharing the full implication of the Cross" with their new suburban neighbors—neighbors who faced, by implication, the same choice Christ offered to crucified thieves. On which cross would new neighbors hang? To which eternal fate would they succumb?[101]

At Carol Stream's Village Church, as elsewhere in the region, suburban development thus became a key strategy of evangelical efforts to capture new suburban masses of the postwar nation. As David Moberg recognized in his 1956 address to the NAE, population movements likely fostered suburban church growth more than actual reverence for God, but displaced suburban migrants nevertheless sought connection and belonging in otherwise unfamiliar and strange new residential landscapes. The fields were white unto harvest, as Moberg—and the Bible—put it. Especially in new neighborhoods

[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

and suburbs, growing evangelical churches offered potential congregants a material meeting place, a community of peers, convenient social services and an absolutely cosmic sense of purpose.

While less studied and understood by historians and religious scholars, economic development practices of local churches and national organizations alike were absolutely essential to this religious mission. Evangelicals' strategy to capture the suburbs fused enthusiasm for Christ's message—as evangelicals understood it—with the practical needs of housing and maintaining congregational life in a transformed postwar economy. The successes of evangelical suburban development not only grew evangelical populations, but moreover seemed to affirm divine purposes and even a divine will behind financial and economic practices engaged to secure suburban development. While evangelicals were not the only religious laborers who worked suburban fields, their tight social networks, professional business managers and centralized institutional hubs provided essential spiritual energy, human connections and material resources needed for aggressive repositioning in suburban regions, especially around Chicago. Churching the postwar suburbs thus became part and parcel of midcentury evangelical missions, practically guaranteeing a particular spatial, economic and racial reordering of evangelical religion that issued from the same economic drives and spatial configurations of new residential segregation.

Subdivision Evangelism in White Fields, Ready Unto Harvest

As Etan Diamond notes in his history of religious communities in postwar America, "…hundreds of thousands of new churches and synagogues formed between 1940 and 1970," at the heights of federally-subsidized suburbanization in the United States. Diamond convincingly argues, moreover, that "…regardless of the theological orientation, new suburban congregations used religion to provide

essential community structure in an otherwise structureless environment."[102] In this regard, suburban evangelical congregations in Wheaton were little different from their non-evangelical and even non-Christian counterparts. Nevertheless, theological orientations *did* have significant influence on the shape and style of community structures that congregations built, and conservative evangelical churches generally positioned themselves as aggressively and competitively as possible to flood new suburban marketplaces not only with their religious vision, but more importantly, with their preferred religious and social orders. As Diamond relates in his work, one "mainline Protestant church consultant complained that complained that conservative Protestant[s]…were 'positively war-like in their aggressiveness' to found new suburban churches."[103]

In Wheaton and Carol Stream, new evangelical churches formed discrete communities by curating attractive social services that spoke to the localized socioeconomic needs and cultural preferences of a new white middle-class. New congregations rarely led their advertising pitches with theological arguments. The Church by the Side of the Road, for instance, billed its development plans as "a community project," and not "just another church in Wheaton." A slick promotional brochure released during the building project's fundraising stage detailed the congregation's "practical plan" and listed the church's material and social amenities: the size of the auditorium, the size of the auditorium's platform for musicians, the "provision for a nursery and a children's room," the expansive Sunday school rooms, the facility's complete kitchen, the strategic benefits of the church's location near certain roads and new neighborhoods, and the size of the church's parking lot. The closest the brochure got to a statement of faith was Pastor Loveless' declaration that the congregation was "a high-level

[102] Etan Diamond, *Souls of the City: Religion and the Search for Community in Postwar America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 18-19.

[103] Ibid, 37.

missionary project which will mean blessing to homes and neighborhoods which are not now adequately supplied with spiritual opportunities."[104]

WEFC promotional materials also communicated highly-tailored "community" pitches that specifically targeted young white families by projecting and affirming normative patriarchal family orders, restrictive domestic roles for women and reproductive sexual standards of an idealized white postwar family. In a brochure that featured on its cover one such smiling, white family together reading a bible, a tagline identified the church nonetheless as a place "where everyone is welcome." After a brief welcoming invitation from Loveless, a florid paragraph described in great detail the "comfort and convenience" of the building's design, including its wide driveway, spacious foyer, well-equipped coat and hat room, cushioned pews, eye-pleasing light fixtures, and more. Most of the remainder of the brochure focused on WEFC as "a church designed for the family—to start begin with the child." Pictures and captions described a nursery and early primary program that featured "trained nurses," "trained supervisors" and "competent, and experienced mothers" with whom "mom and dad" could feel comfortable leaving their children during Sunday services. Beyond infant and toddler care, the church promoted its growing Sunday school program—taking careful note that parents could leave their children at youth classes while attending their own adult group—while recognizing youth as the "the future of the church."[105]

Only in the last pages of the extensive promotional brochure did the WEFC fully reveal its new evangelical bona fides, including its prioritization of social reform through varieties of evangelism. Proclaiming the church to be more than a "glorified recreational center," the pamphlet insisted accordingly that "[a]ll activities [were] carried on with the spiritual emphasis upper-most at all times."

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[104] Brochure, "Community Project—The Church by the Side of the Road," circa 1953, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

[105] Brochure, "The Church by the Side of the Road," circa 1953, Folder "1953 Constr.," Unmarked file cabinet, CCWC Collection.

In the last sentences of its youth program description, the brochure presented its social concern for youth in a "day of juvenile delinquency"—a frequent social emphasis of midcentury evangelicals—and proclaimed Jesus Christ to hold exclusively "the answer to the needs of every young person." The last pages of the brochure also declared WEFC to be a "missionary church" with concern for "…preaching the gospel to every creature." The page featured the image of an unwashed and malnourished Chinese child, and brochure copy claimed that the church "…[was] aware of the tremendous physical and economic needs of peoples of the world" and promised plans for "clothing and food relief projects." As customary for salt and light activists, however, the church pronounced "…an even greater need for the Bread of Life, the Bible, and it [the church] is sending forward workers to supply and fulfill that need."[106]

On the very last page of the brochure, in literal fine print, the WEFC made explicit its self-understanding as a local representative of the true, spiritual church or Christ, further affirming the divine purposes its historically and locally particular cultural preferences and social orders. In typeface inexplicably smaller than that of the rest of handout, the WEFC's statement of faith ratified its alignment with NAE-style evangelicals on its most basic doctrinal principles, including a belief in the literal bible and the reality and necessity of Christ's blood atonement. Most importantly, the WEFC clearly affirmed an ecclesiology shared by the NAE and EFCA denominational traditions: the spiritual unity of all regenerate people of faith as the true church of Christ.[107] Peculiar to the WEFC's statement of faith, however, given its claim to welcome all, was a final caveat: "[t]hat only those who are thus members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church." While anyone could attend the church, formal membership in the WEFC required approval by the Board of Deacons and required attestors who could affirm an individual or family's faith, regeneration and commitment to

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

the social body of Christ. By participating fully in the WEFC's programs and by fully affirming its claims to follow God's biblical and spiritual direction, full members of the church received formal affirmation of both their place as well as the new community's place in God's grand designs. For members of churches like WEFC, full membership became another status aspiration among many in postwar white suburbs, but even evangelical churches with less restrictive membership standards married divine meaning to suburban social norms. As WEFC's self-representation affirms, white evangelical churches cultivated suburban communities that relied upon and strengthened novel postwar family 'traditionalism' with its strict patriarchal gender roles, middle-class managerial masculinity and domestic caretaker femininity, among a variety of related cultural emphases.[108]

Like WEFC, Village Church cultivated its own distinct style of evangelical community in context similar to but slightly varied from its sister church in Wheaton. Such was the consequence of harried competition for new congregants between churches that established themselves among carefully curated municipal populations. Crucially, what most of these new communities lacked as a consequence was significant social heterogeneity by race and class. For postwar churches in and around Wheaton, what Etan Diamond describes of Indianapolis' suburban congregations also rings true:

> …the absence of African Americans and the narrow demographic slice found in [Indianapolis'] suburban subdivisions meant that the new suburban congregations took a highly internal attitude toward community. Community was found within the walls of the church, and if the view turned outward, it was to people who were similar to themselves and who shared the same general set of cultural ideals and economic aspirations. As such, congregations tended to focus their community-building activities less on serving a needy population than on creating opportunities for friendship and interaction.[109]

In this regard, suburbs were ideal locations for the aspirational growth imperatives of modern evangelicalism, but the worst possible locations for the aspirational "spiritual integration" of

[108] See again Diamond, 54-55
[109] Ibid., 53-54.

egalitarian evangelism. Since the population immediately outside an evangelical community looked and acted like the population within that community, evangelization became as easy as saying hi to a neighbor already recognized as a peer and a mirror of oneself. On the grassroots level, this professionally-cultivated, materially-structured and highly-circumscribed social leveling—a consequence of what Neil Winegarden called the biblical decentralization of American churches—strongly informed an insular suburban social perspective that lay white evangelicals came to understand as a reflection of God's will for both religious and wider social order. In turn, populations further afield of suburbia began to look stranger, more distant and far more intimidating to approach, and the more diverse social orders of nearby cities looked increasingly like rebellion, chaos and decay.

VI.
Long Shadow: The Suburban Institutionalization of Organized Evangelicalism

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."
—Psalm 1:1-3

"Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity."
—Psalm 118:25

In April of 1962, Carl Gundersen accepted the National Association of Evangelicals second annual "Layman of the Year" award. For the NAE, granting this reward to a real estate developer had become by its second year an early trend. The first "Layman of the Year" award had been granted in 1961 to Miami real estate guru, and former president of the National Association of Realtors, Kenneth S. Keyes.[1] Passing no comment on that continuity, Gundersen's remarks consisted entirely of a recitation of Psalm 34.[2] For those who knew Gundersen, the speech was a reflection of his personal character and his career within evangelical organizations. Never a man to offer many words in public, Gundersen often allowed scripture, which he memorized diligently, to speak for him. The biblical message he offered to the audience of the NAE's twentieth annual convention was concise and clear: "The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."[3] As an active lay member in fundamentalist and evangelical institutional life in the early to mid-twentieth century, and as a Norwegian immigrant who modeled the American dream, Gundersen had good reason to believe that God delivered the righteous from want of any good thing. Gundersen himself was not desolate, in spirit or material possession. A lifelong member of the Evangelical Free Church in America (EFCA), Gundersen had long steeped himself in soulful devotion to literalist

[1] Mailing, "NAE Convention News and Report" Wheaton, Illinois, May 1961. Box 40, Folder 9 (2 of 3), NAE Records, SCBL.

[2] Gundersen, *Long Shadow*, 14.

[3] Psalm 34:22.

biblical principles, local church service and global missionary endeavors inherited from his assimilationist immigrant church. As the founder and owner of a successful construction company, Gundersen & Sons, he had amassed a minor fortune building homes, warehouses, offices and churches in Chicago and its suburbs, both before and after World War II.

Like many sincere Christian businessmen of the era, Gundersen returned a significant surplus of his success to his preferred religious institutions and projects. It was those devotions that occasioned the Layman's award in 1962. The NAE recognized Gundersen for his thirty-three years of service as a board member for The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), as treasurer and member of the finance committee for the NAE, as well as a founding member of its 1943 board, as vice-chairman of the board of the Winona Lake Christian Assembly, as a board member and vice-chairman for the National Association of Christian Schools (NACS), as a board member for Trinity College and Seminary, as a chairman of the Chicagoland Christian Businessmen's Committee (CBMC) and an organizing member of the Christian Businessmen's Committee International (CBMCI), as chairman of the finance committee for Billy Graham's 1962 crusade in Chicago, and as an elder and trustee for his local congregation, the Wheaton Evangelical Free Church.[4] Not mentioned were Gundersen's years of commitment to the boards and commissions of Youth for Christ (USA and International), several world mission trips made for TEAM, management of his own charitable enterprise, the Epaphroditus Foundation, as well as innumerable contributions of money, time and resources to other individuals, projects and organizations in an ever-expanding network of mid-century evangelical institutions.

The timing of Gundersen's "Layman of the Year" award also coincided with the final stages of construction for the NAE's first fully-owned headquarters in suburban Carol Stream, Illinois—just miles north of Wheaton College. As a member of the NAE's building committee, Gundersen

[4] Gundersen, *Long Shadow*, 13.

organized the effort and executed the construction with his private firm at no profit.[5] The project was one of three evangelical headquarters projects Gundersen oversaw simultaneously, in addition to offices for TEAM and YFC. All three offices were built in the same industrial park on land donated to the organizations by Gundersen and his occasional partner in both business and religious enterprise, Robert C. Van Kampen. Van Kampen, for his part, both donated the land and, from his position as vice-president of Gary-Wheaton Bank, likely helped to secure the NAE's mortgage for their building. Gundersen and his construction company, however, were at the center of all three projects, each of which aimed to secure efficiency, stability and financial security for the organizations involved.

When Gundersen passed just two years later from complications of leukemia, his friends, family, colleagues and partners sang his praises with shared appreciation for the impact of his lifelong devotion and offerings. As his wife and amateur biographer Valborg Gundersen eulogized, "Carl A. Gundersen was a man of vision and action…responsible directly or indirectly for getting the Gospel to many in this land and in lands beyond the seas."[6] Dr. V. Raymond Edmond, then Chancellor of Wheaton College, echoed Carl's message from the NAE ceremony of 1962, citing Psalm 1 as an "…apt and accurate description of Carl Gundersen:" "…God's blessed man [who] 'shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water…; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.'"[7] Dr. Arthur M. Climenhaga, then Executive Director of the NAE added, "what better word can we speak of Carl A. Gundersen than to say, 'He went to be with his Lord leaving a *long shadow*. We of the NAE are a noteworthy part of that shadow….'"[8]

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[5] Fundraising material, "Founder's Development Program 1963" (circa 1963), Box 174, Folder 1, NAE Records, SCBL.

[6] Gundersen, *Long Shadow,* 11-12.

[7] Ibid., 9.

[8] Ibid, 11.

For nearly half a century, Gundersen's shadow remained in the suburban infrastructure of Chicago's evangelical institutions. His home church, described above, bore the imprimatur of his construction and real estate expertise. Alongside other major evangelical churches in the Wheaton area, WEFC provided an early blueprint for suburban megachurch development. After 1962, Gundersen's trio of headquarters (and their significant financial entanglements) formed a material core for what would become one of the twentieth century's most important institutional incubators of modern white evangelicalism, alongside those in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Colorado Springs, Colorado and Orange County, California. By the 1980s, Gundersen Industrial Park in Carol Stream, just off Gundersen Road, was home to nearly twenty mission, parachurch, church-service and religious publishing organizations, including the Greater Europe Mission, the Association of Church Missions, Christian Life Missions, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association of America, *Christianity Today*, Christian Service Brigade, Chapel of the Air, Hope Publishing, Tyndale House Publishers, and others.[9] While Gundersen himself did not plan, build, or likely foresee the full scope of institutional expansion that came, his early activity in the realm of evangelical economic development was absolutely essential for such concentrated suburban growth.

As the scope of Gundersen's development history suggests, the suburbanization of modern evangelicalism was more than a history of local churches, congregations and communities. Alongside that history, organized evangelicalism—as institutionally diverse as it was—grounded its very viability in the material economics of suburban development. In fact, as the history of major evangelical organizations like the NAE shows, evangelical institutional suburbanization itself was a project that *centralized* cooperative evangelical activism as much as it "decentralized" church plants, as Neil Winegarden claimed in 1957. While historians of modern evangelicalism have often identified the *ad*

[9] List, "Village of Carol Stream - Business License List", June 28, 1984, Box 3, Folder JM15, CSPL LHC.

hoc style of its activism for the tradition's rapid growth and influence in American society at large, a closer inspection of evangelical institutions' bureaucratic records shows that *ad hoc* activism was a persistent and pernicious problem from an organizational perspective, especially from the perspective of organizational finance. From the 1940s into the late-1950s, for instance, the NAE struggled mightily to remain solvent, and it regularly stalled or abandoned favored programs for lack of funds. Prior to its suburban migration and before it announced its new suburban headquarters, the NAE's executive officers worked diligently and often fruitlessly to discipline and refine irresponsible financial practices and programmatic disorder within the association.

The failure of early attempts to resolve the NAE's financial troubles and to sort its related organizational incoherence caused new executive leadership to take a closer look at the association's investments, including its commitments to expensive urban headquarters, as a portion of extensive institutional reforms. Drawing on leaders of evangelicalism's corporate managerial class, the NAE worked first to resolve its significant debt burden through austerity measures, debt burning campaigns, and, finally, suburban relocation. At the very same moment that the NAE itself moved to Wheaton—as a renter, for the time being—the association launched its studies of suburban church planting that resulted in its "New Churches for a New America" project. While the NAE actively engaged this new "larger phase of evangelism," the association itself leaned on local and national suburban development gurus, including Carl Gundersen, Robert C. Van Kampen and preeminent Miami real estate operator Kenneth Keyes—an arch-defender of Jim Crow segregation and bureaucratic architect of postwar residential segregation—to manage its finances and debt retirement. Keyes, like his northern evangelical counterparts, was no stranger squeezing cash out of reluctant investors, and under his direction, the Debt Retirement Committee settled the NAE's arrears at the same time NAE executive director George Ford simplified the associations' sprawling organizational structure and decelerated the its unchecked *ad hoc* programming.

NAE leaders like Ford interpreted their improved financial prospects in characteristic evangelical style, seeing encouragement from divine sources to continue and expand upon their material investments through the coordination of highly-professionalized and insular evangelical and business social networks. After Keyes' debt relief and Ford's reorganization, the NAE looked to build its own headquarters on its own land, as recommended by "some business men" in the association. While the project required taking on new debt immediately after the retirement of old accounts, developers like Gundersen, Van Kampen and Keyes knew that not all debt was created equal in postwar real estate development economies. What the NAE needed, these men knew, was capital assets against which to leverage their various operational expenses whether they had adequate cash-on-hand or not. Since Gundersen and Van Kampen retained direct control over local financial and material resources through their own private professional networks, and since both men were well-practiced in extending their local human and capital reserves at cost or cheaper to their preferred institutional projects, they championed and soon coordinated the NAE's new building project. Among the human and capital resources Gundersen and Van Kampen held were friendly business relations with local developers, private land holdings in Carol Stream, personal connections at CBMCI and other corporate social networks to solicit for project fundraising. When shortfalls arose, both Van Kampen and Gundersen personally stepped in to shore up financial gaps. Ultimately, the building project ended entirely debt free, given charitable donations secured by Ford from the postwar religious infrastructure funders at both the Kresge and Lily Foundations. Against its new capital assets, the NAE *immediately* leveraged new debts to finance the association's daily operations, but the organization remained well in the black given its capital holdings. In fact, it was in better financial health than it ever had been.

On their face, the mundane details of the suburban evangelical narrative to follow may seem to some readers to have very little to do with religion, per se, and even less to do with matters of race. Nevertheless, the history of evangelical institutional suburbanization is no less religious than any

account of popular religious historical appeals to 'lived experience.' At the very least, NAE leaders consistently described their own financial circumstances and even their building project in sacred, often directly biblical terms. Loans were gifts from God, donations were rewards for faith and land holdings were promised rewards for God's chosen people. At most, the brick-and-mortar realities of religious life are no less essential to the lived experiences of religious peoples than subjective human sentiments, opaque religious rituals or even ecstatic experiences. The same argument can be made for matters of race that only seem totally absent from the minutiae of corporate finance or institutional development practices. In fact, the unspokenness of racial formations in evangelicalism's suburban planning reveals as much as it conceals, as the unspoken methods for wealth accumulation pursued by realtors like Kenneth Keyes related below will show. Similarly, the story of Trinity College's migration to suburban Deerfield displays how two Americas were imagined and articulated on the very same land. In that narrative, related below as well, now familiar faces and institutions of evangelical Chicagoland are found—Carl Gundersen, Harold P. Halleen, EFCA ecclesiastical bureaucracy, and others—but the Trinity project's immediate proximity to prominent civil rights controversies arising from segregated housing well outside the south lends the development an entirely different racial perspective that easily extends to all white suburban developments of the era. In general, that racial view offers more to understandings of white evangelical religion and civil rights era social and political conflict than heretofore documented in the annals of American religious history.

The Trials and Tribulations of United Evangelical Action

As detailed in the previous chapter, suburbanization no doubt had a profound effect on the social order of local evangelical congregations as grassroots religious activism fused professional economic development and revivalist zeal to fashion new communities. But suburbanization also played a major role in the maturation of a growing, organized national evangelical movement designed to reform old-

school fundamentalism.[10] Like a variety of local churches in and around Wheaton, national evangelical organizations also learned to appropriate suburban development resources as part of a strategy to sustain growth, efficiency, stability and financial power. In order to do so, these organizations also engaged selectively-closed evangelical business networks, including specialized development interests within them, to achieve organizational goals. Chief among these organizations was the NAE, the parachurch agency that self-appointed to spearhead coordination and cooperation between a vast array of fundamentalist reformers and their myriad social projects. Beyond mere interest in financial well-being, the NAE moreover engaged suburbanization as a key corporate strategy in evangelical institutional reform, one that centralized cooperative evangelical activism to fashion a more efficient and effective tool for wider social reforms across the United States. Gradual, often halting success in these endeavors eventually solidified wider evangelical sanctification of suburban land and the communities who occupied it.

In 1940s, prior to suburban consolidation, the NAE organized at the crest of a wave of activist experimentation in the evangelical world, the early successes of which inspired increasing optimism for the prospects of wider collaborative efforts. Success, however, came from a variety of sources: not merely from growing popular enthusiasm, but also from organizational coherence and financial stability. The most famous evangelical organization among the NAE's contemporaries, Youth for Christ (a touring youth revival organized in 1944) set a new standard for clear messaging and corporate efficiency in collaborative evangelism. As an organization, YFC derived much of its support from its appeal to popular culture, its early promotion of the evangelical world's rising star, Billy Graham, and its uncontroversial focus on youth uplift. Due to this strong central mission and it clearly defined, carefully planned programs, YFC enjoyed not only popular support, but financial support from

[10] See footnote 3 above.

sympathetic evangelical interest groups, chief among them the Christian Business Men's Committee International (CBMCI). According to historian Sarah Ruth Hammond, CBMCI and YFC's relationship was symbiotic. After the war, the organizations were "joined at the hip," and they grew together. CBMCI affiliates promoted regional YFC organization as a first priority in their own communities, calling YFC "God's answer to naturalism, modernism, communism, and materialism, which had invaded our schools and colleges for the past generation."[11] Unsurprisingly, CBMCI's Christian businessmen readily and regularly opened their wallets for YFC while CBMCI leaders joined and the executive board. With a well-funded, expertly managed, expansive, and expensive national tour, YFC became a household name. For many, YFC's religious corporate model became the ideal against which all others were measured.

The NAE openly backed YFC, and no doubt wished to duplicate its successes, but the NAE suffered from a dearth of organizational coherence that YFC held in spades. In fact, shortly after its founding, the NAE quickly became a source of great controversy and significant navel gazing within the evangelical world, slowing early efforts to "unite" evangelical activism—to collect many marginal and often competitive leaders and campaigns into a far more effective vehicle of social change. Formed out of a now-famous 1942 conference on "United Action among Evangelicals," the NAE was born of dual impulses. The first impulse aimed to fight the very forces that YFC battled so well. Key among the NAE's contribution to that battle was the attempt to institutionally mirror, and therefore undermine, the liberal ecumenical Federal Council of Churches (or FCC, precursor to the NCC) whom the NAE regularly charged with aiding and abetting naturalism, modernism, communism and materialism. To capture this sentiment, the NAE adopted the catchphrase "Cooperation without

[11] From "The Story of Youth for Christ and How CBMCs are Co-Operating," *Contact*, March-April 1945, 1-5. Cited in Hammond, *God's Businessmen*, 124. See also ibid., 120-126 and Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*.

Compromise" as their motto—denominational and congregational cooperation, in other words, without deference to liberalizing trends in American Protestantism.

However, the NAE's style of anti-liberal anti-ecumenism also aimed to stifle long-standing inclinations among evangelical fundamentalists to agitate for bitter confrontation with their critics and naysayers, even those among their own conservative Protestant constituency. Accordingly, the NAE also battled members of its own base, like Carl McIntire who founded his own American Council of Churches (ACC) to pursue a more directly confrontational and vitriolic agenda against the FCC and mainline denominations. The NAE countered McIntire by promoting a positive vision of outreach and bridge building, primarily through revivalism, despite their general agreement with his critiques of liberal Protestantism. Revivalism, however, created its own problems within the fundamentalist world, as some churches, like many in the Dutch Reformed tradition, rejected "Arminian" revivals as strongly as they rejected FCC liberalism. Even the NAE's gentler rejection of the FCC fomented conflict, lopping off potential support from large denominations with considerable conservative evangelical impulses, including the Southern Baptist Convention which had long-standing institutional ties with the liberal ecumenical organization.[12] Over its first decade and beyond, then, the NAE struggled to articulate a united voice on the national stage, although it ultimately ended up far closer to McIntire's ACC on principle than its founders first intimated.

Nevertheless, these early struggles over message did not stymie the NAE's ambitions. According to some scholars, seeming internal disarray may have even aided those ambitions. Over time NAE leadership did pursue ambitious and diverse paths of action with increasing success, illustrating, in the view of Joel Carpenter, that "[t]he most powerful and effective kind of American ecumenism was neither formal and ecclesial, corporate or bureaucratic, nor even more voluntary and coalitional. It

[12] See Carpenter, *Revive Us Again,* 141-160.

was ad hoc, local, and task-oriented."[13] Carpenter's assessment was certainly accurate for the early NAE, but ad hoc and task-oriented goals regularly gave birth to significant organizational problems well into the 1960s. Moreover, corporate bureaucracy could never be fully exorcised from the association—it was, after all, an association. In the two decades after the NAE's formation, the organization's hardest lessons would come from the attempt to balance formal bureaucracy and voluntary coalition in order to achieve local and task-oriented goals efficiently and with enduring impact. That balance required a corporate restructuring, one that better managed evangelical resources of both income and expenditure in a modernizing economy.

Suburban institutionalization eventually played a crucial role in providing that restructuring by way of debt and assets management, but only as other practices of finance and organizational structure were disciplined and refined. In terms of organizational structure, the early NAE did, in fact, struggle with the glut of interests and projects that its big-tent approach encouraged, but which also threatened to undermine its unitary mission. In its first decade, the NAE regularly established commissions for the pet projects and specialized needs of particular interest groups and individuals within the organization. Naturally, the result was a proliferation of commissions and affiliated organizations with their own agendas and budgetary demands. By 1949, that list included the Commission on Radio, the Commission on Church Schools, the War Relief Commission, the Commission on Educational Institutions—which founded a secondary association, the National Association of Christian Schools (NACS)—, the Commission for Youth, the Commission on Industrial Chaplains, the Commission on Foreign Missions, the Commission on Army and Navy Chaplains and *United Evangelical Action*, not a commission, but the NAE's in-house periodical. After enumerating the activities of these various agencies in his 1949 report to the NAE's Board of Administration, R.L. Decker, the NAE's then-

[13] Ibid., 159.

executive secretary, issued a warning: "[t]he activities of the NAE and its affiliated organizations are now so varied and far flung that there is danger that NAE shall not practice internally the united action we are bringing about externally!" Decker hoped that a meeting of the commission executives would bring about more unified efforts, if not a unified bureaucratic structure.[14]

In more practical terms, varied and far flung projects compounded financial woes for the early NAE. Without a simple, single-issue cause to market, the NAE failed at first to secure consistent and robust patronage from organized evangelical businessmen as YFC had so successfully managed. Although many sympathetic ears lent their vocal support to the fledgling organization, NAE founders were disappointed by initial returns in fundraising and committed membership. Anemic returns on fundraising goals were not for lack of trying; regular mailers and pledge cards were distributed to members, dues and convention fees were collected, board members were solicited, and publicity campaigns were initiated. Modeling the partnership of YFC and CBCMI, the NAE even formed its own National Layman's Advisory Council, later called the Laymen's Undergirding Committee, led by Carl Gundersen (a CBMCI co-founder) and others, with the explicit intention of rallying both Christian businessmen and their wallets to the cause.[15] Despite poor returns on these efforts, the NAE "continued to step out" on projects "before [it] had funds" to do so, as then-treasurer Clyde Taylor put it in 1947.[16] In order to meet fundraising gaps, the association often turned to "private notes," or non-institutional loans that could be secured through distinct social relationships on friendly and patient terms, or they relied on sympathetic partners in evangelical industries, like Christian printing presses, to accept late payment for goods delivered. While these financial maneuvers kept the NAE afloat, its programming and projects suffered. By 1952, R.L. Decker lamented the stasis of many

[14] Report, R.L. Decker to NAE Annual Convention, "Report of the Board of Administration to the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals," April 19, 1949, Box 44, Folder 4, NAE Records, SCBL.

[15] Minutes, "Board of Directors, NAE," May 5th 1948, Box 44, Folder 3, NAE Records, SCBL.

[16] Minutes, "Minutes of the Executive Committee," September 9, 1947, Box 44, Folder 3, NAE Records, SCBL.

programs he supported and which he saw as essential to the NAE's ambiguous-yet-ambitious call to action: "[t]here are a number of projects, in various stages of development, all of them incomplete because of the lack of funds, which if they could be launched could set forward the cause of evangelical action."[17]

Handling the Lord's Money: Professional Debt Management, Bureaucratic Consolidation and the Financial Mission of the Evangelical Church

Accordingly, Decker inaugurated a series of new, bureaucratically-centralized experiments to overcome its financial deficiencies without sacrificing any of its robust if disorganized ad hoc programming. Decker attributed most of the organizations woes to financial matters alone, and so he announced first a new stewardship program called SHARE that aimed to foment organizational unity not by clarifying the organization's central mission and scaling its programs, but rather by better coordinating aggressive fundraising in a more efficient and centralized fashion. Prior fundraising initiatives were too diffuse to be reliable, Decker argued; they primarily targeted known local congregations and distinct, isolated individuals. Decker accordingly promoted more direct, centralized stewardship coordination with the executive boards of member denominations who would assume responsibility for supplying mailing addresses of their congregations and membership rolls. "I believe this problem can be solved," Decker stated, "by working through the proper denominational channels to secure pastors names and addresses and to enlist of the pastors of more than 18,000 local congregations included in our constituent denominations."[18] According to Decker, this effort, when fused with continued efforts in prior fundraising fields, made SHARE "an 'all-out,' an overall, unified appeal for support…."

[17] Report by R.L. Decker, "The Semiannual Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Administration of NAE," October 14, 1952, Box 44, Folder 8, NAE Records, SCBL.

[18] Ibid.

Persistent financial trouble at the NAE also elicited concern for the direct and indirect costs of location and the importance of place for institutional viability. Like most national organizations of its era, the NAE had pursued early institutionalization in major cities, including New York, Washington D.C and Chicago, the latter of which served as home for the organization's central office and headquarters. The expenses of urban residence, in matters of institutional overhead and quality-of-life for NAE staff, became increasingly troublesome for the association, as the maintenance of headquarters at a "prestige address" in a downtown district exacted its costs. For one, persistent financial duress across the organization took its toll on urban staff. Prior to announcing SHARE, Decker had announced the departure of four staff members from the Chicago office, two of whom had left for health issues related to stress—including an ulcer that required hospitalization—and two more who left for better pay at a local press. Decker then noted that the NAE had failed to pay its workers "prevailing wages for office workers in Chicago," relying instead on Christian workers willing to sacrifice health and income on the alter of evangelical activism. Decker suggested the NAE consider a new "….policy of paying the prevailing wage and letting employees exercise *voluntary* stewardship of their money in accordance with their Christian conscience."[19] Urban confines introduced other financial problems, as well. As the NAE had no stable or substantial capital to purchase its own building, it had to rent its offices; the NAE thus monthly paid its office overhead without investing any equity in duly owned property holdings. When the NAE's Chicago lease came close to its end in early 1953, Decker and other NAE executives began to weigh the possible benefits of relocating "in some suburban town as, for example, Wheaton or Evanston." By April, Decker reported the Executive Committee "…had been unable to find a suitable location in Chicago" and

[19] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

that it was increasingly "thought that the advantages of a Loop location are greatly outweighed by the disadvantages."[20]

The NAE did stay in Chicago for two more years, but 1954 brought the organization a new executive who would expand and improve upon Decker's prior efforts to centralize NAE finances *and* bureaucracy in the suburbs. Dr. George L. Ford, a pastor in the Free Methodist tradition, first served as Decker's Associate Executive Director as well is the NAE's Business Manager and Director of Public Relations, before replacing Decker as the organization's Executive Director in 1956. Ford quickly became "the right man" to promote NAE interests and foster a feeling of return on investment for its patrons. One of Ford's first tasks was to advise the Executive Committee on "the advisability and possibility of moving [NAE] headquarters" to Wheaton. More pressing, however, were Ford's responsibilities to pay down outstanding NAE debts, which had grown to nearly $60,000. Ford negotiated "amortized payments" on some of the debts to keep crucial accounts open, but "severe pressure" from some creditors required cutbacks in central office subsidies for regional NAE offices and its own internal publication, *United Evangelical Action*. Even efforts to mail NAE publications and stewardship materials were limited because, as Ford lamented, "we did not have money available for postage."[21] Ford thus called for new era of fiscal responsibility at the NAE, inaugurating a de facto organization-wide austerity program that refocused stewardship efforts first and foremost on the financial stability and long-term health of the central office, not its myriad subsidiaries.

With great significance to the imminent suburbanization of the NAE, the austerity program empowered particular evangelicals with deep ties to pre- and postwar suburban real estate to override the association's bureaucracy and manage its debt using stewardship methods honed in unspoken and

[20] Minutes, "Minutes: Board of Administration," April 14, 1953, ibid.

[21] Report by George L. Ford, "Report of the Associate Executive Director to the Board of Administration of the National Association of Evangelicals," October 11, 1954, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

unacknowledged structures of intentional, self-serving racial segregation. A new Debt Retirement Committee, initially led by Paul Rees—the same Paul Rees who had spoken out against racial segregation in 1945—appointed key evangelicals in corporate management to manage its project, including Miami real estate guru, Kenneth Keyes. Keyes, for his part, was a "true segregationist" of the southern Presbyterian tradition, one of the revanchist white southerners that usually worked alongside and occasionally sparred with L. Nelson Bell.[22] Like other evangelical corporate leaders, Keyes made his name in national evangelical circles by promoting the mutually compatible forces of spiritual evangelism and material capitalism in sermons and publications that declared his business to be "In Partnership With God," as his most circulated sermon on the matter was titled (subtitled, "A Business Man's Testimony Regarding Christian Stewardship").[23]

While Keyes made his evangelical hay promoting financial support for Christian causes as a corporate priority, he made his real estate hay by manipulating racialized housing markets to his own benefit, buying and selling "office buildings, shopping centers and large apartment complexes" from the 1930s onward first in Miami and then all along the east coast. Working within the National Association of Realtors, Keyes learned to promote the sale of large apartment complexes in particular by estimating "the income …the property would produce as leases at low rentals could be increased," as he described in a late-life autobiography.[24] What the aged Keyes' did not explicitly elucidate was how he could accurately estimate, a decade out, the increase of leases at "low rental" properties that he bought and sold speculatively to investors. The historian N. B. D. Connolly has clarified. Keyes was an HOLC appraiser, and he, alongside his fellow white appraisers, graded Miami's neighborhoods in such a way that blacks were given few economic options but to move to areas with dense apartment

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[22] See the introduction to this dissertation.

[23] See Pamphlet, Kenneth S. Keyes, "In Partnership with God." Folder 08, Box 465, Kenneth S. Keyes Manuscript Collection, PCA Historical Center, St. Louis, Missouri. (Hereafter Keyes MC and PCAHC).

[24] Kenneth S. Keyes, *God's Partner* (Self-published, 1994), Folder 09, Box 465, Keyes MC PCAHC.

complexes for lease from white owners only, while white landlords—the clients to whom Keyes sold his complexes—were gifted with a black population forced to depend on their white property to live within their means. As Connolly put it succinctly,

> [i]n the hands of working entrepreneurs, the power to draft HOLC "Security Maps" did not just determine the value of existing homes, it granted real estate developers the security to color-code their profits in red and green—"Negro" and "white"—so they could safely build speculatively and guarantee profit zones on a metropolitan level.[25]

And yet, Keyes credited his financial successes to the prioritization of charitable donations to evangelical causes or, put more theologically as Keyes believed, by giving his money to God who returned the favor ten-fold. Upon this submerged racial economy and the designs of its architects, the NAE came to depend.

Keyes did not describe his work with the NAE through the lens of race, just as he did not acknowledge the craven and racist opportunism of his real estate development, but he did lend the association his deracinated stewardship model. As the committee ramped up efforts, Keyes increasingly took the lead by donating weeks of unpaid time to develop a new financial plan for the NAE.[26] With Keyes' crucial input, the Debt Relief Committee made two recommendations to Ford and the NAE's Board of Administration. First, the committee "strongly urge[d]" the board "to not approve any new projects involving the expenditure of Home office funds for a period of three years or until the debt is liquidated," effectively stalling any further expansion of the organization's persistent ad hoc, task-oriented local programs. Second, Keyes presented a new, tiered stewardship plan that required committed donors to lean on their own social connections, rather than relying on one-off contributions from far-flung congregations or even separate denominational bodies. Keyes then

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[25] N. D. B. Connolly. *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida*. University of Chicago Press, 2014, 98 and 316n97.

[26] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee," July 6, 1954, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

reported that with careful prayer and consideration—and at the urging of the committee—he would agree to lead the new fundraising campaign.[27] The following day, the board adopted both recommendations and promoted Keyes to the position of national chairman for debt retirement.

Within the same year, Ford negotiated the NAE headquarter's move to Wheaton, reducing the office's overhead costs, improving office efficiency with better access to existing evangelical resource networks and eliminating urban pressures on NAE staff. In his April 1955 report to the NAE's Board of Administration, happily reported the move to Wheaton after announcing a more somber 50% reduction in central office staff. Ford revealed that suburban migration had originally been contemplated "on the basis of securing our own building," but the best solution given NAE finances remained the leasing of space in Wheaton's central business district where rents remained much lower than in Chicago. Aside from saving money on office overhead, Ford noted other improvements in staffing and business efficiency. The new office's proximity to Wheaton's printing presses and publishing houses—many evangelical in ownership and focus, as well as sympathetic to the NAE's cause—offered more convenience than Chicago and lowered shipping costs. By 1955, moreover, all of the NAE's full time staff had moved to or lived in and around Wheaton.[28]

Nevertheless, Ford directed the NAE to imagine its improving financial prospects, secured by debt management, suburban migration and bureaucratic consolidation, as a portion of God's design to which united evangelical action owed responsibility. In his 1955 report, Ford downplayed suburban development's material benefits in order to revere its spiritual effects. He insisted that "the spirit of cooperation and devotion to the task are much more important…" than "individual capabilities" or "physical advantages or disadvantages" of any given location. Ford gave special thanks to the devotion

[27] Minutes, "Debt Retirement Committee," January 10, 1955, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.
[28] Report by Ford, "Report of the Associate Executive Director to the Board of Administration," April 18, 1955, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

of office staff who no longer suffered under the adverse urban labor conditions recognized by R.L. Decker years prior. Unlike the Chicago office, where devotion bought below market wages, health problems and staff turnover, Ford declared that the new suburban office had "…no clock watchers, for all are devoted to the Lord, whose work it is." With these spiritual gains in mind, Ford reminded his audience that their finances were, in reality, God's finances and that financial or bureaucratic backsliding would undermine not merely human confidence in the NAE, but also divine support for their cause. "[W]e must remember," Ford argued, "that too much promotion might be worse than too little if it seems to indicate that we are careless in the handling of the Lord's money."[29]

For the NAE, 1955 was a financial crucible that coincided with its increased evangelical efforts in suburban planning which, in turn, redirected NAE leadership to consider more seriously their own long-term organizational plans with a new corporate focus. Ford had attended his first American Institute of Planners meeting earlier in the spring of that year, an experience that prompted him to reevaluate the NAE's approach to long-term development planning. In his report to the NAE board, Ford admitted he was astonished to learn that the Catholic Church had been planning its property evaluations fifty years into the future, and that the NCC planned fifteen years in advance "right here in Chicago" with a desire for "complete comity control." Ford also admitted to his ill-preparation for the event, mostly due to the absence of any clear NAE policy on such matters. Nevertheless, Ford claimed he knew enough to assert that the NAE's constituency would not abide by NCC comity proposals, a claim that was, in Ford's estimation, "somewhat disconcerting to the National Council men."

Despite the NAE's freeze on new projects, Ford convinced the board to transform the existing Commission on Home Missions into a new Commission on Church Extension, chaired by Neil

[29] Ibid.

Winegarden, that could produce NCC-like services for the NAE's conservative Protestant constituency. The commission would be responsible, primarily, for the study of "the church in the community" with aid from "realtors, architects, financiers, lawyers, and planners, as well as ministers."[30] In other words, Ford recommended that church men concede considerable oversight of evangelical institutional expansion to professional developers. Within a year, the commission was up and running, gathering troves of existing research on real estate development legislation while organizing NAE representation on planning groups both nationally and locally. The Church Extension Commission also created its own educational literature and recommended education outreach on this "larger phase of evangelism," as commission minutes described it, through news releases, brochures (like "New Churches for a New America"), local church extension clinics and even the adoption of planning curriculum at evangelical "colleges, Bible schools and seminaries…."[31]

The NAE's church extension project did not bear directly on the development practices of the organization itself, but the "larger phase of evangelism" did mirror much of the NAE's new concerted focus on corporate efficiency, as well as its deference to business professionals in matters of development finance, or debt and assets management. Central to those corporate efforts were Debt Retirement Committee chair Kenneth Keyes and Finance Committee members Carl Gunderson and Robert C. Van Kampen, among others. By the end of 1955, Keyes abandoned his initial tiered stewardship strategy, citing an overwhelming lack of enthusiasm for the NAE or even a total lack of awareness of the NAE and its projects among lay businessmen he attempted to enlist. Keyes' solution, for the time being, was to encourage board members to directly engage their own social networks for funds rather than constantly initiating external contacts through a solitary commission chair. Keyes'

[30] Ibid.

[31] Report by Neil Winegarden, "Commission on Evangelism and Church Extension," April 19, 1956, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

appeal was part frustration and part challenge. "If those of us who are most active in the NAE are not willing to lend a hand in this undergirding effort," he chided, "how can we hope to challenge the interest and support of laymen throughout America who at this time know little about our movement?"[32]

The following year brought more challenges to the status quo of NAE operation in its location, organizational structure and financing. Beyond Keyes' efforts, the NAE continued to search for increasingly cheap, more efficient suburban office space, including initial investigations into the purchase of its own building, a first step towards holding real capital assets. In the interim, the NAE searched for cheaper rents, first in a building shared by Scripture Press, a long-standing publisher of evangelical literature in the Wheaton area, then in offices owned by Van Kampen, Wheaton's local evangelical property patron.[33] By 1957, Ford turned his attention to increasing bureaucratic efficiency by stripping long-serving NAE regional offices of much of their power in order to centralize all organizational services in the Wheaton office under the direction of a new national field director.[34] Ford also gutted the largely ineffective financial mission of R.L. Decker's Laymen's Undergirding Committee, leaving stewardship programming directly under the control of the Finance Committee and its subsidiary, Keyes' Committee on Debt Retirement.[35]

In the late-1950s, then, NAE institutional reorganization decelerated much of the ad hoc, local activism on which it was founded, and through which it often floundered, in order to consolidate bureaucratic power with a divine sense of purpose on suburban land that was regularly infused with

[32] Report by Kenneth Keyes, "Report of the Laymen's Undergirding Campaign to the NAE Board of Administration," October 17-21, 1955, Box 45, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

[33] Minutes, "NAE Executive Committee," Oct 7 1956, Box 45, Folder 3, NAE Records. See also Report, "Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Administration," April 25-29, 1960, Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records. See above on Van Kampen's many other land donations to religious organizations in the Wheaton area.

[34] Report by Ford to the Executive Committee of the NAE, "Survey of Regional Status and Proposed Reorganization," circa 1957, Box 45, Folder 4, NAE Records, SCBL.

[35] Report by Ford, "Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Administration," April 2-4, 1957. Box 45, Folder 4, NAE Records, SCBL.

biblical salience. Throughout the duration of austerity programs and consolidation efforts, Ford appealed directly to financial pressures to justify bureaucratic coups, but he also reframed the effort in stark scriptural terms that reflected the NAE's spiritual ambitions in terms of land rights. In Ford's estimation, the NAE represented "the children of Israel …on the threshold of the Promised Land," the future possession of which God had determined. Like the Israelites, early NAE efforts to capture their own promised land were discouraging; the land was occupied and fortified, and God's chosen were not prepared for the fight to come. Nevertheless, the Lord had led the NAE through parted waters, Ford claimed, and "brought us through to dry land." "We are at the threshold of realization of the effectiveness God intends," Ford declared, right before he enumerated gains of the past year "both in short term and long term planning" in the effort "to possess the land for God."[36] While Ford's biblical metaphor can be read as a general statement on long-standing evangelical efforts to recapture the American nation for its conservative Protestant constituency, it must also be considered as a specific reflection of particular development aspirations then at hand in the NAE and the larger evangelical world—aspirations that increasingly saw the suburban consolidation of evangelical social power, in a variety of forms, as a matter of divine providence and divine right.

In the suburban economic context, however, land possession required a modicum of good financial standing, and so in 1958 the NAE finally promoted debt relief as its first priority, above and beyond all other programming interests, at Keyes' insistence. At that year's spring Board of Administration meetings, Keyes' reiterated "the need for a complete liquidation of our indebtedness" and pressed the board to accept two conditions that could erase all NAE debt within the year. First, Keyes' urged that "every dollar raised" from evangelical laymen, usually men in business, be directed toward debt relief, not distributed through normal channels into committee and commission budgets

[36] Report by Ford, "Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Administration of the National Association of Evangelicals," April 10-12, 1956, Box 45, Folder 3, NAE Records, SCBL.

or NAE operating expenses. Unlike failed calls to support the NAE by appeal to its unfamiliar mission and projects, Keyes believed he could better rally businessmen "to the cause of attempting to liquidate…indebtedness," a financial mission that they better understood and for which more immediate returns on financial investment could be secured. Second, Keyes called on the board itself to take initiative to raise adequate funds for the operating budget while lay support was redirected to debt liquidation.

Keyes' focused insistence on debt management as a central institutional priority yielded immediate returns, confirming his understanding that debt could serve as a better fundraising motivator than religious mission. After presenting his plan to the board, board members themselves immediately pledged $7,000 to the operating budget and they pledged to secure up to $25,000 total to sustain normal operations during the debt retirement campaign. After discussion of Keyes' new plan at a separate meeting for Laymen's Undergirding, committee members pledged an additional $16,000 from their own personal and organizational coffers toward NAE debt relief.[37] As spring meetings ended and the year progressed, Keyes upheld his end of the bargain. By October, a mere six months later, $52,000 of $60,000 total debts owed had been pledged by Keyes' army of debt-conscious lay businessmen—the same army who could not muster their support on other terms in years prior.[38] At a meeting of the NAE's Executive Committee in December, Keyes indicated that all NAE debt would be "liquidated by convention time." Having delivered his promise, Keyes pressed the NAE's higher-ups to uphold their financial commitment to the operational budget.[39]

Given this boon, leadership at the NAE continued to interpret improved financial fortunes in a divine religious economy of faith and its promised rewards, from material prosperity even unto

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[37] Minutes, "Minutes of Board of Administration," April 14, 1958, Box 45, Folder 5, NAE Records, SCBL.
[38] Minutes, "Minutes of Board of Administration, October 7, 1958, Box 45, Folder 5, NAE Records, SCBL.
[39] Minutes, "Executive Committee Meeting," December 9, 1958. Box 45, Folder 5, NAE Records, SCBL.

salvation. As news of Keyes' success filtered back to the NAE's Executive Committee, Board of Administration and various committees, promises to fortify the operational budget were maintained with "[c]onsiderable emphasis…on the necessity of our keeping faith with our laymen."[40] As a matter of "keeping faith with…," NAE officials recognized Keyes' economic successes as a reward for his faith and for the faith of his associates in corporate management; in turn, the NAE learned to mold their own faith to match the efforts of evangelical businessmen who produced miracles of finance. In a call to shore up the operational budget delivered to the board in October, Ford declared "…it is imperative that we come out in the black or we will lose the support of the business men that are making our debt liquidation possible." After laying out a plan to return operational budgets to the black in the effort to "keep faith," Ford closed his remarks by invoking, without further commentary, Psalm 118:25: "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity."[41]

By early 1959, the Lord seemed to give answer to Ford's prayer, sustaining the supposed providence of bureaucratic restructuring and the clear blessings of corporate culture. In his report to the Executive Committee that spring, Ford opened his remarks with another Psalm that sustained the presence of God's hand in recent organizational events, Psalm 105:1: "O Give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people." Ford then proudly proclaimed that the NAE, for the first time in over a decade, "now [had] a net worth" rather than a net debt, even though a small one at $14,693.01. While Ford extended the NAE's sincere thanks "for the deliverance the Lord has given," he insisted the NAE not take license and revert to old bureaucratic habits. "We must not be presumptuous in launching out into new programs before we are prepared to pay for them," Ford intoned with language familiar to Clyde Taylor's critique of the institution twelve years prior.

[40] Minutes, "Minutes of Board of Administration, October 7, 1958, Box 45, Folder 5, NAE Records, SCBL.

[41] Report by Ford, "National Association of Evangelicals Financial Report," October 7-8, 1958, Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

Moreover, Ford went on, "[w]e must build no towers until we have carefully counted the cost and made sure we are able to complete the job."[42]

The Long Shadow of Suburban Evangelical Institutionalization

At that point, however, Ford recommended that a careful counting of costs for a new tower commence in the form of finding "a building of our own" that would allow the NAE to pivot toward efforts to possess real assets in God's new promised land.[43] Initial investigations in 1959 looked to purchase an existing building with the support of "some business men…interested in this [project]," and by the Annual Convention of 1960, Ford was ready to make moves on widened interest, raising "the acquiring of a headquarters building" to a "primary objective" for the NAE's next two years. Ford further noted the symbolic and financial gains a new building would provide. "The sense of establishment which a headquarters building would give," Ford argued, "would be as much of an asset as the substantial savings we would realize." Painting that symbolic and financial effort with characteristic spiritual drama, Ford concluded his address proclaiming, "…the NAE is, in this critical day, facing its greatest opportunity. We have never been so well equipped by experience and leadership and financial stability. The power and guidance of the Holy Spirit are daily available to us. If we have the dedication to match the demands of this day, we shall not fail."[44] Finally, the NAE had reached a position where bureaucracy, finance and spiritual strength appeared to coalesce in substantial harmony.

Planning for the NAE's new tower commenced in 1960, and the NAE quickly engaged the same local development circles it had promoted in church extension programs, finding ready partners in local suburban municipal and church development networks who supported the project for their own

[42] Report by Ford, "Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Administration," April 6-10 1959, Box 31, Folder 1 (1 of 4), NAE Records, SCBL.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Report by Ford, "Report of the Executive Director to the 18th Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals," April 25-29, 1960, Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

particular if disparate purposes. Participants in initial planning sessions debated over the ideal location for a new headquarters, entertaining some discussion "as to whether Wheaton was the best location for such an office building" or if the NAE should return to a "'prestige' address." That debate was soon settled by NAE Finance Committee members Carl Gundersen and Robert C. Van Kampen, who offered to donate their own development land in newly incorporated Carol Stream for a new building.[45] That land, however, had recently been zoned by Carol Stream as an industrial office park in order to capture corporate tax revenue as an offset for low residential property taxes that fostered a more competitive housing market for Jay Stream. Since the NAE was tax-exempt as a not-for-profit religious organization, they would not pay taxes that Carol Stream's municipal style required. Jay Stream nevertheless understood, according to local historian Jean Moore, that the presence of "such prestigious organizations" brought "other advantages," especially in the staffs they employed among whom were counted Stream's friends and acquaintances from Wheaton, prospective homebuyers and experts in community management.[46] With Stream's secular development support, Gundersen offered further development resources as a form of sacrificial devotion, just as he did a decade earlier at the Church by the Side of the Road. Gundersen agreed to review all sub-contracting bids for the site, with deference to Ford as needed. Moreover, Gundersen pledged the use of his own tradesmen at the actual cost of labor with a minor 5% increase "for the use of equipment, such as trucks, mixers, etc."[47] Gundersen estimated that total costs would come in around $100,000.[48]

As building commenced, difficulty securing enthusiastic financial support again reared its head a major obstacle to NAE ambitions, but Gundersen and Van Kampen's practiced oversight of the

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[45] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee," October 10, 1960, Box 137, Folder 16, NAE Records. In actuality, Gundersen and Van Kampen did not directly donate the land. Rather, Gundersen paid Van Kampen and himself $10,000 for its cost directly out of the coffers of his own charitable organization, the Epaphroditus Foundation. See Minutes, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" Jan 30, 1961, Box 137, Folder 16, NAE Records, SCBL.

[46] Moore, *Build Your Own Town*, 38-39.

[47] Minutes, "Minutes of Headquarters Building Committee," Jan 19, 1961, Box 137, Folder 16, NAE Records, SCBL.

[48] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee" Chicago, July 20, 1960 Box 137, Folder 15, NAE Records, SCBL.

Building and Finance Committees ensured the project would manage costs professionally by counter-balancing any new debt with hard capital assets. At first, however, Gundersen and Van Kampen tapped Harry Burkema of CBMCI to coordinate construction financing. Burkema strongly discouraged bank financing and suggested that the NAE pursue a campaign to raise $75,000 through direct fundraising while securing private promissory notes for the remaining costs, which "could be written at a more reasonable interest rates than first mortgage funds" and which could be cancelled by the signatory at any time as a kind of delayed donation.[49] As construction progressed, however, donations from direct fundraising slowed, as it had for NAE initiatives of the past—a trend with which Burkema had been unfamiliar coming from the highly solvent CBMCI. By late 1961, Ford estimated a shortfall of $45,000 in necessary funds and recommended with support from the Finance Committee that a conventional mortgage be taken out. At the very same time, Ford moved all of the NAE's primary bank accounts to Gary-Wheaton Bank, where Van Kampen then served as the bank's Vice-President.[50] In January of the following year, Ford announced that Gary-Wheaton was willing to loan the NAE $60,000 on a 15-year mortgage with 5.75% interest—slightly higher than market rate given the NAE's lack of capital assets and cash on hand. Given the risk involved, the bank further stipulated that one-quarter of the mortgage be paid within the first year.[51] In April, the NAE finally took occupancy of the nearly completed building, and by June, the Board agreed to the terms specified by Gary-Wheaton on a $65,000 mortgage.[52]

Like debt relief campaigns before it, headquarters fundraising and financing put additional strain on NAE programs and their budgets, but unlike prior efforts, the organization had now secured a financial bulwark against their own operational excesses by way of expert debt and assets management.

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[49] Minutes, "Resume on Executive Committee Business," June 30, 1961, Box 137, Folder 16, NAE Records, SCBL.
[50] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee" Oct 9, 1961, Box 137, Folder 16, NAE Records, SCBL.
[51] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee Jan 14, 1962 Box 137, Folder 14, NAE Records, SCBL
[52] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee," April 11, 1962, Box 137, Folder 14, NAE Records, SCBL.

By the end 1962, building expenses created budget shortfalls that required the NAE to take out an additional $15,000 loan from Gary-Wheaton, again at the recommendation of Gundersen and Van Kampen, simply to cover operating expenses.[53] With $80,000 in new loans—$20,000 more than Keyes started with in 1958—and with fundraising enthusiasm spent on the building campaign, all of Ford's careful accounting for the NAE's modest tower may seem to have been for naught. However, the NAE's new debt served primarily to secure a fixed capital asset appraised at $113,000. In other words, the organization's net worth remained more securely in the black than ever before, having grown by nearly $20,000 since Ford first celebrated Keyes' successful debt relief program three years earlier. The NAE had its tower, and with it came a solid corporate base on which it could maintain and even expand daily operations and programs..

Nevertheless, given fundraising lessons learned under Keyes' debt liquidation program, the NAE did not rest content with its new arrears and instead put them to use. With confidence in its continued vision derived from recent financial victories, the NAE quickly engaged extra-organizational religious development financing in order to erase their new debt while promoting the NAE to new clients. This time, debt deliverance first came at the hands of the Kresge Foundation, which was then organized to support capital investment projects for religious organizations. The NAE headquarters project seemed an ideal and opportune fit for Kresge services, and the foundation committed $15,000 to the liquidation of the NAE mortgage on the sole condition that the remainder of the mortgage balance be paid off by July 1, 1963.[54] Reinvigorated, the NAE's finance and building committees jumped into action by utilizing new debt both as a motivational technique for continued fundraising as well as a platform for expanding awareness of the NAE and its programs. Building on Keyes' prior debt

[53] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee," December 3, 1962, Box 137, Folder 14, NAE Records, SCBL.

[54] Minutes, "Minutes of Board of Administration. Aurora IL Oct 8, 1962. Box 31, Folder 2 (4 of 4), NAE Records, SCBL.

liquidation campaign, Gundersen and other leaders pushed an aggressive person-to-person campaign with a primary focus on the fresh opportunity to erase NAE debt. With learned promotional savvy, Ford also quickly established a "Founder's Development Program," featuring slick promotional brochures that clearly communicated the NAE's history, purposes and beliefs before proceeding to the monetary ask with a full-page vertical spread photo of the modern-style headquarters. Naturally, the brochure ended with an old stewardship standby, a blank pledge card and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return it in.[55] The NAE's growing base responded quickly, delivering $20,000 of the needed $45,000 by April, but with three months and $25,000 to go, anxiety within the organization grew. After Gundersen's report on the financial position of the campaign, the Board again reached into its own pockets to offer an additional $5,500.[56] The penultimate saving grace arrived in June, just one month prior to the Kresge deadline. Through a series of conversations, Ford had secured an additional $15,000 donation from the Lilly Foundation, an organization similar to Kresge in its focus on funding the growth of religious institutions.[57] Only $3,500 remained on the final total, an amount taken care by none other than Carl Gundersen.[58]

With full repayment of headquarters debt, the NAE continued a holistic corporate reformation grounded in suburban investments and fortified by closed evangelical financial and development resource networks. Nevertheless, for its public audience, NAE leadership framed its success not as a matter of expert financial management, but rather as a result of expectant faith and miraculous providence. In so doing, they strengthened a growing trend to relate financial success in suburban economies with divine intervention on behalf of the faithful. In relating the financial drama of its

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[55] Brochure, "Founder's Development Program 1963," circa 1963, Box 174, Folder 1, NAE Records; See also Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee," Jan 21, 1963, Box 137, Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL.

[56] Minutes, Minutes of Board of Administration, April 22, 1963. Box 31, Folder 3 (1 of 4), NAE Records, SCBL.

[57] Minutes, Minutes of Executive Committee, June 7, 1963. Box 137 Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL.

[58] Report by George Ford, "Report of the General Director to the Board of Administration" October 7-8, 1963. Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

new headquarters, for instance, the NAE's internal newsletter, *NAE Today*, celebrated Gundersen's faith over and above his material and professional contributions in seeing the project through. In *NAE Today*'s retelling, Gundersen's initial donation of land and construction resources was "…the beginning of a real faith exercise," rather then a savvy and well-practiced financial move the he, Van Kampen and Harold Halleen had executed with regularity over the prior decade. The newsletter also described process of financing by mortgage as a discouraging development rather than a second-best funding choice secured in part by close ties to financial service providers. Given these supposed struggles, moreover, the story emphasized Gundersen's persistent belief that "God would provide funds" to pay off the NAE's new debt. Accordingly, as the NAE narrative had it, Gundersen's faith was rewarded by a providential donation from Kresge in a moment "where faith [took] hold and the unusual began." Reinforcing Gundersen's belief that "the Lord [was] going to make a way," the story went on, the Kresge donation then spurred further member donations and, eventually, the final $15,000 donation from the Lilly Endowment.[59] "The Lord had worked a miracle," the story declared, "honoring men of faith."[60] In a subsequent issue, *NAE Today* featured another synopsis of the new headquarters that further interpreted the building's material benefits as a providential gift for the extension of His work. Noting "greatly improved working conditions and staff morale," as well as relief from "overcrowding" and "the uncertainty of renting," the newsletter declared that, "…as much as the building is a permanent home, it is even more a tool given by God to do the work which NAE has been called to do."[61] In this version of events, much of the minutiae of standard professional financial management under ubiquitous market conditions was erased, replaced by God's clear intent and purposes.

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[59] The article omitted Gundersen's personal $3,500 contribution from its accounting. See above.

[60] Mailing, "NAE Today," circa September 1963, Box 40, Folder 10 (2 of 4), NAE Records, SCBL.

[61] Ibid.

George Ford reinforced this message of faithfulness and its divinely sanctioned rewards in his report to the Board of Administration in October of 1963. "We praise God for His faithfulness," Ford intoned, "and for the help of His people in meeting these obligations on the building."[62] But Ford's praise also noted the symbolic meaning of the building for the NAE as a newly reformed, bureaucratically-centralized corporate organization. For Ford especially, the building was a "significant milestone in the development of the work" that indicated "maturity and stability" over novelty and ad hoc instability.[63] Elsewhere, Ford proclaimed "[t]he building gives us not only the facilities we need for our work, it also is a symbol of the solidity of the organization and brings us necessarily to consideration of the future of the work in a new light."[64]

Ultimately, the NAE's new headquarters shaped a financial model and novel stewardship practices rooted deeply in the economic infrastructure of suburban development and finance, providing the organization moreover with a consistent supply of low-interest debt that spurred yet more debt-centric fundraising campaigns that appealed to corporate capitalist laymen more than principled calls for central mission support. Despite its improved overall financial standing, the NAE continued to struggle to secure regular patronage for its executive office's operating budget, a problem compounded by the financial pressures required to pay off its portion of the mortgage. With connections at Gary-Wheaton Bank, however, the NAE was now able to secure loans to close operating budget gaps—first for $15,000, then for another $20,000. The bank extended the loans explicitly because the NAE

[62] Report by Ford, "Report of General Director to Board of Administration," October 7-8, 1963, Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

[63] Report by Ford, "Report of the Executive Director," April 23, 1963, Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records, SCBL.

[64] Report by Ford, "Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Administration," October 8-9, 1962, Box 75, Folder 2, NAE Records, , SCBL.

now held enough in assets—an office building and land—to cover the loans' worth should they default; Gary-Wheaton loans, therefore, carried the condition that the NAE could take out no other mortgages on the office while the loans were in repayment.[65] Nepotistic financing relationships ensured, however, that loan costs never grew prohibitive. In October of 1964, the NAE repaid the bulk of its debts to Gary-Wheaton Bank with new loans taken out at a lower interest rate from Hawthorne Bank, a local financial institution founded by suburban developer Jay Stream in 1962 with earnings from the sale of stock in his own construction company that built suburban Carol Stream.[66] With its new debt held at Hawthorne, the NAE simultaneously closed its operating budget account at Gary-Wheaton and moved it to Stream's business as well. In 1965, Van Kampen *also* left his position at Gary-Wheaton to join Hawthorne as its new Vice-President, second in command to Stream himself.[67] Tied as it was to local suburban financial institutions and their professional social networks, this loan financing model, anchored by fixed capital assets holdings, became a fixture of evangelical institutional organizational in Wheaton and in other evangelical communities across the United States.

In view of the NAE's building project and its immediate aftermath, evangelicals' professional management of suburban assets provide a more direct and convincing explanation for American evangelical institutional growth than long-standing appeals to the social power of charismatic preachers or of principled debates over doctrinal purity and biblical interpretation. Beyond the NAE, the development interests among evangelical bureaucrats, along with their secular suburban business partnerships, provided similar benefits to a growing cadre of evangelical institutions and further secured the seemingly miraculous success of area suburban communities. Gundersen and Van

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[65] Minutes, "Minutes of Executive Committee," December 10, 1963, Box 137, Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL.

[66] Memo, "To the Executive Committee," October 5, 1964. Box 137, Folder 13, NAE Records, , SCBL. See also "Hawthorne Bank opens Saturday," *The Citizen*, January 5, 1962, Page 3, File Cabinet 1, Drawer 2, CSHS HRC.

[67] "Collection: Collection 313 Papers of Robert C. Van Kampen | Archives of Wheaton College," accessed August 7, 2020, https://archives.wheaton.edu/repositories/4/resources/704.

Kampen's activism for the NAE was simultaneously extended to YFC as well as TEAM, Gundersen's once-ethnic Scandinavian Evangelical Free missionary agency. Both organizations also opened headquarters in Gundersen's Carol Stream office park on land owned and donated by both Gundersen and Van Kampen. Over the coming years, the site would draw other major evangelical organizations to a new suburban institutional hub, including Ken Taylor's Tyndale House publishers and, later, the offices of *Christianity Today*, evangelicalism's leading public voice. As Stream expected, these prestigious organizations brought evangelical professionals and homebuyers to the flourishing residential communities of Carol Stream and beyond. The development of the park further brought steady employment for local office workers, construction work for contractors and a glut of printing jobs for local presses. The growth of residence and commerce, along with the near constant expansion of its religious industry no doubt provided many with a sense of profound pride and accomplishment, one couched in a divine vision to reform evangelical Christianity and better harvest the souls of a new suburbanized nation.

By 1964, suburban developments in the evangelical institutionalization marked a closing of an old world and the opening of a new one. Citing general fatigue and a desire to give the NAE to new, invigorated leadership, Ford resigned as Executive Director at the end of 1963, although he stayed on as General Director and advisor for a short while longer. A year earlier in December of 1962, Gundersen was diagnosed with cancer; by May 1964, he succumbed to the illness and passed on. In a tribute read to the Executive Committee of the NAE two weeks later, organization officials declared "[w]e shall miss him but we rejoice in his 'inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.'" Gundersen's personal inheritance may have been an eternal one, but the inheritance he passed on to the NAE and other evangelical organizations cast a "long shadow," in the words of the NAE's

new Executive Director, Arthur Climenhaga. In Climenhaga's view, the NAE was "a noteworthy part of that shadow…."[68]

Both Ford and Gundersen's shadows would continue to reside in the centralized physical and corporate structures of the new NAE, one admittedly better positioned to pursue its agenda. While the NAE continued to rely, in part, on local congregations, sympathetic denominational bodies and revival campaigns to support its mission, it had successfully secured an equal, if not greater, source of institutional support and stability in the economy of suburban development and debt management. Improvements in evangelical organizational efficiency secured by suburban development also combined with the expansion of suburban evangelical church networks to foster a new reverence for seemingly bountiful lands and their financial miracles. This very experience of suburban success would greatly inform evangelical ideology on related issues of land and opportunity as the civil rights era progressed, forging one perspective on two distinct experiences of suburbanization.

Two Americas: New Evangelicals and Suburban Perspectives

Four years prior to his passing, just as NAE headquarters planning was heating up in Wheaton, Carl Gundersen drove to Bannockburn, IL—thirty miles northeast of Wheaton and seven miles northwest of Deerfield—with H. Wilbert Norton, President of Trinity College and Trinity Theological Seminary, in tow. The two EFCA leaders would spend the day assessing "Sunset Estate," a 79-acre farm being considered as a new location for Norton's school, which was then housed on the north side of Chicago near present-day Ravenswood. Trinity's identity had already changed much over the past two decades. Prior to 1946, the school was two separate colleges: in Chicago, it had been the Swedish Bible Institute, the Swedish EFCA's bible school modeled after Dwight Moody's MBI by J.G. Princell; in Minneapolis, it had been the Norwegian-Danish Bible Institute and Academy, the

[68] Gundersen, *Long Shadow,* 11.

Norwegian-Danish EFCA's near-equivalent bible school. After the two schools merged, they adopted the "Trinity" moniker, which went through various iterations over the years.[69] In the 1960s, Trinity College and Trinity Theological Seminary left Chicago to settle outside Deerfield, establishing a new institutional hub of conservative Protestant influence in Chicago's northern suburbs. The story of Trinity's suburban migration repeats a by now familiar tale and features many of the same characters, highlighting both the insularity of evangelical institutional development networks in Chicagoland, as well as the reach of their economic influence.

Much like simultaneous developments in suburban evangelical churching and at the NAE, Trinity's relocation aimed at long-term growth and required the concerted cooperation of a small army of real estate developers, loan officers and evangelical activists to achieve its goals. Since the early 1950s, Trinity had shifted from a two-year bible college that fed a three-year seminary to a four-year liberal arts college (with a hearty bible emphasis) and a separate, smaller divinity school. The new college, which first granted educational degrees to certify teachers for the mission field and later expanded its liberal arts offerings, drew increasing enrollment that destabilized institutional budgets and overwhelmed the College's dilapidating urban infrastructure—a series of converted mansions outside an industrial district. After 1957, the college's board planned to further expand to six hundred students within ten years, and necessary consideration was then given either to improve the urban properties or to relocate in order to keep pace with and encourage further growth.[70] In 1959, lacking clear options for moving forward, the EFCA's Board of Education, which oversaw Trinity's affairs, recommended urban redevelopment "until something more definite and concrete would arise" in other fields. EFCA leaders understood this strategy to be a matter of divination: "[t]he idea was in essence," the board

[69] See Hanson, *Trinity Story*, 80-84 for the Gundersen story and 11-75 for earlier Trinity history. See also, Martin, *Trinity International University*. On the ethnic history of the two bible schools, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[70] Hanson, *Trinity Story,* 73-78.

report read, "if the Lord opens up a way and gives clear guidance for a change of location, the Planning Committee was certainly in favor of it."[71]

In this context, the persistent quest for growth—common to both evangelicals and modern institutions of higher education—rallied a host of active evangelical developers to aid Trinity's efforts in discerning God's plan. Shortly after the 1959 EFCA annual convention, Norton received a phone call from an old friend, a real estate developer named Carlson.[72] Carlson phoned to recommend enthusiastically a bucolic farm outside Deerfield as a potential site for Trinity. In turn, Norton called Gundersen, who was on the Planning Committee for Trinity development. According to later accounts, the call to Gundersen was Norton's manner of making "a very specific covenant with God. [Norton] had prayed, 'Now, Lord, if you have anything in this for us, help Gundersen to answer affirmatively to my question, *Should the other members of the committee see this property?*'"[73] So in October, Gundersen and Norton arrived at Sunset Estate on a "glorious" afternoon to discover a farm that reportedly looked as if "the Lord had thrown colored Klieg lights on the whole scene." After surveying the entire property, Norton was said to have asked Gundersen if the rest of the Planning Committee should be clued in, and Gundersen proceeded to answer Norton's prayer: "'By all means, they must!'"

Before deliberations could be pursued, development interests forced the EFCA's hand on relocation and left the final decision in the hands of a few, central bureaucratic managers who well understood the financial potential of suburban investment. Dr. Arnold Olson, then President of the EFCA, received call that the school needed to secure the property by downpayment, or lose it. Olson

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[71] Report, Board of Education to EFCA Annual Convention, "Board of Education," *Evangelical Free Church of America Yearbook*, (1959) 113-4.

[72] Likely Paul Carlson, a former moderator of the EFCA annual convention (1957) and the founder of its "Christian Investors Foundation" (1958), a privately-backed loan service for EFCA church extension projects. Paul Carlson was famous in EFCA circles for suggesting to prospective investors that they "[m]ake [their] money serve two masters—God and you." See Roy A. Thompson, *Toward New Horizons: The Evangelical Free Church of America, 1959-1969* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Publications, 1969), 83. See also 38.

[73] Hanson, *Trinity Story,* 80-81. Emphasis original.

rushed to meet Norton at his office, along with Harold Halleen, who was, at this time, Trinity's board treasurer, a board trustee of Gundersen's Church by the Side of the Road and a senior executive at Bell Federal Savings and Loan Association. Olson attempted to phone other board members to secure democratic approval for the measure, but he failed to reach many of them on such short notice. Those he did reach, along with Norton and Halleen, suggested they would support Olson's decision after the fact. Olson decided to sign the check for $20,000. According to later accounts, Olson then turned to Halleen and asked, "What if the Board turns me down and I have to pay this sum out of my own empty pocket?" Halleen, unsurprisingly, reassured Olson. As Olson later recalled, Halleen told him, "if the Board would do such an unwise thing he and I would purchase the property and become millionaires."[74]

Not all in the EFCA shared Halleen's enthusiasm for suburbanization, and dissenters sparked a debate among EFCA leadership and in EFCA print that reflected wider rhetorical patterns of "white flight," and resistance to it, across a variety of contexts religious or otherwise. At the denominational level, EFCA leaders doubted that the authorization of the 1959 Annual Conference extended to such an ambitious relocation, and some refused to move on the property without further deliberation and official consensus on the matter. Controversy over the Sunset Estate plans filtered into EFCA print, resulting in an editorial debate by the spring of 1960. That March, *Evangelical Beacon* editors invited two anonymous laymen to weigh the pros and cons of urban or suburban institutionalization in their denominational paper. Arguing "No!," one layman invoked the costs of resettlement on an undeveloped farm, estimating that "1 1/2 to 2 million dollars" would be needed to complete the project. Otherwise, the dissenting layman cited suburbia's void of cultural resources then widely

[74] Olson, *Give Me This Mountain*, 155; see also Hanson, *Trinity Story*, 82-83.

available in the city: no mass transit, fewer employment or internship opportunities and no public libraries that could service the school.[75]

Despite some financial concerns against suburban development, pro-development arguments deferred to the expertise of professional developers on the matter and analyzed long-term viability in other cultural terms, including considerations of neighborhood "transition" and perceived public safety. The layman who argued in the affirmative asserted that "any banker, savings and loan officer or contractor" always promoted "the right location …[with] ample room for expansion" as the "most important factor in building new buildings (residential, business, or school)." With a seeming familiarity of experience in the matter, the pro-relocation layman also cited prohibitive costs as well as legal prohibitions in efforts to maintain or expand the present urban campus. This concern for the urban site extended farther to "the block surrounding [the] campus," including its transitional demographics and their perceived threat to future student security. "At present," the layman asserted, "there is a definite shifting of people in the neighborhood. In ten years will we want our young people to be out in the evening in an old neighborhood?"[76] Whichever argument among these persuaded most, a vote at the 1960 Annual Conference was nearly unanimous: Trinity would move to Bannockburn to pursue its present status as a leading evangelical institution of learning.

As Trinity first became aware its farmland outside Deerfield in 1959, another major suburban development was already underway within the growing suburb itself, one that reflected an entirely different experience of suburbanization in the 1950s and -60s. By 1959, a group of local investors with the Progress Development Corporation (PDC) had purchased property for a new subdivision in Deerfield, and construction quickly commenced. Unknown to many Deerfield residents at the time, PDC was the Chicago subsidiary of Modern Community Developers (MCD), a suburban

[75] "No! Says Layman No. 2," *Beacon*, March 22, 1960.
[76] "Should Trinity Relocate? Yes! Says Layman No. 1," *Beacon,* March 22, 1960.

development firm led by Morris Milgram. Milgram had made a name for himself in the years prior by successfully negotiating the development of an integrated suburb in Concord Park, Pennsylvania, not far from Levittown, despite initial resistance from white neighbors. After further success integrating a handful of new developments across the suburban northeast, Milgram turned his the attention of a new national campaign to Chicago, where a handful of inspired local investors decided to pursue his model of "business venture with a social goal."[77]

While Milgram had faced initial resistance to his ventures before, nothing prepared him or the PDC for the level of organized revolt against their development that arose in Deerfield. Once news of Milgram's involvement in the project spread, municipal officials shut down construction at the site for putative "building code violations." Locals vandalized the half-built homes overnight. Harold Lewis, another local development investor, hired a team of lawyers to legally challenge any continued efforts at the site, accusing Milgram of public deceit. Even the local Episcopal minister—who claimed to support fair housing initiatives—came out against Milgram's purported "methods."[78] In a scene that would recur across America in a variety of housing controversies in the coming decade, concerned whites—many of whom had recently left Chicago for the suburbs—organized and overwhelmed municipal planning meetings and bombarded speakers with impassioned pleas and, on occasion, vitriolic, openly racist or red-baiting attacks.

Long-established zoning rights, media coordination with southern segregationists and frank legal decisions finally turned the tide of power and cast PDC out of Deerfield. To undercut PDC's claims to its land, the city rezoned the properties for use as public parks, a measure that had been rejected twice previously for its deleterious increase of residential property taxes. Harold Lewis, while denying

[77] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2009), 236. See also 230-237. For Milgram's own account of this story and similar efforts, see Morris Milgram, *Good Neighborhood: The Challenge of Open Housing* (New York: Norton, 1979).

[78] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 238.

any racial motivation behind the municipal case, sought public support in part by writing Citizens' Councils in the south who then wrote on his behalf to southern newspapers, detailing more explicit racial threats from Milgram's project to a more sympathetic audience who had recently suffered serious defeats in their own civil rights struggles. After a series of court battles—and losses—Milgram finally received withering censure from federal district Judge Sam Perry, who declared that Deerfield officials had shown no racial animosity in their legal planning. Moreover, Perry claimed, Milgram had falsely portrayed himself in an effort to illegally force integration on unsuspecting homeowners. "The whole thing smacks of a money-making scheme to me," Perry insisted, without the least hint of irony.[79]

The disparity of experiences in suburbanization near Deerfield at the turn of the decade, represented on one side by Trinity and the other by PDC, highlights then increasingly public effects robust legal segregation in early postwar suburban markets. Integrated or not, suburban developments of the mid-century served to increase the financial fortune of development interests and property owners—of private residences or larger institutions—often by dictating who could develop where under legally defined conditions. When local development projects infrequently challenged established racial norms in housing by dictating inclusion rather than exclusion in residential neighborhoods, they received significant publicity and experienced significant blowback from white suburban publics. When local development practices conformed to racially exclusive economic, legal and cultural norms of the era they most often proceeded without notice, just one more stream in a massive deluge of wise suburban investments.

While Trinity's relocation no doubt spurred internal EFCA controversy for a number of reasons, no public scrutiny disrupted its actual proceedings and Trinity became part of the racially-circumscribed institutional infrastructure of new suburbia. Despite some support for urban culture,

[79] Ibid., 239-241.

Trinity pursued its suburban destiny for the same primary reason many white residents moved to Deerfield: because Bannockburn was not Chicago.[80] Sunset Estate's pastoral farm and woodland setting, dotted on all sides by new developments, new municipal infrastructure and new communities, encouraged utopian visions for a grander future. Steadily increasing land values offered further potential for financial stability and growing wealth in institutional capital assets holdings. Zoning, lending and realty practices in local municipalities, moreover, ensured systematic protection against "shifting" populations that former city-dwellers aimed to escape. Even if indirectly, the PDC's failed development also solidified white homogeneity in the communities that would surround Trinity if only through the shuttering the only intentionally integrated development in the region. The PDC's public failure, moreover, no doubt discouraged future investments from racially progressive projects and the progressive, diverse communities they attracted. Trinity thus came to be surrounded not only by stable white populations, but also by white communities who affirmed—or at least had little interest in challenging—local white supremacy.

While comparative context for Trinity's development story captures more explicitly the shifting racial structures and ideologies of the new suburban era, no suburban development was free from similar fetters, including suburban projects of church extension or institutional centralization in the evangelical world. As the 1960s advanced, Wheaton would see its own share of housing controversies, controversies inaugurated by Milgram and later incited by new housing-conscious factions of the civil rights movement in the urban north. As fair housing projects sparked moral consideration for economic practices, evangelicals—including leading evangelical institutions and publications, like the NAE or *Christianity Today*—would offer their own religious solutions to inequality that often issued from suburban locales and reflected established suburban perspectives. Northern evangelicals also

[80] See ibid., 237.

collaborated with more practiced race-conscious southern evangelicals—much as Deerfield developer Harold Lewis engaged southern Citizens' Councils—to reform religious racial ideologies of growing ill-repute with new standards more palatable to average white churchgoing homebuyers in suburbs across the nation. Those standards also reflected long-standing theological, ecclesiological and ecumenical positions of evangelical religion that were invoked more frequently and with more urgency as the -60s progressed, in large part to support spiritual alternatives designed to undermine effective civil rights activism in new, primarily northern locales. For white evangelicals, then, planned suburban migration and its religious institutionalizations would indeed cast a "long shadow" over the conservative Christian tradition.

VII.
Salt and Light: Suburban Evangelicals and the Transformation of White Supremacy

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it…."
—Luke 19:41

"Evangelicals have a social conscience but they revolt at the idea of using the temporal power of the church to force world revolution according to any humanly-devised plan."
—James DeForest Murch in *Cooperation Without Compromise: A History of the National Association of Evangelicals*, 1956.[1]

"The issue rests on whether the Church, in the name of the Church, should become involved in these matters, or whether individual Christians, as Christians and good citizens, should exercise their influence as 'salt' and 'light' in the social order."
—L. Nelson Bell, in *The Presbyterian Journal,* June 1967[2]

"Evangelicals are taking a look at the inner-city. This, of course, is not the first time. …However, times have changed—we are all aware of it."
—Clyde W. Taylor, General Director of the NAE in "Evangelicals and the Inner-City," December 1968[3]

For good reason, 1956 has been understood to be a crucible of shifting social organization against inequitable and violent racialized social orders in the United States. Most famously, Rosa Parks and other southern black women launched the Montgomery bus boycott on the eve of that year, mounting challenges to southern segregation on both material and legal grounds while promoting the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. to national prominence as the charismatic religious leader of a nascent black movement against southern white supremacy. From 1956 onward, the nation and its regional patterns of racial segregation would not look the same, nor would the black American revolt against white supremacy long remain in the south alone.

[1] James DeForest Murch, *Cooperation without Compromise; a History of the National Association of Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 158.

[2] L. Nelson Bell, "A Layman and His Church: Reversal to Romanism?" *The Presbyterian Journal*, June 14 1967.

[3] Monograph, "The Inner City Examined: Report papers and findings from the NAE Seminar on the Inner City," (Schiller Park, IL; Dec 9-11, 1968), Box 65, Folder 14, NAE Records, SCBL.

Not by coincidence, 1956 was also a pivotal year for organized evangelicalism in the United States, although that narrative has been characterized less by its racial formation despite good reason for it to be so. Regardless, in 1956, the Reverend George Ford assumed leadership of the National Association of Evangelicals, founded only fourteen years earlier. Under Ford's direction, Kenneth Keyes, the southern Presbyterian real estate guru and architect of suburban segregation out of Miami, laid groundwork to revolutionize the NAE's financial and corporate structure as means of expanding the institution and its influence. Ford's Commission on Church Extension released its long-term suburban planning recommendations, initiating what the commission called a "larger phase of evangelism" in the economic development of racially segregated suburbs. Outside the NAE, influential evangelical activists and intellectuals, including J. Howard Pew, Billy Graham, L. Nelson Bell and Carl F. H. Henry, organized and launched *Christianity Today* to better represent evangelical views in the Christian periodicals of the modern age, and Bell in particular took responsibility for evangelicalism's presentation of its racial concerns. In tandem with these developments, James DeForest Murch published an early history of the NAE, *Cooperation Without Compromise*, in part to allegorize the association's modern mission in grand teleological dramas of the Christian church, in part to explain how and where organized evangelicalism was devoting and should devote its social concerns.[4] In sum, white evangelical leaders in 1956, from Ford to Murch and beyond, were poised to take their case for evangelicalism to a much larger but nevertheless racially circumscribed Protestant public on a variety of social fronts.

From the perspective of this dissertation, 1956 was not the dawn of a radical new era, but rather the beginning of the end of a long sociohistorical process of racial formation whereby northern evangelicals with distinct racial traditions transformed white supremacy as it had existed in material

[4] See again Dawson, *Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

and ideological ways. Over the ensuing twelve years, patterns of social, religious, economic and political transformation inaugurated in the Great Depression and accelerated in the postwar years began to settle in ways that alternately alarmed and satisfied a diverse American public. By the time the 1970s approached, powerful social orders and related social ideologies built on and through decades of religious activism ensured the formation of a white evangelical church tradition. In addition to the racially segregated social communities that suburban evangelicalism cultivated and served, the movement added resonant racial ideologies informed by its pre-existing concepts of church order, including the church's spiritual unity and its spiritual egalitarianism.

Articulated as such against liberal ecumenical foes of the era, white evangelicals' racial ideologies drew clear lines of distinction between themselves and the forces they believed threatened the work they had accomplished, including and especially the forces of civil rights activism. Newly settled in postwar subdivisions and industrial office parks, white evangelicalism as a visible church and as a spiritual ideal helped to reorient Americans' social concerns to new spatial orders no longer northern or southern, but rather urban and suburban. By this reorientation, evangelical leaders hoped to contain challenges to American white supremacy as they lived it while rearticulating grounds for white supremacy that fortified racial inequality. As argued in the preface to this dissertation, by lending credit for their corporate structures and corporate ideologies to God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by limiting their ecclesial and individual social ethics to evangelism and individual regeneration on behalf of the spiritual church, white evangelicals secured their white identity, the white supremacist social order of their church and the anti-structural individualism of their culture that elides that identity and social order.

Cooperation without Compromise: Evangelical Ecumenicity and the Racial Boundaries of "Legitimate" Social Reform

Published at the very bend of this grand historical fulcrum, James DeForest Murch's 1956 history of the NAE provides crucial insight into the socio-structural controversies that drove white evangelicalism's advance as well as the sociohistorical processes by which organized evangelicalism and its projects were formed as white racial projects. While Murch's narrative followed a long Christian tradition of claiming spiritual authority by circumscribed appeal to biblical and historical precedent, the central problem Murch addressed was organizational, or structural, in nature: it addressed matters of church order and, further, matters of the church's relations to and with society. By associating the NAE with early Christian and Reformation-era history, therefore, Murch was not merely claiming authority by appeal to tradition, he continued an evangelical appeal to a specific model of Christian organization that promoted rebellion against dominant and heretical religious and social orders of the time. However, Murch did not intend to cast modern evangelical activism as an ascetic or pietistic rejection of social concern—a call to remove oneself from the world, as critics of supernaturalistic fundamentalism had it. Murch insisted, instead, that evangelicals had a "social conscience," one that took revived responsibility for social orders without abandoning a mote of its spiritual conscience.

A decade after Carl Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* first publicly chastised fundamentalism's social ethics and called for a "new reformation…with "ecumenical significance," the NAE judged itself and its programs in Henry's terms: as an arm of Christ's "divinely-empowered Christian community."[5] In the context of the 1950s, this judgement was of critical importance to the organized evangelical movement's understanding of its growing successes in the public sphere, especially as corporate strategies and practices for extending conservative evangelicalism's social influence came to be institutionally entrenched or abandoned on the basis of success or failure,

[5] See chapter four of this dissertation.

respectively. As black racial revolutions of the 1950s and -60s came to challenge white social structures, moreover, white evangelical leaders of the era clung most tightly to corporate beliefs and strategies they felt most fundamentally proved their supernatural distinction and confirmed their social power. Of primary concern for organized evangelical leaders, then, was social boundary maintenance—ideological, institutional, even geographical—that shielded organized evangelicalism's beliefs, methods and organizations from social corruption, as evangelical leaders themselves understood it, or from social critique, as it was understood by a growing number of critics primarily from outside and occasionally from within the evangelical movement.

By 1956, two years after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision and in the midst of the Montgomery bus boycott, the NAE more diligently guarded its own social boundaries with careful definition and defense of its own place in modern evangelicalism's assumed ecclesial teleology. In NAE president H.H. Savage's 1956 introduction to James DeForest Murch's *Cooperation without Compromise*—and successively throughout the entire structure of Murch's early history of the NAE—ecclesiastical concerns both historical and pragmatic reigned. With the text's very first words after its front matter, Savage commenced immediately his own treatise on the meaning of the word "ecumenicity," its "ecclesiastical sense" and its scriptural basis. Savage endorsed Murch's narration of the NAE's founding and his description of its organizational programs and their goals as a "keen analytical approach" that affirmed "scriptural ecumenicity [as] the basis for the existence of the National Association of Evangelicals."[6] Murch himself opened his first chapter with the declaration that, "[u]nity, fellowship and cooperative action are the 'hallmarks' of true evangelical, biblical Christianity," and he embarked thereafter on an expeditious historical journey that traced the foundations of biblical Christianity to its degraded twentieth-century state, as he understood it: from

[6] Murch, *Cooperation*, v.

the visible church's first apostasy in the conformist "ecumenical ecclesiasticism" of the Catholic empire, to its partial revival in the separatist Reformation, then its early and promising cooperative experiments in the United States and finally through its second "Great Apostasy" at the turn of the twentieth century, led by "liberals" of "German rationalism and the social gospel." Only in his present and from his position did Murch recognize the reemergence of "true evangelical, biblical Christianity" in far-flung social projects either representative of the NAE's interests or directly engaged by the NAE itself. As Murch claimed in his history's final chapter, but not the final chapter of the NAE's history, "[t]he rapid expansion of the National Association of Evangelicals in every area of inter-church cooperation from 1942 to the present hour is one of the most significant developments in the recent history of American Protestantism. The NAE has had every mark of the guidance and blessing of God"—as would a visible portion of the true evangelical church.[7]

Just as important to the maintenance of the NAE's ecclesial boundaries was a strengthened attack on its liberal foes that made more explicit (and more fundamentalistic) its understanding of liberalism's cultural homogeneity. Like Henry, Murch prioritized the identification of 'anti-redemptive' ecclesiastical and humanistic projects of Christian liberalism with which he claimed the true church was unable to cooperate. However, Henry had mostly limited his commentary to affairs of "the church" without significant commentary on specifics of political or economic social orders outside the church. Murch's work showed a far more explicit and overriding concern to identify as mutually constitutive an apostate liberal Christianity and its godless liberal kin in politics, economics or elsewhere. In *Cooperation without Compromise*, liberals appeared everywhere as a united force that assaulted every core evangelical value, especially those that upended proper church order and defied evangelicalism's ecclesial social ethics. Citing a long sermon of Harold Ockenga, Murch amplified a

[7] Murch, *Cooperation,* 195.

specific ecclesiastical critique of Christian liberalism that held no analytical or social distinction between religious and secular forces. "…[W]hoever is a liberal in political economy or theology is contending against the protection of the rights of the individual…," Ockenga declared. "The liberal today has sold out lock, stock, and barrel," he continued, "to regimentation and control in church and state."[8]

Beyond conservative principles like "rights of the individual" and concern for authoritarian "regimentation" in institutional bodies, of particular concern to Ockenga and Murch's assault on liberals was the project to associate liberal Christianity, liberal churches and liberal ecumenical organizations with dictatorial anti-capitalist political movements, specifically. Conversely, Ockenga and Murch associated evangelical institutions and evangelical projects with patriotic nationalism, democracy and free market economies. For his part, Ockenga attacked liberal views of the church with classical fundamentalist rhetoric, claiming:

> [t]he church, according to the liberal, is an organization for human betterment. It is no longer the assembly of called out people who are redeemed, the body of Christ, the organism of which He is the Head and, which enjoys mystical union with Him. The church becomes a movement akin to a radical party in the historical destiny of social development. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the social revolution. So the church is the vanguard of the spiritual betterment of mankind. One can easily recognize the difference between this and the Christian gospel.[9]

In other words, Ockenga accused liberal churches of subverting proper church order and church ethics by placing human needs ahead of spiritual needs, an inversion identical from his view with that of atheistic, totalitarian communists. Murch, for his part, continued this line of attack on organized evangelicalism's particular institutional foes, and he spent significant effort detailing the specific parties who played out "the Battle of the Century" from 1900 to 1950. Taking particular aim at the social

[8] Ibid., 22.
[9] Ibid., 24. Compare to Kallman quote of 20 years earlier in chapter 3.

programs of the FCC, Murch argued ultimately that "[e]vangelicals felt that the Council would substitute political action for the ameliorating influence of the gospel[,] and many *red-blooded Americans* [held] that the Federal Council stopped 'just short of proclaiming the allegiance of the church to a socialized economic system for America instead of the *democracy of free enterprise*.'"[10]

To any specialist of modern conservative evangelicalism, none of the declarations above will be surprising nor especially revealing from the well-documented perspective of evangelical political thought, its challenge to liberal intellectual perspectives and even its folk appeal to middle-class white Americans. From the perspective of ecclesial ideology and institutional formation, however, these claims are essential to understand properly the practical strategic mission of the conservative evangelical movement, as well as the ensuing racial consequences of those practical strategies. What mattered most to organized evangelicalism's leaders, in addition to maligning the political, economic and religious ideologies of "the liberal," was the effort to delegitimize liberal institutions while simultaneously building conservative counter-institutions that claimed rightful and restored authority to operate with divine mandate. From this perspective, Murch's *Cooperation without Compromise* was less a manifesto in the vein of Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, and more a practical guide to help those both within and outside the NAE to identify, describe and justify the various institutional projects of organized evangelicalism within a supernatural social order. After Murch established the ecclesiastical stakes of the new evangelical reformation in his first four chapters, accordingly the ensuing eleven chapters of his work described in detail the institutional workings of the NAE, fashioning a narrative of spirit-legitimatized evangelical social work around which conservative Protestants could rally in mutual opposition to presumed liberal cultural hegemony.

In this regard, Murch's work specifically and the NAE's self-promotion in general strove to set

[10] Ibid, 44. Emphases mine.

powerful institutional and organizational norms for evangelical culture moving into the latter half of the twentieth century. Among the most important of those norms were structural investments that settled evangelicalism in the segregated suburbs of the postwar era, lending its racial ideology conceptual and material content in ecclesiastical order. In fact, with his description of the NAE's intervention into suburban planning, Murch justified suburbanization as organized evangelicalism's ecclesial responsibility. In Murch's narrative, the NAE's Commission on Evangelism recognized a need to expand evangelical efforts to take advantage America's postwar suburban boom. In so doing, Murch reported, they discovered liberal "ecumenical overlords" who restricted church building markets in liaison with municipal authorities—"an unholy alliance between church and state," Murch declared, that sought explicitly "to prevent strictly evangelical churches from being established."[11] For this reason, Murch argued, George Ford directed the NAE to pitch an evangelical development perspective to the American Institute of Planners (AIP) in 1955. Citing Ford, Murch again emphasized the specifically ecclesiastical dilemma that the NAE faced in suburban social contexts. As Ford put it,

> [1955] will largely determine whether the evangelical voice will be heard in matters of community planning, guaranteeing the religious liberty that is so much apart of American life or whether the liberal ecumenical movement will usurp the right of the churches. Let me assure you that this is no imaginary threat. I have seen their plan. It proposes in many cases the federation of churches, the purchase of property by a super-church organization for allocation later according to population developments, and downtown worship centers which would not only take the place of regular Protestant churches but would be headquarters for Catholics and Jews as well. Ecumenicity would replace evangelism: the right of propagation, which is so basic to religious liberty, would be traded for the doubtful advantages of a noncompetitive church life: Bible-believing churches would be forced to a hands-off policy in many communities even though the only Protestant churches might deny every essential doctrine of Christ and the people be entirely without a true Christian witness. We have the opportunity now to do something about this but unless we keep our light clear and distinct, both nationally and locally, the opportunity will soon pass.[12]

[11] Ibid., 117-18
[12] Ibid., 118-19

Murch was happy to report that Ford had since secured a line to sympathetic developers in the AIP, granting local evangelical churches "appeal to a national organization which is capable of defending their right to preach the Gospel anywhere without compromise." Here, then, was discovered an effective strategy for a movement that sought proof of its own significance by way of effective social impact. As shown in chapters four and five of this work, Murch's 1956 expectations for the NAE's advocacy in suburban planning were well met over the next decade, and suburban investment as an ecclesiastical strategy became a powerful cultural tool for evangelicalism's extension across the nation, just as evangelicals' suburban successes proved, for many, that their movement had divine backing. At the same time, evangelicalism's racial orders were given the import of the movements' ecclesial teleology.

Murch's advocacy and optimism for evangelical "community planning" helped to paint a picture of divinely-empowered community under development, as did the vast majority of his reports on dozens of other projects led or supported by the NAE. However, in Murch's brief history of the NAE, one social issue in particular remained a clear source of conscientious discomfort for evangelicalism's leaders, and yet it failed to produce the expected collaboration and social impact of evangelicalism's ecclesial teleology: the issue of race. In describing the NAE's race work from its founding through 1956, Murch could only refer to one serious example of institutional engagement with the topic: a 1951 "Forum on Social Action" that included a discussion of "Race Relations" led by Carl Henry himself.[13] At that forum, Henry lamented that more work was not being done to evangelize American black populations, nor resources given to them to evangelize themselves and raise their own churches, nor invitations offered to welcome them into evangelical and fundamentalist bible colleges to train black evangelical leadership. Henry's uneasy conscience, however, failed to

[13] For full proceedings of the forum, see ibid., 161-166. Much of the forum's deliberations concerned the relationship of capitalism and evangelicalism, specifically.

produce the kind of corporate unity and effective action that Murch highlighted in most of his descriptions of NAE programs. Some forum participants argued that evangelism could proceed in the face of religious and social segregation, and that no church intervention was necessary. Others argued that Christian segregation was a paradox given the spiritual equality of all peoples, making evangelism and desegregation mutually obligatory. The only black representative mentioned in Murch's summary observed aptly that a "…violent overthrow of segregation would only furnish a temporary solution…" and that spiritual efforts were *also* requisite to "attack the problem."[14] From Henry's stated perspective on the forum, "…the big agreement of all participants was that in contrast with the liberal gospel the effective attack upon social problems could come only through an emphasis on what liberalism conceals—the substitutionary redemptive death of Christ for sinners"—square one of modern evangelical social ethics.[15]

Given the specific disagreements of the NAE's "Forum on Social Action" in 1951, Henry recognized with characteristic acuity an underlying difficulty in organized evangelicalism's response to racial issues in particular and many other social issues in general: namely, the struggle to articulate such issues in entirely evangelical terms since those issues were most commonly identified and defined by liberal voices. In his own words, Henry wondered aloud if the "social problem" of race relations, among others, could be possibly addressed by evangelical social action if its qualities were expressed and solutions proposed "…in the same terms [by] which liberalism does." Absent a proprietary evangelical vernacular for discussion of these issues, Henry called for evangelical leaders in ethics and the social sciences to "…carry forward a more technical approach from the theoretical side." In other words, after the 1951 forum, Henry and the NAE recommended that evangelicals moving forward continue to develop their own unique language and accordant solutions for a variety of social

[14] Ibid., 165.
[15] Ibid., 166.

problems, including those of race, class, global conflict and domestic politics. As Murch declared, with characteristic optimism for organized evangelicalism's future, "[w]hile there is still much to be accomplished before evangelicals' 'uneasy conscience' is assuaged in the field of Social Action, nevertheless their critics cannot justifiably accuse them of quiescence in this field."[16]

L. Nelson Bell, Scalawag: Evangelical Unity, Racialized Spiritual Ideology and the Demise of White Southern Evangelical Sectionalism

In the late-1940s and early-1950s, the lexicon of evangelical ecclesiastical purity had not yet established firm enough boundaries around social issues of race to handle comfortably popular understandings of racial justice given meaning largely by liberal social critique. By 1956, however, those boundaries began to come into focus and matured even further over the ensuing decade. By redefining racial equality in spiritual terms and by claiming God-granted authority over the maintenance of spiritual boundaries of the church, Murch and his fellows at the NAE projected their own unique racial ideology, one that emerged, in the words of Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "from the struggles of competing [religious] projects and ideas seeking to articulate similar elements differently."[17]

The same year that Murch published his ecclesiastical history, the NAE released as well two important public resolutions seemingly unrelated by explicit measures but certainly not so given Henry's recommendations for further reflection in 1951 as well as the ecclesiological paradigms of evangelical racial discourse established above. In the first of several resolutions passed that year, the association attacked their ecclesiastical foes in familiar and suggestive terms, accusing certain "political and social philosophies" of undermining "our American way of life with its freedoms and individual

[16] Ibid.

[17] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation,* 64. Omi and Winant's original term is "political projects."

rights…in open political attack […or] organized sabotage." More importantly, the resolution charged the practice of "organized ecclesiastical regimentation" for aiding and abetting those philosophies, either in "individual ecclesiastical systems" (denominations) or "certain cooperative church endeavors" (liberal ecumenical movements). Tellingly, as one evidence of ecclesiastical collusion to undermine evangelical freedoms, the NAE cited ecumenical "propaganda and pressure" to coordinate comity agreement in the planning of new residential developments then proliferating around the country—the exact same charge leveled by Murch in *Cooperation without Compromise*. The second resolution passed in 1956, a resolution on "Human Rights," modeled the NAE's new official perspective on racial issues. With careful moderation, the association resolved that racial discrimination was fully incompatible with Christian teachings, and it affirmed long-standing appeals to the "intrinsic value of every man" in Christ's eyes. At the same time, the resolution promoted "every legitimate means" to end racial discrimination but rejected "…extremist tactics by any individual or organized groups." Ultimately, the NAE proclaimed that "those in authority…particularly evangelistic Christian groups have a moral responsibility to work effectively and openly for the creation of that cultus of life which will provide equal rights and opportunities for every individual."[18]

To ears practiced in the language of 'cooperation without compromise' and salt-and-light activism, the NAE's resolution on "Human Rights" walked a fine line intended to maintain the conservative ecclesiological priorities of 1956's first resolution despite controversy over racial issues. NAE leaders understood well that interpretation of the second resolution depended entirely on what means were considered legitimate, which individuals and groups were considered extremists and which church bodies produced the "cultus of life"—a socially effective ecclesiastical order—requisite to meet the challenges ahead. Before the mid-1950s, organized evangelicalism's positions on legitimate and

[18] See Document, "Resolutions Adopted in 1956," circa 1956, Box 175, Folder 19, NAE Records, SCBL.

illegitimate measures to secure ideal social orders were well established by an expansive and ever growing literary corpus of evangelical social commentary. By the late-1950s, despite declared support for racial equality, leaders of organized evangelicalism in the north and south frequently insisted that civil rights activists and their sympathizers, like other enemies of the true church, held neither requisite spiritual authority nor pursued legitimate gospel means to establish the kinds of socio-religious orders that sustained "equal rights…for *every* individual."[19] In effect, this insistence differed little from segregationist argumentation, in large part because 'reformed' segregationists came to play a greater role in its articulation. On the one hand it admitted, as did liberal theology, that God "made of one blood all nations of men;" on the other hand, it asserted evangelical authority to discern and establish the "bounds of habitation"—or "the kinds of socio-religious orders"—that made equal rights and opportunities possible in a sacred cosmology.

In 1956, L. Nelson Bell became the primary spokesperson for this new articulation of white evangelical racial ideology as the co-editor of *Christianity Today*. In the annals of American religion, Bell is often represented as a southernizer of the national evangelical movement and simultaneously as a moderating force for the white supremacist inclinations of southern evangelical culture. In truth, he was both—and neither. Bell's early positions on ecclesiology and race represented a form of southern evangelicalism too parochial and retrograde for the burgeoning national evangelical movement, but his personal relationships with northern evangelicals and their sympathizers alongside epochal legal developments in national jurisprudence altered his public inflections of church spirituality and racial segregation. Bell witnessed personally the rapid rise of the new evangelical movement through his son-in-law, Billy Graham, whom Bell had first met in 1941 when Graham was a fresh-faced twenty-two year old college student. By the 1950s, Bell had also forged strong ties to the

[19] Ibid. Italicization mine.

conservative northern Presbyterian J. Howard Pew, an oil executive who held the purse strings for Bell's media projects, especially at *Christianity Today.*[20] In service to these powers of the evangelical movement, Bell modified his public rhetoric around race and ecclesiology to match organized evangelicalism's social priorities and to convert southern evangelicals to the northern cause.

Once a stalwart defender of southern segregation in religious and public worlds, Bell had formulated a new defense of segregation in 1955, one year after he helped to block the merger of southern and northern Presbyterian churches on explicit segregationist grounds and one year before he joined the editorial staff at *Christianity Today*. Shortly after the PCUS merger dust settled, Bell penned what would become his most widely read editorial to date in his *Southern Presbyterian Journal* (*SPJ)*, an essay entitled "Christian Race Relations Must Be Natural, Not Forced." Bell opened the 1955 essay with shrewd self-deprecating humility before positioning himself as a moderate whose argument would "…not please extremists on either side of this controversial matter." What followed no doubt surprised many, in fact: Bell conceded immediately that "segregation by law [could not] be legally defended" in American society. For all the anger this statement induced in southern segregationist hardliners, however, Bell went on to articulate an impassioned defense of racial segregation by other means. If segregation by law was indefensible, he deduced, "[i]n like manner, *forced integration* cannot be defended, either on legal or moral grounds."[21] This new articulation of "voluntary segregation" by personal preference and Christian conscience deftly echoed regnant conservative concerns over forced ecclesiastical union under liberal ecumenical directives while, at the same time, it refused to engage vitriolic and controversial religious defenses of Jim Crow. This careful balance of ecclesiastical

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[20] Aside from helping to finance the periodical with clandestine backing, Pew purchased two hundred thousand subscriptions outright for *CT's* first year to send *gratis* to Protestant churches and ministers across the country, buying *CT* a strong base of support on which it could build and thrive in coming years and decades. See Grem, *Blessings of Business* and Evans, "White Evangelical Protestant Responses."

[21] L. Nelson Bell, "Race Relations Must Be Natural, Not Forced," *Southern Presbyterian Journal*, Aug 17. 1955.

priorities and submerged "racial custom" earned Bell his position as evangelicalism's conscience on issues of race at *Christianity Today*.

Bell's work at *Christianity Today* supported moreover new efforts by the organized evangelical movement to proliferate its own social and ecclesiological visions across the nation's varied and overlapping social spheres. In search for its own lexicon to express similar elements of religious organization differently from their ecclesiastical foes, leaders at the NAE and *Christianity Today* came to reject the language of ecumenicism itself, preferring instead to establish its own distinct ecclesiological public identity. Offering a more complete intellectual rejection of ecclesiastical order as such, albeit a fully rhetorical rejection, this self-descriptive turn worked to elide the movement's structural formations while projecting a stronger public image as an appendage of the indefinite mystical church. In 1959, for instance, the NAE self-published and distributed a sermon by former NAE president Paul Petticord that defined "True Ecumenicity" in a "dangerous age," once again reiterating the NAE's true spiritual unity in the face of "materialistic communism" and gratefully weakening "onslaughts of liberal theology." Nevertheless, Petticord claimed counterfactually that "[t]he NAE was not born to combat some one or some organizations" before immediately admitting the organization aimed to serve "...those who felt that they were being submerged and limited in their gospel outreach because of the rapid growth of the liberal theological forces" in their churches. Petticord then went on to split a swathe of proximate hairs. "The NAE was not born to become one church nor to do the work of the church," he asserted, ignoring the association's prevalent claims to be an coordinating agency for evangelical churches and organizations. "The unity of the evangelical movement," he continued, "is the result of Evangelicals finding each other in a common search for fellowship and the necessity of having a united evangelical voice on the issue of the day both in

matters of church and state."[22] By implication, in Petticord's view, the NAE itself was coordinated first and foremost by a Holy Spirit—not constitutional conventions, executive boards or debt management committees—that brought individual evangelicals together in spiritual unity.

By the opening years of the 1960s, new ecumenical efforts for a grand liberal Protestant ecclesiastical merger—particularly the Blake-Pike Proposal and the ensuing 1962 Council on Christian Unity (COCU), as well as the WCC's 1961 "Statement on Unity" in New Delhi—caused conservative evangelicals to draw a hard line against the use of ecumenical language, but not its institutional practice, on grounds that it too closely represented 'anti-redemptive forces' in American and global religion. In an emergency "Memorandum on Christian Unity" circulated internally at the NAE in 1961, executive director George Ford declared "…that Christian unity must be spiritual rather than a mere organizational accomplishment."[23] In a more confrontational statement originally published in *United Evangelical Action* and later as a pamphlet offered for print, the NAE's long-time public relations officer in Washington D.C., Clyde W. Taylor, reminded "…evangelicals who 'stress the positive' [to] not forget that the New Testament does denounce heresy." Echoing Petticord's earlier claim that evangelicals simply found each other "in a common search for fellowship," Taylor proclaimed, "[a] key word for evangelicals is fellowship. We are convinced that the unity which Christ prayed for should be manifest in fellowship and visible cooperation on a spiritual basis. Christian fellowship is only possible between true Christians. *It is not possible to have fellowship with one who is only Christian in name*."[24]

Framed as an ontological impossibility in the supernatural dynamics of spiritual unity, Taylor helped to redefine ecumenicity and ecclesiastical coordination as diametrically opposed to evangelical social projects—an anti-structural ideology that obscured the reality of conservative ecclesiastical

[22] Pamphlet, Paul Petticord, "True Ecumenicity," Box 65, Folder 11, NAE records, SCBL.
[23] Memorandum, George Ford, "Memorandum on Christian Unity," Box 66, Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL.
[24] Pamphlet, Clyde Taylor, "Examining Ecumenicity," Box 66, Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL.

maneuvers while appealing nevertheless to evangelical unity in other terms. In short order both Ford and G. Aiken Taylor, then full editor at Bell's *Presbyterian Journal*, penned similar screeds, with the former calling ecumenicity "A Threat to Christian Unity," and the latter declaring "The New Ecumenical Theology" to be an atheistic and socialist trojan horse.[25] By 1963, the NAE was holding its own Conference on Christian Unity (also COCU—an intentional swipe) to issue similar warnings and to propose evangelical alternatives.[26] Of no mere coincidence to these events did L. Nelson Bell terminate his correspondence with W.A. Gamble on the grounds of disagreement over G. Aiken Taylor's alternative proposal to Blake-Pike Proposal for ecumenical Protestant merger across the United States. Related, as well, was Bell's defense of a new world where nominal distinctions between northern and southern conservative evangelicals were no longer relevant to the ecclesiastical politics of the true evangelical church. By removing "southern" from the title of his *Presbyterian Journal,* Bell wished to demonstrate that conservative southern Presbyterians and conservative northern Presbyterians were of the same spiritual community, the unity of which offered more spiritual power to influence combat ecclesiastical foes.

At *Christianity Today*, Bell pursued the project of anti-structural national evangelical unity in his editorials, but also through his private correspondence with various parties who wrote to the magazine. In private, Bell was more explicit about his ultimate racial goals than he admitted in public, and he was harsher on unrepentant separatist southerners than he was on northerners who expressed similarly retrograde racist views but wished to express support for the evangelical project. After a series of increasingly hostile exchanges with the arch-segregationist preacher Carey Daniel of Texas, author of the popular tract "God The Original Segregationist," Bell penned a final letter similar to his

[25] See Periodical Clipping, George Ford, "A Threat to Christian Unity," Box 66, Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL; and Periodical Clipping, G. Aiken Taylor, "The New Ecumenical Theology," Box 66, Folder 13, NAE Records, SCBL.

[26] See Box 76, Folders 22-26, NAE Records, SCBL.

correspondence with W.A. Gamble in both tone and message: "I am a Southerner and am as strongly opposed to integration as you are," Bell declared. "However," he continued, "I do not believe that the means which you adopted will accomplish the end which we hope to have."[27] By comparison, in response to an incendiary racist, anti-semitic, and red-baiting letter from one Margaret Engh of Chicago that included a picture of a "mixed race family" with the caption "Save the White Race!," Bell calmly responded: "If you will review the copies [of *Christianity Today*] of the past year, you will see that much that we are trying to do is along the line of the concerns which you have expressed so clearly."[28]

Of course, *Christianity Today* had never published and never did publish anything so vitriolic and retrograde as the materials and Engh sent to Bell, but Bell's admission that his periodical was doing the same kinds of work as much more explicit forms of white supremacist argumentation nevertheless captures the conscientious rhetorical strategy he deftly executed throughout the civil rights era on behalf of the evangelical movement. While Bell cut off communication with strident segregationists who refused to compromise with new ecclesiastical realities in their pursuit of "a world which no longer exist[ed]," he reached out to those he felt might be more receptive to spiritual unity. Amongst them was a Presbyterian minister out of Columbus, Georgia who had been ousted from his post after arguing for, in Bell's words, "'creative contacts' between the races." No doubt Bell hoped that this church leader, having experienced a decidedly negative consequence of an outright pro-integration stance in a southern church, may eventually come around to Bell's view. Accordingly, Bell posed eight questions to McNeill that elucidated his own strategy when dealing with racial matters. "Could you

[27] Letter, L. Nelson Bell to Carey Daniel, October 8, 1958, Folder 9, Box 2, Bell Papers, BGCA.

[28] See Letter, Margaret Engh to L. Nelson Bell, October 25, 1957, Box 2, Folder 14, Bell Papers, BGCA and L. Nelson Bell to Margaret Engh, November 1, 1957, Box 2, Folder 14, Bell Papers, BGCA. The white supremacist magazine from which Engh pulled her picture was printed in Hinsdale, IL and written by an official suspect of the FBI's investigation into two 1958 synagogue bombings in Peoria, Illinois and Atlanta, Georgia.

have had a stronger influence ultimately, had you left the race issue alone and preached on the devastating harm of intolerance and hatred to the spiritual life of the Christian?" Bell asked in one question. "Was the element of true Gospel preaching…obvious in your sermons…; or, were your people led to feel that your concept of Christianity put racial equality in first place?" he asked in another. Perhaps most importantly, Bell asked, "[i]n view of the great need for preaching 'Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures……and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures' if you had it to do over again, *would you use a diagonal rather than a frontal approach to the question of race?"* Bell insisted that his queries were not meant to be critical, but rather that he hoped to help "our church as a whole," and he signed the letter cordially.[29] Here again, Bell revealed his methods: a "diagonal" rather than a "frontal" approach, or a message on race that articulated shared social elements of race by different means.

Bell's racialization of evangelicalism's national and spiritual ecclesiastical unity proceeded throughout the 1960s, but as the civil rights movement continued to pile up legal and social victories, Bell amplified his criticisms of the dangers inherent to the movement not by frontal appeal to its explicit racial demands or interracial contacts, but rather by stoking diagonal fears over social disorder that opened the door to communist revolution. In particular, Bell argued that sit-ins, marches and other forms of confrontational civil disobedience were informed by a "philosophy that 'rights' can and should be secured by mob action." Not only did Bell argue that this had a deleterious effect on "a generation already showing little respect for the law," but more importantly, he asserted that such actions meant to secure "'civil rights' for one race" at the expense of others, enacting "a form of tyranny…imposed on our country by a minority. Where civil rioting is used to get rid of unjust laws, the end can be oppression."[30]

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[29] Letter, L. Nelson Bell to Robert B. McNeill, June 9, 1959, Box 43, Folder 12, Bell Papers, BGCA.
[30] L. Nelson Bell, "A Layman and His Faith: Christian Race Relations," *Christianity Today,* July 19, 1963.

In the *Presbyterian Journal* as well as *Christianity Today*, Bell attacked communism in liberal spheres whether or not race or religion was the primary issue at hand, ensuring the continuity of political and religious associations that tied evangelicalism's ecclesiastical and political foes together. In an installment of "A Layman and His Church" published in the *Presbyterian Journal*, for instance, Bell railed against the proposal of a group of "economists, professors and labor leaders" for the government to provide a mandatory minimum salary for every American, even if they were unable to work. "There is a grave moral issue involved in this proposal and as one reads the report of this group it is obvious that the thin line which exists between state Socialism and Communism disappears at many points." Bell took the opportunity to tie liberal forces in the church to similar programs, despite the lack of any church leadership in the proposal's committee. "More and more the Church finds itself willing to look to the government to perform tasks of charity and compassion. This has hurt the Church. It has furthered the tendency of the Church to try to carry out her spiritual responsibilities through governmental legislation."[31] Bell similarly took the church and its leadership to task for its growing involvement in subversive civil rights demonstrations that, in his mind, threatened national order and opened the door for more radical elements to take hold. "That the Church should become identified in growing measure with demonstrations and civil disobedience is ominous," Bell warned, adding, "[w]e are convinced that behind some of these activities there are individuals whose primary interest is not civil rights but national disorder." Bell then added a second threat to the continued civil rights program of the liberal church: "The 'message' has gotten across. Carry it too far and disaster can be the end, and, along with disaster, the Church will find she has lost her position as a spiritual leader."[32]

[31] L. Nelson Bell, "A Layman and His Church: Abolish Poverty?," *Presbyterian Journal*, May 13, 1964.

[32] L. Nelson Bell, "A Layman and His Church: Street Demonstrations—Playing with Fire," *Presbyterian Journal*, April 8, 1964.

Over the same period, Bell also continued to define the priorities of the evangelical church and its social ethics in terms resonant with the spiritual church tradition. In 1966, in his typical fashion, Bell indicted Christian churches for ignoring their true calling with a statement that would have felt at home in fundamentalist periodicals of the 1930s. "The Church has a high and holy calling," Bell insisted, "to proclaim the message of redemption in Christ. If she does not fulfill it," he continued, "she might possibly succeed in eliminating every social, economic, and political injustice; but she would then find that men were still lost sinners without knowledge of the Savior."[33] Nevertheless, Bell's social ethic affirmed that "individual Christians" had right of conscience to pursue social, economic and political projects as they wished. In the evangelical era and for evangelicals familiar with the traditions of the spiritual church, this was no contradiction: since the true church was the social and spiritual aggregate of all regenerate believers, evangelicals who acted on Christian conscience upheld the purposes of Christ's body nonetheless.

The Inner-City Examined: Spiritual Geographies, Ecclesiastical Formations and the Style of Transformed White Supremacy under National Evangelicalism[34]

Alongside his diagonal approach to race relations and his more formulaic attacks on the dangers of liberalism, Bell's critique of civil rights excesses also began to show the new spatialization of white supremacy that the evangelical church had helped to redefine as a portion of its ecclesiastical, financial and social striving. In the wake of urban black rebellion following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Bell took little time to mourn King's passing, instead opting to pen an editorial title "Civil Disobedience." Before noting King's death, even, Bell opened his essay by declaring: "[c]alculated civil disobedience, seemingly so innocent, has brought an era of lawlessness and bloodshed that can plunge

[33] L. Nelson Bell, "A Layman and His Faith: Priorities First!," *Christianity Today*, March 4, 1964.
[34] Portions of this section were previously presented at an AAR session in 2018.

our nation into unbelievable chaos." Calling urban riots "senseless rebellion" that threatened "anarchy," "revolution", and "dictatorship," "…with the resulting loss of freedom and ultimate bondage," Bell called for a restoration of "law and order" that alone could prevent "national disaster." Moreover, while Bell recognized that America's cities needed rebuilding, he nevertheless insisted that "…chaos cannot be cured by money, no matter how great the sum. Even if every person were put in a mansion, without regard for law and order our problem would continue."[35]

Given evangelicalism's massive financial investments in the suburbs, Bell's claim might appear ironic, but it reveals nevertheless significant spatial, racial and ideological barriers that had been constructed between white suburban evangelicals and diverse urban populations over two decades of robust institutional development. Miracles of finance, religious development networks and antiliberal competition drove evangelicals to the suburbs in the postwar era, dramatically shifting their geographical and spiritual perspective on America's so-called race problem. Over the course of the 1960s, civil rights agitation and urban riots brought some evangelicals to reexamine their new locations and their responsibilities to communities in the cities they had abandoned rather than to critique those cities outright, as Bell had in his own way. For that reason, in the winter of 1968, less than a year removed from King's assassination, Clyde Taylor, the NAE's General Director, opened a seminar themed "The Inner City Examined"—unironically hosted in suburban Schiller Park—with recourse to the new racial and ethnic makeup of urban America. Taylor described the "inner city problem" as one caused by migration—not of whites from the city, however, but of black people, poor whites and "new ethnic minorities" into the city. Nevertheless, he also admitted evangelicals' "lack of continued Christian effort" in urban areas of need, noting that evangelical churches had been accused justly of

[35] L. Nelson Bell, "Civil Disobedience," *Christianity Today*, April 26, 1968.

being "little islands of righteousness, totally isolated from the contamination of the world, and completely disinterested in it."[36]

Other white evangelical leaders at the conference drew on biblical parallels to describe spatial configurations of the inner city problem and evangelical proximity to it. For the most part, white leaders aligned with Taylor and Bell on proposed spiritual solutions for material problems that, ultimately, elided evangelical responsibility for material social orders in which they knowingly and willingly participated and resided. Dr. Philip Hook of Wheaton College, for instance, allegorized the "inner city" crisis as the same kind of problem faced by early Christians, when the faithful resided on the margins of society and from there attempted to save the decaying cities of the Roman Empire.[37] Moreover, Hook recognized the role that church infrastructure played in exacerbating social problems, declaring that,

> …the Church in owning property has started to have an investment in this world which it seeks to preserve and which has made its goals sometimes earthly rather than heavenly. When the Church owns property, it is concerned about the neighborhood in which the property is; it is concerned about the …value of that property…; it becomes tied to the values of this world.

Despite this recognition, and despite his location at moment he stated it, Hook insisted that evangelicals' citizenship was not "of this world." Rather, he argued, evangelicals must place their "investments" elsewhere, in heavenly and spiritual goals. Hook professed moreover, "[t]he message of the Gospel is not culturally defined, nor is it culturally expressed," adding, "…that salvation is not culture, it is not a way of life or way of governing."[38]

While these statements may seem contradictory, they align fully with the ecclesial and individual

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[36] Monograph, "The Inner City Examined: Report papers and findings from the NAE Seminar on the Inner City," Dec 9-11, 1968, Box 65, Folder 14, NAE Records, SCBL

[37] Ibid., 13.

[38] Ibid., 18-20.

social ethics—or salt and light activism—long-since promoted by the organized evangelical movement that established a selectively-applied duality in spiritual and material affairs of evangelical life. In full recognition of the spatial boundaries of white suburban spaces, Hook rejected the idea that "transporting the people from the inner city to suburbia" would correct "the blight of slavery and racism." Moreover, both Hook and Taylor denounced the methods of civil rights activism alongside social interventions offered by the state and liberal denominations alike, efforts they saw as unauthorized and forced meddling in the spiritual work of salvation. Taylor maintained in opposition to apparent public opinion that, "[q]uite contrary to what the great masses are demanding today—true freedom is not political and social, but spiritual." He urged evangelicals to be rather a "salt and light" in society, exercising their Christian influence by slowing the growth of social corruption (salt) and sharing the good news (light).[39] In other words, in social worlds, evangelicals could do little other than slow the inevitable corruption of human relations while offering their eternal spiritual alternative: unity and equality *in Christ*.

Among the only black representatives at the NAE's conference on the inner-city, the Reverend William Pannell offered a distinct evangelical perspective that aired the deep and usually unstated white racial projects and white racial ideologies that white evangelicals had engaged over the last two decades. Unsurprisingly, Pannell rejected Taylor and Hook's appeals. In fact, Pannell denied his colleagues' biblical allegorization for material and social order, and he did not engage in calls for spiritual unity or spiritual equality[40]. Instead, he detailed a history of political and social conditions that conspired to ghettoize black America, including many conditions that built white suburbia.[41] After relating the story of freeway construction in Nashville that served white suburban commuters and demolished

[39] Ibid, 5-7.

[40] See again Dawson*, Allegorical Readers* and fn. X of the introduction to this work.

[41] Monograph, "The Inner City Examined: Report papers and findings from the NAE Seminar on the Inner City," Dec 9-11, 1968, Box 65, Folder 14, NAE Records, SCBL.

hundreds of black homes and dozens of black-owned businesses in the city, Pannell unleashed a suburban jeremiad on his mainly white audience, worth citing at length:

> Now walk up to [a black] man with your Scofield Bible and tell him that God loves him. The statement is irrelevant and a cruel mockery. At least it is from a white man who has nothing else to offer. The truth is that men are trapped today by a system called free enterprise…. …Which leads me to take issue with a repeated premise that evangelicals believe the Bible and want to follow its precepts; that the church today is in somewhat the same position as the early church in relation to society. I would challenge all that. How explain the evangelical exodus from the city? Do we dare say that this was in obedience to Scripture? We pretend we are simply Bible-believing Christians with a heavenly citizenship. In fact, we have a vested interest in the American system. We are not in the same position in which the early church found itself. Evangelicalism is white, Anglo-Saxon, Republican and suburban, and the real reason we are in the cities with any force is because we are more concerned about property than people. We are the landed gentry, our bumper-stickers urge support of the local police, and we vote for law and order. …No, we are not where they were. Our god has become a naturalized American who supports the great white dream. You don't like to hear this coming from a black brother, but you are very careful to maintain your system this way. …The black man could care less about white fears or white moralizing. For the system is white, and the problem is not ours but yours, and you must search out all those sick reasons why you have so long denied deliverance to the captives and refused to set at liberty those that are bruised.[42]

In 1968, Pannell recognized with acute clarity the spatial and ideological racializations of white evangelicalism as it had then only recently developed. He recognized also the capitalist economic relations that shaped evangelicals' religious community, as well as the conservative politics that issued directly from concern for the security and continuity of those relations. He even recognized the 'ethnic' Anglo-Saxon legacy of whiteness, and the transformation of God into an American—a supporter of the "white dream" and a white dream in and of itself.

Five years earlier, Martin Luther King, Jr. had characterized the white church as "an archdefender of the status quo," but by the time Pannell unleashed his jeremiad, the status quo itself had shifted dramatically—from the south to the north, from segregated public spaces to segregated residential

[42] Ibid. For more on the suburban jeremiad, see James David Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs*.

communities. What remained constant was the white church's myriad imbrications with the power structure of the white communities in which they resided. The transformation of white supremacy, then, was not a transformation of power—and especially not its diminution—but rather was a transformation of style: style of social order and style of social ideology. In the concepts of evangelical ecclesiology as it developed out of fundamentalist separatism were the discursive and spatial seeds of a racialized ideology that fully delegitimized material and structural solutions to material and structural problems. While the end result of this delegitimization was a cultural toolkit devoid of the right hammer for the job, the toolkit itself was purposefully if gradually limited by the choices of an elite white male vanguard who positioned their cultural interests as spiritual interests. The consequences of those decisions are alive and well today.

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